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The Christian Point of View

THANKING GOD FOR MERCIES

AMONG the many letters which come to me at this season of the year, are some which are full of encouragement and help. There are those who always write in a critical and not infrequently a fault-finding spirit. Their words are sometimes an excellent oil that does not break the head, but oftener like vinegar and nitre, which is rather a disagreeable mixture to take. Radical Reformers, who usually wish to reform everybody and everything but themselves and their own bad manners, are most unpleasant people, and every editor has more or less of these to deal with. Hence, friendly, sympathetic and optimistic words, whether spoken or written, gladden the editor's heart and give him courage and cheer. Of such a sort was the following extract from a letter which came from a friend, who, in a distant land, and among a strange people, finds most of his reading about American affairs in the columns of the New York Observer. It is not needful to add, for the information of persons who read the extract, that the chief interest of this pious soul is in the welfare and progress of the Kingdom of God. For those who are like this writer, all things earthly have one central point, and everything that takes place is part of a divine movement in the interest and for the coming of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. One who thus believes cannot be a pessimist, and has no reason to be a chronic fault-finder.

The letter to which I referred, runs thus: "The accounts of the Riverdale meeting, Presbyterial gatherings for prayer, evangelistic plans of the Assembly's Committee, and other similar movements which I read of in The Observer, are most satisfactory as well as encouraging; for whatever the results, these things are in themselves altogether blessed and ought to be the normal life

of those separated unto the Gospel of God. During later years I have prayed daily for the ministers I know, and for those whose work I know, and for all who are actively engaged in Christian work. As I read of these spiritual refreshments at home, I am now able to thank God for His spiritual mercies."

This is a view from the Christian standpoint: "Whatever the results, these things are in themselves altogether blessed." How many doubts and anxieties such a temper of mind puts to rest! It is not an indolent acquiescence with things as they are, nor a blind fatalism, but the quiet resting of the believing and trusting soul upon the word and will of God. We have used the means which God has given us, we have improved all the opportunities which have been offered, we have followed, so far as we are able, the divine leading. In doing thus, our souls have been happy and blest. We hope for certain definite results, and still labor and pray and hope for them, but if these do not come, and if very different things occur from what we expected, we are not to be dissatisfied, and go out with the prophet Elijah under the juniper-tree. Rather with humble gratitude for the enjoyment of the divine life in our own souls, with thanksgiving for our union with so many of God's true children in efforts to glorify and honor Him, we will ask ourselves: "Should it be according to Thy mind?" and in serene faith and undiminished enthusiasm, we will continue our efforts for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Christian ministers and workers are too ready to limit results to their own narrow horizon. Here is a disciple of the Master who has been praying for a number of years for ministers and others who are engaged in Christian work, and especially for those in and around New York. The answer to these prayers is now seen, and thankfully acknowledged in the spiritual mercies of which he speaks. It may not be possible to point to any single individual in whom the prayer has been answered, though this is not said; but there have been gatherings for prayer, and plans for religious work, and a deeper spiritual life among Christian people, and these are counted as divine refreshments, and tokens of favor and answers to petition. This is the Christian attitude. He sees mercies where doubters and unbelievers can see nothing. If God should bid him go up to Carmel and look out to sea, he would discover the cloud of blessing, even though no bigger than a man's hand, and when the desired rain came in floods upon the dry ground, he would not be surprised, though very grateful. He is expecting something from God. He is waiting in quietness and confidence for an answer to his requests. The position is one of mingled faith and humility. He is "living the normal life of those who are separated unto the Gospel of God." We need more of these Christians at home as well as abroad; hopeful Christians, who hope as well as patiently wait, who when they cannot fly in the service of the Master, fold their wings and sing His praise. The Christian standpoint is built upon faith in God's promises and hope in His mercy, and the outlook embraces so many public, private and general blessings that it always causes gratitude and praise.

Augustus.

DANGERS OF HASTE

THE appalling disaster in the Park Avenue tunnel of this city January 8, in which fifteen people were killed outright and thirty-six seriously injured, by a rear-end collision between a Harlem "local" and a Danbury express coming in over the New Haven road, points more than one moral, whether considered from a theological or a mechanical standpoint. It is difficult to determine the precise Providential aspects of such a calamity. As for man's part in the matter, until a thorough investigation of the causes of the accident has been made by the proper authorities, it would be unsuitable to try definitely to locate the blame for the disaster. Indignation against any one individual should not blind public opinion to the demerits of any faulty system of transit which may now be in vogue. The public demands a victim, but it has no right to arraign any but the right victim. Calm, dispassionate judgment must in due time arrive at a verdict on these points.

It is quite proper, however, in any discussion of this shocking disaster to insist upon a moral that is less obvious than other lessons, and which yet should be taken to heart by the general public. This is the peril that besets undue haste in almost every activity of life. There is a feverishness of spirit which is peculiarly characteristic of Americans, that tempts multitudes to rush to their places of business in the morning, dart nervously hither and thither during the day, and rush home at night over the "L's," the ferries, or through the tunnels, to repeat the process every day in the week, scarcely punctuating the course of fevered activity by even a few hours of sensible meditation and worshipful occupation on the Sabbath.

Such velocity of movement greatly increases the dangers of travel. Whether or not a train is more likely to leave the rails when proceeding at the rate of forty miles than at that of twenty or ten miles an hour, the chances of appalling destruction if the impact with an obstacle is made at the higher rate of speed are very greatly increased. Yet the public is continually clamoring for yet more rapid transit, although in the case of many a traveler a few minutes or a half hour added to the length of the journey would make no material difference in the work of the day. If the average traveler were at liberty to make his choice between swifter trains and slower trains which were safer, the problem would be simpler, but as matters stand, especially where an insufficient number of tracks is used, the safety of the general traffic is no greater than that of the fastest train that goes careering along the road, jeopardizing slower trains, peremptorily demanding a right of way, which is not always, alas! practically afforded.

Until the American people abate somewhat of this inordinate desire for rapid traveling, the risks of travel, despite the best precautions that can be or that ought to be taken, will continue to be very great. Indeed, it is matter for congratulation that, considering the large masses of humanity that are daily moved in and out of the city over the congested railway lines, more accidents have not occurred in the past. At the same time, railway directors and managers should be vigorously urged by public sentiment to introduce on the systems of which they have control, additional precautions, including improved signals, additional tracks, improvement of motor power and of rolling-stock, and possibly, in some cases, the introduction of electricity. The public has a right to demand a thorough provision for safety in railroad traveling, provided it does not complicate that demand by an appeal at the same time for dangerously high speeds and velocities that are unreasonable. Half the work of this busy world that is now performed at lightning speed would be better done if it were done more slowly and deliberately. And yet we know that the writer of this editorial will be annoyed, if the next trolley car he signals fails to stop, even though another is due in a minute.

Our Captain

TO THEODORE LEDYARD CUYLER—READ AT A CELEBRATION OF HIS EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

BY CHARLES LEMUEL THOMPSON

Fill—fill up your glasses—with Croton!
Fill full to the brim, I say,
For the dearest old boy among us,
Who is ten times eight to-day.

It is three times three and a tiger—
It is hand to your caps, O men!
For our Captain of captains rejoices
In his counting of eight times ten.

Foot square on the bridge and gripping
As steady as fate the wheel,
He has taken the storms to his forehead,
And cheered in the tempest's reel.

He has seen the green sea monsters
Go writhing down the gale,
But never a hand to slacken,
And never a heart to fall.

So it's—Ho!—to our Captain dauntless,
Trumpet-tongued and eagle-eyed,
With the spray of the voyage behind him,
And the Pilot by his side.

Together they sail into sunset—
Slow down for the harbor bell,
For the flash of the port, and the message
"Well done"—It is well—It is well.

So it's three times three and a tiger!
Breathe deep for the man we love;
His heart is the heart of a lion,
His soul is the soul of a dove.

It is—Ho!—to the Captain we honor,
Salute we the man and the day,
On his brow are the snows of December,
In his heart are the bird songs of May.

New York.

SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS

RUSSIA'S
TRANSCON-
TINENTAL
RAILWAY

One of the most remarkable achievements of modern times is the completion of the great Russian transcontinental railway. It is true that our country set the example by its railways across the continent of America.

We laid our rails over and under mountains, across deserts and above great rivers, and joined the Atlantic and Pacific oceans with iron bands. This was done by private enterprise, aided and fostered by the Government. The Government of Russia has imitated our example in spite of immense obstacles, and in a little more than ten years it has built a line upon which one can travel from Moscow or St. Petersburg to Vladivostock on the shores of the Pacific ocean, in elegantly furnished, lighted and provisioned trains. The journey is amazing. It leads across vast steppes, which are like our rolling prairies, over desert regions, and immense tracts of fertile valleys, as yet thinly inhabited, and through dense forests, and by means of thirty-nine miles of bridges it crosses many broad and deep rivers. There is one break of forty miles at Lake Baikal, where huge ice-breaking steamers transfer the entire trains from shore to shore. Of course, there is, as yet, no such service as is given on the American Transcontinental trains, but this will come in due time, as it has come gradually in this country. And when Russia has joined the Baltic and the White Sea by a grand railway combination with the Northern Pacific ocean, the hour will have struck for her to reach down and with a mailed hand, open the gates which now prevent free passage from the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean, and thence to the Atlantic. Russia will then easily become in a century the most powerful nation in the Eastern Hemisphere if not upon the globe, and her