

sacerdotal priesthood receives a crippling blow. Bunyan has prised his generation. He has sown the Baptist "seed"; and though the reaper passed from the field, the harvest is there. So for us! The day is dark and cloudy, the old Laudian spirit is abroad coercing the consciences of men by the power of the State. But the dawning of a new and better day is at hand. Go forward, followers of Bunyan, forward to witness for Christ and to save the whole world.—Baptist Times.

Confessions of an Octogenarian Optimist.

By Henry G. Weston, D. D.

I had rather have lived the fourscore years that God has allotted me than any other fourscore since the world was made. I have seen the best of the old and the beginning of the new. In my boyhood everything was as it was in the days of Alexander, only improved. The expresses which were my childhood admiration were the same as those by which the Macedonian conqueror sent the tidings of his triumphs.

I am glad to have lived when the Massachusetts town meeting, the unit of her political institutions, was in its glory. It was the purest and best example the world has ever seen of government of the people, by the people, for the people. Let me tell a story of the politics of Massachusetts in my time. For seventeen successive years Marcus Morton was the Democratic candidate for Governor of that State. The intense animosity between the Federal and the Democratic parties had by no means died out. With a large majority of the "Orthodox", Democrat and Jacobin were synonymous. The seventeenth year, Judge Morton was elected by one vote. When the result was declared there was no suggestion of any doubt of the perfect fairness of the election, or the correctness of the returns; the successful candidate took his seat as quietly as if he had a hundred thousand majority. I am glad to have lived at a time and in a State when a seventeen year's stubborn contest for the chief magistracy could end in an election by a single vote, and not a whisper be heard suggesting that anywhere in the election there had been a wrong or a mistake.

It was in the first quarter of the last century that God blessed America with revivals of such a type that Christians of other countries considered America as peculiarly the land of revivals. Many a New England pastor saw in these visitations of the Spirit the dawn of the millennium, and planted his orchards with the full faith that his children would eat the fruit in the high noon of the millennial glory.

But what of the harsh theology preached in those days, and the unlovely character which was its necessary fruit? I never heard any such preaching nor did I know of any such preachers. That there were some very unlovely Christians in the past generation is without question. At one time I had more than my share of them in my church. They never gave me any trouble, for I long ago discovered that among the heirs of life God has always chosen some very unattractive people. Said a brother once to me, as we saw a member of my flock approaching, "There comes one of the best and one of the most disagreeable women in the world." I have repeated this remark in all parts of the country and never without some person in the congregation telling me after the sermon, "I know that woman." There must be a large family of them. I am glad God selects repellent specimens of the human race and in them shows the power and extent of His grace. It would be awful to think of their having no one to love them in this world nor in the world to come; awful to think that grace could not take possession of a naturally unlovely human heart. Such Christians are not peculiar to the last century, nor was it the preaching to which they listened that made them what they were.

It would be foolish in me to attempt to speak from personal knowledge of the prevailing type of the religious character of the last generation. My sphere of observation and my powers of judgment were very limited. But the Christian friends whom God gave me the first half of my life were, next to the Lord Jesus, my greatest blessing in a life crowned with blessings. To their exciting, restraining, moulding influence and example I owe everything. They have all long ago passed away, but more and more I see how much I was indebted to them. Some of them, I think, were as near perfection in the various walks of a godly life, rich and poor, as their gifts and opportunities allowed.

And this optimistic view of God's law of life relieves me of the necessity which so many men, abler and better than I, feel, of berating their predecessors and disparaging the piety of all preceding ages. We listen to these excellent men as they catalogue the imperfections of Abraham and Jacob and Moses and David and Peter and Augustine and Calvin and Jonathan Edwards and good old John Bunyan and point out the erroneous conceptions of the divine character in the Old Testament. And I sit and think that Abraham was "God's friend" in an age when God had no friends; that Jacob received the first heavenly title of nobility ever conferred—a Prince with power

to prevail with God; that Moses gave us directly from God's lips that law which is more precious than silver or gold; that the most heavenly aspirations and the deepest gratitude have in all generations ascended to heaven in David's words; nay, that the Lord Jesus Himself, in those awful moments we cannot understand, found in the Psalms His most fitting cry to His Father.

I am glad that the Bible records the sins and the consequent prayers of these men; glad that so guilty a man as David could pray, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." I have special reason for gratitude that David's supplications were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that David's God is my God. I am glad that the Bible records the awful sin of Peter, for it reveals the wonderful heart of Jesus who committed to Peter's charge the flock for which he had given His own life. I read that list of disparaged men in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and thank God that I am encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses (not spectators—perish the thought—witnesses) to the truth that very imperfect men can become heroes of faith.

And may we ask of those who deprecate the Old Testament portraiture of God to tell us where, even in the New Testament, can be found more tender messages of pleading love and sweeter assurances of unbounded mercy than are spoken of Jehovah to His people through the prophets. Where can there be anything more blessed than this: "I, even I, am he that blot out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25). And when those over whom He has sorrowed return to Him, the lips of the Infinite burst into song, "The Lord thy God will rejoice over thee with singing" (Sept. 3:17).—Watchman.

The Awakening at Gruff's Corners.

By Rev. W. E. Compton.

No one knew why it was called Gruff's Corners. One said it was from a man named Gruff, who had lived there three years ago, and another said it described the people's attitude toward strangers. Wherever the name came from, the place is now generally known as Gruff's Corners, although you will not find that name on the map.

Gruff's Corners was a little settlement at a point where four roads met, and consisted of a country store and post-office, a blacksmith shop, four or five houses, and a church which drew its supporters from miles around. The church was one of the true country type, which is frequently seen in the present day in the East, struggling against dissolution, as its best boys and girls left its neighborhood for the larger fields of opportunity in the town and city. The church members were so scattered that very little could be done beyond the regular Sunday preaching, and interest in anything beyond their own parish was very low indeed.

One March Sunday the representative of the Board of Foreign Missions came to the church at Gruff's Corners. The roads were undergoing their spring thaw and were hub-deep in mud; progress was slow indeed, and no one ventured away from home unless driven out by absolute necessity. Why the Board's representatives ever come into the country at the worst time in the year no one can tell. The coming of the stranger had been announced some weeks before, but the patient, hard working pastor had some misgivings as to the size of the audience he would have. And as if to blight all hopes, Sunday dawned with a tremendous downfall of rain. The sexton stopped to ask if it were worth while to open the church, adding: "Nobody will come in this weather." The pastor, however, thought it would be better to hold a service, so the bell was rung, and the pastor and the stranger went to the church.

The entire audience consisted of five women and seven men, or, rather four men and three boys. One of the boys, a lad of about fourteen, came from a Ne'er-do-well family that lived in the woods about half a mile from the church. They were not vicious, but simply shiftless people. This boy, whose name was John, was a great church-goer. On this particular Sunday he appeared in an old coat of his father's, which just reached his shoe-tops, a pair of pants derived from the same source, which were rolled several turns at the bottom, but which even thus were freely bespattered with the mud from the spring roads, and he had evidently selected his shoes with a desire for ventilation, for there were openings at both the heel and toe, and they were about four sizes too large for him. He was most attentive to the remarks of the representative of the Board, and when the collection plate was passed, he was seen searching through his pockets for something to give, but his search was in vain.

The morning's collection amounted to thirty-three cents, which the pastor thought was unusually good, having seen less with a much larger audience, but the visitor was discouraged, and he went away the next morning, it being too stormy for an evening service, with the impression that his visit had been of but little value.

After the visit of the missionary, however, it was noticed by the neighbors that John became suddenly active. The garden which had been neglected, was

planted and kept in neat order. The yard by the house was raked and cleared and as far as possible the rickety building put on a respectable appearance. Jack had usually spent his summers in fishing and lounging, or if he did any work, it was only picking wild berries, but this summer he surprised the natives by offering his services to the farmers and working hard all summer. People began to talk about it, and to wonder what came over the boy, but he kept on and said nothing. The explanation came late in the fall, when Jack came to the pastor of the church and gave him fifty dollars, the proceeds of his summer's work—to be sent to the Missionary Board. His heart had been stirred on that rainy Sunday by the account given of the great needs of the world and he had resolved to do his part.

On the following Sunday the pastor told, with tears in his eyes, the story of Jack's consecration and gift. The effect was marvelous. Those staid country people who had spent their lives fighting real difficulties, not imaginary ones, were stirred as never before. They saw that they had not been doing what they might. This boy from the ne'er-do-well family had put them all to shame, and they now saw the need of the world's conversion as never before. The pastor began to preach on missions and the people began to give for missionary work as they never had done before. One fine winter day the representative of the Board came again to the church—this time by request—and the building was packed to the doors with eager listeners; best of all, the collection, instead of being thirty-three cents, was nearly one hundred dollars.

This was the beginning of the missionary spirit at Gruff's Corners. The interest did not stop, but continued because the people had learned the blessing of giving. They became so absorbed in the work outside that they almost forgot their own church affairs, but in some strange way the Lord sent a reflex blessing upon them, the needs of the church were promptly met and for the first time in years there was a surplus in the treasury. Then they raised the minister's salary and paid it promptly when it was due even though heretofore they could scarcely pay the smaller sum. The affairs of the people individually, also, became more prosperous, so that the improvement was apparent to the eye of any observer. What the reason was, the people themselves could not tell, but many old difficulties had gone for good and the old church, instead of dying, had begun to live in earnest.

Jack did not become a missionary, but he did become a loyal Christian and a respected member of the community, which pointed to him with pride and in the end he became comparatively wealthy. The people of Gruff's Corners, therefore, bless the day when they received the missionary spirit, for they have learned that "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that which withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty."—American Messenger.

ACROSS SEAS.

I stood upon a busy pier,
And watched a ship float out to sea;
My friend had gone, and yet I said:
And I shall see them face to face,
"Some day they will come back to me,
And clasp their dear, dear hands in mine,
And they will tell me what they saw
And heard in foreign countries fine,
And I shall be again content
When they come back the way they went."

I stood upon another shore
And watched a strange ship drift to sea;
My friends had gone, and, grieved, I said:
"No more will they come back to me,
But I must sail the way they went."
And find the harbor where they bide,
Ere I can see them face to face.
And find no seas divide,
And they shall ne'er be quite content
Till I have sailed the way they went."

Zion's Herald.

If I knew all that is to be learned from a daisy even, I should be less a stranger to God than I am.—William Mountford.

The gayest castles in the air are better for comfort and for use, than the dungeons in the air that are daily dug by discontented people.—Emerson.

People are sometimes unhappy because they cannot make a mark in the world. Perhaps we ought to be content if we can succeed in rubbing out a few of the marks that have been made.

Thou, who hast made my house of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;
O Love Divine, O Helper ever present,
Be Thou my strength and stay.

J. G. Whittier.