

"BUT NOW LEAD THOU ME ON."

Sunday School Times.

The mood of surrender is too often misrepresented to us as a spiritless one. The prevailing fault of most devotional writing is that it is too tame, and does not do justice to the immense relief which is the mark of a great surrender. There is, it is true, a kind of yielding to God which seems to use up all the strength and leave one afterward in a state of mere resignation; but there is also such a thing as a passionate surrender, in which the soul feels that it cannot too soon be done with all that it has left behind, or too soon far forward to enter upon what God has in store for it. And this kind of surrender rather than something plaintively devotional is what one may feel breathed out in the hymn "Lead, Kindly Light."

Those words "But now" mark a clean break with the old order of life, and there seems to be no hint of a looking behind as if there were in the past anything that one might regret to lose. It is not the utterance of one who is seeking divine guidance as a last resort, but of one who wonders that he could have been so long satisfied with the poverty of a self-guided life. It is the conviction of one who has everything to gain and little to lose, rather than of one who feels that he is making any sacrifice. As there is no hint of death, there is also no hint of sacrifice, no thought of a rich past to be broken with or high ambitions to be forsaken, but just a great relief and a great release from a mistaken way and misleading hopes. Everywhere in Newman's hymn we find justification for believing that its strength and virility deserve more attention than they have received. Relief over things that have been put behind, as if one were glad to be quit of them forever and could never wish them back, is what seems to inspire the prayer "Lead thou me on."

However much thought and planning may go to the forming of our plans for life, there often comes slowly over the mind a suspicion that, after all, life is not getting on. Many a definite end for which we strove may have been quite successfully achieved, many of its prizes may have been won, while leaving us with the feeling that they have in no wise advanced us in the real purpose of life. For guidance is not the first thing that most of us think of in mapping out our lives. We incline rather to take care of them by the most diligent planning, and we call upon God to bless and forward what we have planned.

Encouraged early in life to be definite in purpose and to consider what we wish our life to be, many of us have seemed to start on our way advantaged above our fellows by the ambitious and resolute line we have struck for ourselves. We wondered at the seeming looseness with which others let life shape itself for them. With sharp and well-defined notions of the circumstances under which our nature would work best, or what influences we required for our best work, we arranged life so as to exclude the things that did not contribute to such an end. Leaving nothing to chance, thinking it enough to have a well-formed plan and ask God's blessing upon it, many men have failed to see how there could be room for much else, until, in the midst of their successful programs, there would fall some sudden and subtle sense of failure and disillusion that challenged it all, and brought life to a standstill at the very moment when to the eyes of the world it seemed to be having everything before it. Then a man becomes convinced of the fact that over our lives there is One whose interest is keener than ours can ever be. We have mis-

taken our province; for it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, and to try to serve God without His guidance may be one of the unholiest things a man may attempt. But everything yet remains open to the soul that is sensitive enough to feel this.

The fault was not in the definiteness of the plan, but in the indefinite place in it that was assigned to God. Sooner or later, with that left to chance, the purpose was bound to become unsatisfying. "I have been reading," said Edward Payson, "the lives of a number of persons of eminent usefulness, and I find that none of them was good for much until he had laid aside his ambition to be a great and notable person and had left it to God to determine what he was to be." "But now lead thou me on" was in effect what Chalmers said at the turning of his ministry, when his great effectiveness began. Thought out as his course had been, and planned according to his own ideas of what was best for him to undertake, he came to this arrest, in which he found that, though everything was going as he had planned, his life was not getting on. Then with all frankness, as one glad to be quit of a bad business, he said of all those former triumphs of his that if they ever did any soul any good it was more than he ever had any account of. It was not the breakdown of his purpose, it was rather the discovery that he had none that was worthy of the name. Intense relief marked his surrender, while all the freshness and invention, the new ways and the romance and adventure of Christian service, began only after he had left it all to God as to what he was to do and what he was to become.

"Lead thou me on" is the voice of relief and liberty, not of break-down and misery. To realize that life was meant to direct itself, and that no life was ever able to do it to any high achievement, is to find that flexibility which is just what the soul longs for but sees so little of when it has submitted itself to the awful rigor of a plan of its own. Our limitations are broken up; and yet how slow we are to see it, for we look upon God's leading as if that were to limit our life and its plans! There is a limitation that increases a hundred-fold our efficiency and our peace and our freedom, and when we have sought it and won it we shall have not a doubt about what is the chief element in surrender. We shall know that it is not a crushed but an emancipated will, not a mood of resignation, but the knowledge that we never lived till now.

THINGS TO FORGET.

If you would increase your happiness and prolong your life, forget your neighbor's faults. Forget the slanders you have heard. Forget the temptations. Forget the fault-finding, and give a little thought to the cause which provoked it. Forget the peculiarities of your friends, and only remember the good points which make you fond of them. Forget all personal quarrels or histories you may have heard by accident, and which, if repeated, would seem a thousand times worse than they are. Blot out of memory, as far as possible, all the disagreeable occurrences of life; they will come, but they will grow larger when you remember them, and the constant thought of the acts of meanness, or worse still, malice, will only tend to make you more familiar with them. Obliterate everything disagreeable from yesterday; start out with a clean sheet for to-day, and write upon it, for sweet memory's sake, only those things which are lovely and lovable.—Herald and Presbyterian.

MEMORIES OF DR. HORATIUS BONAR.

The name of Horatius Bonar is known throughout the length and breadth of the Christian world. Many may have to stop and ask how and whence they know him, but it is still true that far more of his life's history than his mere name and the simple facts of his career has been made a part of the heritage of real knowledge of the followers of Christ. When in our own Presbyterian church we raise our voices in the words of such familiar and favorite hymns as "Glory be to God the Father," "Thy Way, Not Mine, O Lord," or when as children we sing "Light of Life, so Softly Shining," or when at our communion seasons we join in the solemn hymn "Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face," we are worshipping in the words and spirit of Horatius Bonar. In our "Book of Praise" there are seventeen of his hymns. Indeed, it may be regretted that there are not more. No less than forty-one of them have been set to music for use in the Catholic church, a fine tribute to the broad Christian unity and the depth of spiritual power which underlie his lines.

After all, perhaps, we cannot know him better than to thus make these outpourings of his beautiful, simple faith and spiritual yearning a part of our own lives. But it proves easier, often, to hold communion with the saints of old and of our own day if we can know them as far as possible as men. If we can only call up a picture of them and follow them sympathetically through the experiences of their lives, then we have something more tangible and concrete to cling to. It is just this service that the little book before us performs for those of us who would know better and learn more from Horatius Bonar. It is not a biography, for it was the express wish of Dr. Bonar that no formal biography be published. Bowing to this wish, his many friends were not willing that his memory should be allowed to die. On January 21st of this present year in Chalmers' Memorial church, Edinburgh, where Dr. Bonar had been minister for twenty-one years, a public meeting was held in commemoration of the centenary of his birth. This volume is the record of that meeting. It contains thirteen brief addresses, each carefully assigned to prominent men of church and state, and arranged in consecutive order. The book is in consequence as nearly as possible a biography. Indeed, it has this added advantage; instead of seeing this Scottish minister and poet through one pair of eyes, we see him from many points of view. It is in this way, as the service itself must have been, somewhat unique but none the less a distinct success. To these thirteen addresses are added two memorial sermons preached on the following Sabbath. Doubtless many to whom Horatius Bonar has been merely a name will be glad of this opportunity, even though it has appeared only after Dr. Bonar has been dead for twenty years, of becoming acquainted with the life of one whose hymns they have often sung and admired.

• Memories of Dr. Horatius Bonar, by Relatives and Public Men, Addresses delivered at the Centenary Celebrations. With Portrait. Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1909. pp. 127. 26d. net.