The Influence of Company.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

The effect of company upon our souls is less considered at this time than it ought to be. Probably the most of men are ten times more careful in selecting a horse than in choosing a friend. They do not thoughtlessly surround themselves with servants, and yet they leave the gathering of their intimates to chance. Because, we are compelled in some degree to mix with the ungodly world in the course of daily business, therefore many imagine that there can be no harm in making unconverted persons intimate associates. Such a mistaken idea must be mischievous, and the sooner we are delivered from it the better.

We might be colored and tinctured by our friendships; it is unavoidable. The wise of men assures us that "He that walks with wise men shall be wise;" and it is equally true that he who walks with fools will soon become foolish. Some men have great influence, and to be near them is to be assuredly affected by them. Even those who have least power over others have a measure of it, and unconsciously to ourselves we may fall in some degree under their spell. The Jews have a proverb that "two dry sticks put to a green one will kindle it;" and it is doubtless true that, should one evil associate be unable to deprave us, there is a cumulative force in the example and persuasion of number. It is to be feared that when two or three are met together under the power of sin, there the devil is in the midst of them to aid their base endeavours. Now, it is a hard thing to go in and out among the children of darkness without learning some of their ways, and harder still to meet them in companies, which make up synagogues of Satan, without feeling the baleful force of the god of this world. If the company of the wicked does not leave a smeare it will leave a smell; if it be not deadly it is dangerous. Some of us are more plastic and malleable than others, and we are the first to be impressed by our surroundings; it is, to us, therefore, of the first importance to place ourselves in holy society, and shun all needless associations with the godless as we would avoid the plague. We are ourselves acquainted with many who have been ruined by bad company—such were B——, who became a reprobate through spending his Sabbaths in excursions and amusement; F——, who was led into speculation and ultimate embezzlement through his friends of the billiard table; H——, who was never worth a penny piece after he had found his heaven in the banquets of the Free Masons; and J——, who went from bad to worse through the company of those who laugh at purity and call vice pleasure. Indeed, the list is endless; and we shall be conceited to no ordinary degree if we imagine that we shall be safe where so many have fallen, never to rise again.

When dubious associates can not altogether prevail with us to do evil, they are sure to hinder us as to our growth in holiness. The higher forms of grace are extremely delicate, and the process of their progress are intensely sensitive, and hence it happens that even the presence of the graceless may injure them. We do not wonder that the heathen, in their more solemn worship, were accustomed to lift up the warning voice—"Far hence, ye profane!" Instinctively one feels that in holy approaches to God the absence of the wicked is greatly to be desired. A word, or even a look, or a gesture from an influential worldling has soured the milk of devotion of many a pious heart. A note or two from graceless lips has reminded a holy man of a profane song which he would give his eyes to forget, for its recurrence to his memory has chased communion from his mind. These servants of iniquity are powerless to help us, but terribly potent to hinder us in our advances to our God. Who can make headway in faith while intimate with unbelievers? Who can dwell in hallowed peace when rough and headstrong spirits have unrestrain d access to him? Who can be pure, and yet lay his head in the bosom of impurity? Who can keep his garments unstained, and yet toy with the unclean? The ascent to the heights of holiness is steep in itself, and we have enough burdens of our own to carry; there can be no need to link ourselves with those whose nature and disposition lead them to drag us down.

Not with the light and vain,
The man of life feet and wanton eyes;
Not with the world's gay, ever smiling train;
My lot be with the grave and wise.

Not with the trifler gay,
To whom life seems but sunshine on the wave;
Not with the ringing idler of the day;
My lot be with the wise and grave.

Not with the jesting fool,
Who knows not what to scber truth is due,
Whose words fly out without an aim or rule;
My lot be with the wise and true.

With them I'd walk all day,
From them time's solemn lessons would I learn;
The false from true, and true from false, I may
Each hour more patiently discern.

In these times we observe a craving in certain minds after what they call "admission to society." Persons usually numbered with Christians have become rich, and this "society" fever has come upon them with their increased substance. They are not themselves extremely talented or accomplished people, and in years gone by they were highly gratified when the leading friends in the church welcomed them to their houses; but now, though they are assuredly no better cultured than they were, they look down upon their former friends, and say that they long to get into "society." If they would turn their talk into English it would read thus—"We are now rich, and are carried away with self-importance. We reckon ourselves to be too respectable to associate with godly people in the middle station of life, much less with poor saints. We want to have the esteem of worldings, and enter with them into gaities and frivolities." When this desire is satisfied, the consequence are that these foolish people are patronized by people who find their interest in so doing. They are allowed to provide expensive feasts, and are honored by the company of certain nobodies, with big names, to whom a good dinner is an object. Their sons become genteel scamps, and their daughters are caught up in marriage, or in a worse manner, by penniless captains or profligate gentlemen; who devour their money, and treat them with heartless indifference. The family which might have been honored, had it been gracious, goes over bodily to the godless majority, and is no more to be found beneath the banner of the Lord. Such is the influence of companionship, when it is adored under the mystic name of "society."

But it is argued that we must have "society." So indeed we must, and if we find it a song the godly it will be to our lasting and abounding benefit. An old Puritan has well observed that "Nothing in all the world contributes so much to the kindling, the firing, and the inflaming of men's hearts after holiness, as the society of those that are holy. Algerius, an Italian martyr, had rather been in prison with Cato than live in the senate house with Cæsar.

It is ten thousand times better to live with those that are holy, though in a dark prison, than to live amongst those that are unholy, though in a royal palace. Urbanus Regius, having one day's converse with Luther, tells us that it was one of the sweetest days that he ever had in all his life. There must be disease in the mind of that Christian who would not find delight in the company of many men and women of our acquaintance, for their experience, their holiness, and their communion with God have made their words as music to the ear. When a few true believers meet together, and hold converse upon the grand themes of our divine faith, the pleasure is as real as it is pure—as intense as it is pr fitable. We shall never forget an hour with George Muller, with Samuel Martin, with Baptist Noel. It has been our privilege to converse familiarly with many renowned persons, but we speak without any reservation when we say that with the most godly we have had the best remembered and the happiest forms of intercourse. It will be among our sunniest memories throughout life that we have many times had the good Earl of Shaftesbury all alone in dearest fellowship at our home; and much as we have valued his public utterances, one of our highest joys has been to hear him pour forth a full-volumed stream of store and incident of a personal kind connected with his own walk with God. We were never dazzled by his rank, but we have been profited by his friendship in a way which may be more freely spoken of another day. Yet have we found equal joy and good cheer in the company of godly men of names unknown to fame. We could mention a score of intimates with whom a "crack," is a grand treat. Don't tell us that we must go among worldlings for good company. Our private belief is that grace, in many an instance, quickens the intellect; that peace of heart breeds bonhommie, and that the loftiest pleasure comes of joys digged from the mines of godliness. The society of the fashionable if frequently vapid; the card which is the one thing needful of etiquette, is the token of the stability of worldly friendships. Even for mere interest compared as to gracious conversation; there is substance, freshness, life in it. The world stands on stilts; paints and powders its wrinkled face; ogles, and minces, and lies; one sees behind the scenes of its "*society*," and henceforth loaths it. But the society of true believers, though it may lack polish, veneer and plush, has truth for its language, freedom for its atmosphere, sincerity for its spirit, and life for its characteristic. Nothing is more romantic than real life; and if we associate with those whose love to God impels them to labor for the benefit of man, and especially if we join them in their endeavors, we shall not suffer from weariness, or complain that we have fallen upon an age of prose.

As to the actually vicious or profane, Christians can never be excused if they associate with them. The question is still debated in some circles whether alcohol is a poison or no, but we never heard anyone advocate moderate doses of prussic acid; and so it can never be doubted that the company of a dissolute person of either sex is as much to be avoided as that of a cobra or a panther. No matter what their talents, bad men or women can not do good to us or to our children. Out of evil comes evil.

"Why did you not take my brother's arm last night?" said one young lady to another.

"Because I know him to be a licentious young man," answered the wheer girl.

"Nonsense!" said the first; "if you decline the attentions of all licentious young men, you will soon be left alone in your glory. I can assure you."

"Very well," was the reply; "then I will be left alone; for I am determined, come what may, that I will have nothing to do with persons of loose character."

This little dialogue we have borrowed; but whoever wrote it sketched a scene which we believe has been many times observed with delight by holy angels. We commend it to all, and most of all, to those whom it more immediately concerns.

We are so much under the influence of our comrades in life's battle that we dare not enter a regiment whose traditions are ignoble, we need to unite with the best, and rally to the most glorious banner. We are none to good when aided by the most helpful associates. We can none of us afford to be deteriorated and debased by ill connections. The mountain of life must be scaled; crevices, chasms, precipices, must be encountered. Almost without exception we must be roped together in this mountaineering, let the wise man accept only as his partners those who will pursue the ways of faith and virtue, for with these only will he reach the summit.

Lincoln's Mother.

Though President Lincoln's mother died when he was ten years of age, yet she lived long enough to inspire him with a noble ambition, to train him to love truth and justice, and to reverance God and goodness. Years after, when men were looking to him as one who might become a national leader, he said:

"All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my mother."

The wife of a pioneer, she shared the privations and hardships of life in a wilderness. The struggle for existence familiarized her not only with the distaff and the spinning-wheel, but with the axe, the hoe and the rifle. She helped her husband to clear and break up the soil, to kill wild turkeys, as well as deer and bears, whose flesh she cooked and whose skins she dressed and made into clothes. When she married, he husband could neither read nor write, but she found time, toilsome as was her life, to teach both rudiments to him and her son. She was unusually intelligent and refined for a pioneer's wife. Her taste and love of beauty made her log-house an exceptional home in the wilderness, where the people were rugged and lived so far apart that they could hardly see the smoke from each other's cabins.

When Abraham Lincoln had gained the people's ear, men noticed that he scarcely made a speech or wrote a State paper in which there was not an illustration or a quotation from the Bible. "Abe Lincoln," his friends used to say, "is more familiar with the Bible than most ministers." He had been thoroughly instructed in it by his mother. It was the one book always found in the pioneer's cabin, and to it she, being a woman of deep religious feeling, turned for sympathy and refreshment. Out of it she taught her boy to spell and read, and with its poetry, histories and principles she so familiarized him that they always influenced his subsequent life. She was fond of books, and read all she could beg or borrow from the pioneers far and near. Her boy early imbibed his mother's passion for books. Here and there could be found in the cabin Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Weem's Life of Washington, and Burns' poems. Young Abe read these over and over again, until he knew them as he knew the alphabet.

When his mother died the son had already received a good education—he told the truth, he loved justice, he reverenced God, he respected goodness, he was fond of reading, he could swing the axe, shoot the rifle, and take more than a boy's part in subduing the wilderness and building up a home. She selected the place for her burial. It was under a majestic sycamore, on the top of a forest-covered hill that stretched above her log-cabin home. No clergyman could be found to harp her, and the neighbors took part in the simple, solemn rites. Months after a preacher, who had been written to, travelled hundreds of miles through the forest to preach a funeral sermon under the great sycamore.

The boy of ten years never forgot those sad, plain services, nor the mother whose memory they honored. She ever remained to him the incarnation of tenderness, love, self-sacrifice and devotion to duty. When he was President, he honored her training by the thought: "She placed me here!"—*Youth's Companion.*

Full Moon Christians.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

A clock would be of little value which should only strike "one." There is but little more of value in the spiritual experience and influence of those who make a public confession of Christ, and then cease to grow. Their religion seems to begin and end with that act, as far as any visible power for good is concerned. But from sound, deep, sub-soil conversion, we should expect a steady continuance in faith, and constant development in the divine life.

So many are the hindrances to be overcome, that the great Apostle exhorted his new converts to "continue in the faith." In the first place the old nature is not entirely exterminated even in the most genuine regeneration; as Paul was forced to fight his, and to bruise it with sturdy blows, so has every Christian had to maintain the same conflict. The flesh lusteth against the Spirit. "Why be so strict?" murmurs the old selfish nature. "It is only a little thing; why not indulge this once?" In addition to these and similiar evil suggestions from within, there are constant weakening and demoralizing influences from without. Many social customs are unfavorable to robust conscientious godliness; so are certain temptations of business life in these days of hot competitions. Bunyan's Pilgrim halted in "Vanity Fair" only a few days, but many Christians have to encounter an intensely worldly atmosphere all the time. The Adversary, too, is never idle; the neglect to keep watch even for an hour, lets the enemy slip in through the postern-door. With some Christians there is a natural tendency to doubt and depression; this is aggravated by poor health and shattered nerves. With others there is a speculative tendency, which busies and bewilders itself with mysteries beyond our reach. Satan rejoices when he can entice a Christian into such fogs; they chill him to the bone. Every one of us has foes to fight, that just as much belongs to us as our gait, or complexion, or features of the face. A Christian's school has no vacations; his campaign has no truces, his service no furloughs. He must battle his way up to the conqueror's crown.

In view of such obstacles, the strongest proof of the reality and power of heaven-imparted grace is found in the fact that so many hold out to the end. Over against the backslidings and desertions of certain professors, must be set the victorious experience of those who continue in the faith, and are kept by the power of God to a full final salvation. Those who attain to the richest, strongest, and most fruitful piety, are those who use the *Helps* most faithfully. They are devout students of God's Book, feed on it, and draw their soul's "rations" every day. They pray without ceasing, even in the face of discouragements. They keep Christ before them, and when we are looking at Him, we are not to be beguiled by the Tempter. There is a prodigious encouragement also in knowing that the Lord Jesus has His eye upon us, and makes continual intercession for us. His promises also are taken in like iron into the blood.

In estimating ourselves or others, we must not expect the impossible. The strongest have some weaknesses; the bravest show some scars. Christian character is to be estimated by the whole trend and bent of the man. No ship makes an absolutely straight track from New York to Fastnet-rock; no Christian can show a chart of his voyage without variations from the air-line, but if he keeps on heading for heaven, he will, by God's help, reach it. Some Christless people do very many good things, and some Christians may commit grievous sins, as Noah, Hezekiah, and Peter did, and yet have their faces set towards God. Everything depends on the direction in which the life is steered, and on patient continuance in well-doing. To "continue in the faith," means to continue in vital heart-union with the Lord Jesus—ever more in his omnipotent grasp, ever-more under His supreme guidance.

Some professors of religion are like the young moon that shines feebly above the horizon for an hour or two, and then goes down. The true Christian should be like the full moon that sheds its steady beams the whole night through. Clouds may occasionally float across and hide it; spots on the surface can be detected by the naked eye. But in spite of all these blemishings, the steady orb is there, reflecting the glory of the Sun of Righteousness, and shining on and on, until it is swallowed up in the glorious day-dawn of heaven. To be all this, is within the possibility of every soul, even the humblest and the most tempted, if that soul will simply *continue in the light and love of Christ.*

Who has Seen Christ in You To-day?

"The sermon was well enough on that question this evening," said John Sewell to his wife, Ann, on his return from church one Sunday.

"What was it, John?"

"Who has seen Christ in you to-day? I wish you had been there to hear him. Ann, he made it pretty plain that all who love Christ ought to show by their conduct that they are in earnest."

"That's true, John. I know I come full short of what a Christian should be."

"I am sure that you and the children have not seen Christ in me to-day" (for I remembered to be like my Master, I should not have been so cross with you, maybe, you wanted to take your turn on the morning."

"And I shouldn't have snapped you up so and been so vexed," interrupted Ann.

"Then I used Tom roughly because he worried me, and when he cried I boxed his ears, when a kind word would have made all right. There are plenty of things I should have done, even to-day, if I'd acted up to the parson's question.

"We'll try to begin fresh, John. You're quick and I get vexed. We've both a deal to learn. We must just pray that the children and our friends may see Christ in us."

Monday morning came. John was up early and before he went off to work he asked that Christ might be seen in him that day. Ann did not forget that she wished that Christ might be seen in her, and at breakfast-time the children were told how Christ might be seen in them, and they were cautioned to be kind and loving toward one another, and toward their companions.

Thus, throughout the family, tempers were quelled for Christ's sake, and pleasant acts were performed for Christ's sake, and John was able, in that same strength, to ask a fellow-workman to forgive the sharp words he had spoken to him the previous Saturday.

"I've had the happiest day I ever spent," John remarked to his wife that evening. I know I've long been a professor, but I have not shown by my behavior that I do really want Jesus to be seen in me."

"I'm sure that it has just been the same with me," replied Ann.

"I know why some of our fellows in the shop find fault with religious people, and call them no better than those who have no religion at all. We Christians are not shining lights; we get into the same tempers, and use the same sharp words, and do the same actions as men of the world, and we bring reproach on Jesus."

"That's well said, John. I mean to ask myself every night, Who has seen Christ in me to-day? I know that I shall often have to tell God that I've failed, but Jesus will help me to be true to him, and you know there is a text which says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Dear reader, will you take this question home, "Who has seen Christ in me to-day?"—*Friendly Greetings.*

Beethoven's Eccentricities.

In 1816 Beethoven began to keep house, and a sad kind of a house he had. He was like a child in the hands of servants and landlords, and rarely found himself at peace with either. He constantly changed his lodgings, and seldom had time to get things settled in a house before it was necessary to move again. It was seldom that a servant stayed more than a few weeks, and the house frequently took care of itself. His room was generally a model of confusion. Letters strewed the floor, and the remains of his last meal, sketches of his music, books and pictures covered the chairs and tables. Sometimes it would be weeks before he could discover a manuscript which he sorely needed. He broke nearly everything he touched, and sometimes upset the ink in the piano. He loved to bathe, and frequently would stand pouring water over his hands, shouting his music; if any musical idea occurred, he would rush to the table and note it down, splashing the water over everything in the room. Every day, whatever the weather, Beethoven took a long walk; he had his favorite haunts around the city, and nearly all his musical ideas came to him in the woods or meadows, amid the trees, the rocks, and the flowers. He was never without a little book in which he wrote down any thought which seized him; and then at home the thought would grow into a song or a symphony.

He was quiet and rapt when at the piano; but we are told when conducting an orchestra his movements were violent. At the Diminuendo he would gradually crouch lower and lower, till he dropped entirely out of sight, rising slowly during the crescendo, when he would almost jump into the air. With his pupils he had the sweetest patience, repeating a correction over and over again; he would always forgive a wrong note, but woe to the unlucky pupil who failed to give the right expression to a phrase or bar, for this the master thought indicated a lack of soul, and this he could not forgive.—*St. Nicholas.*

Answered Prayer.

BY H. T. H.

Two associate pastors, in the village of W——, had been earnestly engaged for some weeks in a series of revival services. The church was quickened, and quite a number had given themselves to Christ.

Names of persons unconverted were being presented as special subjects of prayer. Among the rest that of a talented young physician. At one time Dr. H—— had been a professor, and had wielded a powerful influence for good; but small steps from the path of duty had finally led to those that had taken him very far from God.

An evening or two after his name had been presented for special prayer, he was present for the first time. The church was silent. The pastor's voice had ceased with an invitation for any who wished, to make known a request.

The Doctor arose, stepped out into the aisle and said: "I have a request to make. When a student at C——, I was a member of the —— Church. My life then was one of trust in God, and I was happy in the highest sense of the word. Since here, as you all know, I have left the path of duty, and have wandered into scepticism. When first I left the harbor of peace, it was only to skirmish about the coast a little; but the fog of criticism and unbelief is so treacherous, that, ere I knew it, I had drifted so far, that I discerned not it was the voice of the tempter that lured me on, promising a better harbor just ahead. Since then I have spent largely for literature, and have pored over every thing from Buddhism to Ingersollism. But for one peaceful hour, I would give the universe at the time when I had Christ as a personal friend and felt as blessed as God's intending boy, loneliness and darkness I have groped along without God. During these meetings Christian friends have invited me here. The Holy Spirit has wrought in me an insatiate desire for spiritual nourishment. I am here to-night to shake off the shackles that have been binding me, and through strength given me, I consecrate myself to the service of God. Like a homesick wanderer, I seek my Father's house. Will you pray earnestly for me?"

Several weeks have elapsed since then, and the Doctor is quietly testifying by his life that

"There is power in Jesus' name
To cure a sick soul;"

and, like a true servant, he is about his Master's business. He has gathered a large class of young men around him in the Sabbath-school, who used to be on the street during that hour, or anywhere. He has banished Ingersoll's picture from his office, and one of Dr. Talmage hangs in its stead. We could enumerate many other items, but suffice it to say that we who have long prayed in secret for his return, are filled with gratitude almost ecstatic. It is the oft-told story of the prodigal son, and, we trust, may encourage those who are praying for others who are wandering.

But none of the ran-somed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night the Lord pa s-sed through,
Ere he found his sheep that was lost.
But all through the mountain, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There rose a cry to the gates of heaven,
"Rejoice, I have found my sheep."
And the angels echoed around the throne,
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back his own."

Josh Billings Wit And Wisdom.

Some one who knows how to appreciate good things even when ill-spelled has been to the trouble of "translating" the following pithy sayings of Henry W. Shaw ("Josh Billings") into ordinary orthography:

"The highest rate of interest that we pay is on borrowed trouble."

"Counseling with fear is the way cowards are made; counselling with hope is the way heroes are made; counselling with faith is the way Christians are made."

"Goodness is just as much of a study as mathematics."

"No man is rich who wants any more than he has got."

"The wealth of a person shall be estimated, not by the amount he has, but by the use he makes of it."

"Health can be bought, but you have get to pay for it with temperance at the higher rates."

"We should be careful how we encourage luxuries; it is but a step forward from hoe-cake to plum-pudding, but it is a mile and a half by the nearest road when we have to go back again."

"Be humble, and you are sure to be thankful; be thankful, and you are sure to be happy."

"It is as much of a study to know how to make the most of one's self as it is to know how to make others happy."

"It is a great deal easier to look upon those who are below us with pity, than upon those who are above us without envy."

"If you want to get a good general idea of a man's character, find out from him what his opinion of his neighbor is."

"It is a great art to be superior to others without letting them know it."

"Pleasures make folks acquainted with each other, but it takes trials and griefs to make them know each other."

Seven Questions.

If you meet with an atheist, do not let him entangle you into the discussion of side issues. As to many points which he raises you must learn to make the rabbi's answer, "I do not know." But ask him these seven questions:

First. Ask him, Where dal matter come from? Can a dead thing create itself?

Second. Ask him, Where dal motion come from?

Third. Ask him where life come from, save the finger-tip of Omnipotence.

Fourth. Ask him whence came the exquisite order and design in nature. If one told you that millions of printers' types should fortuitously shape themselves into the divine comedy of Dante or the plays of Shakespeare, would you not think him a madman?

Fifth. Ask him whence came consciousness?

Sixth. Ask him who gave you free will.

Seventh and last. Ask him whence came conscience.

He who says there is no God in the face of these questions, talks simply stupendous nonsense. This, then, is one of the foundations—one of the things which cannot be shaken, and will remain. From this belief in God follows the belief in God's providence, the belief that we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. And belief in redemption necessitates belief in sanctification, and the knowledge of God not only as Jehovah Nissi, the Lord our banner; Jehovah Jireh, the Lord our helper; but Jehovah Shammai, the Lord our glory; and Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness; not only of the Immanuel, the God with us, but of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, the God within us.—*Herald.*

It is told of Robert Hall, that he was called upon to visit a sick lady. He went at the appointed hour and found her sweeping and dusting the house; her hair in curl papers and sleeves rolled up. He proposed prayer; they both knelt down. When he concluded he looked around and found her with her hair curled and attired in her best silk. She had slipped out during the prayer and made her toilet. We know of pastors who have had similiar experiences.

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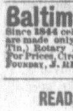
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