

# NEW YORK OBSERVER

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1898.

VOL. LXXVI., NO. 36.

Established in 1823.

Whole No. 3931.

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Postoffice orders should be made payable at New York Postoffice and not at any sub-station.

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Published weekly. Entered at New York Post Office as second class matter

New York Observer 156 Fifth Avenue New York

## Faith Cures and Christian Science

ON a summer evening, I was strolling up Madison Avenue in New York, and as I neared Twenty ninth-st., an open church door on which was the following sign, attracted me: "Christian Science testimonies to-night at eight o'clock." I walked in and took a seat. The building was familiar. There the old Rutgers congregation used to worship, and I had heard Drs. Conkling, Stevenson and Booth preach there, and had twice supplied the pulpit myself, as a favor to Dr. Booth in his absence. A woman sat in a chair on the platform behind the "sacred desk," as the pulpit used to be called. There were one hundred and seventy five people in the congregation, and the sexes were about evenly divided.

When I went in a man was speaking from one of the pews and he spoke for a long time. His testimony was remarkable; indeed it was so incredible that I could not believe it. He testified to his personal recovery from skin disease, dyspepsia, tuberculosis, and a number of other ailments, by simple faith in divine healing. He went farther than this, and said that although he had never been able to see without glasses, and was as helpless as a blind man without them two years ago, that he was suddenly cured. His experience was as follows: He was at the seashore, dropped his glasses, accidentally stepped on them and crushed them to atoms. He could not replace them and was helpless. He exercised faith, saw clearly at once, and had never worn nor needed glasses since. He offered to bring witnesses to prove his statements, and gave his name and address. He spoke simply, without manner or rhetoric, and said that he gave his testimony whenever he had a chance, to glorify God and advance Christian Science.

There were several other testimonies, by women, but they were emotional and hysterical and amounted to nothing. Christian Science hymn-books were in the pews, and there was occasional singing. It was a very hot night and after an hour's sitting I went to my hotel. The cir-

cumstance made more impression upon me because I had recently received several letters, asking my opinion upon faith healing and similar subjects. The Christian Scientists teach that spirit is the only entity, that matter is entirely subject to spirit, that all spirit is of God and in God, and, therefore, if my spirit is in perfect harmony with God, I cannot suffer or be diseased. Hence they say that what are called suffering and sickness, are imaginations and simply show that my spirit is not in perfect accord with God at the time. Faith healing resembles this theory thus far that those who expect a cure because they pray for it and believe in it, think that their special sanctification and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit warrant them in expecting special results, both bodily and spiritual, from their prayers.

For a careful, reverent, and thorough discussion of this subject, from the point of view of a Christian man of Science, though not a Christian Scientist, I would refer to an address made by Dr. Willis E. Ford, of Utica, before the Young Men's Christian Association of that city in November, 1887, upon "Miraculous Cures." From this paper, I venture to quote a few sentences of a general nature, which are illustrated by many cases of personal experience in an extensive practice:

"Faith in the efficacy of mysterious and miraculous means for curing diseases is the legacy of centuries of superstition, of mistaken religious teachings, fostered in later days by the pretensions of ignorant or designing persons, by the half-implied sanction of some religious bodies, and by the teachings, as well as the manners, of many physicians of the age just preceding ours. \* \* \*

"The doctrine of the faith healers or those who employ the prayer cure, seems to be based upon a misconception of the meaning of certain isolated passages of Scripture regarding the efficacy of prayer. Now the intelligent religious world believes in prayer, its necessity for the good of the subject, its efficacy in the manner appointed by God, but it does not believe that fervent prayer, with faith without any other effort can, or ever does, or ever has since the time of the Apostles, changed the fixed and wise laws of Nature, solely to please and possibly to benefit any individual. If it be admitted that these great laws may be changed, that the order of nature may be reversed in a single case, then it is fair to assume that the laws were and are defective, or that personal solicitation may accomplish what God is unwilling to do for the race, either proposition being abhorrent to any orthodox Christian man. The egotism and assumption of those who promise cures by this means is simply appalling. That the doctrine has not been vigorously attacked by the churches is probably due to the fact that any disparagement might be construed into a general declaration against the efficacy of prayer. There is a great and vast difference, it seems to me, between praying for an object and trusting God for the manner in which prayer shall be answered, and the dictating to the Almighty that He shall do a specific act in a prescribed way and at a given time.

"Carried to its logical conclusion, faith-cure would prevent any such thing as death, and similarly if men set about it, the laws of gravitation, of light and heat could be changed. The whole economy of nature was not set in motion to minister to the personal wish or comfort of any individual or set of individuals, not even men of great faith,

The life or the health of any human being cannot be said to be of greater consequence in the universe than the fulfillment of the great purposes of creation for which laws are perfected, among which are the laws of disease and the inevitability of death. This ought especially to be conceded by these-called prayer cure and faith-cure people, who believe the Bible, including the doctrine of immortality and the blessedness of the future state. \* \* \* The claim of faith-healers that Christ came into the world to save both the body as well as the soul, is nowhere warranted by the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach that He hallowed our sufferings and took away the sting of death, but not death itself. Even He prayed, 'if it be possible let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' Every prayer offered in this spirit is becoming of every Christian man, but the dictation to the Almighty as to the time and method of carrying out his purposes toward men, must be looked upon as sinful presumption, while the actual practice of faith healers is not above the jugglery of mesmerists, or the witchcraft of Indian doctors."

Through more than twenty pages, Dr. Ford illustrates his subject with incidents and experiences, as marvellous and forcible as any that have ever been recorded in the annals of faith cure and Christian Science, analyzing each and explaining all upon grounds of reason and common sense to the entire satisfaction of any impartial reader. His conclusion is that "the danger of admitting the possibility of miraculous cures in these days is as great, as that caused by the inroads of any form of unbelief or even atheism." It remains for those who claim such cures, to show that they are incapable of any other than a miraculous explanation, and I am inclined to believe with Dr. Ford that this cannot be done.

AUGUSTUS.

### Give Me Thine Heart.

The Heavenly Wisdom calls,  
Her gracious smile enthalls,  
Her voice like music falls,  
My son, give me thine heart.

It is thy Father's voice,  
That bids His child rejoice  
And make the blessed choice,  
My son, give me thine heart.

It is thy Saviour! He  
Whose love constraineth thee,  
Now calleth tenderly,  
My son, give me thine heart.

The Holy Spirit pleads  
To satisfy thy needs,  
To bind the heart that bleeds,  
My son, give me thine heart.

Mattituck, N. Y.

CHARLES E. CRAVEN.

### "The Chief End of Man"

IT has been said that Milton's view of his own life, as expressed in the last line of his sonnet "on having attained to my twenty-third year," is the essential condition of Puritan thought. The poet tells us his future was to expand

"As ever in my great task-master's eye,

and we can accept the dictum provided we do not put too much stress upon the idea of God being a task-master. The central thought of the Puritan world was the personal relationship between God and His people. We are fortunate in having this crystalized for us in the noble opening question of the Shorter Catechism. I can never grow weary of praising that question, and its glorious answer. It has long seemed to me the very gate not only to a worthy life, but to Heaven itself.

Quite recently I was reading a volume of Robert Louis Stevenson's essays, and I came upon the following striking passage in an essay entitled "The Foreigner at Home." He is speaking of the position in Great Britain of the somewhat neglected Scotchman, overlaid as he is by English names, words and thought, and yet neve-

losing his native vigor and individuality, and he says:

"About the very cradle of the Scot, there goes a hum of metaphysical divinity; and the whole of two divergent systems is summed up, not merely speciously, in the first two questions of the rival catechisms, the English tritely inquiring, 'What is your name?' the Scottish striking at the very roots of life with 'What is the chief end of man?' and answering nobly, if obscurely, 'To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.' I do not wish to make an idol of the Shorter Catechism; but the fact of such a question being asked opens to us Scotch a great field of speculation; and the fact that it is asked of all of us from the peer to the plowboy, binds us more nearly together."

Here is a somewhat unexpected testimony from a source which cannot be suspected of any leaning to scholastic theologizing of the power of this grand old Puritan formula to lift men to communion with God, and to humble all men in the presence of God. Is it not the chief glory of these Westminster Standards that they place all men on a perfect equality before God, try every theory of life by one standard of service, and glorify human life, not for anything in man, but for what God by His grace is able to do for it in Christ Jesus?

The permanence of the impression made by the Catechism is well illustrated in the testimony borne in his old age by Thomas Carlyle. He said in 1876:

"The older I grow—and now I stand upon the brink of eternity—the more comes back to me the first sentence in the Catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper its meaning becomes."

To-day we are apt to think of such a statement of the norm of human life as out of keeping with our time and only to be learned by reference to some more strenuous age. It is at least true that the idea was the very staple of thought in the Puritan epoch. We find a fine illustration of this in a letter of John Winthrop the younger, written to his father the great governor of the colony of Massachusetts Bay, in 1629. In assuring his father of his purpose to join him in his emigration, he says:

"For the business of New England, I can say no other thing, but I believe confidently, that the whole disposition thereof is of the Lord. \* \* \* And for myself, I have seen so much of the vanity of the world, that I esteem no more of the diversities of countries, than as so many inns whereof the traveler that hath lodged in the best or in the worst, findeth no difference, when he cometh to his journey's end; and I shall call that my country where I can most glorify God, and enjoy the presence of my dearest friends."

There was a foundation in young Winthrop's individual case for a life of high service, and it was nobly rendered. There was a like foundation in the temper of the times for the large patriotism so well expressed in Winthrop's phrase, and for lives of pure devotion and unselfishness sacrifice, and the fabric built on that foundation is found in free England and independent America.

Easton, Pa.

ETHELBERT D. WARFIELD.

### Fort Thomas Hospital

ON a beautiful July morning, we visited the general hospital at Fort Thomas. It is situated on the Kentucky shore of the Ohio river, about five miles from Cincinnati. The fort, now a hospital, is furnished with an appropriate number and variety of buildings. The residences of the officers and of the soldiers, the parade ground, the winding roads, the beautiful natural scenery, the fine views up and down the river, the lofty stone tower, etc., present a scene of charming variety. The commandant at the hospital is Deputy Surgeon General W. H. Gardner, who ranks as lieutenant colonel in the regular army. He is assisted by a large hospital staff. The chaplain recently appointed is the Rev. Mr. Vatterman. Thus the spiritual interests of our soldiers are provided for. Many fervent prayers for our brave men will ascend to God from thousands of Christian hearts.