

FRAGRANT CHRISTIANS.

(By Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.)

Our Divine Master directs his disciples to be luminous: "Let your light shine!" He reminds them that they are to be the salt of the earth, to preserve society from moral corruption. There is also a steady and often unconscious influence shed off from the genuine Christian which may be likened to the fragrance shed by aromatic plants. Travelers in southern France can detect at once their entrance into the lavender-producing districts—the air is laden with grateful perfumes.

In the "Canticles there is a lively picture of the Church as an "inclosed garden," with its pleasant fruits, its pomegranates, its cinnamon, its myrrh, and all the chief spices. Then follows the prayer: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out!" As odors may be latent in a plant, so graces may remain undeveloped in a Christian. What is needed is to call them forth. Pruning is a sharp process, but God's people often require it to make them fruitful. Certain processes are needed also to make them fragrant.

A "north wind" is prayed for to start the odors. Perhaps this may signify the work of the divine Spirit in producing deep conviction of sin and shortcomings. Christians need to be convicted of sin as much as un-regenerate sinners. Many of the most pungent calls to repentance in the New Testament are addressed to members of those early churches. Peter was under heart-rending conviction of most odious sin when he went out of Pilate's courtyard weeping bitterly. That started the spices, for true contrition has the savor of a sweet smell in God's estimation. Many years ago a powerful awakening occurred in one of our theological seminaries. The "north wind" of the Holy Spirit's power smote so mightily that some of the students abandoned their hopes, threw away all their previous impressions as shallow and unsatisfactory, and experienced a deep, thorough reversion, that went down to the roots of character. One of the best evidences of the power of a revival is that it brings delinquent church members to repentance. The same strong gale that uproots false professors, sets the spices of penitence flowing from those who had grown indolent or worldly-minded. Awake, O north wind, and blow upon our churches!

God has many methods of developing the graces of his children. Discipline is one of them. They tell us that the juniper plant emits the sweetest odor when it is flung into the fire. We all know that bruised flowers yield the most fragrance. I have had some striking exhibitions—among my own flock—of the influence of severe trials in bringing out the richest and noblest traits of Christian character. A lovely young woman has preached to me far more eloquently from her dying pillow than I had ever preached to her from the pulpit. Another one, under distressing pecuniary adversities, has been like a shaken cinnamon tree: her cheerful fortitude has proved that nothing can impoverish a soul that is enriched with the unsearchable riches of Christ. Bereavement has sent its bitter blast into some of our families; yet the odors of riven hearts have been sweet with the spirit of submission. Almost every believer's experience contains the record of severe trials which were sent in order to shake the spice trees.

Who bears a cross prays oft and well;
Bruised herbs send forth the sweetest smell;

Were plants ne'er tossed by stormy wind,
The fragrant spices who would find?

The inspired poet of the Canticles also prays for the "south wind to come upon my garden." Not only the keen north wind, to bring us to repentance, and the sharp blasts of adversity to test and develop our faith, but God is asked to send the warm south wind of love, to melt us into gratitude and praise. A great blessing sent upon a church, or upon a Christian, often makes the hearts thus blessed to become like a bank of violets under a May shower. Do we not need to have more of the felt presence of Jesus in our souls, and more of the warm breath of his love to set all our affections growing and glowing and breathing out a holy joy? However softly the south wind may blow upon the lavender bushes, it is from the bushes themselves that the fragrance must be diffused. God's mercies come alike to saint and sinner. The balmyest of zephyrs cannot draw sweet odors from a pigweed or a thistle. Dead trees yield no fragrance. It is from a zealous, earnest, Christ-imitating life that the sweet, attractive influences flow forth; but you and I must do the living.—Brooklyn, N.Y.

A PRAYING CHURCH.

A prosperous church is a church which prays. It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." We must never lose faith in prayer. We must never abandon prayer. We must never lose the spirit of prayer. A church can get on for a considerable time without singing, and can go on indefinitely with indifferent singing. A church may do well with poor preaching, and even without preaching of any kind. But a church without prayer is no church at all. We might as well expect a man to live without breathing as to expect a church to live without praying.

Pray for the minister. Pray for the sick and afflicted. Pray for the children. Pray for the lost. Pray for the community. Pray for one another. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He may send forth laborers into His harvest. Pray without ceasing. Pray everywhere. Let the church be characterized by prayer, filled with the atmosphere of prayer, and crowded with the trophies of prayer.

SYMPATHY.

A plump little girl and a thin little bird
Were out in the meadow together.
"How cold that poor little bird must be,
Without any clothes, like mine," said she,
"Although it is sunshiny weather."

"A nice little girl, is that," said he;
"But O, how cold she must be! For see,
She hasn't a single feather!"
So each shivered to think of the other
poor thing,
Although it was sunshiny weather.

The death of Jesus is a more splendid vindication of righteous rule than the death of all sinners would be.—Principal Cave.

There is a courtesy of the heart; it is allied to love; from it springs the purest courtesy in the outward behavior.—Goethe.

Most men, Micawber like, are content to sit still and wait for things to turn up. The man who succeeds is the man who turns them up.

He who trusts as if God were the worker, and then works as if God had remitted all work to men, is sure to find the secret of Christian Success.—Arthur Edwards.

The most hopeless man on earth is the one who learns nothing through experience. One may pull an ass out of the pit a hundred times, and a hundred times it will fall in again.

LIVING WITH GOD.*

Some Bible Hints.

The "secret place" is easily found; it is an open secret to the pure in heart (v. 1).

Satan is the father of lies, but God's truth is a shield against them. Few men realize the comfort and safety of absolute sincerity (v. 4).

Many that do not know God are openly prosperous and do not seem to have fallen; nor will they be seen as fallen till we reach the land of open vision (v. 7).

The child of God is kept in all his ways, ways secular as well as ways religious (v. 11).

Suggestive Thoughts.

One great hindrance to living with God is subservience to the senses. If we live to the spirit, we shall live with God, who is a spirit.

Live with God, and there is much besides with which you will not care to live, such as show, pomp, worldly power, luxury.

If we expect to spend eternity with God, we would surely better learn to live with Him in time.

Seemingly the most impossible thing in Christianity is God's living with men; Christ came to prove it possible.

A Few Illustrations.

God in your house makes it at the same time the lordliest palace and the strongest fortress.

The inmates of a house spend time together. So we with God, if He is an inmate of our house.

Those that live together come to be like one another. So we, if we live with God, come to be like Him.

It is an old saying, "You cannot know a person till you live with him." Neither can you really know the full blessedness of God till you live with God.

To Think About.

How much time do I spend alone with God each day?

Would it make any difference in my home if I could see God there?

Is it a delightful thought to me that I shall live with God forever?

A Cluster of Quotations.

Keep me from mine own undoing.

Help me turn to Thee when tried;

Still my footsteps, Father, viewing,

Keep me ever at Thy side.

—John M. Neale.

It may be a question whose loss is the greater, his who thinks that Christ is present with him when He is not, or he who thinks not that Christ is present with him when He is.—A. J. Gordon.

What folly it is to imagine that I cannot expect God to be with me every moment!—Andrew Murray.

There is no joy like the joy of communion. Living apart from God is misery.—Andrew A. Bonar.

Heart. IX. A life lived

The hardest thing about the hard things of life is, that we must bear so many of them alone.

As flowers always wear their own colors and give forth their own fragrance every day alike, so should Christians maintain their character at all times and under all circumstances.—Beecher.

Many a man thinks it's virtue that keeps him from turning rasoul, when it's only a full stomach. One should be grateful and not mistake potatoes for principle.

*Sun., Sept. 8. Topic—Songs of the with God. Ps. 91. (Consecration meeting.)