

THE MID-CONTINENT

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THE RECOMPENSE.

There never was a night so black,
That did not sometimes pass away,
Revealing unto us the day,
More precious in the shadow's track.
There are no griefs that we must bear,
That are too hard for us. God knows
How many and how long he woe
We need to make our heaven more fair.
When angrily the billow rolls,
The Lord will walk upon the sea
To us in our infirmity,
And whisper peace unto our souls.
O happy ones who bear the rod!
Beyond the darkness of the night,
There is a morning full of light;
"Be still and know that I am God."
—EDWARD C. DOWNING.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE HOSPITAL.

BY REV. CHARLES L. THOMPSON, D.D.

[From an address to the Society of the Presb. Hospital, N. Y., Dec. 21, 1890.]

In the early ages salvation meant getting through an unfriendly world into heaven. It meant running the gauntlet of fire, fighting with wild beasts, through the arena of the Coliseum making a swift rush through the open gates into paradise. The exigency of a persecuting world pressed that phase of salvation to the front. Then came times, not of fighting the world, but evading it, when men tried to slip past into heaven in the silence of a cell, or a cavern, or a monastery. To be saved meant to deny the body and starve it that the soul might live. St. Simeon on his pillar, scorning his body that his soul might be free, was the type of Christianity then. I need not remind you how far from these ideas was the conception Christ gave of salvation. How grandly deep, how inspiringly broad was that conception! It went to the very depths of very human need, and to the very breadth of human society. He founded a kingdom. Its base was on earth, reaching to the limits of humanity; its top-stone was in heaven, the angels wheeling round it and singing "Grace, grace unto it."

His idea was not to wreck this life in order to secure the next, but to save them both. His idea included not only a new heaven, but a new earth, and in the Apocalypse a hint is surely given of the coming glory of humanity, when we are told not that humanity ascended to heaven, but that the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city, came down to dwell with men.

Christ's ideal of His kingdom was good news for this dark world. Christ's redemption provides not an escape like Lot's from burning Sodom, but a kingdom in the bodies of men and in the body of human society, which shall renew the face of earth and make it fair enough to be a footstool of God.

In illustration of this broad conception of Christ's kingdom notice He took to Himself a true body. So from the ground up we are bound to the nature of Jesus Christ. Notice, also, He put the human body in the foreground of His ministry. He was first of all the Great Physician; the first Christian hospital was in the heart and hands of Jesus Christ. It is customary to say: "Christ's miracles of healing were in order to prove His divinity." But that cannot exhaust the meaning of those miracles. They had another—shall I not say a deeper meaning? Christ's divinity is in all His life and works, and in all the stream of Christian history that flows from them. That will take care of itself. But His ministry to the body enlarges our conception of His kingdom. The kingdom of grace at that point slips into the kingdom of nature; He waits to save not only man, but humanity. Christianity shall have a complete victory; it shall scorn no human need, and its ideal shall be a strong, clean, physical temple that may worthily resound the praises of a ransomed soul. Not only so, but the soul shall have an instrument fit to do its work.

The spirit of the Gospel shall look out upon the world through clear eyes, and walk toward a world's needs with feet both swift and beautiful; and steady shall be the nerves that sustain and express the mighty energies of a consecrated nature. So Christ touched sightless eyes, healed lame feet, and lifted paralyzed hands into strength. Thus the foundation of a hospital are laid not alone in Christ's compassion. That

indeed, the good Samaritan idea, goes into every such corner-stone. But far more than that, a restored body is necessary not only to impress Christ's piety, but His great conception of the scope and power of His kingdom. In that kingdom the body plays an important part.

The Gospel presents the exact opposite, and it does it for the first time in the history of the world. The Egyptians, indeed, took care of the dead body—teachings of their doctrine of immortality. But Christianity, in the interest of both time and eternity, takes care of the living body. Its first and special ministry is to that which is sick and lame and turned out of the way. Indeed it has a message to strength and culture; it has a message to the Greek Acropolis and the Roman Forum.

But on the way to the heights of culture it stops with a divine compassion in the vales of human misery. Its picture of ideal service is not that of a priest or a Levite on the way to the temple to offer bullocks on the altar, but of a Samaritan, whose worship was in doing good to a wounded man. A certain phase of science says: "That is all right: put them in the wine-press of social competitions, squeeze the life-blood out of that which is weak."

But the world, more humane, demands help. It turns to Christianity and says: "You claim to come from heaven. Prove it by lifting the dark mass of poverty and sorrow up into light." We need not try to evade that test. It is sharp, but it is just. Why should we talk of eternal joy if we have none for this dark present. We must give what the Gospel calls an earnest of the future inheritance by giving people a better time here.

There is a man in England who has a superb dream of lifting the fallen and healing the sick. Do you say General Booth is a dreamer? Well, I thank God that the Gospel can inspire such a dream.

The Presbyterian Hospital is working on the great problem. It stands across the street from the Theological Seminary. All my habits of life incline me to lay stress on the intellectual defences wrought out in the latter institution. But if Jesus Christ were to come to New York, as I recall His visits to homes of sorrow and sickness, I believe His first visit would be not to the seminary, but to the hospital. Only once He disputed with the doctors in the Temple, but to the end He was the Good Physician.

NOTES FROM THE CRESCENT CITY.

REV. ROBERT IRWIN, D. D.

Suffering from serious results of the "La Grippe" of last year, and feeling unfit for the pressure of school life at home, I have sought with my wife, refuge in New Orleans and the Gulf coast. How easily and quickly we came. Selecting the best route, the Cairo Short line, we made the trip, 700 miles, in less than 24 hours. A smooth track, few stops, a palatial car, gentlemanly officials, and excellent eating houses, what more can one desire?

Leaving St. Louis the evening of a beautiful day, we awoke the next morning in Tennessee to find a fearful snow storm raging. We were forcibly reminded of our little granddaughter, who a week ago, arriving in San Antonio, after having heard so much about the land of flowers and sunshine, was surprised to find the day dark and cool. Looking out at the rain as it dashed against the window of the Hotel she said: "Well this is a good joke on Texas." So thought we of the Sunny South. However, we soon passed the snow line, and emerged into sunshine.

The day following our arrival being Sabbath we sought the First Presbyterian church to hear Dr. Palmer. His church faces on Lafayette square, and is the leading Protestant church of the city. The congregation was large, with an unusual number of aged people. The services were plain and simple and severely Presbyterian. The sermon was grand, tender and inspiring. I had heard Dr. Palmer at Assemblies before ministers in deep logical sermons that carried the head by storm; but this sermon, in his ordinary ministrations carried the heart as well. His text was, "The Master has come and calleth for thee." Although past 70 years of age, Dr. Palmer has all the vigor of early manhood. He speaks without notes, and from an experience that has not escaped the cup and the cross. He

is master of true pulpit eloquence. Though his sermon was an hour in length, there was no perceptible sign of weariness in the audience; for he had something to say, and drove it home with an earnestness that commanded attention. A striking contrast to the fifteen minutes essays too often demanded by spiritually dead churches—sermons, if you can call them such, that have no more food in them than school girls' essays.

I remarked that it was in this church that the Assembly met, back in the fifties, before the separation. It was impressed on my youthful mind by one incident which my father told us on his return home. A large number of commissioners came by boat. Saturday night overtook them far above New Orleans. They entreated the captain to tie up over the Sabbath; but he would not grant the request saying that it would cost too much. When he assured them that the boat would lose \$500, a subscription was at once started and the cost paid over to the captain and the boat was tied up. Sabbath services were held in all the regions round about, and this example of Sabbath keeping was heralded abroad and had its effect.

In the evening we attended the Prytania Street church from which Bro. Ferguson was called to the West church in St. Louis. By appointment of Presbytery Dr. Willard preached and declared the pulpit vacant. The people of this church are devoted to Bro. Ferguson and speak in the highest terms of his devotion and success in the work here. It was a sacrifice to part with him, for under his untiring ministry the congregation had grown rapidly, not only in number, but in spiritual power. The large number of young people, whom we saw at the evening service gave promise for the future growth of the church.

This is a queer city, yet deeply interesting in its history, its peculiar situation, and its heterogeneous population. I will tell you more about it again. The winter has been colder than usual, as blighted banana trees indicate; yet not too cold to prevent roses from blooming. It does seem strange to be shivering in your winter wraps, while passing yards full of beautiful and fragrant flowers.

The visitor cannot fail to see the line so plainly dividing the old from the new city, the foreign from the American. In the old French Market you hear the commingling of nations, with queer customs and strange tongues. Even John Chinaman elbows his way through crowds of French, Spanish, Portuguese, Indians, Italians, Creoles and Negroes. Here the streets are narrow and dirty; the houses old and quaint; the architecture and trimmings bespeak a bygone age.

Near by are places of historic interest, the oldest Cathedral built in 1724; the Cabildo, built by the Spaniards where all the transfers of the country from one sovereign to another were made; Jackson Square, with its historic association, as the "Place d'Armes," now ornamented with an equestrian statue of Gen. Jackson; and not far away the mint, and the Bishop's Palace. You wander up and down the narrow streets so like foreign cities that it is hard to realize you are in America. It is said that thousands of these people have never crossed Canal Street, the dividing line into the American portion.

We were out in the cemeteries and were deeply interested. Burying above ground is a necessity, from the nature of the soil. Tombs of brick or marble are built above ground, containing vaults for several persons. When the space is needed for some other member of the family and the body is decayed, the bones are removed and placed in a vault below, and the remains of the coffin burned. Thus, many burials can be made in the same tomb during a series of years. Many of the private vaults are expensive and beautiful, costing from \$10,000 to \$50,000 each. Great care is taken in ornamenting and preserving these "Cities of the Dead." It is an expensive mode of burial, but less revolting than the deep damp ground.

We have already seen much of the city, its busy marts of trade, its fine drives, and its inviting homes, with blooming flowers and broad verandas. Yet there is more to see. One is attracted by the great tanks in all the yards, cisterns above ground. They look so much like beer vats that an Englishman remarked that the people of New Orleans must be great beer drinkers. These supply the water for household purposes. We are among a hospitable people and shall pass the time with pleasure and profit. More again.