

Let us get at this with all simplicity. Call before your recollection now for a moment one of those occasions which occur in everybody's experience. You are at a little family party, let us say. But some incubus or dullness lies over the guests. Everything goes decorously but solemnly on. There is no use in trying to disguise the fact; it is stiff and uncomfortable. You are all mortified and fatigued with the vain attempt to be interested and become interesting. Just now the door opens, and in comes a new arrival—one of those individuals we sometimes meet in a world like ours, which really has too few of them.

His face is radiant with good cheer, and every other face is radiant in an instant with welcome. Right hand goes to this acquaintance, heartily goes the left hand over to that, so the whole room is alive with greeting and answer. A sally of pleasantry flies over across to one friend, and a gentle wish to another. He finds his way with perfect good-breeding to the lady of the house, and bends gracefully, acknowledging her as its head. But his voice hushes instinctively, and his manner softens, as he tranquilly gives a greeting to a pale invalid in the corner. Down he sits in the very midst of the throng, and happy is the one who sits next to him. There he is the centre of unconscious attraction. You seem to think that up to this moment you had been waiting for him.

Yet observe; he says nothing others might not say, does nothing others might not do. But there is an indescribable charm—an irresistible force in his presence. His very look kindles the company he has entertained. Watch him for a half hour. Now he is at a quaint story, with funny episodes, that are met all around with pleasant laughter. Now he is describing some pathetic adventure which fills your eyes with tears. Again he is listening to a comrade whose wit he has started, or some abashed maiden whose diffidence he has mysteriously wiled away.

"Oh, yes," says some croaker, not a little jealous; "a lady's man; a society assistant on call; a lion with a popular mane or a new stripe in his colour; a trifter, worldly and volatile." Well, ere long you notice he is sitting by the side of one of the awkward boys, inquiring with a whole heart full of sympathy after his brother sick at home. That boy believes in him with all his soul, for he remembers how many times he has watched by the bedside in the midnight, with hand firm as the doctor's, and footfall light as a mother's. And one evening, perhaps, he overheard this man—this one now telling the anecdote—wrestling for his brother in prayer for comfort and recovery.

Go on; croak as you will; call him shallow, because he sings a song full of wise nonsense. But mind you, for you miss him just now, he slipped unnoticed up stairs to see the old folks. There he sits now talking sober words of reverent regard to the old patriarch who keeps out of company hereafter, waiting at the quiet fireside with his Bible.

So this happy-hearted, earnest-hearted man glides along, from gayety and gladness into that which is more thoughtful, like a sleigh over snow. And on the whole, his life is as full of meaning as the best life amongst us. He is popular, and why? Because he possesses a contented, manly health. He is natural, and so his companionship is wholesome and inspiring. He is what you would call genuine; oh, word of unmistakable meaning! He is a true man, because he is a new man in Christ Jesus. He sees the bright side wherever there is a man; he sees the dark side, too, and tries all he can to leave it at least a little brighter.

The main question is, Where did he get all this? You might as well ask the dairy-maid, out on the free hills among the cows, where she got the ruddy bloom on her cheeks; she never had anything else. Healthiness is not the thing to be got; it is the sallow countenance, the thin visage, the weak step, which has to be got. So here, this glow of cheerful piety is natural and belongs there. It is the habit of carping and the disposition of croaking which has to be acquired. Cheerfulness, like health, comes of itself. It is sickness and disease that are what lonesome men and companionable devils toil together to accomplish on earth.

A Christian man is a genial, happy, manly man; a

Christian woman is a contented, cheerful, womanly woman, unless some warping, injurious influence has destroyed the first and fitting balance of nature restored by divine grace. A warm heart, a considerate thoughtfulness, a free conscience, a noble purpose, an informed mind, a cultivated taste, an appreciative intelligence, and a charitable judgment of others—these are elements of a truly religious character; they belong immediately to one who has been regenerated by the wonderful power of celestial love. The one ineffable, unparalleled benediction of the gospel is, to every soul which has been created anew by it, just this, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."  
—C. S. Robinson, D.D., in *S. S. World*.

#### THE GREAT HELPER.

Every person is conscious of lacking something in his daily effort to live well. It may be an uneasiness as to the future in view of the past. It may be a spirit of doubt that disturbs every effort toward faith. It may be practical ignorance of the real duties of daily life. It may be the want of some example such as we have never seen in our fellow-men to pattern life after, or the lack of a positive assurance that religion is real, that God is real, that eternity is real.

Now if one or all of these longings of humanity can be met and satisfied by any being, that one is the Great Helper. In Christ the world has one that answers to this human call. His grace is all-sufficient to lift any man up out of the dreadful past and the anxious present to full assurance of the better future. The fact that such a being as Christ ever lived on earth, a mystery to those who lived with Him, yet a blessing to them for good,—something of a mystery to all who have read His life and death in the gospel since He passed away from earth, yet a greater power in the world to-day than ever,—this fact ought to satisfy any sane man that religion is a reality, for Christ lived religion; that God is real, for Christ was so much above the highest conception of a man, He reflected the best idea that man has of what God is; that eternity is also real, for Christ talked as familiarly of eternity as He did of time. The only explanation that can be given of such a being is the solution of these great disturbing questions.

His practical life likewise enlightens our ignorance of the duties of living. His life, so pure, so true, so perfect, is the outline for our life, and the infallible guide in life. What He said and did under the varying circumstances of His earthly being, as far as they touch our lives, we may say and do. The way Christ acted among men we may safely act. And as He came from God and was of God, we may know that Christ's life is the life God wants man to live.

Christ, then, is the Great Helper, and not to any one class or race of men alone, nor to any one condition of life. He is the universal friend, brother, Saviour. Why will any one try to live without seeking help from Christ?

"I am the way, the truth, the life."—*Golden Rule*.

#### PRACTICAL SYMPATHY.

In one of our sleeping cars in America there was an old bachelor who was annoyed by the continued crying of a child, and the ineffectual attempts of the father to quiet it. Pulling aside the curtain, and putting out his head, he said, "Where is the mother of that child? Why doesn't she stop this nuisance?" The father said very quietly, "The mother is in the baggage-car in her coffin; I am travelling home with the baby. This is the second night I have been with the child, and the little creature is weeping for its mother. I am sorry if its plaintive cries disturb any one in this car." "Wait a minute," said the old bachelor. The old man got up and dressed himself, and compelled the father to lie down and sleep, while he took the babe himself. That old bachelor stilling the cry of the babe all night was a hero. And the man who, for the sake of others, gives up a lawful gratification in his own house or in the social circle, is as great a hero as though he stood upon the battlefield.—*J. B. Gough*.

#### WHAT I HAVE SEEN.

An old man of experience says. I have seen a young man sell a good farm, turn merchant and die in the insane asylum; I have seen a farmer travel about so much that there was nothing at home worth looking at; I have seen a man spend more money in folly than would support his family in comfort and independence; I have seen a young girl marry a man of dissolute habits, and repent of it as long as she lived; I have seen a young man depart from truth where candour and veracity would have served him to a much better purpose; I have seen the extravagance and folly of children bring their parents to poverty and want, and themselves to disgrace; I have seen a prudent and industrious wife retrieve the fortune of a family when the husband pulled at the other end of the rope.

#### YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOREVER.

Blue, dim, and solitary, in the wide offing, as one sails over the Aegean Sea, rises the isle of Patmos suddenly, out in the distance. There is no reason specially for a visit. Little or nothing remains to be seen ashore.

But the Christian tourist sits thoughtfully on the deck, and recalls from his familiar reading that here John, the last of the apostolic band, and the loneliest, was once worshipping, and heard a trumpet; he looked, and saw a vision; he listened, and received an encouragement; he was obedient, and wrote the Apocalypse.

What did the trumpet articulate?

For it uttered words. Its blast rang out in terms and tones of human speech. On that solemn Sunday morning, while this spiritually minded man was in the act of communion with God, the heavens overhead became vocal. He tells the story in his own simple way:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

There is, so scientific people tell us, one point, even in a whirling wheel, which is at rest. One line of atoms at the axis, around which all the others revolve, is still. When we conceive of providence, intricate and confused as it is, well typed by the prophet as "a in wheel the middle of a wheel," we are always to remember that God Himself is sitting unmoved at the centre of the universe, the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift, and with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And there is relief and comfort in this.

Shocked and shifted as we are in this life, our minds become impressed with a sense of insecurity. We are agitated with a thousand disquiets. No lot in the world is safe. Affairs fluctuate. Individual experience fits and plays with the phases of the moon. Insurrections are not fixed. Even the perpetual hills do bow, and the eternal seas do change their bounds. Stability seems but an empty fiction or a dream. Versatilities mock our expectation; vicissitude is the rule of earthly existence.

Over all sits God calmly. His throne never moves. His eye never sleeps. His patience never wearies. He wills and waits at His own pleasure. We look up and find Him watching; we know were to find Him always. And the beauty and glory and welcome of this thought is centred in upon the one revelation that the God whom we see is the Saviour whom we love; "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

The idea of our divine Lord as a person is to many minds exceedingly indefinite. He seems a mere historic character, born, living, dying, like any other being among the generations of men. We accept His deity as a mysterious doctrine of revelation, essential, of course, to His office and work; but our understanding of the ineffable meaning it bears is very vague and irrelevant. And that strange life, which began at the manger in Bethlehem, ran through some sorrowful years in Galilee, and then ended on the cross at Jerusalem, has no real significance as a mission of Immanuel, "God with us." We hardly know how to deal with it. Really the weakness of many believers is owing to their absolute inability to make this personal career of our Redeemer available in their experience.

Such confusion is perfectly natural. It is the necessary sequence of a miserable mistake. How childish inadequate is the conception of an infinite Son of God, which limits Him consciously or unconsciously to an earthly history ending in a failure! Now the Scripture insists that Jesus' birth was not His beginning, nor was His death His end. The thirty-three years of His human existence bear almost no measure of relation to the real duration of His life. He was living for an eternity previous to their commencing; He is living now in an eternity as unbroken and as boundless as ever. The incarnation was an incident in His career, it was only a part of His work of redemption, a necessary part, a noble part, but not the whole. His biography would have to be written with an alphabet the Alpha of which no human voice ever repeated, the Omega of which no mortal tongue would know how to speak.—*Charles S. Robinson, D.D. in S. S. Times*.

THERE are two Baptist Churches in South America; one at Santa Barbara, Brazil, and the other at Demerara, Guiana.