

The Helpers.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul enumerates the various classes of gifts and workers God has put in the church to accomplish all the offices of the body. There are apostles and prophets and teachers and workers of miracles put in the prominence of first mention. These are gifts which any one might be proud to possess and exercise. In covering earnestly the best gifts we universally think of the power to preach with boldness and to teach with shining ability and to perform marvels of service.

But the places of honorable and useful positions are not all exhausted in this list. To give standing room and holy employment for the greatest number of Christians on whom no tongue of fire has rested, and whose hands are not endowed with miraculous agency, he adds some other classes. Among these is a comprehensive, undefined class whom he calls "helpers." While they are not thrust out into solitary prominence as leaders, they are as usually-sacred duty of helping others. They are here to stand by the good men and women who occupy the more conspicuous places, and by their ready presence they are to help these in every good work.

There are many beautiful patterns in the Scriptures of this high ministry helping. In one of the valleys shrouded by the majestic Horeb, Israel struggled for a passage against the Amalekites. On one of the adjacent peaks stood Moses with his hands uplifted for the help of Jehovah. At last when his hands were weary and dropped by his side, victory leaned to Amalek. Human strength broke down just at the crisis. God could have put unnumbered vigor into the prophet's hands and left him to keep watch in prayer alone. Instead of this, He left him to grow faint. What his brethren could do for him the Lord refrained from doing. Aaron and Hur were not commissioned to lead in the praying—for it was prayer in action—but they were ordained to help. And they stood, one on each side the prophet, holding up his tired hands until the victory was won. They have honored and immortalized the office of the Helpers.

There was many a little but important task about the tabernacle which the aged Eli had neither time nor activity to perform. Awaiting his call and obedient to his bidding was the boy Samuel, not yet judge and prophet, but only a helper. The hands which were used to one day anoint Israel's first and after that his greatest king earned service by sweeping at the tabernacle and closing the doors. Samuel was a helper.

One afternoon as Peter and John were on their way to prayer-meeting, a lame man appealed to them for help. Peter as was his custom, became spokesman. And in the minute received what our Lord cured is said, "and Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said look on us." Peter was not alone in giving the blessing. John stood near him, looked with him upon the helpless man, joined Peter by his approving countenance and for his helpfulness receives mention scarcely less prominent and certainly not less honorable. John was helping Peter.

Here is a commission for every Christian. There is always room to help. There is always some one near needing help. No gifts are so meager but that they may come in to supplement the labor of some one who is not quite equal to the task.

The pastor needs about as much help as any other of the Master's servants. He can do only his own part, and not at all that as he wants to do it, the weakest member of the church can help him out, and it often happens that just that little help makes the difference between failure and success. Brother, you can help him preach by attending punctually, listening attentively and blessing conscientiously. You can help him by introducing him to strangers, by telling him of the people who have recently moved into the neighborhood, and by notifying him of any who need his visits. The fact is the pastor is dependent on the same channels of information as other people. He is not a mind reader that he can know without being told that there is certain work for him to do.

It is a good thing to help the pastor make a pastoral visit when he comes to see you. Receive him as your pastor, not as a mere neighbor. Open your heart to him. If it is convenient to have prayers, open the way lest he be embarrassed by an inopportune proposition, or goes away with a fear of having missed an opportunity of doing good.

But the pastor is by no means the only man to be helped. The superintendent wants more teachers and better. While one fourth of his brethren are with him, the others are of uncertain frame of mind. There are unruly boys, and untalented teachers, and giddy girls and empty treaters, and classes without teachers, and absentees to be looked after, and the sensitive ones to be placated. Timber for good superintendents is not lying around in every lumber pile, and even the best incumbents at this difficult office must be left to struggle alone.

The fact is, everybody is in need of generous friendly help. The leader of the prayer meeting next Wednesday evening is counting on somebody to stand in the breast of a leader's silence—for silence is not always golden—and carry the interest over the spell of waiting. He needs assistance in the singing. Most of all he wants hearty promptness in all the exercises. If only one leads, all may help.

Four church treasurers—poor too often in soul as well as in purse—are looking for the day break of the millennium if all the delinquents should conclude to help him out by volunteering their dues without his sad visit to them. Give him a chance to meet you as a welcome neighbor rather than as a bearer of sad tidings.

Help all of them. Help the children to behave. Help the erring ones to try to do better. Help the choir to keep in a good humor by keeping in a good humor with them and by keeping in a good humor with the whole church. Help the singers by going to the fourth end of the pew instead of blocking the way or occupying the first easy corner. Help the sexton with a constant smile and an occasional quarter for personal attention. Be known as a candidate for high and holy offices of Christ's Church. Crave ordination to this office by the gratitude of those who will lay their hands upon you and bless you. If

the pastor must needs print his name on the church cards and nail it on the door that people may know his office, let it be so the helpers will soon be found out and their names will be cherished in the hearts of those to whom God has sent them as helpers in times of need, and God will enroll them in the same verso that contains the names of apostles.—Central Baptist.

A Powerful Preacher.

If people had the excellences of character and initiative then, we would not need to be very careful of our example; but unfortunately for us, the crooked things in our lives are more apt to secure the imitation of others than the things that are entirely correct. A gentleman sent a cracked plate to China as a sample of the plate he wanted, and the Chinese imitated it perfectly, for every plate he received from them had the crack in it. So in imitating our fellow-men we are apt to get their imperfections in our own lives.

The good instruction will not counteract the bad. The little child said to the father who was trying to teach him to pray, "Why do you want me to pray, pa? I never see you pray." The bad example weakens every other kind of instruction. The best instruction loses all its force when communicated by persons whose lives do not correspond with it. For that reason the life of the minister and the character of the teacher should harmonize with the truths they would impart. The immoral teacher ought to be as rare as the immortal minister. Nor can the parent who would impart religious knowledge to his children be regardless of his character. Says Tillotson: "To give children good instruction and bad examples, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while you take them by the hand to lead them in the way of hell."

A good example gives new beauty and power to truth. It was said to Dr. Goodell, the missionary: "The daily walk of such men as yourself shows what moral beauty there is in the true Christian character." An English nobleman, leaving the house where the pious Fenelon resided, remarked: "I could stay no longer. If I did I should become pious in spite of myself." It was said of John Keble, author of the "Christian Year": "The holiness and consistency of his daily life were so remarkable, that it was impossible to live under his roof without receiving profounder impressions of the power of religion."

Said Hume, the infidel, of an earnest Christian man: "There is an argument for Christianity which I cannot answer: I have, as I think, fairly met and answered every other argument. But that young man's consistent life is something which I do not pretend to answer." A Roman Catholic priest remarked that he would willingly change his faith if all Protestants were like Oberlin. Says Chalmers: "The strongest argument for the truth of Christianity is the true Christian, the man filled with the spirit of Christ."

It may seem hard to us to live up to our own resolutions and teachings on this subject, but it is worth a trial. We have the theory, and if we would put it into practice it will give increased power to what we teach and do. When we find a character where this correspondence of teaching and life is seen, we ought to appreciate it. Such a man must make an impression on those upon whom he preaches. The eminent Scotch minister, telling the impressions he received from a car-driver when asked to drink, who said: "I am a teetotaler, and I won't taste a drop of it." Said he: "Well, that stuck in my throat, and it went to my heart, and to my head, and I was numb, and cultivated, uneducated Roman Catholic carman; and I said, if that man can deny himself this indulgence, why should not the Christian minister?"

Bunyan says: "Dost thou see a soul that has the image of God in him? Love him, love him." This man and I may go to heaven some day.—Christian at Work.

Sick Prayer-Meetings.

That fine spiritual teacher and preacher, Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, communicated to the New York Evangelist an article with the above heading which is altogether too expressive to be withheld from the reader.

The best place to feel the spiritual pulse of a church is the prayer-meeting. If that is full of life, warmth and vigor, then the church is healthy; if the prayer-meeting declines, then this whole body is apt to suffer from the disease at the heart. The circulation of warm blood is impeded; devotion, which is the breath of the church, becomes feeble, and pretty soon the church grows cold, as in the case of a dying man.

Prayer-meetings, like human bodies, are subject to a variety of diseases. Sometimes they suffer for want of a nourishing diet. No themes or topics are introduced to quicken thought, or arouse devotion, and the meeting is starved to a skeleton. But if some rousing practical topic is introduced; above all, if the vital truths of God's Word are presented, then the meeting has something to feed upon. The Holy Spirit honors the service that honors his precious Word. People run dry; even the best soon talk themselves out, and talk their souls are replenished from God's inexhaustible storehouse of wisdom, knowledge, and quickening power. Let the leader of the meeting choose some central truth or some striking practical passage of God's Word, and invite the people to come and talk about it and weave it into their prayers. The weekly gatherings of Christians should be instructive as well as devotional. The pastor is not supposed to be the only one who is well up in Bible knowledge; some private Christians get insight into the "deeper things of God" that a minister has not yet discovered. On the evenings when special prayer is made for the evangelization of the world, "Monthly Concerts" is not supposed to be the only thing to be fed with fresh information from the missionary fields. If nothing is carried out, I suspect that a large proportion of church members saunter into their prayer rooms in a listless, listless, listless fashion, trusting that somebody else will have brought "five loaves or a few small fishes" for the evening's repast.

They do not even carry a felt hat, a fervent desire, a spiritual hunger; there are apt to bring nothing and to carry nothing away. Scores of prayer-meetings are held, but the people who are expected that unconverted persons or young people will ever be attracted to a meeting in which there is nothing to interest them, or even keep them awake? A devotional meeting is no more a self-feeding apparatus than a human body is; its supplies must come from God's Word, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, and from the experiences which the Spirit has awakened.

Many other prayer-meetings are suffering from what the doctors call "general debility." They have run down. The few people who do attend them, hear only the same stereotyped remarks, and the same stereotyped prayers, week after week. The blood has been slowly drained away from the meeting until it has reached the last stages of consumption. A is too busy to attend the meetings any more. B is too tired after his day's work. C has her round of social engagements. D goes to his club and E to his political headquarters, and F cares more to stay at home and read his newspaper. And so forth, the whole alphabet of delinquencies comes the same "I pray thee have me excused." The faithful few who need the meeting the least are at their posts; the unfaithful majority, who need to pray and to be prayed for the most, are absent. The feeble praying-meeting, which makes the alphabet heart sick, but it sends its slow paralysis through the whole church.

"What is the matter with us?" says one church-member. "Had we not better look for another minister?" says another. "Perhaps we had better invite an evangelist to come and revive us," suggests a third brother. "People are attracted by fine music; let us get up a fine choir," suggests an aesthetic brother, who attends the opera generally on the prayer-meeting evening. Good friends, there is no mystery about the state of your church. You are drifting away from God! You are freezing to death, as people always freeze when they get too far from the source of all heat and life. That poor, sickly declining prayer-meeting is not merely a symptom of a declining church; it is one great cause of your decline. Revival and recovery, if it come at all, must come there, and had better begin there. The few who have stayed by the mercy-seat all along should direct their prayer "at a mark," and that is for the descent of the Holy Spirit as a fire from heaven. The desperate decline, or the regular recovery, and the church also into its present diseased and enfeebled condition, must "face about," and go back to their deserted place of duty. Returning health cannot come from pulpit or music-loft, from minister or evangelist; it can only come from the heart, and that recovery will only come to those who penitently pray for the blessing, and are ready to work to secure it. Until that sick prayer-meeting begins to amend, there is not much hope for your declining church. Call for the Great Physician there!

Christian Experience.

A pious frame of mind is the most precious acquisition that can be attained in this world; it is as much superior to the general religion that is current as the health of a sound constitution is to the bitter, dry, and feelings of a man in a deep decline, or the regular order of a sound intellect to the lucid moments of the deranged. But this happy state of mind is not generally attained at all without much previous spiritual exercise and praying without ceasing, nor is it retained without watchfulness, prayer, and constant strivings against the corruptions of the heart, the influence of circumstances, and the various temptations of life. But whatever may be the privations and difficulties attending its possession, they are infinitely overruled by the fruits of joy and permanent consolations it produces. In this state of mind only it is that a person is prepared to meet the various storms and trials of life, and can look forward with a well-grounded confidence to the close of the present scene. It is walking in the light, and the person is more acquainted with divine things, with a moderate capacity, than others with large intellects. He is at home in the deeper subject of experimental religion, the various workings of the corruption of the human heart, the weak yet genuine workings of divine grace upon a revealed Saviour, the suitability of the promises to convey the blessings of salvation to perishing sinners, the adaptability of Christ in what He is, and what He has done, to supply all the wants of sinners enlightened by the knowledge of themselves, and seeking salvation in His name. He knows, in some measure, the inexpressible beauty of the moral character of Christ, of God in Him, and has tasted the pleasure that flows from thus beholding the beauty of the Lord. This gives strength and vigor to every grace, and in the strength of grace he is enabled of the being of grace, and raised above the misery of living even doubting his state.—David Charles.

A "View Halloo."

"This oatmeal isn't cooked," remarked Susie, pushing her plate away. "I am sorry," said her mother, looking at the oatmeal. "Wife, it does seem as if Bridget might learn not to overdo the steak," said father, critically.

"No, it's not more oatmeal." "But the oatmeal is delicious, and the cornmeal melt in your mouth," sang out Susie, from her watch tower on the sunny side.

"And the baked potatoes can't be beat," echoed Bob, indignantly. "When the oatmeal is cooked, and the cornmeal melt in your mouth, and the baked potatoes can't be beat, give me a 'View halloo!' and I'll answer back," said Bob.

"Here is a rare piece; I didn't see it," said father. "I'd as soon have a pear as the oatmeal," reflected Susie; and these two conspirators flashed looks at each other, while mother smiled knowingly, and the wind had changed.

"A little child once asked his mother the question of what part of heaven do people go to who are good, but not agreeable?"

Our Little Girl.

The train stopped suddenly between two stations. Several of the passengers rushed out of the car excitedly and came back with the tidings that there was an obstruction on the track that would cause the delay of an hour.

The countenance of most of the passengers instantly fell into the depths of gloom and despair.

"This is simply intolerable!" muttered one middle-aged man to his companion. "I shall not reach the city before the market closes. It will cost me two or three thousand dollars."

A physician dropped his newspaper and passed impatiently up and down the car. "An hour late with all my patients!" he exclaimed.

"Are any of them in immediate danger?"

"No. But an hour lost! It's unbearable!"

A young girl looked at her companions with the tears in her eyes. "I am going into town for the trimming for my dress. Now it will not be done in time. I shall have to wear my old blue to the party."

A short, pumpos old man talked loudly and incessantly, scolding conductors and brakemen, as if they were personally responsible for the delay.

"I am to leave here this afternoon before the 10 o'clock," he exclaimed in hot indignation. "The audience will be out in twenty minutes!"

A young man sat immovable, his head bent upon his breast, his face set and hard.

"My little boy is dying," he said to some one who questioned him. "I was telegraphed for. I shall not see him alive."

But while with most of the passengers there was a secret conviction that the wheels of the universe had stopped because they were delayed in their pursuits or work, one woman sat silent and tranquil.

She was near the end of a long life of pain and hardship and wide experience. She had come, too, near enough to the God who ruled over all lives to understand how every event, accident, great or little, has its place and purpose in the eternal order, as have motives living in the sunshine. She was close enough to the gate of the future life to see how little is its infinite height and meaning was the old ball-dress, or the fall of stocks, or even the loss of an hour with the string of beads.

"One of the most singular studies in life," says Bouchet, "is to note how different men, each with his own scales, weigh the same objects and attach to them different values."

The lost bit of finery which brought tears to her eyes, weighing only a few ounces, was lighter than a feather in the eyes of the stockbroker; and his loss of thousands was contemptible to the man whose child was going from him into the grave without a word; and doubtless his pain seemed momentary and trivial in the vision of angels, as a thousand years are as a day, and death but a momentary change of life.

"How, then, are we to find the true weight and value of things in the world?"

In the United States, many, when they built a machine, weighing only a few ounces, weighed it in the scales of the stockbroker; and his loss of thousands was contemptible to the man whose child was going from him into the grave without a word; and doubtless his pain seemed momentary and trivial in the vision of angels, as a thousand years are as a day, and death but a momentary change of life.

For Jesus' Sake.

Annie Griffin stood on the dunce stool for the third time that week. The offense was twisting her tangled brown curls into horns, so that little Lottie May laughed outright and disturbed the school. The hands of her mother, pointing to four, and the other children were marching, two and two, out of the school-house, most of them looking wistfully over their shoulders at the shabby figure standing on the stool, and wearing a pair of worn-out man's boots.

Annie was generally favorite, the children would miss her merry chatter and romps, which brightened the long way home, and the little ones would miss the strong young arm in crossing fences or ditches. When the last child had gone out, Miss Laura turned to her pupil and said, wearily: "You may sit down, Annie, and study the lesson you missed this morning." The big boots came down heavily from the stool, and their owner dragged them slowly across the room to her seat, into which she carelessly dropped, bending her curly head over a greasy spelling-book.

For some moments not a sound broke the stillness, save the occasional snapping of the coals in the stove. The school mistress leaned her head on her desk and closed her eyes. From time to time two brown eyes glanced at her from over the greasy spelling-book, and suddenly they flashed in astonishment, for tears were stealing down the teacher's cheeks. Poor Laura was disheartened. The children had been hard to manage. A letter had come from home, saying her precious father was not at all well, and added to her anxiety, was the certainty that her salary would not be paid in time for her to go home to spend Christmas. Her head ached and her heart ached, but she knew him who was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and her lips moved silently in prayer for strength and comfort.

As the watching eyes in the corner gazed, a mist gathered slowly in them, quenching their defiant sparkle. Two tiny little feet were drawn from the boots and crept boldly across the room, a little arm was wound around the school-mistress' waist, and a sweet voice said, hesitatingly, "Please don't cry, Miss Laura, and I'll never make horns or do anything to trouble you again."

The teacher drew the child towards her, and in broken tones told her of the cause that burdened her, and of how she tried, through all, to bear them for Jesus' sake, and do her duty faithfully.

"Miss Laura," said Annie, "I have troubles, too; but I cut up and try to forget them. How can you be so sweet and good?"

Then Laura lifted the child to her lap and told in simple language how the dear Saviour loves and cares for every one, and how He wants us to take up our cross and bear it patiently, looking to Him for strength and guidance. When she finished, Annie was sitting bolt upright, a hopeful light shining in her great brown eyes as she said:

"Oh, I am so glad you told me that. I'll tell Tim, tonight, and father, too. We used to be better and go to church till mother died, and then father took to drinking, and Tim and I don't say our prayers, or try to do anything for Jesus' sake. Tim rides with the mail bags, rain or shine, and he's sick, and father takes the money and spends it as fast as Tim gets it, and that's what's breaking my heart. But I ought to be good and help them to remember, instead of being so wild and naughty."

Miss Laura again urged the little girl to go to Jesus with these troubles, and assured her of His loving comfort, and then Annie pulled on the old boots and they walked home in the gathering twilight. It was a precious influence the teacher had left with this little girl, who, through her example and teaching, had been led to see Jesus. Soon Annie had made the poor house cheerful with fire-light, and set the evening meal. Then, with hope in heart, but with anxious eyes she watched for the home coming of her father and brother.

Soon her face brightened, for some one rapped up to the post-office, and handed the mail-bag to the post-master, then on to the stables, for Tim took care of the horses, too. The moments seemed ages to the girl at the window, and she thought she had never known Tim to walk so slowly as he came towards the house. She could wait no longer, but rushed out and caught him by the arm. As the rays from the fire fell through the open door into the boy's face, it showed a hopeless, almost despairing look, and when the door was reached he fell helplessly into the arms of others footsteps came rapidly up the path, and in a moment Mr. Griffin was bending over his boy with a pale face.

An anxious week followed, and then the mail carrier was better. During the father of silent consolation, Annie told her father of her conversation with her teacher, and with tears in her eyes told him for her sake and Tim's, but most of all for "Jesus' sake," to lead a better life, and when Tim was better she told him, too, and it was beautiful to see the pale face light up as he whispered, "Yes, for Jesus' sake, we will lead better lives, trusting all to Him."

And they were faithful to the end. Tim became a minister of the gospel, and years after we find Annie a happy wife and mother. The old gray-haired man the children call "grandpa," often gathers round the fire, and tells them how the sweet duty of living for "Jesus' sake," planted in the heart of a child by her teacher, worked a miracle in the home and lives of three of their nearest and dearest.—E.

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"How, then, are we to find the true weight and value of things in the world?"

In the United States, many, when they built a machine, weighing only a few ounces, weighed it in the scales of the stockbroker; and his loss of thousands was contemptible to the man whose child was going from him into the grave without a word; and doubtless his pain seemed momentary and trivial in the vision of angels, as a thousand years are as a day, and death but a momentary change of life.

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