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Our Correspondent Going Down the Amoor River Under Russian Escort

The Thrilling Story of Mr. North's Perilous Journey Across Siberia and Through the Russo-Chinese Battlefields will be found on page 865

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WHEN IT IS FINISHED

IT is never safe to judge of anything before it is finished. Take a house, for example. While building it is a scene of rubbish; foundation-stones, lumber, bricks, lime scattered about indiscriminately. Take a single season in Nature, winter, for example, it is all snow and ice; spring, it is all confusion in the ploughed acres. A field of wheat, when it is full grown, is like a pattern of watered silk, swaying before the wind. As autumn comes on, it becomes a sea of gold, and is soon gathered into the garner. When it is finished! What does this mean in the verse, "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"? There is only one legitimate and inevitable conclusion to sin. It does not come at once. Indeed, men often think that while this conclusion has overtaken others, they have escaped it. A young man's youthful indulgences may poison the very fountains of health. Evil men and seducers live not out half their days. Half their days would be a half of three-score years and ten. Dr. Cyrus Hamlin, at Lexington, Mass., has lived ninety years; Professor Park, of Andover Theological Seminary, ninety-two. When their lives are finished we shall see all the more clearly what we now see, that the path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect way; that a hoary head is a crown of glory when found in the ways of righteousness.

BUILDING OF YACHTS FOR SPEED

IT is natural that Great Britain, who rules the ocean, should want to beat her trans-Atlantic daughter in a yacht race. It seems to her that a half century is long enough for the American cup to stay over this side of the great waters. We regard racing of this kind, as, perhaps, of every kind, of secondary importance. The question should never be, Who can build a yacht and sail it the fastest? but, Who can build a yacht that has the best yachting qualities, speed, strength and beauty, and so manage it as to win the cup from an antagonist that competes for the same qualities? With regard to the *Columbia* and the *Shamrock*, we think they were very nearly equal for speed, but that the Yankee management of the *Columbia* was superior to the British management of the *Shamrock*.

One good result has come from the races. The British nobleman has shown

us how to be beaten gracefully. Indeed, Great Britain has had so many lessons from this side that all her people ought to have learned that art. Lord Tennyson has put the matter with grace and vigor in these lines:

Gigantic daughter of the West,
We drink to thee across the flood;
We know thee, and we love thee best,
For art thou not of British blood?
Should war's mad blast again be blown,
Permit not then the tyrant powers
To fight thy mother here alone,
But let thy broadsides roar with ours.

We were speaking of yachts and not vessels of war. We hope and pray that as to these we may enter into no competition with our mother; and so long as her cause is what Tennyson calls "the great cause of freedom," we are not likely to desert her.

HERESY-HUNTING

HERESY-HUNTING has been virtually laughed out of court. Lyman Beecher was tried and Albert Barnes was tried and Professor Swing was tried and what good did it do? This is what men say. Is there then, no difference between truth and error? Is there no such verse as that which warns us against bidding error Godspeak? We think ridicule of heresy-hunting may have dissuaded some of us from doing our duty. There is a line between truth and error which men ought sacredly to regard. On that line they ought to stand. The degree of an error, the importance of it, the question whether it may not be better to suffer it, than to agitate against it, these are questions of expediency. I may have strong convictions on a single doctrine. To me it may seem essential to vital Christianity. I could not doubt it or neglect to defend it without injury to my own soul. But it may not be my prerogative to judge whether it is essential to salvation, especially to the salvation of one who has never been taught to recognize its importance.

Doubtless, there was an old-time treatment of Christian doctrine, which has been improved upon. It magnified the letter above the spirit. There is certainly a way of treating difference in doctrinal belief, which implies charity toward those who differ from us. It may seem essential to my salvation from sin, that all the attributes of the Godhead be revealed to me in the Man Christ Jesus. The text most needful to me may be, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." For my brother, it may be more important to remember that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

AWAY WITH PESSIMISTS

HERE part forever with all the cynical and saturnine. I do not want to live on the same street with them in heaven. They will always be singing out of tune, and searching for fractures in the amethyst, and finding fault with the country. Give them a world to themselves where they can have an eternity of pouting, a sky full of drizzle-drozzle, an owl in each tree to hoot away the hours, and a kennel of snarling rat terriers to nip the robe of every angelic intruder.

A ROBUST RELIGION

WE keep our religion too much indoors; it ought to be climbing rocks, or hewing forests—a stalwart religion, a robust religion, a religion able to digest the strong meat of the Word—instead of being kept on the pap and gruel of spiritual invalidism. It is high time that we threw off the Sunday clothes of sickly sentimentality, and put on the work-day dress of an active, earnest Christianity.

The Quality of Friendship

ONE of the most delightful adjuncts to personal happiness is the possession of a friend. We all take it for granted that we have friends, although, we constantly assert, that the rush and hurry of our era is fatal to the growth of friendship. It is said that there are no Davids and Jonathans now, that men and women are too unheroic, too selfish and too quarrelsome for true friendship. But Dr. Johnson, who lived before the new era, in his very longest words, pronounced his times equally unqualified for it.

It is true that friendship in its beginnings requires an amount of steady leisure that might in these busy days be called waste; for though friendship is proved by adversity, it is nursed in freedom, ease, and in long happy hours; so that no friend can be made without some such expenditure of time and personal interest as might in many cases be ignorantly called "waste."

But as people come into the stress and storm of life, our advanced civilization makes greater and greater demands on our time—we have not leisure to make friends. It must be noted also that great cities prevent those close friendships of barbaric ages—we are so far apart, that we neither spare the vitality, nor yet the time to cultivate a close intimacy. Yet, in spite of all these drawbacks, there is the same capacity for friendship in the human heart, the same craving for it, and the same delight in it that there was in the days of David and Jonathan.

It is often asserted that there are no friendships between women, and though this is a hard saying, most women will admit its truth. There is, however, a natural reason for this almost insurmountable fact—it is, that friendship needs diversity of character. A friend must not be a reproduction of ourselves; he or she must be something added to ourselves. If they are not so, there is no room for the process of mutual adaptation and mutual completeness. And it is just in this vital point that women are deficient. They are too much alike to be friends; that is, they don't differ from each other as men differ from men. Amid all their manifold diversities, there is that underlying resemblance—that something not to be accounted for or explained—which we call "a woman's way of looking at things." We may realize this quality by the common instinctive assertion of women that they understand a woman, simply because they are women. No man professes to know another man, because he is another man.

In all other respects women are of the stuff that friends are made of. They have self-sacrifice, great tenderness and tact, quicker sympathies, keener apprehensions than men, but there is too much underlying similarity for the best type of friendship between one woman and another woman. Hence there are few legends telling of women sacrificing themselves for women; but literature is full of stories of women doing heroic deeds for their fathers, brothers, sons, husbands and lovers. And it is remarkable in this consideration that the stories of men's devotion to men, without any tie of kindred, are also very numerous. It is evident, then, from the fact of kindred and sex entering so largely into women's deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice that they do not as women compliment each other; on the contrary, their intimacy strengthens all the weak points in their characters.

There is, however, a professed prejudice against friendship between the sexes; but the excellence of this relationship asserts itself above all cavillings and suspicions. No moral commonplace is so generally acknowledged as the value of a good woman's influence over man. Keeping this in view, we must also admit that there never was a time when early marriage was so difficult, except to the wealthy; never was a time when the sexes were so much thrown together on terms of equality; never was a time when greater intimacy was socially sanctioned. Now if this companionship is to be one altogether of complimentary and formal politeness, it will be a source of moral degeneration. If this intercourse is to be entirely one for frivolity and amusement, and if all the serious feelings are to be excluded from their life together, then these feelings will make for themselves irregular channels, or they will die out. If we never venture below the surface, we must necessarily become superficial.

It will be immediately said that friendship between the sexes never stops at friendship;

it becomes love. What then? It is presumed that the friendship to begin with was in every respect a proper and suitable one; if so, is there any better stepping-stone to love than that esteem, which springs from a knowledge of each other's character; a sympathy in each other's tastes and an interest in each other's pursuits? Of course, there may be unjust misrepresentation and unkind criticism, and this to most women would be a formidable obstacle. For no woman can disregard social opinion, and indeed the very women who would make the noblest friends are just the women who would not disregard social opinion. But the world is not nearly as censorious as people imagine. It is far oftener impatient of absurdity than suspicious of evil. A friendship avowed without obtrusion, that is independent, without affectation, and which neither affects secrecy, nor thrusts itself into notice, will not produce ill-natured remarks from any one whose opinion is to be regarded. In most cases, when people are talked about, it is their own fault; if they respect themselves they have set the fashion of being respected.

As to the qualities necessary for a true friendship, we must first of all be sure that the feeling is one of disinterested affection. And if any one has the power to inspire this feeling, in man or woman, let them be proud of the ability, and grateful for it. There are many devoted husbands and wives that could not be a true friend; they don't "have it in them." Again, friendship is not formed till the need of it is felt. People who can tell everything to everybody, who can give the world a thoroughfare through their hearts and their lives, never feel this need. They have no sanctum for a friend. All they want is a listener.

A friend that is easily made is the best friend, and the most lasting. It is possible to take a great deal of pains to win a friend, who after all is found to be little worth the winning. There should be from the very first interview something of that happy sympathy which comes from two minds vibrating readily and truly together—the answering glance, the understanding smile, that shows approval; the subtle fusion of opinion and feeling, which implies liking and choice.

Friends should be equals. There can be no stooping in friendship, as there may be in love. Friends must walk on the same level, in all respects. No suspicion of interest, or of patronage, must chill the warm glow of mutual satisfaction in each other's society. No one can count a companion to be a friend, when there is a constant fear that they are going to be used, or a constant attitude of being on the defensive, for their self-respect.

But the most important fact about friendship is that it should develop and bring to the front the best and highest qualities of our natures. If it does not do this, it fails radically. We cannot make a friend of a man or woman if we find ourselves in their company duller, more irritable, more selfish than when we are alone. For it is the office of a true friendship to brighten our faculties, to make us more original, far-seeing and generous, and to touch our spiritual lives to finer issues than solitary reflection is capable of doing. For just as leaven by its mere presence in the meal changes every particle, so does the mere presence of another human being affect for good or evil those with whom they come in contact.

Considering these things, it is most important to our happiness that we make friends, not only because men are most just to those whom they love, but because in the multitude of our affections our hearts are enlarged, and the more ties there are binding us to others the better and the happier we shall be. People generally have friends who are capable of friendship; and as there is no more subtle and pleasant tincture in the composition of happiness than the thought that "we deserve it," such people may add this pleasant self-approval to their affection.

Lastly, we may be sure of one thing, that sincerity is the vital air of friendship. We must be true to our friends, and not say one thing with our lips, and another with our actions. Indeed, we could not do this wrong for any length of time, for the power of character arises from its truthfulness. In vain shall we profess to be what we are not, the mask will continually slip aside, and in the feeling of those we would deceive we shall be known for exactly what we are.

But, thank God! there are for all of us, if we deserve them, hearts that know how to love, great hearts that we shall find true and full of valiant tenderesses, though the earth quake, and the heavens melt, sincere hearts that have a woman's compassions to soothe our sorrows and a man's ambitions to stimulate our efforts—friends to whom our happiness will be very dear, and our worth dearer still. Friends like these are great treasures; and if God has given any of us, even one such a friend—man or woman—let us bind them to us with everlasting cords of love, and continually thank God for so great and good a gift, until

"We come to the place of our rest,
Each traveler comes with his friend."

Amelia E. Parr