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THE CHRISTIAN TREASURY

A FAMILY MISCELLANY

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CONTAINING

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MINISTERS AND MEMBERS

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VARIOUS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS.



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THE SPIRITUAL RELATION OF CHRISTIAN WORK TO THE
CHURCH AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

BY REV. ROBERT SMITH, A.M., CORSOCK, BY DALBEATTIE.



N the general aspect of the case, it is readily admitted by all that a mutual connection does exist between life and work. The difficulty lies in realising its importance, and especially the importance of the fact that the connection is not one-sided, but in the strictest sense mutual.

Life is necessary to work, but work is equally necessary to life. And this holds good not only in principle, but in degree. Work gives back to life as much as it first received from it. The law of the physical world—that action and reaction are equal and contrary—is of equal force in the spiritual. The hammer delivers a blow to the anvil, but the anvil returns it back again to the hammer. And so it is with all things that are in a true sense mutually related. The cause becomes an effect, and the effect is turned into a cause alternately. So it is, as between *truth* and *life*. The knowledge of truth produces life—life in its best form as a living experience—but this last is the key to all further increase of knowledge. So also does it stand with the second pair, *life* and *work*, with which we have at present specially to do. The first condition of Christian work is true Christian life; but the first condition of the maintenance and increase of true Christian life is faithful Christian work.

Nor is this reflexive influence of work on the life from which it springs to be regarded

as incidental, or only of comparative value. The work must, of course, vary in form according to the circumstances of each individual. But in some form or other it is an essential element of his Christian calling. Without it, his spiritual life can never be healthful or strong. And, indeed, its entire absence would argue the extinction of life altogether.

As hinted already, there are two pairs of reciprocal relations to be attended to here. Truth, life, and work are all co-related. Of these, truth is related to life, and life to truth; and, again, life is related to work, and work to life.

It thus appears that the life occupies a middle position, being related to truth on the one hand, and to work on the other. Truth, entering the soul through the channel of faith in the power of the Holy Ghost, kindles the new life there; but by the same power it issues forth again, and appears in all works of holiness and love.

But this circuit of life must be complete. There must be a reverse as well as a direct current; and if it be interrupted in either direction, the flow of life ceases. Now, it is admitted on all hands that spiritual life must be nourished and sustained by Christian truth. But I doubt whether the idea be so familiar to our minds as it ought to be, that it is equally dependent on Christian work for its growth and strength.

Two utterances of our Lord concerning His own life possess a deep significance in relation

ourselves seriously and in dead earnest to seek it from the Lord's hands. His mighty arm is not shortened that He cannot save; neither are His waiting ears heavy that He cannot hear us; nor is He unwilling to give us the desire of our hearts. But is not this one of the questions? *Is it the desire of our hearts to be so revived and blessed? Is not the lack of this desire one of the evidences of our need? 'Ye shall seek Me and find Me in the day that ye search after Me with your whole heart.'* He does not willingly withhold; but blessings bestowed without hungering and thirsting after them, yea, and seeking them with our whole hearts, would simply be wasted, because not appreciated, or even taken hold of. The satisfied soul can receive no more. If we are content to live satisfied with temporal blessing and worldly prosperity

and comforts, then will we have no room for spiritual riches. Perhaps the first form of a true revival will be to show us our spiritual poverty. We are not particularly partial to the old methods of dreary introspection; but might it not be a good beginning for each of our readers to sit down and take an honest account of stock of spiritual things, and find out just what we have and what condition our spiritual possessions are in, and then ask ourselves the question, 'How much owest thou?' In this way we might find out what our estate is, and be led to turn with our whole hearts to the Lord, both confessing our poverty and sin, and seeking revival, deliverance, and spiritual wealth at His gracious hands, who will not be impoverished by giving, nor enriched by withholding.—*Independent.*

STOP BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

A PLAIN TALK WITH YOUNG MEN.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.



A YOUNG man, who had just lost an excellent situation by a two-days' 'spree,' came into my study lately and said to me, 'Doctor, I cannot understand how it is that I should have made such a fool of myself and thrown away my chance for a living. This is almost killing my little wife.' I replied to him, 'There is no mystery about your case. You have been tampering with drink a long while, trying to jump half way down Niagara. You ought to have stopped before you began. It would not have cost you one-hundredth part as much effort to have signed a total abstinence pledge several years ago as it will now to break loose from this terrible habit.' I entreated my friend to grapple his weakness to God's strength; he signed a pledge of entire abstinence, and went away with the desperate look of a man who is pulling for life in the rapids, in full sight of the cataract.

That young man is a fair representative of a sadly numerous class who 'lock the stable door after the horse is stolen.' He may possibly be saved, but so as by fire. My plain talk to-day is with those who have not yet flung themselves into the rapids. I wish to give half-a-dozen common-sense reasons for letting every intoxicating drink (whatever its name) entirely alone. He who never touches a drop will assuredly never become a drunkard. Prevention is easy, is safe, is sure; reformation is difficult, and with some persons is well-nigh impossible. The Jews were commanded

to build battlements around the flat roofs of their dwellings in order to prevent the children from falling over into the street. To put up the parapet cost but little; but the want of it might cost broken bones; and, alas! what human power could recall a dead darling to life? I am always thankful that I took a pledge of entire abstinence in early boyhood. But for that battlement I might have been ruined by the drinking usages which were deplorably prevalent in my college. 'Stick to the teetotal' said a shrewd old kinsman to me when I started for college; and now, after forty years, I wish to commend the bridge that carried me safely over.

(1.) The first argument, my young friend, for total abstinence is that no healthy person *needs* an alcoholic beverage; and even invalids had better be careful how they tamper with it as a medicine. Sir Henry Thompson and several other distinguished British physicians have deliberately declared that 'alcoholic beverages cannot, in any sense, be considered necessary for the maintenance of healthy life; that it is not a food in any true sense of that term; and that the steadiest and best work is best done without it.' Livingstone, the heroic explorer of Central Africa, was both a physician and a teetotaler. His testimony was:—'I find that I can stand every hardship best by using water and water only.' I entreat you not to fall into the delusion that you can do any honest work the better by firing up your nerves with alcohol. If you do you will have to increase the fuel

constantly in order to produce the effect. Solid food and sound sleep are all you require. Even as a tonic medicine, wine and Bourbon may cover up a great deal; they *cure but very little*. Several friends I have known to be decoyed by them into drunkenness and disgrace.

(2.) Therein lies a second reason for avoiding all intoxicants. They are deceitful. Not only the sting of the serpent but the subtlety of the serpent is in them. The deception lies in the fact that the *habit* of drinking will become confirmed before you suspect it. That young man who came into my study so tortured with the adder's bite never dreamed at the outset that he was playing with a rattlesnake. Every alcoholic drink has in it this quality, that it never satisfies, but awakens a constant demand for more. A small glass creates a thirst for a larger; one draught only whets the appetite for a second. This is not the case with any wholesome food or beverage. Bread and beef do not breed excess; one glass of milk does not arouse a morbid thirst for two the next time. But this horse-leech quality in alcoholic liquors, which cries 'give, give,' and is never satisfied, is the very thing that makes them so dangerous. This it is which makes it so difficult to drink wine or brandy moderately, and so easy to fall into drunkenness. A healthful beverage satisfies appetite; a hurtful one, like wine or brandy, stimulates appetite until it becomes an uncontrollable frenzy. This I regard as the Creator's *law against alcohol*; and when you take your first social glass you begin to play with a deadly serpent.

You may say 'Ever one who drinks liquors does not become a sot.' Very true, but every sot drinks liquors; and not one in a million ever expected to become a sot when he began with his champagne or his 'sherry cobbler.' Will you run the risk? I would not. The two reasons why I am a teetotaler are that I dare not trust myself, and I dare not tempt others by my example. The most deplorable wrecks are those of men or women who at the outset considered themselves perfectly strong and invulnerable. Nothing from the pen of Dickens can surpass a heartrending letter which I received from a cultured gentleman (then in an almshouse) who declared that he traced all the misery of his life directly to the 'first glass he ever drank at the N—House, in the capital of Ohio.' First glasses have peopled Hell! With whatever 'odds' in your favour, will you run the fearful hazard? Then stop before you begin!

A third reason why alcoholic drinks are dangerous is, that it is the peculiar property of alcohol to strike directly to the *brain*. Some drugs have an affinity for the heart, others for the spine. The glass of brandy aims for the brain, as a hound makes for a hare. In striking the brain it overturns the throne of the reason and turns a man into a maniac. Like the shot in a naval battle, which hits 'between wind and water,' the alcoholic

death-shot strikes where body and mind meet, and sends both to the bottom. No brain is proof against it.

The mightiest man intellectually whom I ever saw in America, I once saw pitifully drunk! Alcohol is no respecter of persons; the giant and the idiot are struck down alike by its stiletto. You might as well put the pistol to your brain and make swift, sure work with it, as to poison your brain by the slower and equally deadly process of the bottle. Ninety-nine hundredths of all the suicides in the land began with a thoughtless glass. Stop, my friend, before you begin!

All intoxicating drinks are more dangerous in this country than in almost any other from the nervous temperament of our people. Our climate is stimulating, and American life, in almost every direction, runs at a high rate of speed. Youth is commonly stronger at the engine than it is at the brakes. This is pre-eminently true of our young men. One unanswerable proof of the difficulty of stopping the drink-habit is found in the fact that so very few are actually reformed. Not one-tenth of those who enslave themselves to the bottle ever break loose, even though they cry out in their sober moments 'Would to God that I might never taste another drop!' There was a touching pathos in the speech of one of our 'boys in blue' to the police magistrate after he was arrested for drunkenness. He held up a whisky flask and said, 'Your honour, the only enemy that ever conquered me is *that!*' Yet he admitted that enemy himself, and could not dislodge it.

I might multiply arguments in favour of total abstinence as the only certain safeguard. The grace of God is powerless if you voluntarily yield to temptation. It is a defiance to the Almighty for you to leap into the rapids and expect Him to save you from the cataract. No small part of my own life has been spent in bootless efforts to save those who were in the swift and treacherous current. The remainder of it shall be spent in endeavouring to prevent young men from embarking on the stream which is all music and mirth at the starting-point, and all death and damnation at the bottom. Tons of arguments and appeals have been printed on this vital question, 'how to save young men from strong drink?' but they all may be condensed into one line—*Stop before you begin!*

UNWORTHINESS. — Let not unworthiness scare the children of God. Parents love their children, and do them good, not because they see that they are more worthy than others, but because they are their own.—*Leighton.*

SIN. — Those who can look with dry and displeased eyes upon another's sin never truly mourned for their own. It is a godless heart that doth not find itself concerned in God's quarrel; and that can laugh at that which the God of heaven frowns at.—*Bishop Hall.*