

Pastor and People.

Turning Points of Life.

The switch-tender was weary, and, as he sat at his post his eyes were heavy, and he fell asleep. The train came thundering along, and as it neared the place, the man heard the whistle and rose to adjust the switch for the train. He was just too late. He sprang aside, the cars moved on, were thrown from the track, and a scene of death and disaster was the consequence.

It was only a little switch. A bar of iron a few feet in length, which opened at one end only an inch to allow the flange of the wheels to pass through the narrow way. Only a few seconds more would have placed the little bar at the right angle, and all would have been well. But the few seconds were lost; the little bar was out of place, and the train, with its invaluable freight of life and property, was nearly all buried in a mass of death and ruin.

A young man was once under a state of deep inquiry about his eternal interests. Two or three of his companions learned that he was going to prayer-meeting, and they determined to change his purpose. They persuaded him, only this once, to go to the accustomed place of resort. He finally yielded. They placed their arts of amusements, gaiety and pleasure, and bound him at last in the snares of a female companion. It was his fatal moment. In a few weeks from that time he had committed murder, and followed the dead with instantaneous self-destruction.

A young man had appointed to meet some friends to go to one of the public gardens in London on Sunday evening. While waiting at the place assigned for rendezvous in one of the streets, a Christian friend, a lady, passed by, and asked him where he was going. He was ashamed to confess his intention, and readily yielded with her invitation to go with her to Church. It was the turning point with him. He was arrested by divine truth, was brought under a sense of sin, became a Christian—a faithful missionary, a devoted and exalted hero, an apostle of Christ—and died a martyr on the isle of Erromango, a victim to heathen rage, but a sacrifice of love to his Redeemer. It was John Williams, the missionary.

A young man went to visit his friends on New Year's day, according to the custom of New York. He had abandoned the intoxicating cup. He had suffered from its evils and was a sworn total abstinent. He uniformly refused to taste or handle until he called upon a young lady, who, finding her invitations all declined, began to banter him with a want of manhood, and plied her ridicule so far that he at last yielded. It was the setting of the switch. He was taken home in a state of intoxication, and a few months afterward he died uttering terrible curses upon the tempter who had been the cause of his ruin.

A young man who had been prayerfully trained, came to the city to enter a place of business. His fellow clerks invited him to join in their pleasures and pleasures. For a time he resisted, but at length he thought he would go to the theatre, only once, just to please his friends and see what a theatre was. The devil was the switch-tender that night, and the course of that young man subsequently lay through the paths of extravagance, gambling, shame and the grave.

Two young men were walking one evening toward a prayer-meeting when they were accosted by several acquaintances, who were on their way to a place of usual resort. They entreated them to join them, but they refused. Finally one of them consented and turned aside, only once more, for an evening of worldly pleasure, and let his friend go to the prayer-meeting alone. One found peace with God; but his companion became hardened, and in three months, while his associate on that eventful night was honoring his Master by his faithful and consistent life, he was the inmate of a prison, awaiting the penalty of the law.

Our life is full of these turning points of fortune and of ill, of peace and of woe, of life eternal, or of despair and death. The track we travel has a switch at almost every step. We need to have them well guarded. The eye must be kept open. The hand must be steady. The arm must be strong. The soul should be well armed, so that it may be prepared for every attack or for every expedient of the enemy. Life, honor, virtue, success, and immortality are before us. Little things, at first unaccounted of, may lead to the other extreme!—Dr. Haven.

The Riches of His Mercy.

The only conception the vast majority of professors have of "growth in grace," is the gradual sanctification or purification of the entire man from all the impurity connected with the fall. To be improving every day in internal feelings and desires, until lusts no longer war in the members, seeking to bring forth fruit unto death, constitutes, in their view, "The Higher Christian Life;" there being, of course, thenceforth, complete absorption at all times in the holy will of God, and perfect conformity to all the requirements of His attributes and perfections.

But how different is the case with the truly enlightened and believing mind. Being "renewed in the spirit of his mind," and led to seek healing by the balmy blood of Immanuel, and justification in His righteousness, he also longs for freedom from the very in-being of sin. Pain would he oftentimes burst through the bonds "which so confine and jade him;" but when he would do good, evil is present with him; so that how to do good he finds not. Let him be favored, as he may, at times, with hallowed communion with his God upon the mount, he knows full well that when that communion is ended on the part of his Heavenly Friend, he must as surely descend as that he ascended, and once more, like Abraham, "return to his own place." And the higher the rise, the lower

the depression succeeding is felt to be. And when again in the vale, amid the occupations of life, the inward workings of the devil, and the baits or fiery darts of the flesh, the believer finds himself to be no better than he was before the sweet indulgence granted to him. He finds his light, like that of the moon, to be a borrowed one. The Sun of Righteousness reflecting His rays on his otherwise dark, yea, opaque souls, causes a brightness to appear thereon, which otherwise could never be. And so it is written: "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." Those sunbeams withdrawn, the moonlight brilliancy disappears, and the child of God relapses, if not into the darkness of despair, (which is but seldom the case with those who have received the Spirit of adoption), yet into gloomy despondency and cheerlessness.

We see this truth illustrated in the example of Elijah. Favoured with the presence of his God, he had boldly confronted an idolatrous, powerful monarch, and bearded all the priests of Baal. Suddenly the Lord withdrew, and Jezebel's threat was sufficient to make him flee for his life, and when in Beorahoba's wilderness, to wish he might die, feeling no better than his fathers. Truly, "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are." Had he not been, he would not have realized the riches of the mercy of the God of Israel as he did. For if no flesh is to glory in the Lord's presence, it was necessary that Elijah, and every patriarch, prophet, and apostle, should, in their private experience, as sinners saved by grace, be brought continually to feel what they were by nature, and their entire dependence upon grace for salvation and every mercy. Whatever men may think and say, there is in this respect a very close connection between these illustrious old worthies and all the rest of the family of God, even to the present day, in those chequered frames and feelings which are so continually tossed about by the rising winds of afflictions, adversity and temptation.

And it is thus the riches of His mercy become so highly prized by all the Lord's people. They do not go into fires and floods, the horrible pit and the miry clay, for nothing. The fires discover the power; the floods the inability for creature-dross to swim or to stand, and the pit and the miry clay is insufficient to extricate and deliver the soul. When sin's cords and bands closely outwine and bind, when the mouth of prayer seems closed, when repentance seems congealed, like the Polar Seas, until the "breaking up" time arrive by the fresh appearance of the sun; and when faith's hiding place cannot be traced out, we then lie at the mercy—not of the flesh and the devil, no, but blessed be His holy name, at the mercy—of the Lord—the riches of His mercy. We feel we have no personal claim by nature to the least of His mercies; but we inwardly sigh for the greatest. Can any arm, any voice, save that of our Beloved, bring the relief, deliverance, and comfort we require? Can we find now any substitute for a precious Christ? Where are other gods, and other loves? Can they arise and save us at the time of our trouble? No; nor do we desire them. "Ephraim shall say: 'What have I any more to do with idols? I have seen him and observed him,' saith the Lord. It is enough that there is a living, Almighty Christ, who is able to save even to the uttermost: to Him alone we look and apply. And sweet is His word—'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.'" O! the riches of His mercy!

If, then, we were asked to define, in a few words, a growth in grace and in the knowledge of God, we would say, it consists in an increasing experimental acquaintance with the great plan of salvation by God, in Christ; the Holy Spirit continually unfolding self in its hideousness before our eyes, causing us to cease from all confidence in the flesh, and to look with a single eye, and an undivided heart, to the perfect merits of the Son of God.

To trust in Him alone, By thousand dangers scared, And lightness have none

that is, none of our own. And thus the Saviour's blood and righteousness become everything to us in the way of justification, and the Holy Spirit's power is alone relied upon to work in us, "both to will and to do," of the Lord's good pleasure. And thus are we nothing-to-pay-debtors to the riches of His mercy, and compelled to draw therefrom, daily, for all that both soul and body need, while strangers and pilgrims on the earth. May this be, more and more, the happy portion of our readers.

Why do You Drink?

"Why, really, I never had that question put to me before!" Then it is time it was put to you. We ought to be able to give a good reason for everything we do; and surely, when we reflect on what drinking has done for this country, we should ask ourselves why we drink? No one can deny that the use of intoxicating liquors has brought poverty, misery, disease, and ruin upon millions of our fellow creatures, and I now ask why you make a practice of drinking them? This is an important enquiry, and let us examine a little into the reasons which people may give for taking intoxicating liquors as a beverage.

1. I believe many persons drink simply from habit. They have been brought up to drink, liquor is part of their regular diet, and they take it as a matter of course. Now, I would ask you, is it right to drink merely because you are in the habit of doing so? When you remember that the liquor is capable of depriving you of your senses, and that it is a snare to vast numbers who are not considered as drunkards, you ought to have a better reason for taking it than merely that you have been brought up to do so. The question for consideration is this, Is the habit a good one? Is it justifiable? Is it expedient? If not, it ought to be given up.

2. But some may drink just because others do. What a poor reason! If we are to do what others do without questioning the propriety of what they do, then we may say farewell to all improvement. We

are certainly not to follow the multitude to do evil, and we should not be afraid of appearing singular when we know that we are doing right. Christians are declared in the Bible to be a peculiar people; they should be better than their neighbours; and if we will not uphold a great principle—a principle of inalienable importance—merely because we do not like to differ from others, we are destitute of that moral courage which is an essential part of the Christian character.

\* \* \* \* \* Now as to moderation. On this important point I must state my opinion, however displeasing it may be to some; and it is an opinion derived from personal observation: it is this, that really moderate drinkers are very few. How often have I been in company where the wine has passed freely, and every person present has taken many glasses—I will not say how many, but too many by far! And yet every one would say he was a moderate drinker. A moderate drinker, forsooth! Are we to affirm that anything short of downright drunkenness is moderation? Yet this is what some seem to hold. I do earnestly press upon our notice the fact that almost all people who drink at all take, at times, even what the world at large will acknowledge to be too much. We hear a great deal of "just half-a-pint of beer"—"just one glass of sherry"—"just a teaspoonful of brandy," and such like expressions; but where, I ask, are the persons who keep strictly within those limits?

4. But many will stoutly deny that they drink these liquors merely because they like them, and allege that they drink only for health's sake. No doubt many believe that fermented liquors are not only beneficial, but that they are indispensable to health. Now it is this notion which you should, I think, most carefully enquire into. It is true that medical men often recommend these drinks; but consider what an amount of evidence there is on the other side. How many practitioners of eminence declare that alcoholic liquors are highly injurious! And look at facts. Are not some of your relatives, or friends, or acquaintances total abstainers? Cannot they do without ever tasting of the delectful draught? Are there not tens of thousands who are strong and hearty, and are yet strictly water-drinkers? You may be sure you would be perfectly well without your glass, and even better. The plea of health is not sufficient; and the idea that you could not live without your beer, or wine, or spirits, is simply a foolish mistake.

5. Lastly, you may say that you drink because intoxicating liquor is one of the bounties of Providence, and ought to be enjoyed by all. This plea I have often heard advanced in justification of the practice. But let me remind you that there is no such thing as intoxicating liquor in nature, and not a single animal in creation will even so much as taste it, unless trained and forced to do so by man. It is an artificial beverage. It is made by man. It is manufactured on purpose to enrich those who sell it, and it does enrich them, to the great impoverishment of all other classes of the community. The wines mentioned in Scripture are not for one moment to be compared with the wine, rum, gin, brandy, whiskey, porter, ale, beer, cider, and other liquors, the consumption of which is so vast at the present day. Who can tell the deleterious ingredients of which these spirituous drinks are more or less composed? They are not the good creatures of God which we are to enjoy at pleasure.—Tract

Pernicious Literature.

The following from the N.Y. Intelligencer will repay a careful perusal:

On a former occasion we adverted to the injurious effect of a certain class of our popular publications upon the minds of our young lads. We would now remind our readers that boys are not the only ones who are exposed to the dangers attendant upon unwholesome reading, or who suffer deplorable mental and moral injury from an indulgence in it. Of course, in using the term "unwholesome," we do not refer to books which are palpably and grossly indecent; but to that much larger and more unsuspected class of publications which are allowed free ingress to our families, and which, without sinking to the level of positive pollution, are yet extremely pernicious in their influences, and are the more dangerous because the poison is dangerous and unobserved.

The publications to which we more especially refer usually take the form of a sentimental love story or a highly colored tale of unrestrained or ill-regulated passion; or they assume the guise of a novel descriptive of inconstancy, or incompatibility, or some other obliquity, whose repulsive features are softened down and made attractive and perhaps triumphant; or they refer for their interest upon the doubtful, and as nearly as may be without incurring overt guilt, unlawful relations sustained by the characters to each other and to society; or they dwell upon the dark side of human nature, ministering to sordid sensibilities, and creating a sympathy for that which is hard, unlovely, or evil, at the expense of that which is lawful, and honorable, and pure. There is too large a currency of literature of this kind, in which great art is exerted to make the line between virtue and vice, purity and impurity, good and evil, almost indistinguishable; and we regret to add that they too often emanate from publishers in whom the public are wont to repose unlimited confidence.

Young girls, and girls approaching womanhood, are the ones who are the most exposed to these dangerously seductive publications. It is almost impossible that they shall read them and escape with the tender and delicate bloom of their natures unharmed. Innocent, ingenuous, immature, inexperienced and unwarmed, they are unable to discriminate between that which is salutary and that which is poisonous even in things material, much less in things moral or intellectual; and the result is that after feeding habitually upon such ailment as these publications furnish they become the victims of false sentimentality and morbid fancies; they contract enervating

ideas of life and duty and not unfrequently they imbibe impressions which result in prurient feelings and tainted susceptibilities. They are poisoned insensibly to themselves, and before we are able to apply the remedy—too often before we are forewarned of their danger.

We cannot err in our effort to arouse the solicitude of parents to their insidious evil; nor is it possible for them to exercise too much care in order to avert this great and increasing danger. In its very unprotected innocence and inexperience consists the weakness, as well as the strength of growing and undeveloped womanhood; and in the quiet retirement from the strife and struggle of the world, danger lurks as certainly as safety blossoms. We therefore earnestly warn fathers and mothers to jealously watch over the books—especially the whole brood of tales, novels, romances, and the like—that come into their households, and to rigorously exclude all such as flatter vice or daub iniquity, even by implication.

Household Altars.

In the olden time the father of the household was its prophet and priest. The father of the present fast age can hardly find time to make the acquaintance of his own children, to say nothing of decent and devout attention to the proprieties and sanctities of family religion.

It is a sad fact that, in many households, nominally Christian, there is no family altar and no household recognition of God. The Bible is an unopened book, and there is no open acknowledgment of allegiance to God, the Father in heaven. A godless, prayerless household is a terrible spectacle, especially when there is an outward profession of better things. The evils are magnified many fold where there are young children. What can compensate for the sweet and tender influences of well conducted family worship on the minds and hearts of the little ones? Parents who omit it not only provoke the wrath of the Lord, but neglect the best and most natural means of religious education, and thus put in fearful jeopardy the souls of their children. It was not an idle superstition that bade the simple-minded, devout Norwegian girl flee from the house where she had engaged service, because there was no "prayers in the house." A prayerless soul is a fearful anomaly. But a home where children are born and nurtured and reared, where loved ones sicken, and suffer and die, where in the eyes of the children the father should be the type of the "Our Father in heaven," and the mother the ideal of all that is tender and affectionate and devout, where all precious memories should be garnered like hidden treasures, and where all holy and pure influences and associations should pervade the very air—with no open Bible and no voice of song, prayer or praise—what shall we say of that home! One can hardly conceive it possible that such a home could exist in a Christian land. No wonder that the curse of the Lord hangs in dark relief over the families that call not on His name.

No Proxy Work.

Are not the laity forgetful of their royal priesthood? Apparently they think that the whole burden of preaching Christ and His Gospel lies on the clergy, their part of the Christian's duty being simply to contribute to a more or less inadequate support of a clergyman. But the Christian's work can never be done by proxy. No man, and no set of men, even though it be called a parish, can ever throw his or its Christian duty upon the shoulders of any man. The members of the church are all alike, kings and priests unto God. Each alike is required to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is the baptismal and not the ordination vow that makes the man not only a servant but a soldier of Christ, bound not only to keep himself safe within the citadel of the church, but also to engage heartily in the church's warfare against sin.

It is a miserable fallacy having too great credence at this time, that the support of the church means the support of the parish of which one is a member. But that is a still more miserable fallacy which teaches that the parish is to be maintained and built up, and made to flourish by the unaided effort of the rector, the laity meanwhile critical, peevish, fault-finding, because larger numbers are not brought in to share the parochial expense. The Churchman.

Wilt Thou be made Whole.

Is it our health that we bring to the physician? Nay, not our health, but our sickness. In so far as we are healthy we do not need him; but only so far as we are sick.

Yet how many reverse this in spiritual things! The amount of disease about them seems to be discourage and disqualify; and they labour to find or to make some symptom of returning health in order to qualify them for the physician.

They say, "Alas I have no convictions, of sin, how can I come?" Why, if you have no convictions, you have all the more need to come, for that proves that you have more disease about you. They say, "I have no love; how can I come? Surely I am disqualified." Why, if you have no love, you have more need to come, and are the more qualified for the Physician by being more sick. Each disease is a claim upon the Physician's skill and power, an appeal to the Physician's tenderness and care. Doubting, troubled spirit, hear this and be encouraged; yea, be confident and glad. The evils of which you complain are evils which none but the Saviour can remove. Can you, then, bring them too soon? Can you bring too many of them? Are they beyond His power to relieve? And is this your reason of keeping them to yourself, and trying to get rid of them before you come? O, the folly, as well as the wickedness of unbelief!—H. Bonar, D.D.

YANG-HOK CHING-TO-MI is the title of a Chinese Young Men's Christian Association in San Francisco, with a membership of 250.

Random Readings.

It is no little mercy to see a hell deserved, and a heaven given.

How it seems to brace up a man, and to give him dignity—I live for God!

The righteousness that clothes you is made up of the merits of an incarnate God.

RECOVERING Christ, and one with Christ, the believer receives all that Christ is, all that He has done.

EVIDENCES of being a believer! All evidences are so linked that, if one in certainty is possessed, all are there.

REMEMBER, my brother, thou never pleasest thy Lord more than when thou leanest thy whole weight upon Him.

"LET us love one another out of a pure heart fervently," bearing and forbearing, dealing tenderly with one another

SELF-CONFIDENCE is the offspring of pride, presumption and self-ignorance. Self-distrust is the child of Divine teaching.

It is one of the greatest blessings this side of heaven to feel—"Well, God is no intruder," to have a captivating view of God.

BLESSED is he who learns to profit by his wants and infirmities, and who, in all the privation he endures, is still submissive to the will of God.

The path of the believer is always new. Among the thousands and millions who have gone before, not one treads in the path of another.

It is an unspeakable mercy when the soul seems to see all those perfections, once a brazen wall to keep him out, now a brazen wall to keep him safe.

THERE is no inconsistency in being "called," as were the disciples, to follow Christ, and being "called" to a marriage feast. One may follow Jesus into such lawful enjoyments. Shun feasts to which the Master would not be bidden, and to which He would not go.

LAMB is sweet, for Thou hast tolled, And care is sweet, for Thou hast cared; Ah, never let our works be spoiled With strife, or by deceit ensnared. Through life's long day, and death's dark night, O gentle Jesus, be our Light. —Faber.

PETER committed what, at first, appeared to be a very little sin. It did no one any harm, yet we do not see it now in that light. So with all sin. In the future, especially in the immediate future, sins look very small. In the past, at least after we have begun to repent them, they look large and terrible. This is Satan's trick; he knows well how to employ them.—Cheerful Words.

To watch without prayer is to presume upon our own strength; to pray without watching is to presume upon the grace of God. The Lord's Prayer is the rule of our duty and desires. We are engaged by every petition to co-operate and concur with divine grace to obtain what we pray for. A stream preserves its crystal clearness by continual running; if its course be stopped, it will stagnate and putrefy. The purity of the soul is preserved by the constant exercise of habitual grace.—Bates.

I WAS once wont to meditate most on my own heart, and to dwell at home and look a little higher; I was still poring either on my sins or wants; but now, though I am greatly convinced of the need of heart-acquaintance and employment, yet I see more need of a higher work. At home I find distempers to trouble me, and some evidence of grace; but it is above that I must find matters of delight, and joy, and love, and praise. Therefore I would have one thought on myself and my sins, and many thoughts upon Christ, and God, and heaven.—Baxter.

THERE was a great master among the Jews, who bid his scholars consider and tell him what was the best way wherein a man should always keep. One came and said that there was nothing better than to have a good eye; which is, in their language, a liberal and contented disposition. Another said a good companion is the best thing in the world. A third said a good neighbour was the best thing he could desire; and a fourth professed a man who could foresee things; that is, a wise person. But at last there came in one Eleazar, and he said a good heart was better than them all. "True," said the master; "thou hast comprehended in two words all that the rest have said; for he that hath a good heart will be both contented and a good companion, a good neighbour, and easily see what is fit to be done by him."

ESOP was once ordered by his master, Xanthus, who was about to entertain a large party, to go and purchase for him the best thing he could find in the market. He went accordingly and bought a large supply of tongues, which he desired the cook to serve up with different sauces. When dinner came, the first and second course, the last service, and all the made-dishes were tongues. "Did I not order you," said Xanthus, in a violent passion, "to buy the best provisions that the market afforded?" "And have I not obeyed your orders? Is there anything better than tongues? Is not the tongue the bond of civil society, the key of science, and the organ of truth and reason? By means of the tongue cities are built, and government established and administered; with that men instruct, persuade, and preside in assemblies. It is the instrument by which we discharge the chief of all our duties, praising and adoring the gods." "Well, then," replied Xanthus, thinking to catch him, "go to market again to-morrow, and buy me the worst things you can find. This same company will dine with me, and I have a mind to divorce my entertainment." "Esop the next day provided nothing but the very same dishes, telling his master that the tongue was the worst thing in the world. "It is," said he, "the instrument of all strife and contention, the inventor of law-suits, and the source of division and wars; it is the organ of error, of lies, calumny, and blasphemous."

THE largest Swiss Sunday-school is at Borne, and has 600 scholars and 150 teachers.