

Belligious Miscellany.

"I see no sin in dancing," said a young Christian belonging to a family of wealth and influence, "but the world thinks lightly of Christians who indulge in such amusements, and I wish to have my piety unchallenged."

"How long will your people listen with interest?" said a strange preacher to a pastor. "I have never tried them, and would advise you not to, was the reply. If your sermon is good, don't spoil it by overgorging. If it is poor, they will want less of it."

So dependent is the Christian church upon the Holy Ghost, that there never was an acceptable sigh heaved by a penitent apart from him; never did holy song mount to heaven except he gave it wings; never was there true prayer or faithful ministry except through the power and might of the Holy Ghost.

To educate a soul for heaven is as much a divine task as to emancipate a soul from sin. To comfort a desponding Christian, to strengthen his weak hands and confirm his feeble knees, to brighten the eyes of his hope, and to give him nerve to hold the shield of his faith—all these are the work of the spirit of the living God.

It is not by regretting what is irreparable that true work is to be done, but by making the best of what we are. It is not by complaining that we have not the right tools, but by using well the tools we have. Where we are, and what we are, is God's providential arrangement; and the wise and manly way is to look our disadvantages in the face, and see what can be made of them. Life, like war, is a series of mistakes, and he is not the best Christian nor the best general who makes the fewest of false steps. Poor mediocrities may do that; but he is the best who wins the most splendid victories by the retrieval of mistakes. Forget mistakes; organize victory out of mistakes.

If our religion were one of mere intellectualism, we should only need a well trained minister, who had passed through all the grades of human learning, who had stored himself with the best biblical criticism, and was able to instruct and illuminate our understandings, and we, if we be men of judgment ourselves, could profit exceedingly well. Our faith standing in the wisdom of man, the wisdom of man could be easily found, and our faith could be confirmed. But if our faith standeth not in the wisdom of man nor in the eloquence of human lips, but in the power of God, then in vain do we make a profession, unless the Holy Ghost dwelleth in our inner man.

Now, Christian brethren, disdain to sneak out of trouble. Disdain to send out engineers to see which way you can go and keep out of the forest. Straight and narrow is the way. Take a direct line, and follow it without turning to the right or left. If God sends you trouble, say: "I was built for trouble, as much as the ship that goes to sea is built for storm." If suffering comes upon you, let it not daunt you. Conquer it. And with pride wear the scars which you receive in conflict. The lines and wrinkles on man's face are God's handwriting, and the charter of the man's glory, if we only knew how to interpret such writing.

From old it was decreed, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Jehovah made to meet upon the head of the Substitute all the offences of his covenant people; but each one of the chosen is brought personally to ratify this solemn covenant act of the Great God, when by grace he is enabled by faith to put his hand upon the head of the "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." My fellow believers, do you remember that rapturous day? My soul recalls her day of deliverance with delight; laden with guilt and full of fears, I saw my Saviour willing to be my Substitute, and I laid my hand, timidly at first, but courage grew and confidence was confirmed, I leaned my soul entirely upon him; and now it is my unceasing joy to know that my sins are no longer imputed to me, but laid on him.

A man may worship through awe, or through a sense of duty, and I think there are hundreds of men in the churches now who are only religious men, and not Christians. A man who leans toward God, only awe or fear; who obeys merely from duty; who is under the dominion of conscience rather than love, may be religious, but he is not a Christian. Such live by conscience, they live by a bond, bound by a tie, by fear. Their life is literally one of service; they are fatigued servants of God, not in the sense in which the words are largely used in the Scriptures, meaning simple disciples of Christ, but they are most literally God's hired men, or worse, God's bondsmen. Men must learn no longer merely to fear God, no longer to tremble as before a tyrannical master of a despotic government; but come unto him through Jesus Christ, and say, "Lord, I love thee, I trust thee, and I will serve thee because I love thee."

The church of Christ was designed to represent him on earth, and to minister to all the moral needs of the human race. Her work then, is not done when she sends out preachers and teachers; when she exhibits sacraments and liturgies; when she puts up churches at home and mission stations abroad. She must grope her way into the alleys and courts and perilous of the city, and up the broken staircase, and into the bare room, and beside the leathsome sufferer. She must go down into the pit with the miser; into the forecamps with the sailor, into the tent with the soldier, into the shop with the mechanic, into the factory with the operative, into the field with the farmer, into the counting room with the merchant. Like the air, the Church must press equally on all the surfaces of society; like the sea, flow into every nook of the shoreline of humanity; and like the sun, shine on things foul and low as well as fair and high—for she was organized, commissioned, and equipped for the moral reservation of the world.

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