

# CONCERNING PEOPLE WHO ARE TOO LATE.

BY THE REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

Esquire Tardy is one of the most exemplary members of the huge Tardy family. He regularly begins the week by being a few minutes too late at church on Sunday morning. We always know the full extent of our Sunday morning congregation when we see the broad-shouldered Squire enter his pew, for nobody comes in after him. And by the way they enter—with flushed faces, with collars awry, and shawls all on one shoulder—it is evident that they slept late in the morning, and have been hurrying ever since to overtake the lost hour. The Squire never hears the invocation, and so misses his share of the blessing; he never hears the “lesson” of Scripture, and so fails to get the thread of the text when it is taken from the morning chapter; he never fails to disturb the whole congregation either when he does arrive at last, puffing and out of breath.

A few days since we met Mr. Afterfair standing at a corner and gazing at a company of workmen who were excavating for a row of new buildings. “Ah! what a find. I was!” said Mr. Afterfair; “I was once offered this whole plot of ground for two hundred pounds per lot, and now it is worth four times that sum; but that is my luck.” He was right there; it is always the “Luck” of the slow coaches to lose all the passengers. We have no pity for speculators, especially for the blundering baggards who are always just one week behind their fortunes. Mr. Afterfair has brought up his family to little work and great expectations. We fear that he will wear a poor man’s hair into the grave.

Every department of life is afflicted with more or less of the people who are always a little too late. Beautiful Paris abounds in memorials of the great Emperor who boasted that he was generally “fifteen minutes” a-head of his nimblest foes in getting into battle. But Paris, amid all her monuments to the heroes who have carried the French eagles to splendid victory, rears no pillar of Marshal Grouchy; for whatever services he had rendered before were all cancelled by the mortifying fact that he helped to lose Waterloo for Napoleon by

being an hour too late. The history of our Washington on the other hand is the history of a man who was never behind his time. Rembrand Peale once told us that, when the Pater Patriæ sat to him for his portrait, he regularly entered his studio while the State House clock was striking eight. When a tardy private secretary apologized for his delay by saying, “My watch is out of order,” “Then,” replied Washington, “You must get a new watch, or I must get a new secretary.” Who can tell what the history of the Revolution might have been if at Taunton and at Yorktown the American commander had been just a little too late? It is quite certain that during the present conflict the rebels have excelled the loyalists in two things—in terrible earnestness of purpose and in promptness of movement. They have not as many muskets as we, nor as much money; but they seem to have better watches than our officers, for in only one battle did their reinforcements come up too late.

But the subject of our brief paper has a bearing beyond the events of this life.—It takes hold on eternity. Men do not only lose fortunes and lose battles by unwise delays, but they have in unnumbered cases lost their immortal souls. For in the day of final judgment the dwellers in Christian lands will be divided into two classes—those who seized their opportunity and those who were too late. The happy hosts on the right hand of the Judge will be made up of those who “knew the time of their visitation,” who accepted the call of mercy, who improved the influences of the Holy Spirit, and pressed into the gate of salvation while the gate stood open. And among these rejoicing hosts the very happiest of the happy will be those earnest, fervent labourers for Christ who always seized every opportunity to do good, who redeemed their time and spoke the “word in season” that saved a soul from death.

On the left hand of the righteous Judge in that momentous day will be a vast multitude of those whose fatal sin was *that they were too late*. They had the clearest knowledge of their duty and abundant exhortations to perform it. Christ came to them with his offers, as He came to besotted Jerusalem; but they knew not the day of their visitation. The truths of heaven