

definite purpose of increasing our membership. This labor to be seen of men has its reward. The church is tending in the direction of a social club, instead of a mighty spiritual life, seeking the transformation of souls. The world is coming into the church, with its low and indifferent views of godly living. The sea is coming into the ship, and if it is not driven back there can be only one result—the vessel must go down. We are not planning that disaster for the church, for the Master of the vessel has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This promise, however, was not made to relieve us from fidelity, but to encourage our faith and call us to new effort in time of danger.

We must look for the causes that have led to this loss of zeal for the salvation of souls. How and whence comes this light estimate of the work of priceless souls?

How is it that we have come to deal with souls on religious questions as the public is dealt with on political or human logic have taken the place of the flaming sword, the "two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart?"

How did we lose our intense concern for the souls that are marching down to perdition? We once had this prayerful solicitude. We were pressed forward by it into service for individuals.

"Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord;  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word!"—

a view that would not let us rest until we had exhausted all possible effort for the salvation of our fellows?

Need it be written that we have lost a realizing faith in the glorious and the awful revelations which God has given us of heaven and hell, of Divine love and human guilt?

Has not the Spirit of God been grieved by our wayward living? Have not our hearts been hardened through unbelief? Have not our prayers been empty words, when they should have been intercessions with groanings (spiritual aspirations) that cannot be uttered?

Some one, who for a time is a prophet of the Lord, will tell us how and when the Church of Christ is to be lifted into the place of power that has characterized it in the days of the right hand of God. His promise will then be fulfilled—"A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time."—Herald and Presbyter.

## The Fine Art of Living.

BY REV. W. C. MARTIN.

I remember an old Negro in New Jersey who had the sunniest disposition I ever knew, a cheerful, hearty soul; and it was no more trouble for him to laugh than it was for a bird to sing. With a wish to draw him out, I used to express dark views of life, and he would respond with "Laws, honey, you doan' know how to live."

There are a great many who "doan' know how to live." Life is the finest of the fine arts and can be mastered only with infinite patience and ceaseless applications to its lessons. Many graduates have been receiving diplomas recently, but all their learning is of small value if they have not learned this fine art. If they have not learned besides classics and languages and mathematics, to be good and do good, to be happy or at least content, they are worse off than that old Negro, for he was happy and good and cheerful and tolerant, and in a real sense had learned how to live. The very noblest workers on earth often give the world nothing else so great or helpful as themselves. I desire no higher eulogium than one recently passed upon a retired pastor: "What he says is good; what he does is better; what he is is best."

Man is a bundle of habits. His life is almost wholly a following of habit. Habit is second nature. His virtues are habits as surely as his vices. Sobriety becomes a habit, and, if he desired, it would be almost as hard to deviate from the wonted course as it is for the drunkard to go contrary to his. The same is true of habitual truthfulness. A man habituated to church attendance finds Sunday a tiresome day without it, even as the individual accustomed to pleasure seeking on that day finds the church service dull. A healthy state of mind and heart, a formation of right habits, is essential to the fine art of living.

But that is merely fundamental. Being good is that we may do good. "Let me remember," said one, "that I must do all the good I can to those whom I meet in the journey of life, for I shall not pass this way again."

"Every man," said Marcus Aurelius, "is worth just so much as the things are worth about which he busies himself." So measured many lives are worth little, for there are those who are busier about bonnets and flounces, or novels and entertainments, or cards and dances, than anything else, and often to the entire exclusion of the higher and more permanently valuable considerations.

But another important lesson in the learning of this fine art is self-denial. Dr. John Hall used to say that he found it a means of grace to stand before one of the great shop windows in Broadway and thank God for the large number of things in the window that he could do without.

And then, if we have learned well the fine art of living, we shall make our lives steadily more glorious until the heavenly sunset shall crown them. Just before the end came to the well-lived life of Stonewall Jackson, while a smile of ineffable sweetness rested on his pale face, he said, quietly, "Let me cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees," and without pain or struggle his spirit departed. We should all be able to pass the river of death bravely and tranquilly and leave a trail of glory behind us if we have learned as well the fine art of living—Herald and Presbyter.

## The Strength of Sin.

It is being freely said that the sense of sin is weakened. It may be true. But the strength of sin is not weakened, for "the strength of sin is the law," and the law exists. Soon or late, the eternal verities make themselves felt and known. Supremely, as it seems, is this the case with the truth before us. "The strength of sin is the law." It was one of our earliest discoveries as children. Sharp and salutary were the teachings of cause and effect. The moral law, in concrete forms, was revealed with wholesome severity in home and school. Whatever else was vague, that was cold and clear. It was not at all a matter that called for the exercise of reason; it was painfully palpable and that was good. It seems to us in later years, that nothing else which we learned was quite so valuable as the meaning of right and wrong.

It was compass and ballast when we launched at length upon the unknown sea of life. It was not everything we needed, but it bought us far and well. There are days yet—days of storm and darkness—when the sense of right and wrong is the one thing that holds. Ease has gone, joy has gone, light has gone, deep calls unto deep in the soul, even love is threatened with disaster; there is but one of two things to be done—the right or the wrong and well we know that the issue in either event will be tremendous. If we are to judge by much that is written and read to-day, these issues no longer exist. They are quite old-fashioned and out-of-date. Sin is a bogie, born of ancient myth. Personal responsibility is the bias of an ignorant brain. So we read. Here and there Christian teachers have replied to these statements with anger or contempt, only to be charged with want of courtesy and what not.

For our own part we can only say the issues of right and wrong do exist for us, and exist with overwhelming might. That they exist also for the vast majority of people is sufficiently proved by the fact that the earth is not yet a madhouse or a shambles, that it is still a fit place to live in, and that a sense of justice and honor is not uncommon. It is not hard to understand how hot is the impulse to use strong language against this ancient doctrine, served up for modern consumption.

No sin? "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." No sin? Why, it is crushing all the heart out of men and women and children, and reducing them to despair. No law? It is the very strength of sin. It is grinding men to powder. How can it be otherwise when it falls upon a human life? It is the most real, the most terrible weight in life. And if a man feel it not, that is the heaviest penalty of all, for that is moral and spiritual death.

The way to get rid of sin is not to deny its existence. How then? To declare him who came "to save his people from their sins."

"The strength of sin is law."

The law must stand. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfill. "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail."

How then shall a sinful man be justified? "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This Gospel we teach—the Gospel that Christ took our place when he died the death of the Cross, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." We preach it because we believe it profoundly, passionately, with every thread and fibre of our spirit. It has been the power of God unto salvation.

There has been wrought in our heart the personal conviction which was wrought in the heart of the savage Bechuanas, who, on hearing the story of the Cross, deeply moved, cried out, "Jesus away from there! That is my place!"

At the close of an article on the atonement of Christ, Dr. Godet writes, "The 'for me, understood in the sense of 'in my place,' is, in my eyes, the centre of the Gospel, as it is the nerve of Christian life. . . . During the sixty years that I have meditated this question I have found nothing better."

"I have found nothing better." The language is restrained, but is enough, and more than enough. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—F. A. Jackson, in London Baptist.

## When Peace Like a River.

"It is well with my soul," was written by H. C. Spafford, and the popular tune to which it is always sung is one of P. P. Bliss' best compositions. Mr. Spafford was a member of the Chicago bar and an elder in a Presbyterian church,

He had been successful in his profession, but had made some unfortunate investments, and when the financial panic of 1873 seriously disturbed the business of the country Mr. Spafford found that his savings of many years had been swept away. The members of his family were prostrated by this disastrous turn in their affairs and he acceded to the wish of helpful friends that they should visit Europe and thus be removed for some time from scenes of his financial ruin. Mrs. Spafford and her four children took passage on the French liner "Havre," and the story of that voyage is one of the most appalling of the many calamities of the sea. When in mid-ocean and in the backwardness of a November night in 1873 the steamship collided with the Glasgow clipper "Loch Earn," and in twelve minutes the former went down, carrying to death 230 souls, and among them were Mr. Spafford's four daughters. Mrs. Spafford sank with the vessel, but floated again and was finally rescued.

The saved were taken to Havre, and from that city she sent a message to her husband in Chicago: "Saved, but alone. What shall I do?" This message of fearful import—"sufficient to drive reason from her throne"—was the first notice Mr. Spafford had that his dear ones were not as happy as when he parted with them a few days before in New York. In his unutterable sorrow Mr. Spafford did not chant a dirge to impossible hope. When he reflected that his property was lost in destruction's waste, that his wife was painfully prostrated, and that his four children were buried in the dark waves of the sea, there came from his heart of hearts a song of trust and resignation that has many times encircled the globe.

"When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows, like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul."

When Mr. Spafford returned from Havre with his invalid wife he said to his friends:

"I never felt more like trusting God than I do now."

Spafford's hymn of resignation, with its fine musical setting by the lamented Bliss, is one of the most helpful of the many gospel songs written during the past quarter of a century. One Sunday evening a service of song was given in one of our large cities at which the story of "It is well with my soul" was told and the lines sung with great tenderness of expression by the audience and choir. Attending the services was a gentleman who had suffered financial reverses in the panic of 1893. When he heard the story of Spafford's heavy affliction and joined in singing the hymn so pathetically inspired, he said to his wife on their return home from the service:

"I will never again complain of my lot. If Spafford could write such a beautiful resignation hymn when he had lost all his children, and everything else save his wife and character, I ought surely to be thankful that my losses have been so light.—Philadelphia Press.

## The Grass That is Stronger than a King.

BY CHARLES FRANCIS SAUNDERS.

One of the stories of our school histories tell how the courtiers of the great Canute, nine centuries ago King of England, Norway and Denmark, would have laid him believe that he was lord of the sea also; and how he went with them to the beach one day, when the tide was flowing, and commanded it to rise no farther. But the ocean cared no more for the royal mandate than for the sea gull's cry, and king and courtiers had to leave the beach to the resistless passage of the waters. Yet what the command of the monarch could not effect is, under divine law, within the humble grass to accomplish.

In many places along the Sandy beaches of our Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Virginia, and on the coasts of Great Britain and the neighboring counties of Europe, grows the beach grass, or marram, a reed-like grass two or three feet high, coarse in texture, and with stalks tipped in late summer and autumn with narrow, chafly spikes of white, reminding one of heads of rye threshed out. It flourishes in the pure beach sand, where many of us have often passed it by without suspecting the useful work it was quietly performing in the world; for wherever it grows it has a special mission to keep the ocean in check.

The roots reach deep downward and far sidewise in the sand drifts, and intermingling form a strong network, binding fast the sands, which otherwise would be shifting hither and thither under the influence of the winds and the waves. As fresh piles of sand gather about or over bunches of the grass, the latter, instead of smothering, starts a fresh growth upward, ever rising above the piling sands. So for three feet of grass visible, there may be fifty or seventy-five or even a hundred feet of underground stems to a single plant.

Small wonder, therefore, that when the sea beats upon a beach where the marram grass has established a colony, the waters roll back baffled, unable to make headway inland at that place. Thus, a grass, whose fragile stalk a child can break, joining with the sand, which is a symbol of all that is unstable and untrustworthy, effects a union in which the weakness of each is turned to strength and a barrier is set which the mighty ocean must respect.

For generations the dwellers by the sea of Northern Europe have made an ally of this grass in their ceaseless struggle against the ocean's encroachments, particularly in England and Holland, and rigid laws have been passed to protect it. Of late years, also, it has been cultivated to some extent, in our own country for the same purpose; visitors to Cape Cod may have noticed plantations of it there.