

THE CHRISTIAN TREASURY

A FAMILY MISCELLANY

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EDINBURGH,
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step by step, through marvellous circumstances to open miracles of power proclaiming and demonstrating the divine origin of the book, so here, as soon as we look within it in even the most cursory way, we repeat the same process and move back from marvel

to marvel, until we reach the open miracle of prophecy, again independently proving the divine origin of the book after a fashion which cannot be escaped or legitimately questioned.

(To be continued.)

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

BY REV. J. R. MILLER.

'A sacred burden is the life ye bear.
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly;
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly;
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win.'

WHAT one thinks about life, what conception he has of that strange thing called existence—particularly what he thinks of his own individual life—is a most vital matter. Life is noble or ignoble, glorious or grovelling, just as a right or wrong, a high or a low, conception is cherished in the heart. No man builds higher or better than his plans. No artist surpasses in marble or on canvas the beauty imaged in his soul, and no one's life can rise in grandeur above the thoughts of life which live in his heart.

No conception is true or worthy which does not consider life in its perspective, not as cut off and limited by the bounds of earthly existence, but as stretching away into immortality and vital at every point with important relations and solemn responsibilities. We are more than animals. Our lives are not little separate atoms of existence, each one complete in itself and independent of all other atoms. He plans very shortsightedly who has no outlook from his hut in his narrow island-home in the great wide sea, and who sees no existence for himself beyond the stoppage of his heart's pulses—that strange experience which men call death.

We can only learn to live worthily when we take into our view and plan all the unending years that lie beyond the grave. We want a vivid and masterful consciousness of our personal immortality. A man who sees but a few bits of rock chipped from El Capitan, and a few dried leaves and faded flowers plucked from the trees that grow in that wondrous valley, has no true conception of the grandeur of the Yosemite; and no more just conception of human existence in its fulness and vastness has he who sees only the little fragment of broken, marred, and shattered years which are fulfilled on this earth. We must try to see life as sweeping away into eternity if we would grasp its meaning and have a true sense of its grandeur or realise its solemn responsibility.

There are streams among the mountains which, after flowing a little way on the surface in a current broken, vexed, and tossing,

amid rocks, over cascades, through dark chasms, sink away out of sight and seem to be lost. You see their flashing crystal no more. But far down the mountain, amid the sweet valley scenes, they emerge again, these same streams, and flow away, no longer tossed and restless, but quiet and peaceful as they move on toward the sea. So our restless, perplexed lives roll in rocky channels a little way on the earth and then pass out of sight, and it seems the end. But it is not the end. Leaping through the dark cavern of the grave, they will reappear, fuller, deeper, grander, on the other side, vexed and broken no longer, but realising all the peace, joy and beauty of Christ; and thus they will flow on for ever. This is no poet's fancy, no Utopian dream of a golden age, no mere picture of imagination. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel. Since Christ has risen again death is abolished, and to every one who believes in Him there is the certainty of an endless life of blessedness in His presence and service. We only begin to live when the consciousness of immortality breaks upon our hearts.

Then there is another element in every true conception of life which is equally essential. No life hangs in mid-air, without relations, connections, or attachments, without dependencies and responsibilities. A man may not tear himself out of the web of humanity and pass all his years on some solitary island in the sea, cutting every tie, casting off all responsibility, living without reference to God or man, law or duty, and fulfil in any sense the true meaning of life.

In every direction there are cords of attachment which reach out and bind every fragment of humanity fast in one great web; and these attachments are inextricable. We may ignore them, but we cannot break one of them. We may be disloyal to every one of them, but we cannot cut one thread of obligation.

A little reflection will show us what these connections are. Whence are we? What is the origin of this life we bear about with us? What are our relations to God the Creator? Our life sprang from His hand. Not only so, but it is dependent upon Him. No more does the trembling leaf hang upon the bough and depend upon it for support and very life than does every human life hang upon God,

depending upon Him for stay and support and for its momentary existence.

Then, as we think of ourselves as Christians, this thought is infinitely deepened. What is a Christian life? We are accustomed to say that it is a life redeemed by Christ's death. More closely defined, it is a life that is taken up out of the ruin of sin and attached to the life of Christ. Apart from Him men are but dead and withering branches having no life, but when attached to Him they become living branches covered with leaves and fruit. As we think of it we see Christ as the one great central Life of the world, and ourselves living only in Him, our little fragment of being utterly dependent upon Him for every beauty, blessing, and hope. We only live in Him. He takes our sins and gives us His righteousness. He takes our weakness and unites it, like a branch grafted upon a tree, to His own glorious fullness of strength. Our emptiness He attaches to His divine completeness. Our lives feed upon Him, and are in every sense dependent upon Him. We have nothing and we are nothing which we do not receive from Him.

Out of this relation come the most binding and far-reaching obligations to God—obligations of gratitude, praise, trust, obedience, service. Our life is not in any sense our own. Its purpose is not fulfilled unless it is lived to accomplish the end for which it was created and redeemed. We begin to study the Scriptures and to ask what is the chief end of life, and we have not to read between the lines to find the answer. Everything has been made with some design. Even a grain of sand has its uses. It helps to build up the mountain, or it forms part of the great wall that holds the sea in its place, or it helps by its infinitesimal weight to balance the system of worlds. A drop of water has its purposes and uses. Creeping into the bosom of the drooping flower or sinking down to its roots, it revives it. It may help to quench the thirst of a dying soldier. It may paint a rainbow on the clouds. It may help to float great ships or add its little plash to the chorus of ocean's majestic music.

'Each drop uncounted in a storm of rain
Hath its own mission;
The very shadow of an insect's wing—
For which the violet cared not while it stayed,
Yet felt the lighter for it vanishing—
Proves that the sun was shining by its shade.'

And if such minute things have their purpose, how grand must be the end for which each human life was made!

We think further, and we find a wondrous network of attachments binding our little fragments of being to the great web of life around us. There are a thousand relationships which link us to our fellow-men, to home, to church, to country, to society, to truth, to humanity, to duty; and every one of these connections implies responsibility.

Obligations touch our lives on all sides. Duties come to us from every point. Every human relationship is solemn with its weight of responsibility.

We think again, and we find that we are in a world in which our minutest acts start results that go on for ever. The little ripple caused by the plash of the boy's oar in the quiet bay goes rolling on and on until it breaks on every distant shore of the ocean; the word spoken in the air causes reverberations which go quivering on for ever in space; and these scientific facts are but feeble illustrations of the influences of human actions and words in this world.

'Our many needs, the thoughts that we have thought,

They go out from us, thronging every hour,
And in them all is folded up a power
That on the earth doth move them to and fro;
And mighty are the marvels they have wrought
In hearts we know not, and may never know.'

This fact charges every moment with most intense interest. The very air about us is vital, and carries the secret pulsations and the most unconscious influences of our lives far abroad; and not only so, but these influences sweep away into eternity. There is not a moment of our life which does not exert a power that shall be felt millions of ages hence. There is something about the vitality and the immortality of human influence that is fearful to contemplate, and that makes it a grandly solemn thing to live, especially when we remember that these qualities belong to the evil as well as the good of our lives.

'The deeds we do, the words we say,
Into thin air they seem to fleet;
We count them ever past,
But they shall last:
In the dread judgment they
And we shall meet.'

We think once more, and we find that life has another attachment—forward to the bar of God. We must render account for all the deeds done in the body. We read more deeply into the divine revelation, and learn that this accountability extends to all the minutest acts and words and thoughts that drop from hand and lip and heart as we move along. It even reaches to the unconscious influences that breathe out from us like the fragrance of a flower. We must meet our whole life again before God's throne, and give account not only for what we have done, evil and good, but also for all that we ought to have done—for the undeveloped possibilities of our lives and their unimproved opportunities.

It is in the light of such facts as these that we must regard the life that is given to each of us. It is indeed a sacred burden. It is no light and easy thing so to live as to fulfil the end for which we were made and redeemed. Life is no mere play. Every moment of it is intensely real and charged with eternal re-

sponsibility. It is when we look at life in this way that we see our need of Christ. Apart from Him there can be only failure and ruin. But if we give ourselves to Him, He takes up our poor, perishing fragment of being, cleanses it, puts His own life into it, and nurtures it for a glorious immortality.

Under a plain marble monument sleeps the dust of one of God's dearest children,* who gave her life to His cause in unwearied service till its last power was exhausted. Cut in the stone that marks her last resting-place is this memorable sentence from her own lips, which tells the secret of her consecration: 'There is nothing in the universe that I fear except that I may not know all my duty, or may fail to do it.' With such a sense of personal responsibility pressing upon the heart at every moment, life cannot fail to be beautiful and well rounded here, and to pass to a coronation of glory hereafter.

SOUL-SAVING PASSION.

Most obviously Peter, Paul, and other early disciples of Christ cherished intense solicitude for the salvation of sinners. The reasonableness of this characteristic of the best Christians that have ever lived appears in whatever light we may view the matter. Not to be thus interested is most unreasonable. During the scene of the disaster by fire, which destroyed a first-class steamboat on the Hudson River several years ago, involving the loss of many lives, a boy on the burning deck was seen to kneel, and with closed eyes commit himself to the care of God. Rising from his devotions, he leaped from the flaming vessel into the river. For a few moments he was invisible under the waves. But soon he rose to the surface, brushed his beautiful hair from his face, and boldly swam to the shore. Upon reaching the land, he turned round to gaze on the wreck from which he had just escaped, and touched with sympathy for the imperilled passengers, he cried out, 'Oh, how I wish I could save them!' With this intensely earnest exclamation, he burst into a flood of tears. That he was deeply affected, no one could for a moment doubt. This touching incident illustrates the spiritual sympathy of a truly Christian heart. Just as that boy trembled and sobbed with almost convulsive desire to save others from the ruin out of which he had been rescued, so a converted soul normally turns with sympathetic longings towards those who are still perishing in sin, and its genuine utterance is: 'My heart's desire and prayer to God for sinners is that they might be saved.'

How can it be otherwise than that the saved should anxiously and actively care for the

unsaved? To be saved is to possess the spirit of Christ, and nothing is more foreign to His spirit than indifference and unconcern for others. Where is the spirit of Christ when sinners are left to say, 'No man careth for my soul'? Christ came to seek and to save the lost. His heart's desire was fully enlisted in the sinner's behalf; He prayed, and wept, and laboured for the salvation of souls. Yea, He even died that sinners might be saved. The Apostle Paul, moved by the same spirit, sought the same object, as it were, regardless of sacrifices to be made or toil to be endured, while he was ready to do or to suffer anything possible and yet lawful, in order that he might increase the number of the saved. He proved the sincerity of his profound desire for the salvation of sinners by labouring incessantly, amidst reproaches and persecutions, while surrounded by almost every conceivable difficulty and discouragement, that he might win souls to Christ, and be the means of their salvation.

Such an example as that of Paul rebukes the too widely prevailing indifference as to saving the lost, and calls for more feeling hearts and active efforts in behalf of those who are not saved. Multitudes bearing the Christian name need to breathe more freely the atmosphere of true Christianity till they have the sympathies of Paul, and, more especially, of Jesus, and their souls become rich fountains of pure benevolence, gushing out in holy effort to save men from their sins. Can too much be done to save a soul? Can any follower of Christ act too promptly or too earnestly in striving to save souls? It should not be forgotten that there is a point beyond which the possibility of salvation ceases, and all that can be done should be done before that point is reached. Countless immortal beings are drifting down the rapids of time towards the terrible cataract over which they may ere long plunge into a hopeless eternity. There is a season when they may be saved, if friends would put forth all possible efforts in order to 'rescue the perishing;' but, alas! too many seem not to perceive the appalling danger to which there is actual exposure, and raise not the warning voice nor put forth the saving effort required. Strange, indeed, and unaccountable beyond measure, is this apathy. If the unquestionable peril of multitudes were seen at all as it really is, surely the most fervent prayers would be offered, and the most vigorous exertions would be made, for the salvation of the sinfully imperilled.—*Watchman.*

ACCEPTABLE SERVICE.—Acceptable service is always free, the heart's deliberate choice. Some wait for God to drive, or lift them into the kingdom, imagining that He can do it, and is unmerciful if He does not. This is to mistake the nature of the kingdom. It is *God's rule in willing hearts.* None will reach heaven who do not *choose* God, and gladly serve Him.

* Mary Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke Seminary. She used to give to the girls in her graduating classes this motto also: 'My dear girls, when you choose your fields of labour, go where nobody else is willing to go.'