

Pastor and People.

MOSES FROM AN OLD MANSE.

The minister's wife had just finished her chores,
By calling on all the Church people;
And some she'd found open as both the church doors,
And some she'd found stiff as the steeple.

For while all the deacons had slept on the wall,
A committee had come like a lion;
And by giving her husband a generous call,
Had shaken the bulwarks of Zion.

For years they had paid him who taught them the Word,
About six hundred dollars or seven;
For they felt that a preacher should "trust in the Lord,"
And grow fat on the "manna from heaven."

And so the cash question had come to annoy;
Which with so many ministers rankles;
For the Lord had sent children; three girls and a boy,
And the boy—hollow down to his ankles.

Sister Blodgett, the wife of "a pillar," had cried,
(They supported a carriage and horses),
"Beware! lest you sin against God," she had sighed;
"A rolling stone gathers no mosses."

The preacher looked up from the book which he read,
And his merry eyes twinkled with laughter,
"Why didn't you tell Sister Blodgett," he said,
"That moss isn't what we are after?"

—Geo. Thos. Dowling, D.D., in *New York Independent*.

SENSITIVE PEOPLE.

The hard part of Church work is not the work. It is the workers. If we could only make the very sensible workers a little more sensitive and the very sensitive workers a little more sensible, and could go about a Church putting in spiritual touches here and there just where they were needed, so that we would work a little less on one another's feelings and a little more on the coming of the kingdom, it would make an amazing difference in the statistics of year-books and the wrinkles on ministers' faces.

It is commonly said that choirs are very sensitive, but in these days of congregational singing we certainly have all joined the choir on that point. Some of us are born sensitive and live all our lives alone with the dread of it—like haunted houses. Others have been made so by continual ill-treatment. Some of us are sensitive all the time and charged like a wire with electricity and ready to throb at the touch. Others are only occasionally so after some particular event, and suffer all the more because they are not used to it.

Sometimes a Church seems like a colossal ball of yarn that in some way or other has been unwound into a wonderful unending tangle; and forthwith a poor minister is ordained and installed to patiently find the ends thereof and wind all up again on the distaff of his eloquence and tact, so that it can be used and spun off into good works.

But it is worse than this. Make all the threads alive so that they are moving in and out among themselves and tying themselves up into new knots while you are untying the old ones, while the yarn that you have wound up is all unwinding again, and then make every inch of thread of pure nerve fibre so that it is hurt when you pull on it, and do you wonder that in such a coil of sensitive confusion many a man, throwing his earnestness into Church work, finds himself tempted to give up our poor human nature, and draw one side to let it squirm and unsquirm itself if it can? It takes a surgical operation to do anything with some of us, and we have to tread around softly in one another's natures as if we were in an invalid's sick-room, tiptoeing our way along toward the truth.

We are not called upon not to be sensitive, but to be sensitive in the right way. Sensibility is the power of great minds. It is the weakness of smaller ones. It makes a song very beautiful, but sometimes it makes the singer very disagreeable. There is a way we can manage our sensibilities and a way we cannot. We cannot say that we will hear the nouns in a sentence and not the verbs, nor that we will hear some things that we are told and not others. We cannot help hearing what we are told, but we can help believing all that we hear. It is so with our sensibilities. They come crying unto us like pettish children, but we tell them that all this would be very easy to explain if we knew all the facts, and that probably it was not so, and that undoubtedly it was too small a matter to be of much meaning if it was, and at all events "He that judgeth me is the Lord."

Every man has a touch of insanity on one subject, and that is himself. Once let a man get into this condition toward any person or all persons, and he is like a man who wakes out of a bad dream in the night, who sits up in bed staring out into the darkness, sure that there is a burglar in the house. The ivy outside the window is trying to get in. The loose blind on the side of the piazza is walking softly around up in the front hall. A mouse is coming down stairs with a creak in its shoes, and the wind in the trees has gotten in somehow and is feeling around in the bureau drawer. The coal sliding in the cellar is a man getting into the window. The house settles like the moving of a trunk, and the piano snap is turning a lock, and the breathing of the child in his crib is the soft opening of the library door.

There is nothing we can do for this man. He will have to do it himself. He will have to get up and strike a light and see how foolish it all is. When a man makes a monk of himself and shuts himself up in a cloister of moods, everything takes

the sickly hue of his own morbidness, and every little remark is built away out into other meaning, and every time some poor, innocent, generous, absent-minded person happens to meet him without speaking, it is as momentous as a European war between two empires, and every little dot of an incident casts a continental shadow, until the poor soul loses its way in a maze of dark inferences—wandering about in a sort of tragic admiration for its own dismalness, as though it were a sort of higher luxury that only sensitive souls were capable of.

The remedy for all this lies in our being more interested in God's work than in the world's marking system for our work. We are not the sentinels of our own reputations. We are soldiers on duty and the call comes from the field, and, my brother in sensitiveness, if, in following your conscience, you have to face harsh criticism, it is worth remembering that there are times in every man's life when he is called upon either to be considered a "fool" in order to avoid being one, or solemnly be a fool in order to avoid being considered one, and it may comfort your sensitive mood to recall what Paul has to say about "being fools for Christ's sake." Our trouble comes from confounding this kind with the common-place kind. Being a "fool for Christ's sake" is very different from being a fool for one's own sake. He who is sensitive for Christ will grow less and less sensitive for himself.—*Congregationalist*.

WALKING IN DARKNESS.

Sometimes we have an experience in life that seems like walking through a long, dark tunnel. The chilling air and thick darkness make it hard walking, and the constant wonder is, why we are compelled to tread so gloomy a path while others are in the open day of health and happiness. We can only fix our eyes on the bright light at the end of the tunnel, and we comfort ourselves with the thought that every step we take brings us nearer to the joy and the rest that lie at the end of the way. Extinguish the light of heaven that gleams in the distance and this tunnel of trial would become a horrible tomb. Every week a pastor has to confront these mysteries in the dealings of a God of love. To the torturing question, "Why does God lead me into this valley of the shadow of darkness?" we can only reply, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." We are brought into the tunnel, however we may shrink back. There is no retreat; we have nothing left to us but to grasp the very hand that brought us there, and push forward.

When we reach heaven we may discover that the richest and deepest and most profitable experiences we had in this world were those which were gained in the very roads from which we shrank back with dread. The real victory of faith is to trust God in the dark and through the dark. Let us be assured of this, that as the lesson and rod are of His appointing, and that as His all-wise love has engineered the deep tunnels of trial on the heavenward road, He will never desert us during the discipline. The vital thing for us is not to deny and desert Him.—*Dr. T. L. Cuyler*.

THE EASY YOKE.

There are two sources of peace and strength to the human soul. The one is the clear recognition and acceptance of the inevitable—the acquiescence in the fact that we are not our own masters, nor are we possessed of irresistible might, and that therefore there are many things which we cannot hope to accomplish, and there are also many duties and responsibilities which we ought not to avoid. Much time and energy and feeling have been wasted by attempting and longing for the impossible—beating the wings of our desire against the bars of the impossible, and expending mind and heart in the hopeless pursuit of that which cannot be. The sooner, then, that we recognize the clear line which parts the possible from the impossible—the sooner we accept what must be—the sooner may we hope to take up the practical business of life. And just in proportion as a man acts thus will he give us proof of the clearness of his judgment and the force of his character. But this apprehension or recognition alone does not suffice. We can readily imagine the recognition bringing no rest or desirable results in its train. The apprehension of the fact that such and such must be, and that such and such cannot be, does not of itself necessarily lead to strength and repose, and the patient and wise taking up of life's duties. There are different ways in which the inevitable may be accepted. The recognition that we are not to have things just as we fancy, that there are both limitation and obligation resting upon us, may be accepted in a very different spirit; and as this spirit is, so will be the moral result upon life and character. If, for instance, the recognition be made under the influence of sheer compulsion—as a great disagreeable necessity—there will be but a sullen submission, and life's duties will be but as drudgeries, accepted in a mechanical obedience that covers the smouldering fires of rebellion, which are only too ready to break out on the first prospect of success. Here is neither pace nor strength to be found. Or, again, suppose the recognition be made simply out of a sense of duty or moral obligation; that the man says: "I yield because I feel I ought." Here we have a moral yielding to that strict martinet spirit that looks upon duty as supreme, and is ready to trample on all feelings, and obey at all costs. It is duty, but duty without love—duty stern, terrible, irresistible. And there is no joy, no spontaneity, no freedom. It is law, the law of duty, instead of the force of compulsion.

Now, there is a far higher spirit of acquiescence; not that of mere duty or compulsion, but the recognition of the right and goodness of such a yielding, and the apprehension of a goodness which thus inspires and calls through what it asks. The above is the spirit of free, spontaneous and cheerful acquiescence. And we can see that the spirit in which life is accepted will make all the difference, and will exert a transforming influence upon the whole of life's experience and duties. We may almost say that the whole question turns upon the spirit in which we act.—*Rev. A. Boyd Carpenter, in the Quiver*.

HOW RIGHT IS REWARDED.

There is no exact adjustment of happiness to desert in this world; and this lesson of the Book of Job is one which is re-inforced by all experience. Yet much of the fiction which is written for the instruction of children implies or teaches the exact contrary. The good boy always gets the situation—always turns out to be the prosperous man of business or the successful doctor. Now, as Sir Henry Summer Maine says, expectation is the first form of law; and those who are led to form such expectations as regards their future think they have got hold of a law of life, but are sure to reap disappointment. Our Lord never calls forth such expectations of a speedy turn or recompense. It is true that He is made to appear to do so in the thrice-repeated "Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly" of Matthew vi. 4. But the authentic Greek text followed by the revisers omits this "openly." The true reward of right action is that which comes to men as secretly as God's vision of it is exercised. It is in larger sympathy with God, an increase of the mind of Christ in us, and a growing capacity to serve God. It is, as Carlyle says, not happiness, but blessedness, which our Father in heaven bestows upon us as our recompense. It is the acquisition from each surrender of our will to His, of an increased power to do His will, and to rejoice in its being done.—*S. S. Times*.

HOW THE DIVINE HELPER COMES.

Dr. Alexander McLaren puts very forcibly that all-important truth of our own impotency and our entire dependence on God to raise us to true strength and vigour and beauty of character. There must be an emptying of self and a fulness of the Spirit by the blessed Father of all mercies:—

There is goodness without the impulse and indwelling of the divine Spirit, but there is no divine Spirit to dwell in a man's heart without the man trusting in Jesus Christ. The condition of receiving the gift that makes men good is simply and solely that we should put our trust in Jesus Christ the giver, that opens the door, and the divine Spirit enters.

True, there are convincing operations which He effects upon the world; but these are not in question here. These come prior to, and independent of, faith. But the work of the Spirit of God, present within, is to heal and hallow us. If you open a chink, the water will come in. If you trust in Jesus Christ, He will give you the new life of His Spirit, and will make you free from the law of sin and death. That divine Spirit "which they that believe in Him should receive," delights to enter into every heart where His presence is desired. Faith is desire; and desire rooted in faith can not be in vain. Faith is expectation; and expectations based upon divine promises cannot be disappointed. Faith is dependence, and dependence that reckons upon God and upon God's gift of His Spirit will surely be recompensed.

The measure in which we possess the power that makes us good depends altogether upon ourselves. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." You may have as much of God as you want, and as little as you will. The measure of your faith will determine at once the measure of your goodness and of your possession of the Spirit that makes good. Just as when the prophet miraculously increased the oil in the cruse, the golden stream flowed as they brought vessels and stayed when there were no more; so as long as we open our hearts for the reception, the gift will not be withheld, but God will not let it run like water spilled upon the ground, that can not be gathered up. If we will desire, if we will reckon on, if we will look to Jesus Christ; and, besides all this, if we will honestly use the power that we possess, our capacity will grow and the gift will grow, and our holiness and purity will grow with it.

Some of you have been trying, more or less continuously, all your lives to mend your own characters and improve yourselves. There is a better way than that. A modern poet says:—

Self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control.

These three alone lift life to sovereign power.

Taken by itself, that is pure heathenism. Self can not improve self. Put self into God's keeping, and say, "I can not guard, keep, purge, and hallow mine own self. Lord, do Thou do it for me." It is no use trying to build a tower whose top shall reach to heaven. A ladder has been let down on which we may pass upward, and by which God's angels of grace and beauty will come down to dwell in our hearts. If the Judge is to say of each of us "He was a good man," He must also be able to say, "He was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

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