

## Pastor and People.

### THE TROUBLING OF THE POOL.

Not when Bethesda's pool a tranquil mirror lay,  
Kissed into radiance by an Orient sun,  
But when the angel stirred its crystal depths,  
The wondrous power of healing was begun.  
Calm and unruffled by a troublous thought  
Like fair Bethesda's pool a soul may lie  
Bathed in the placid sunlight of content,  
While seasons of rich grace are passing by;  
But when the Spirit stirs the sluggish depths  
Until its calm gives way to wild unrest,  
Then comes sweet healing, and the sin-sick heart,  
Dropping its burden there, finds peace and rest.

—Minnie E. Kenney.

### GOD'S PROMISES.

The promises of God are as precious as they are great. We have been sustained and comforted in their fulfilment. They have been living voices in the darkness, a strong hand in the hour of weakness, and have brought peace in the time of trouble. We have trusted them and have not been disappointed. Therefore we know that our hope will not make us ashamed. As we advance in life, we find new promises adapted to our need, and in using them we are conformed to the image of the divine Son. So it will ever be until we enter into His glory.

### THE DAILY CROSS.

There is a window in an ancient church which pictures the progress of Jesus from the Judgment Hall to Calvary, and underneath is the legend, "Via crucis, via lucis"—the way of the cross is the way of light.

Suppose there had come into that church, instead of you, a young man from the forests of early Britain, whose brother had been the victim of the Druid sacrifices, his whole being thrilling with affright at the spectacle, and terror for the darkness that shuts in beyond that bloody altar within the magic circle of Stonehenge—as he looks at that cross-bearer he hears the chant of Christian song, known from its opening words, "Dies Irae"—and learns the story of sin and redemption through the sacrifice of Calvary. To him then and there you can see the way of the cross would be a revelation.

Or suppose there had come in one from the great medical school at Pergamos, who believed in nothing not seen and tangible, who thought lightly of the old religions, and less of the new religion, who believed, with many a modern skeptic, that death ended all. As he studies the life-work of Jesus of Nazareth in that pictured window he has an intelligible commentary in the solemn chant that fills the service. By and by the light breaks in from the cross of Jesus. He sees new meaning in the body and soul of man. The mystery of death is solved. There is life for the believer beyond. In the last stanza he finds himself on his feet, his heart glad, his lips repeating after the singers:—

Exult, O dust and ashes!  
The Lord shall be thy part:  
His only, His forever,  
Thou shalt be, and thou art.

Well, that is the way to study the story of the cross. By such a contrast we can get a new feeling in our own hearts, and we gain a true apprehension of the duty and blessing of bearing the cross.

There was only one man of all the race who bore the cross of Jesus, and he was a stranger from Cyrene in Africa. No man now has any fibre of that cross. If we had it all and whole as when it upbore the form of Jesus, it would do nothing for us. To try to bear it about would only hinder and crush us. So we learn that for each one there is, not the cross of Jesus, but his own cross to be taken up and borne daily as a symbol of discipleship.

What is your cross no one may know, but you must know. Perhaps we can illustrate a little here. On the east bank of the Hudson, there lived two sisters, one a helpless, hopeless invalid. There was a company starting for a summer in Switzerland, and the stronger girl, now worn with watching and care for the weaker sister, was urged to go. It was life to go, as well as her soul's delight and desire. The claim of duty was the cross on which she crucified her longing for relief and refreshment. O, loyal heart and true, our tears are not for sorrow, but for praise.

There were three young men in a mission in New York. All were offered fine business positions and large prospects in the West. Two accepted and went. One remained to care for and close the eyes of a widowed mother. Few men are great enough to lift such crosses and get the glory of them. He who bears it daily and bravely is nearest to his Lord and to heaven. It is this personal, peculiar cross which Jesus makes the symbol of His own for each one of us. A man who can deny himself—put self in the second place—and then take up his cross daily, is worthy to be called the disciple of Jesus.

No day has more than its own cross for him who has left no yesterday's cross to cumber up to-day. If one complains of many crosses to-day, it is a confession of neglected crosses, deserted duties of to-day and before. The worst windfall into which a man may wander, become entangled and perish, is a cluster of these neglected crosses. Take up thy cross to-day. To-morrow has its own.

And if one says, "I have no cross"—that is a confession that he has no Christ. We are familiar with the motto, "No

cross, no crown." A truer one is, "No cross, no Christ." If a man will lift his cross to-day he may find Jesus to-day. If he asks, Where is the Christ? we point only to the cross—there, fellow man, there at your feet—your nearest duty, your devout duty, is the way to Jesus. Let us change the beyond. The way of the cross is the way to Christ.

### CONCERNING DEACONESSSES.

There lie before us no less than four articles, clipped from recent numbers of exchanges, bearing upon the proposition of the late Presbyterian Assembly to establish what some are pleased to call an "order of deaconesses." Three of these articles discuss the action of the Assembly somewhat unfavourably, and the fourth speaks of the proposed deaconesses as "Protestant nuns." The first three are from Presbyterian papers, and plainly indicate that there is much doubt in many minds as to the scriptural character of the office, and as much doubt as to just what work should be committed to deaconesses, were they to be formally set apart to the office. The overture of the Assembly says: "Women also served the Apostolic Church as Deaconesses, whose office and duties were similar to those of the deacons." To this declaration exception is taken, and it is pointed out that there is not the least evidence that women performed in the Apostolic Churches, duties similar to those which the Presbyterian Church holds to have been those of the deacons, viz.: "To take care of the poor and distribute among them the collections which may be raised for their use," together with "the management of the temporal affairs of the church." As a matter of truth, there is no consensus of opinion among the churches to-day as to the duties imposed upon the deacons in the Apostolic Church, and much less is there any agreement as to the duties to be imposed upon deaconesses.

First of all, it has not been proved that there was such an officer as deaconess in the Apostolic Church. The passages usually depended upon to establish the precedent are variously interpreted, and there is almost no ground for the belief that they refer to such an office. The word deaconess is not in the original writings. It occurs only once in our translation and then it is not true to the original, as any novice in the Greek language can see. Evidently the writers of the New Testament had never heard or used a word corresponding to our word deaconesses. They used the word deacon, but not deaconess. Phebe is spoken of as "a servant (deacon) of the church which is at Cenchrea," and there is just as good reason for believing that she was the pastor of the church as there is for believing that she performed the functions usually attributed to a deacon. Indeed, there lies before us an article raising the question whether Phebe was not a preacher and bishop in the church at Cenchrea.

But second, could it be proved that the office of deaconess was known in the Apostolic Church, it cannot be shown what those officers were to do, what service they performed. If it is argued that they performed for women service similar to that performed by the deacons for men, it ought to be sufficient to answer that the occasion for the appointment of "the seven," who are usually regarded as the first deacons, was that the widows among the Gentile portion of the believers were neglected in the daily distribution; and yet, though the work was to be done among women, and these Gentile women, not a woman was appointed to the service. Surely this is very remarkable, if this argument for the appointment of women is worth anything. If ever, in the history of the Church, there was an occasion for the appointment of women to minister to women, it was just then and there; and yet not a woman was appointed. And it cannot be said that it was because of a lack of suitable women; for there were the women who had "ministered" to Jesus, besides Mary, the mother of Mark, and many others who had by this time become identified with the "five thousand."—*Journal and Messenger.*

### QUIET COURAGE.

One of the severest tests of true courage is to carry on one's life quietly and faithfully under the cloud of a great uncertainty—something which makes it uncertain in what direction one's activity is hereafter to be put forth. This is not an uncommon experience; but, although it happens to many, it is never on that account any the easier to bear. Living by faith has always involved a struggle, even for the most heroic souls, and the most of us learn it by the most painful processes. Nevertheless, if we are to live with strength and peace, learn it we must sooner or later. If one broods over an uncertainty, strength is paralyzed and work half done. The man who worries loses the power which comes from concentration and a calm putting forth of his whole force. There is nothing to be gained by this brooding; there is everything to be lost. A strong life is one which commands itself, and does not give up to the rudder every wind of circumstance. When the time of uncertainty comes to a strong man he is not deflected from the thing in hand. If possible, he puts more strength and skill into it; not defying fortune, but accepting Providence by that calm doing of one's work which goes with the consciousness that the honest labourer is worthy of his hire, and that work well done to-day means the opportunity of more work to-morrow. Take your life bravely and strongly. If uncertainties come into it meet them with quiet courage and good cheer. Above all, keep heart and hand in your work, and trust the future to that divine Providence which has ordered the falling of every sparrow.—*Christian Union.*

### FAMILY PRAYER.

There is one mark of a household in which God is known and loved which is too often wanting in our day; I mean family prayer. Depend upon it, the worth of a practice of that kind can only be measured by its effect during a long period of time; and family prayers, though occupying only a few minutes, do make a great difference in any household at the end of a year. How, indeed, can it be otherwise, when each morning, and perhaps each evening too, all the members of the family—the old and the young, the parents and the children, the master and the servants—meet on a footing of perfect equality before the Eternal, in whose presence each is as nothing, yet to whom each is so infinitely dear that He has redeemed by His blood each and all of them? How must not the bad spirits that are the enemies of pure and bright family life flee away—the spirits of envy and pride and untruthfulness and sloth, and the whole tribe of evil thoughts, and make way for His presence in the hearts of old and young alike, who, as He brings us one by one nearer to the true end of our existence, so does He alone make us to be "of one mind in a house" here, within the narrow presence of each home circle, and hereafter into that countless family of all nations and tongues, which shall dwell with Him, the universal Parent of all eternity?—*Canon Liddon.*

### SLANDER.

Another way of slandering is impetuous or negligent sputtering out of words, without minding what truth or consequence there is in them, how they may touch or hurt our neighbour. To avoid this sin, we must not only be free from intending mischief, but wary of effecting it; not only careful of not wronging one distinct person, but of harming any promiscuously; not only abstinent from aiming directly, but provident not to hit casually any person with obloquy. For as he that dischargeth shot into a crowd, so as not to look about regarding who may stand in the way, is no less guilty of doing mischief, and bound to make satisfaction to them he woundeth, than if he had aimed at some one person; so if we sling our bad words at random, which may light unluckily, and defame somebody, we become slanderers unawares, and before we think on it. This practice hath not ever all the malice of the worst slander, but it worketh often the effects thereof, and therefore doth incur its guilt and its punishment; especially it being commonly derived from ill-temper, or from bad habit, which we are bound to watch over, to curb, and to correct. The tongue is a sharp and perilous weapon, which we are bound to keep up in the sheath, or never to draw forth but advisedly, and upon just occasion; it must ever be wielded with caution and care; to brandish it wantonly, to lay about with it blindly and furiously, to slash and smite therewith any that happeneth to come in our way, doth argue malice or madness.—*Barrow.*

### THE MINIMUM CHRISTIAN.

The minimum Christian! And who is he? The Christian who is going to heaven at the cheapest rate possible. The Christian who intends to get all of the world he can, and not meet the worldling's doom. The Christian who aims to have as little religion as he can, without lacking it altogether.

The minimum Christian goes to church in the morning, and in the afternoon also, unless it rains, or is too warm, or too cold, or he is sleepy, or has the headache from eating too much dinner. He listens most respectfully to the preacher, and joins in prayer and praise. He applies the truth very sensibly sometimes to himself, oftener to his neighbours.

The minimum Christian is very friendly to all good works. He wishes them well, but it is not in his power to do much for them. The Sabbath school he looks upon as an admirable institution, especially for the neglected and ignorant. It is not convenient, however, for him to take a class. His business engagements are so pressing through the week that he needs Sabbath as a day of rest; nor does he think himself qualified to act as a teacher. There are so many better prepared for this important duty that he must beg to be excused; still, he will do it if he must. He is in favour of visiting the poor, but he has no time to take part in those labours of love. He is very friendly to home and foreign missions, and gives his mite. He thinks there are "too many appeals," but he gives, if not enough to save his reputation, pretty near it; at all events he aims at it.

The minimum Christian is not clear on a number of points. The opera and dancing, perhaps the theatre and card-playing, large fashionable parties, give him much trouble. He can't see the harm in this or that, or the other popular amusements. There is nothing in the Bible against it. He does not see but a man may be a Christian and dance or go to the opera. He knows several excellent persons who do. Why should not he?

In short, the minimum Christian knows that he cannot serve God and mammon. He would if he could, and he will come out just as near doing as he can. But what if he came out on mammon's side?

A CONFERENCE for the deepening of spiritual life is to be held on October 30 and the two following days at Darjeeling. Friends are expected from all parts of Bengal and also from the central parts of India. Revs. R. Wright Hay, of Dacca, and H. Rylands Crown, of Darjeeling, are among the organizers of the movement.