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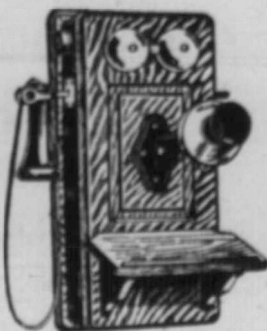
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THE DEEPER LIFE

Unconscious Influence

By Rev. S. G. Bland, D.D.

JESUS at prayer, perhaps in some secret place as seems to have been His wont, was surprised by His disciples. Perhaps, absorbed in communion with God, He was unaware of their presence. They standing a little way off were awed by the intensity, the elevation of His spirit, perhaps by His transfigured face.

They must have been in the habit of praying all their lives, but they felt a closeness of approach, a reality and power of communion in the prayer of their master that made them feel that if that was prayer they had never learned to pray.

Jesus had preached no homily on prayer. He had designed no example in going apart to pray. Yet all unconsciously He had influenced His disciples profoundly. "Lord," they beg, when the mysterious communion has ceased and they dare to draw near and speak, "Lord, teach us to pray."

The incident recorded by St. Luke is an illustration of unconscious influence. Place a prism of glass in the track of a beam of light that has passed through a small aperture. The beam is broken up into a visible spectrum of seven rays—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. But on each side of the seven visible rays are other invisible rays. Beyond the red rays are dark heat rays; beyond the violet the actinic, with powerful chemical properties, and which can be made visible by falling on certain substances. So each of us has an influence conscious, measurable, and under control, and an influence unconscious, immeasurable, and not under control.

There is something very admonitory and humbling about this. Impressions are being formed of us, estimates made of us, interpretations given to our motives and characters, of which we know nothing.

And in these misunderstandings and mistakes may sometimes play a considerable part. Words of ours may be reported to those who did not hear them, detached from their context, without the look, the smile, the manner which robbed them of evil. Some one wishes to unburden his troubles to you when you are half distracted with neuralgia or worried with some trouble not to be spoken of, and finds you unsympathetic and cold.

Some one seeks to interest you in some benevolent scheme, just when you are hurried or bothered almost beyond endurance. That glimpse is all he has of you. You meet in the street some one you do not know very well and who, perhaps, is a grade or two lower (in that shallow way of classifying people we sometimes have) and your eye is slow or your memory not intensive and you meet his eye with a blank unrecognizing glance, and he passes on with a disagreeable sense of mortification and unless rather generous to tell how you were guilty of the contemptible discourtesy of ignoring under some circumstances some whom you would recognize under others.

There are business acts that look like oppression and are not, that are not fraud and yet have the appearance of it. We all have weaknesses or faults that we are not aware of and their influence is going out constantly. No man is good enough to speculate with his reputation. His reputation may already be carrying its peak load. And the hidden evil works out. Our bodies are transparent. Life is self-betrayal.

But there is another aspect to this great law of unconscious influence, a very cheering and encouraging one. A truly good man probably does ten times as much good as he knows of or even

tries to do. He is a Sunday school teacher and thinks, and naturally and properly, that his value to his class is measured by his careful preparation and the way in which he brings the lesson home to their lives. What he



Dr. BLAND.

does not see is how a look or a tone or a little trivial act may be worth whole volumes of scriptural instruction. A friend of mine told me that thirty years before she had seen her Sunday school teacher take a Bible from under a pile of books, saying, "I never like to see the Bible under other books," and the reverent tone and reverent act had never been forgotten by her.

A good many years ago many of the good folk of a country circuit on which I was a junior minister went into a neighboring town to enjoy a Methodist conference Sunday. The next Sunday in their own class meeting they were telling of the help and enjoyment they had found on this high day. Some spoke of the sermons, and some of the conference love feast. One good man said that to be honest he must confess that the able sermons and the thrilling love feast had not done him so much good as the preliminary prayer and the reverent and interested manner of one of the most distinguished citizens of the town who, though belonging to another denomination and one not generally regarded as sympathetic with Methodist usages, had found his way into the love feast and the ordination service. The Judge, he said, had given him a great lift.

There are main lines of usefulness along which the great tasks of life are accomplished, tasks which we prepare to do and do purposefully and count our life ministry, but there are also things we do that we did not plan, little things done by chance or unconsciously, and these too, may be very precious and beautiful—wayside ministries.

When Thorwaldson, the Danish sculptor, returned to his native land with the great masterpieces that he had chiseled in Italy, the servants who unpacked the marbles scattered on the ground the straw which was wrapped around them, and the next summer flowers from sunny Rome were blooming in far northern Copenhagen.

It is easy to do right on the recognized occasions. It is the wayside ministries which reveal the real soul. Sometimes we are on parade. People think little of the goodness or sweetness we show them. What they judge by is the way we act when we are not conscious we are under observation, when we think we are off duty.

It would seem from our Saviour's great parable of the last judgment that when the real nature and upshot of our lives shall be disclosed, everybody, good and evil, is going to be surprised. The bad will be unconscious of their badness; the good will be surprised that they are counted good. The real value of every life will be determined by the unconscious. James F. Geman Clarke tells the story of how travellers straying across the Alleghenies in the old days and thoroughly chilled in the night saw a lighted window and stopped and looked in. They saw a glorious fire in the big fireplace and an old couple fast asleep. So they filed in noiselessly and stood and sat silently about the fire till they were warmed and comfortable, and then filed noiselessly out and the old couple never knew what their fire had done.

And so it may be one of the many delightful surprises of Heaven to find how many travellers had warmed themselves at the fire of your life, found in your character new courage and hope and love.

A poultry farmer neighbor about the conversation fancy strains. After listening to her from the visitor said seriously of try and we've all Blue Antidote.

Little Mary back to her there was going slipped quietly she would not. Out in the h the ice cream, had left it al accustomed pla "Mary Lou," ingly, "I thou dinner. It isn "But I c mother," the New York Pos

"It was top terday," said "Too hot to Gap Johnson, lay, it was m fishin'!"

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"Much botl way!" "I was un my gate." "Ah! Be pose." "Oh, no wanted."

"You're b the matter?" "Well, I'll gan to treat

"Ah, chee even if you l

Diner—"L in the butte Waiter—"Y always serv show that i Buffalo Cor

Bride: " tough." Grocer: " Bride: " with it, and cut it."

The baby, and the c taking her u cold. "No have wheat

A busy m to her papa "Papa's la

Sam was suddenly he Sam:—

"What t here that s thousand g "Well, m are worth answered b "Yes, of thousand g deal more t "Ah, ye are worth

Pat and trench whi ous bomba Mike jum shouted ab ing shells: "For he T've got Evening W