

Snapping Bonds.

C. H. SPURGEON.

Like Samson, the Christian man, when he is as he should be, is wondrously strong in snapping his bonds. It may be that the attempt is made to strap the Christian down tightly with the bond of custom. "This is the rule in the trade." "This is the manner of buying and selling which is current in dealing with this kind of merchandise." The true believer will break that bond as Samson snapped the seven green withes with which Delilah bound him. "No," he will say; "I cannot and I will not lie; neither will I act the part of a deceiver, whatever others may do." Perhaps an attempt will be made to entrap him into sumptuous forms of worship, glittering with show and fascinating with all manner of sweet musical sounds; and for a while his ear may be entranced, and his feet may be almost gone; but presently he remembers the words of his Master to the woman of Samaria: "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." In an instant, away go the bonds of ritualism and Romanism, and the man is free once more.

Possibly he is bound for a time with the fetters of fear of man, which is a snare to many. He is in the presence of one of whom he is afraid; so, for a while, he holds his tongue and does not reveal his own sentiments with regard to Christ and His cross. Or else he has the fear of losing his business; or—such fools are many in England—the greater fear of "losing caste in society." It is that fear which makes slaves of half of our population—the fear of not being thought "respectable." But the true man of God very soon snaps that bond, for he regards it as an honor to be accounted dishonorable for Christ's sake; he feels that, if it be vile to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be viler still; and that if the fact that he is a Christian will bring him into contempt, he will be willing to be in even greater contempt, for he will serve his Lord.

If you want a good specimen of a spiritual Samson, snapping his bonds, look at Martin Luther. In that day when he rose up from the Santa Scala, and would no longer go up and down those stairs on his knees in the vain hope of winning salvation by his own good works—in that moment he snapped his bonds. At the gates of Wittenberg, on that cold December day when his friends had piled together a little heap of wood, and it was blazing away right cheerily, Martin thought that nothing would make the fire burn so well as one of the Pope's bulls, so he threw it on, amidst the wondrous gaze of all the spectators of the daring deed, and the hope or fear of some that he would drop down dead while performing so dangerous an action. He was, by that defiance of the Pope, a real Samson, breaking all bonds that still held him to Popery. And such freemen should all Christians be. If they were, you would not see them—as so many of them still are—fettered with absurd notions about holy days, and holy places, and priests, and I know not what beside, of Papistical trumpery. The true believer in Christ breaks away from all his nonsense and error, and goes forth, even though he stands alone, and says: "The Son of God hath made me free, and I am free indeed." I might give you many other illustrations of the way in which the Christian uses his God-given power, but I will simply repeat what I have already said, that he is, through the grace of God, made to be a man of great strength.

Be of Good Courage.

All ye children of God who are under the peltings of poverty, or the downpour of disappointments, or the blizzards of adversity, "think it not strange as though some strange thing had happened unto you." Millions have had the same experiences before you. No storm ever drowned a true believer, or washed out the foundations of his hope. The trial of faith will be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Two things ought to give you courage. One is that our Lord loves to honor and reward unwavering faith. He permits the storm to test you, and then sends the smile of his sunshine to reward you. Another thought is that the skies are never so brilliantly blue as when they have been washed by a storm. The countenance of Jesus is never so welcome and lovable as when he breaks forth upon us—a sun of consolation and joy after trials.

Long years ago, on a day of thick fog and pouring rain, I ascended Mount Washington by the old bridle path over the slippery rocks. A weary, disappointed company we were when we reached the cabin on the summit. But towards evening a mighty wind swept away the banks of mist, the body of the blue heavens stood out in its clearness, and before us was revealed the magnificent landscape stretching away to the Atlantic Sea. That scene was at the time, and has often been since, a sermon to my soul. It taught me that Faith's stairways are over steep and slippery rocks; often through blinding storms; but God never loses his hold on us.—Theodore L. Cuyler, in Watchman.

The Fatal Sleep.

Some time ago a vessel had been off on a whaling voyage, and had been gone about three years. The father of one of the sailors had charge of the light-house, and he was expecting his boy to come home. It was time for the whaling vessel to return. One night there came up a terrible gale. This father fell asleep, and while he slept his light went out. When he awoke he looked toward the shore and saw a vessel had been wrecked. He at once went to see if he could not yet save some one who might still be alive. The first body that came floating toward the shore was, to his great grief and surprise, the body of his own boy! He had been watching for that boy for many days. Now the boy had at last come in sight of home, and had perished because his father had let his light go out!

I thought, what an illustration of fathers and mothers to-day that have let their lights go out! You are not training your children for God and eternity. You do not live as though there was anything beyond this life at all. You keep your affections set upon things on the earth instead of on things above, and the result is that the children do not believe there is anything in Christianity. Perhaps the very next step they take may take them into eternity; the next day they may die without God and without hope.—D. L. Moody.

A Subtle Temptation.

A subtle temptation of educated people is to attach an exaggerated importance to common ideas as a basis of happiness and fellowship. Frequently children who have enjoyed the best educational advantages, on returning home find that they have intellectually grown away from their fathers and mothers and other members of their families. Unless there is great care unhappiness ensues on both sides; but the care is chiefly to be taken by those who have had the best opportunities. You cannot have everything in this world, and if intellectual sympathies are denied with those who are nearest, there is a vast realm of common ideas, experiences, and aspirations that may be freely shared. Those who have enjoyed peculiar advantages, instead of using them to widen the breach between their less fortunate kindred, should use them to lessen it. A sure indication of a mean and narrow nature is the inability to form good relations with other people on a common human basis. No one ever stood, intellectually and spiritually, so far above his intimate friends as did our Lord, and yet how natural and wholesome his relationship with them was. A good deal is said to-day about following Christ. One way of following him that is often overlooked is not to suffer our attainments to isolate us from those who are nearest to us.—Selected.

New Every Morning.

BY REV. JOHN R. MACDUFF.

It is said of some Oriental kings that they never appear in the same garment to those who seek an audience. Moreover, that whatever be the garment in which they are attired themselves, their attendants have a duplicate gift ready to present to the stranger or supplicant. It is even so with the Shepherd King of Israel. He ever comes to his needy people arrayed in the garb of some new promise or specially adapted blessing. He comes with the robe of righteousness to the spiritually naked. He comes with a garment of healing for the bruised and broken. He comes with the garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness. For every sorrowing thought of the heart He has a counterpart and corresponding comfort.

To be glad of life, because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look up at the stars; to be satisfied with your possessions, but not contented with yourself until you have made the best of them; to despise nothing in the world except falsehood and meanness, and to fear nothing except cowardice; to be governed by your admirations rather than by your disgusts; to covet nothing that is your neighbor's except his kindness of heart and gentleness of manners; to think seldom of your enemies, often of your friends, and every day of Christ; and to spend as much time as you can, with body and spirit, in God's out-of-doors—these are little guide-posts on the foot-path of peace.—Henry Van Dyke.

We Reach.

O cherish in thy heart, as very life,
The oft returning, soul-uplifting dream
Of immortality: we reach, and reach
In vain to grasp the substance of this dream,
But still, star-like, it leads us ever on.

ARTHUR D. WILMOT.

Those who attain any excellence commonly spend life in one common pursuit; for excellence is not gained upon easier terms.—Samuel Johnson.

Victoria.

Feb. 1901.

Still lives our noble Queen,
Long shall Victoria reign,
Our gracious Queen,
O'er death victorious,
Crowned still and glorious,
Still she reigns over us,
Beloved Queen.

Reigns by example fair,
Influence fell-far and near,
For righteousness,
God's holy Word her guide,
Her trust "The Crucified,"
Over her Empire wide,
She reigned to bless.

In countless hearts she reigns—
Still her pure life restrains—
Her good deeds live.
She reigns wrongs to redress,
To make earth's sorrows less,
Still, still for righteousness,
Victoria reigns.

"Defender of the Faith,"
Faithful e'en unto death,
Our Christian Queen,
Still over land and sea,
'Gainst slavery, tyranny,
She reigns majestically,
Empress and Queen.

The twenty-fourth of May
Shall be Victoria's Day,
Each coming spring,
Wave—ensign she held dear,
Ring—bells she loved to hear,
Boom—cannon far and near,
God save the King.

That sacred holiday,
Prayerfully keep away,
As did our Queen,
With loyal hearts and true,
Do good that she would do,
To Christ, her King be true,
As was our Queen.

So shall old England's might,
Wielded for God and Right,
Still stronger grow,
Her Empire still extend,
Her supremacy ne'er end,
Jehovah's Power, her Friend,
Will foes o'erthrow.

Wo lfville,

BESSIE R. COGSWELL.

Learning.

What have you learned by living?
Have you learned to be good and true?
Have you learned to follow the right away,
If skies be dark or blue?
What have you learned by living—
To be as a little child?
To take what thy God sends thee,
With spirit great and mild?

What have you learned by living?
For life is given to learn,
Have you learned to work for ever,
Have you learned to weary never?
Have you learned to keep on singing,
Though your way be clouded o'er—
And to trust him more and more,
Dearly trust him more and more?

What have you learned by living?
Have you learned dear heart to love?
Yea, in your little measure,
As God loves up above?
To love him first and always,
Who loves thee most of all,
And then to love thy brother-man
And lift him if he fall?

Hast not yet learned life's lessons?
Then live them o'er and o'er;
For life is learned by living,
As love is learned by giving;
And when thou hast thy lessons,
The Master, from earth's sessions,
Shall bid thee: "Come up higher,
To learn and love yet more."

—Miss Genevieve Hale Whitlock in the New York Observer.

Workman of God, O Lose Not Heart.

Workman of God, O lose not heart,
But learn what God is like:
And in the darkest battlefield
Thou shalt know where to strike.

Thrice blessed is he to whom is given
The instinct that can tell
That God is on the field when He
Is most invisible.

Blest, too, is he who can divine
Where real right doth lie,
And dares to take the side that seems
Wrong to man's blindfold eye.

God's glory is a wondrous thing,
Most strange in all its ways:
And of all things on earth least like
What men agree to praise.

Muse on His justice, downcast soul,
Muse, and take better heart:
Back with thine angel to the field,
And bravely do thy part.

For right is right, since God is God;
And right the day must win;
And doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.

—Sel.