

THE

FREE CHURCH CIRCULAR.

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The Truth shall make you Free.—John 8: 32.
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Home-Talk by J. H. N.—No. 38.

[REPORTED FOR THE CIRCULAR.]

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SINCERITY.

We are saved by faith. Not by sham faith, nor by poetical or theoretical faith, but by genuine faith. The Bible gives the true epithet that should go with the word faith in our minds;—it speaks of '*unfeigned* faith.' There is a very special necessity for this discrimination of quality in these days; for we cannot help seeing that there is a great deal of faith which will not stand the test of actual life; and faith *unfeigned*, thorough, sincere, genuine faith, is evidently pretty rare. But, as the Bible declares, we are to be saved by faith; and whether any qualifying epithet is added or not, we cannot be doubtful of God's meaning in the declaration. Christ said 'He that believeth shall be saved.' There is simplicity in Christ's character which made it unnecessary for him to add the epithet sincere, or unfeigned, because we are sure without it that he means that. But it is pretty necessary for those who have worldly, loose habits of thinking to put on the qualifying term;—'He that believeth *sincerely* shall be saved.'

Salvation itself is an easy thing,

considered in this view. God is very ready to pour himself out into us, and become our God, when we present to him sincerity, and really seek and accept him in our hearts. There is no difficulty on his part, no want of generosity, no coquetry. We are perfectly certain that he is truthful in all his dealings with us. Taking that view of the matter, and assuming that we have sincerity on our side, it is certain that we can have all good things. To take any other view of it—to suppose that we can come to him in a genuine, earnest heart, and not get what we want, is to put a most abominable imputation on God. It is to assume that he is a stingy, austere, capricious being, that his promises are not sure, and that we must deal with him as we would with a man, with whom we are in difficulty, that is, only when he is in good humor. But it is not allowable that God is any such kind of a character; and if *not*, the difficulties are all on the other side, and can all be summed up in the lack of sincerity. Here are persons who say they are sincere, yet they have a good deal of difficulty; they believe on Christ, yet they often find themselves carried away by evil influences; they think they have surrendered all to Christ, and yet from time to time they find

themselves out of order, and the thing has to be done over again. I protest against allowing any of this kind of experience to bring us into a quarrel with God, or into a feeling that he is capricious, which expresses itself by the old question—'What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?' How can it be that a person surrenders himself to Christ, and finds afterwards that it does not hold? What is the meaning of it? They say they are sincere. I admit that they are sincere in a certain sense, but in another sense they are not sincere. If possible, we will find out the exact truth in the matter, and get a true definition of sincerity, which will explain it.

Suppose, for instance, a family consisting of a father and mother and eight or ten children, and the father of the family, in the first place, wishes to join our Association. Suppose now that this individual father, acting upon his private choice and without taking the sense of the rest of the family, comes and joins us, so far as he is concerned, in good faith. We say he is sincere in that, and enter into an engagement with him. But when it comes to the actual matter of putting himself with all his interests and appendages into the common unity, we find right away that his family is not prepared for it. We find that that family is a unit, that he is only one member of that unit, and hence, that while there is one vote in favor, there are ten against it, and he is so locked in that he cannot stir effectually. I should say the man's position in respect to the Community is sincere in one sense—he is sincere as an individual, but he is not sincere as a member of that family, for he is involved in a unit which is double minded and insincere.

To show the bearing of the illustration,—our affections and passions are separate things in us, as separate as the different members of a family. Our love of sensual enjoyment, in all its different forms, our love of worldly honor, of property, of children, our amateness, combativeness, and all our various passions, are like the different members of a family. Now suppose that those passions and affections in a person which are of the most serious character, and relate most directly to God, feel bound to take the lead in certain circumstances, and propose to surrender to Christ; it is like the father proposing to join the Association. The person's attention for the time being is confined wholly to the working of that department of passion and affection; and he verily thinks himself sincere in his surrender to Christ. An attachment takes place between the man and Christ at that point. But that affection is only one vote in the man's nature, and it may turn out in a general assembly of the affections, that there are ten votes against it. I should say the man was insincere. That individual passion is sincere, but it is counteracted by the action of other passions and affections, and so by mutual resistance, insincerity is the result. The person's experience is good at one time, and bad at another, and of course he is double minded. Suppose you moor a vessel with a bed-cord; it would be enough to hold it in still water, when there was no wind; but let a storm come on, and it will not hold. You may ask whether a vessel anchored with such a cord is sincerely moored? I may reply, Yes. Considering the circumstances of no wind and calm weather, the bed-cord is enough; but let a storm come on, and you will need a

cable as large as a man's leg, and nothing short of that will be a sincere mooring. The cord would serve if the vessel was not to be thumped about ; but considering all that it is liable to, a chain cable is necessary. So it is with human nature. A degree of sincerity as big as a bed cord will hold the character and keep up some communication with Christ, but is that sincere faith ? I say no. Sincere faith is only that which will hold us to Christ under all the circumstances that we are liable to.

Now what kind of sincerity is this ? What is the chain cable ?—and how shall we get it ? To answer this we will go back to the first illustration. In order to surrender to Christ, we must get a vote of all the members of the family, not simply of an individual affection. *All the affections must offer themselves up, before we can have the sincerity required in that passage—' Except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.'* 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all thy heart*;' i. e. there shall be a unanimous vote for him, and nothing short of that is thorough sincerity. That is mooring with a chain cable. Just so far as there is any division in our affections, and part for a measure and part against it, just so far we are inevitably insincere.

We are quite liable to make ourselves insincere by false views of our nature, and giving heed to the legal doctrine to which we are bred in the churches. The way of treating human nature that is in vogue in the legalist churches is this : they do not suppose it is necessary to get a vote of all the passions, but they let those passions which are noble and good, those that they consider the religious passions, act themselves out, and suppress all the rest, as having nothing

to say in the case. This is the doctrine of legality ; and it is certain that a person who undertakes to proceed in this way will be insincere, because you cannot put down the baser passions, as they are called. They are there—they will hold still while you go to church, and say your prayers ; but sooner or later they are up again, and with a loud voice will vote, and make you a hypocrite, causing you to pursue an opposite course from the one you take when your religious passions are acting by themselves. This idea of suppressing the passions is carried still further by some, who undertake not only to suppress but to annihilate them, and even get to think they are annihilated. This will certainly lead to insincerity, still greater than before ; for if persons have taken up such a false view of human nature, as to suppose that any passion can be annihilated, and go forward on that supposition, they are prepared to stumble over facts and into explosions ; they will surely find themselves acting differently from what they calculated on, when they commenced their imaginary course.

This is the way that persons are defeated in their attempts to be religious. Christ's way is not on this fashion at all. He says, ' If a man forsake not all that he hath he cannot be my disciple.' If you say that is a self-denying, legal view of the matter, you do not deal fairly by him, because he goes on to say, that the disciple shall have an hundred fold. What is Christ's course ? It is his method to take all these passions and make them work for him. He says to them, If you will not seek your own pleasure, I will give you an hundred fold. This he says not to one passion but to all ; and seeks to get a unanimous vote for himself in every part of a man's

nature. This is the only way to make men sincere. What is insincerity? It is a state in which there are two parties, and their wills draw first one way, and then the other, making the mind vacillate, so that a man will see clearly now, and then cannot see at all, according as the different parts of his nature prevail. That is being [insincere, double minded; and that state is inevitable, until we take the right view of human nature, and bring up every part of it to see its reward in Christ. Then we shall be thoroughly sincere, and not till then.

Christ said 'How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?' There is no difficulty in being saved, if you believe; but Christ propounded a great difficulty in the way of believing. He does not simply say, 'How can ye be saved who seek honor one of another,' and there stop; he adds, 'and seek not the honor which comes from God.' He does not propose that approbateness and a sense of honor should be annihilated—he does not want to get us into a state where we don't care what men say about us, and leave our approbateness out of account; but he wants us to seek the honor that comes from God, so that approbateness can be gratified. This valuing the opinions of others, loving their praise and being distressed by their blame, is a good thing, and no character is complete without it. But the question is, Whose praise shall we seek? If you let this affection work in an unsubdued way, toward men around you, it will make you insincere. Reason with the passion, and convince it that its true gratification will come by seeking honor from Christ, and it will be a great help to you. In the one case it will make you insincere, in the other it will

intensify your devotion to Christ. I love honor, and have naturally a great sense of what others will say, and I can bear an infamous name not because I am insensible to disgrace, but because I have found more honor and glorious honor coming from God. Among other things. I expect to be honored by God and the hosts of heaven; and it excites my faith, and the prospect of it fires my ambition. The more the passion works, the more earnest and devoted I am to seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and of giving myself wholly to Christ.

Sincerity is the great thing needful in this matter; and I insist that that is all that is needed to beautify us. I know God is not capricious, stingy or unfaithful. The idea that great talents are necessary in order to overcome the difficulties in the way of being saved is a false one. It is false modesty that sets us to thinking that we cannot attain any thorough victory in faith—that it belongs to others who have more talent and intelligence than we. It is a false view of the nature of salvation. All that is wanted is sincerity on our part; the rest God will do. If you say one has a better opportunity of *being sincere* than another; that is a more plausible view of the matter; but to say that one has not an opportunity to learn and be educated as well as another, does not hit the case at all. The difference between one and another's actual attainment in Christ, is just the difference between one and another in sincerity. It all lies there; for the actual results of union with God are not at all proportioned to the human element, but to God's genius. A state of salvation is a state where we are filled with the fullness of God. The fullness of God is an *occe an* in any char-

acter, whether small or great, high or low. God is great, and any body that will be great must be full of God. Do you ask, How shall I get this fullness? We say the key to the whole matter, is sincerity. You say that I am more successful in spiritual things because I have more talents and leisure; but just look at it. Persons who have been bred up in the way I have, to study theology, who have leisure, education and talent, as the priests for instance, make the greatest hypocrites in the world. They do not make the greatest attainments in spirituality as a class, but generally not so great attainment as those who have less opportunity for cultivation. It is not fair to lay to my education and talent what does not result in other cases from this source. The fact is, I have been more sincere and honest than other men. I have gained a more unanimous vote in my nature for Christ. I mean what I say more than other folks do. I imagine if you take a fair view of the results in other persons, bred as I have been, you will find that I have been in the worst circumstances to attain spirituality, and in those most fitted to draw me into hypocrisy. I do not care about personal credit in the case, but if persons think that I am about the right sort of man, as to attention to religion, I want they should lay it to the right cause. As long as they lay it to my opportunities and talents, they are wrong, and they will not get at the truth of the matter, till they lay it to my sincerity. If they know the real cause, it may incite them to sincerity; and I don't care what a man's situation is, or what his talents are, if he is thoroughly sincere he will attain to all good things. There is where God meets us, we touch him there, whether we are high or low.

Sincerity is a beautiful thing to him; it is clean; his spirit delights in it. There are none so low but they can touch him there, and none so high that they can touch him any where else.

It is so incomparably important that we be sincere, that it becomes us to analyze the thing, and find out what it is. There is misery enough, and sham doing enough, and sham experience enough; and I trust our miseries in that respect will at last bring us to a true understanding of sincerity, and that will put an end to these disappointments. If we are a sincere people we shall prosper inevitably, and the fullness of God will be given us in every thing. Salvation is safe and salvation is easy with that condition. If you ask, How shall I go to work to be sincere?—how shall a person recover themselves from worldliness? I should answer by referring you back to the beginning of your experience in faith, for the same process that took place then is good for us all the way. I should say, begin in the affection that is general and universal, and lay out the strength there, in the centre of the being. What is this centre? It is love of happiness. That is generic; that is what we want in every thing. Do you say that there is a sincere desire for happiness in every body? I deny it. People are shallow, superficial and insincere in their desires for happiness. What is real desire for happiness? It is not a desire for present happiness. It is not to set to work to get all we can out of the little nut-shell that surrounds us. It is love of all the happiness that we are capable of—of a happiness that is as broad as immortality. If we do not love happiness in that way, we are insincere, our love of it is a sham. If we begin rightly with ourselves, and civili-

zation is introduced into the centre, it will right away go out into all the affections, and alter the direction of all of them. If all the happiness that a man seeks comes by what money can buy, then his affections devote themselves to that general idea of happiness; that is the guide and gauge of the whole of them; they follow one another, and as far as that matter is concerned they are controlled by the central passion—there is unanimity in the state. Now if there is a change in the centre, and the heart is set on heaven, there also is a beginning of sincerity, which will end in bringing every part of your nature to vote for Christ. I do not blame people for seeking pleasure too much; the real complaint is they do not seek it enough. It is a good prayer, 'Lord give us grace to be honest.'

CRITICISM.

[SELECTIONS FROM REPORTS FURNISHED BY OUR SYSTEM OF CRITICISM.]

THE DRIVING SPIRIT.

While Mr. S. is liable to execute things in a driving spirit himself, he is also liable to be driven by other men. This would be the natural way in which the legal spirit would work. One who is possessed of a spirit that would put legal influences upon others, would work under that spirit himself. And perhaps we can trace the secret spring and inlet of all Mr. S.'s difficulties back to this liability to be driven into things that are not wise from a sense of duty. If a man works with a primary reference to his obligations to man, he is in a legal position. God makes us free, and will make our work for him sportive and attractive. When we act with reference to our obligations to man instead of God,

we find ourselves crowded and cornered up. To go back in Mr. S.'s case to the transaction which we know has had much to do with his spiritual tribulations, it is manifest that he acted in the case from a sense of duty to man—a legal feeling of obligation that would not allow him to consult God. The obligations were pretty plausible and imperious, and instead of lawfully rebelling against them, and asserting his liberty with reference to pleasing God, he yielded to the legal pressure, and hence all manner of mischief. Now he is under pressure to the claims of his business, to the demands of his employer. But there should be a feeling in his heart of obligation to God first. In all cases of driving, he may act as if he was going to die; that is, leave all to consult God's wishes first. Acting from a sense of duty is acting under a spirit of fear—a fear of being censured. Mr. S. should not come under such contract and engagement to man as that he will be propelled by an influence of that kind. If fear instead of love is the leading motive, he will not be in a position to have any strength of heart; he will be without inspiration. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God;' and if his eye is toward man, however imperative the obligation, there is no faith in it, and of course he cannot please God; and if he does not please God there is no life in his actions.

A man who is steering a vessel for a point five miles beyond him, might take a small object on a level with his ship for a guide, or a mountain right beyond it. I want Mr. S. not to steer by the small point of necessity, but by the mountain of love. There is a way to get a specific change in the impelling motive, or the point of sight, even if our outward course is not changed. Get

love in, and act from that, and refuse entirely to act from any legal pressure, and in that way you will change the whole nature of the transaction, and get it round into faith and love, which is the central element of the kingdom of heaven. Make love govern your actions instead of necessity and duty. 'The strength of sin is the law.' The very thing that appears to tend toward righteousness is actually tending in the opposite direction. Men who act from sense of duty are sure to fall into damning sins. In one sense such men are worse off than men who care nothing about duty. Allow of no obligation to man that is not subject to our obligations to God. Consider yourselves minute men, liable at any time to be called away from all occupations and engagements by God. Let this be the attitude of your heart, 'if the Lord will I will do this or that.' Let us always regard this principle in our dealings with the world, and not allow ourselves to make unconditional promises to man. We see in Mr. S.'s case the awful consequences of coming under any obligation to a spirit that does not take God into the account. In one view of the case, he was justified by a sense of honor and justice, in another view he committed a crime against God.

Those who have a driving spirit conceive of God as driving them, and often find themselves under pressure and compulsory influences, as they suppose from the spirit of God. But God is never in a hurry; he moves upon us gently. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.' God will secure to us all the light that is necessary, and have every thing reasonable and right, before he requires us to act. Whenever we are pushed up to act in haste by a spi-

ritual influence, or by man, and are thereby prevented from obtaining the counsel of the spiritual, and the best judgment of minds around us, we may know *positively* that there is a devilish spirit influencing us, and should stop at once.

The driving spirit is a great breeder of laziness. 'The strength of sin is the law;' and the strength of laziness is driving. The driving spirit is death to work. If you feel dull and shiftless, you may be sure there is driving somewhere.

The Two-Toned Universe.

The universe is an instrument of innumerable strings, on which God pours forth the music of his heart. Like the *Piano Forte*, its tones are both *soft* and *strong*.

The Bible is a note-book, accompanying the instrument.

If you either listen to the strains which are ever sounding through creation, or look over the notes of those strains, you will find that God's everlasting melody is at once full of *seriousness* and full of *mirth*.

If you would make the tones of your heart a harmonious accompaniment to that melody, you must first take lessons in *seriousness*, (which is the *soul* of all God's music,) and then you must learn to combine *seriousness* with *mirth*, as these are combined in all the harmonies of nature and of the Bible.

Destruction of the Temple of Nauvoo by a Storm.—The Temple of Nauvoo, erected by the Mormons, finished in 1845, partially burnt in October 1846, having but its four walls left,—all its timber work having been consumed by the flames—was destroyed by a hurricane on the 27th ult.

On arriving at Nauvoo, in March, 1849, the Icarian Community bought this Temple with a view to refit it for schools, studying and meeting halls, &c., and many men were employed in adapting the building for those

uses, when a frightful hurricane burst suddenly on the hill of Nauvoo, with lightning, thunder, wind, hail and rain, completely prostrating the walls. P. Bourg, Secretary of the Icarian Community, in a letter to the St. Louis Republican, says "They will begin again, on the place of the Temple, provisional and urgent constructions, that will serve until they build another large and fine edifice."

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GEORGE W. NOYES, EDITOR.

ONEIDA RESERVE, JULY 5, 1850.

☞ *Correspondents will bear in mind that our Post-Office address is—"ONEIDA CASTLE, Oneida Co., N. Y."*

Economy of Faith.

It is the doctrine of Dr. Franklin that a man must not live up to his income. Three books have been published within a few years, with these titles: 'Living beyond our Means,' 'Living up to our Means,' and 'Living within our Means.' The Franklinites say men must live within their means; another class of persons take the other extreme and live beyond their means. From some examples, and some pretty striking passages in the Bible, it appears to be God's pleasure that men should *live up to their means*. Take the case of the Israelites with regard to gathering manna. They gathered enough every morning to last them through the day, and when there was a necessity for it enough for two days, so that they need not work on the Sabbath. If they gathered more than they wanted for one day it bred worms and stank. (See Ex. 16, & Num. 11.) This exactly corresponds with that saying of Christ—'Take no thought for the morrow,' and with the petition in the Lord's prayer, 'give us this day our daily bread.' There was no provision made for the future. In 1 Tim. 6: 5. Paul speaks of those

who suppose gain is godliness, and then says, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain; and *having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*' The Franklin spirit says you must not be content till you have laid up a store to use all the way through. Such cannot use the Lord's prayer—'Give us this day our daily bread.' They say, give us an insurance of our bread for all the days to come.

Here we are right out on the great question of capital; whether accumulation of capital beyond necessity of present use is desirable. Suppose I have more means than I can employ, am I not keeping the surplus out of use? and, however profitable it may be to me, am I not robbing others by taking it out of circulation? If I get interest for it, I check the use of it in society. Is it right for me to have more property than I can use, which is unavailable to others?

If we adopt this principle, that true political economy forbids accumulation of capital, and puts us on the basis of the Israelites—'give us this day our daily bread,' and keeps us there, we can see it is a principle that continually nurses faith. The other principle of laying up stores, continually supplants faith. That consideration is enough to settle the truth of the two principles: one nurses faith; the other nurses love of money. If the principle is true, that all accumulation renders property unavailable, we see that society is now excluded from a great part of the wealth of the world, which it ought to enjoy. If we could introduce the true principle in the case, the actual comfort, happiness and power of the world would be greatly increased, by letting loose what is now kept in useless store. Society is impoverished, and it is made hard to pro-

cure a living, by individuals taking out a great amount of property for their own security. Suppose a piece of ground by cultivation from year to year will raise wheat enough for twelve persons for as many years. But suppose one man is determined to have security for future support, and gets the whole, he impoverishes the other eleven. This is what every rich man does—every man who is unwilling to take God's note, because he is too lazy to exercise faith, and will have his money where he can see it.

Compare the 5th chapter of James with what was said about the manna. Money which rich men accumulate is corrupted, rusted and wasted, and is put in a condition where it loses its value, instead of blessing society. Accumulation not only paralyzes the activity of property, but James goes further, and says, it destroys its value, and exposes it to decay and rust. A farm that is pledged for the security of some trust is liable to run down, because a man has not the same inducement to keep it in order that he would have if it was free, in his own hands. Houses and farms run down where men accumulate more than they can take care of themselves. There is not the same inducement for tenants to take care of property that there is for owners. There is a curse resting on the whole world, and property going to decay, by being held as pledge for individual security. There are large quantities of land in the State of New York unavailable, because they are pledged for individual security. No matter what laws a man may have on his side, he has no right to rob society by accumulation; and that text so much used by infidels,—'except a man provide for his own, especially for them of his own household, he hath denied the

faith, and is worse than an infidel'—that text is certainly limited to the present. It does not require that a man shall provide for his own house only as he shall provide for himself, that is, for his present wants. If a man has found out how to provide for himself according to his present wants, and not accumulate for future security, but look to God for his wants now, what is good for him, is good for his household.

This is a good principle, though it is very contrary to the lay-up-for-a-rainy-day principle. This putting property to security is precisely the thing that the Israelites did when they kept their manna over, so that it bred worms. The *children* of these millionaires, for whom they lay up their property, are the worms that are bred in it.

Precedence of the Spirit.

All the vehicles of life through which we have fellowship with God and with one another, and with all the lower forms of creation, are of this twofold nature—spirit and form—body and soul—interior and exterior. And this duality of condition has an order in it; one part is superior to the other. The interior takes precedence of the exterior; the soul takes precedence of the body in value and importance. As man is to woman, as the Father is to the Son, as the Son is to the church, as the soul is to the body—so is the interior essence of any thing we have to do with superior to the external form. That is to say, while both are good and perfected in conjunction with each other, yet they are of different value, and the order of precedence must be regarded in our approach to them. In our approaches to inanimate nature, such as food or any thing of a sensual kind, in order to

come in contact with any thing good in it, it is necessary to seek the interior first.

This fact that the interior takes precedence of the exterior, and is the better part, is a principle that may regulate us in all cases of introduction to life and its forms. Make it a rule to give the interior start. In love the point to be gained is to let the spirit take precedence of form; that is, to approach spiritually, and to let the external follow after. But the principle which all see so true and essential in love matters, is just as true of approaching to any other form of good; for all approach to good, whether it is something above or below us, is really love. And this rule admits of application in all directions. In the article of food, for instance, there is a spiritual essence, and also a form or body; and the sense of smelling is that by which the internal essence is perceived. Smell takes precedence of taste; and in the right order of things, the probability is that we shall first become acquainted with every thing we eat by smelling, and receive in a secondary way the body of it afterward. That is, we shall approach the thing through the spiritual presentation of it first. But remember there is a second stage in the matter, where we pass from the sense of smell to the sense of taste. In that second stage there is also a twofold presence. The first stage has only the spiritual presence—the second is superior to the first, because it has the spirit and body too, and all that part of our nature that is adapted to receive the body comes into play. So that the first stage is not superior to the second stage which includes both; but in this double stage, in order that there may be a due appreciation of the proportion between

spirit and body, we must give the spirit the advantage. We must begin with the spirit. If we rush to the form first, the result is neglect of the spirit.

If we attend to these arrangements of smell and taste we shall find they have very extensive sweep. God has given us the spirit as an introduction to every thing good. It is clear that in the first stage of introduction to any spiritual thing, the presentation of the body of it, or external demonstration of any kind, interferes with that process. The real essence of fellowship does not proceed so well where there is much external demonstration going on, as it does where there is a quiet attention to the spirit by itself alone.

This is a practical principle in forming acquaintances. If we want to get at a person's inner essence, we shall not rush into conversation and outward expression. Much conversation, common talk, will raise a fog of sensual life between us, and prevent acquaintance with inner life. The fashion of the world in forming acquaintance is to rush at once into conversation and demonstrations of kindness and good will, and the result is it soon flats out; and for the very good reason that the inner surface of their being is never brought together, but only the outward. The true way is to wait for a conscious acquaintance with each other's spirits, and let them join first. In the first method of joining there is no soul, and of course no vitality.

Following these principles will make a person truly modest. A thorough appreciation of the fact that the interior takes precedence of the exterior, the soul of the body, will be the death of all inmodesty. True modesty does not avoid acquaintance; it is desirous of it,

but is backward in outward demonstration, that the spirit may get acquainted first. The spirit and essence of any good thing is the gift of God, and we want to get the spirit first and the body last. Fix that in mind and then we shall enjoy things, and be thankful for them. This is the only modest way of enjoying things. We shall find in all our dealings with God, that he will stick to this principle. He will insist that we shall smell a great while before we taste. He is determined that we shall get acquainted with him and all his good things in this spiritual and invisible way first.

Individual Responsibility.

[This is the subject of a discourse by J. H. N., which was reported (as will be apparent to the reader) with special reference to the Association. We think, however, the portion here given will interest our friends generally:]

I find from time to time, that some remark I have made and forgotten has stuck in some one's mind, and comes to me again in such an aspect that I am frightened at my own responsibility. I am startled, as though a dash of cold water came into my face, at my own talk. A person lately referred in a letter to some remark that I had made, showing that they were sticking in the letter of it; and I sent back a notice, stipulating that a certain formula, such as I have seen in old law books, should be placed before all the issues, opinions, exhortations, and remarks which I make. It was an appropriate preliminary proviso to literal law, and I stipulate that it be placed also before all I say from time to time. The proviso is this: *'It is hereby further enacted, that these statutes shall, in all courts and places whatsoever, be construed benignly and*

favorably for all the beneficial purposes therein mentioned.' If my observations and remarks cannot have the benefit of that proviso, then I cannot stand up under the responsibility that I am incurring. If I cannot have confidence that there is discretion on the part of my hearers, so that they will get hold of my purpose, and construe what I say benignly and favorably to that purpose, then there is no safety in my standing as a teacher. I shall insist that fair treatment be given to my discourses, and that I am not responsible for any abuse of them in the way I speak of; and if I have not given fair warning, if I have not shaken persons enough to make them realize the importance of giving a benign representation to what I say, I want to do it now.

The grand principle is this: *Righteousness* is my aim; the beneficial purpose therein mentioned is *righteousness*; and all I have to say is to be construed benignly to that purpose. But righteousness looks both ways. Paul speaks of having 'the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.' There is a *right* way marked out by the word of God, and that word has two edges. I have often said, there are two ways to go wrong and but one to go right; righteousness is that *one* way. Accordingly, whoever takes what I say when I am aiming in one direction, and runs it out without any reference to righteousness in the opposite direction, without any understanding of the medium between the two false ways, does not construe it favorably to the purpose I have mentioned. My theory and my experience is continually no and yes—it is 'no-yes-ism.' (Vide Eastman.) The definition of all righteousness is contained in this idea. There is no

such thing as understanding me, or the Bible, or God, unless a man is able to understand the righteous combination of no and yes. You cannot propose a question in morals but that I can answer it both ways. Is it right to do thus and so? No—yes; and both shall be true.

If you say this is puzzling, this confounds us, there is no straightforward chart in these instructions to go by such as we want; I say, very good—I am glad of it. And now comes out the object and value of my instructions. And here I protest against being used as your chart. I don't stand up as a teacher with any intention to save you the trouble of being wise for yourselves. I have no chart to offer you to save you the necessity of being inspired, or of saving you the trouble of rightly interpreting the word of God, and of becoming skilful in handling it. And I renounce the office of chart-maker to men, in any such sense as will enable them to dispense with being wise and inspired themselves. My instructions are to be received as hints and helps in the action of your own minds to things to which I call your attention, but not as substitutes for the action of your minds. There is a certain stage of experience where believers are to be fed with a spoon, and take things in a way with which their own agency has little to do, like infants; but it is a very troublesome stage of experience. Far be it from me to wish to be employed all my days in *spooning* victuals to folks around me. I decline the office. I have never considered it a permanent thing, but held only transitorily. I want the Association to let me speak freely what I have to say, looking both ways, to the right and the left, and not oblige me to feel all the time that I must be guarding myself against wrong inter-

pretation. I do not wish to be cramped in the free, strong expression of my mind upon any subject, for fear I shall be misinterpreted. I wish to believe that people around me are wise and discreet, and that I am able to talk without the danger of their catching it up and converting it into licentiousness on the one hand, or legality on the other, and making ministers of death of what comes from me as messengers of life.

I will go a little further, and define my position as teacher and pioneer of the Association. I feel that it is necessary for me to understand the limits of my own responsibility, in order that I may have rest in my spirit, and also that I may not assume responsibilities which belong to others, because this is not desirable for them. It is very desirable that every one should have the responsibility thrown upon them that belongs to them; and if I can ascertain the limits of my own responsibility, and throw all that belongs to others on to them, it will give rest to my own spirit, and also benefit them.

In all my labors with the Association, I see I must rely finally for good results on two agencies, that are beyond my sphere of will. I have a sphere in which I can guide, command and instruct; but there are two other agencies besides mine which must co-operate with mine in order to secure the result. The first agency is the effectual grace of God. As I have already said, my teaching is not a substitute for inspiration. I cannot relieve any one from the necessity of being truly wise toward God themselves. So also, I have no hope of any good results on others from what I do and say from time to time, unless the effectual grace of God is upon them. Paul may plant, and Apollos may wa-

ter, but God giveth the increase.' I must keep my attention distinctly to the agency of the omnipotent God, clear beyond my own will and wisdom; and my hope of any good must rest on that just as much in the sphere of action in which I am living myself, as in all beyond my reach. I have to trust God in affairs that do not come under my action and control, and I must trust him just as much for things that I plant; because there is no increase from mere planting, and it will not do to trust to any efforts that will take the place of God's office and agency. Persons must not think of me as the primary power in the Association; it is not so; my power is only auxiliary to the grace of God.

The second agency that I will speak of as an extraneous one, is the free will of others. And as I said no instruction should be considered a substitute for inspiration, so I say that no instruction that I can give, or any course of action that I can set going, shall be substituted for the exercise of true free agency on the part of others. I cannot become responsible for others' free agency; they must act for themselves. There has got to be a sense of responsibility and foundation in each one, and no permanent leaning on me. All I can do is to show you as well as I can how I act, and to give you my hints from experience how you ought to act, and if you act under those instructions, with the grace of God, well; if not, I cannot help it. Paul says, 'The things that ye have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you.' I say the same. But to say, The things ye have learned and received, heard and seen in me, *look at*, and that's the end of it, there is no responsibility, and nothing to do, but

I you count that you can do it by proxy, through me,—I don't think the God of peace will be with you. I cannot act for the Association in that way. I cannot save them the trouble of being righteous men and women. How much leaning on me that weakens and paralyzes there is, I don't know; but I have to return continually to the principle that separates me from all others, and puts every man on his own responsibility, and sets before every man the truth that he must certainly keep a separate account with God. However a close connection one may be in with me, however much he may respect me, however identical our interests may seem in the relation of disciple and teacher, still it is true that I cannot give account for you, still it is true that you must give account to God. He will reward me according to my work, whether right or wrong; and he will reward you in the same way. Each one will be dealt with separately; they will not be mixed together by confounding of responsibilities. I feel there is a very great necessity in the Association for individual inspiration, and individual good sense, and individual practical energy.

From Willis's Home Journal.

Ghost-Knockings.

The damage to the renting of a house by the knowledge that there have been mysterious noises heard in it, and the unwillingness of most persons to become subjects of public conjecture and curiosity, would prevent the making public of most of the instances—supposing that spirit-knockings were now becoming general and frequent. Chancing, myself, to know of three cases, the publicity of which is carefully avoided for these reasons, (and not seeing how or why we should know more of such things than our neighbors,) we feel justified in think-

ing it probable that the phenomenon—whatever it be—is more common than has been supposed. It is not two ghosts nor twenty, who have the monopoly of it—not two impostors nor twenty, (if imposture it be,) who have hit on the same trick, with the same manner of performing it, in different and very distant places. Let it turn out what it will, the topic is one so much discussed, that all which throws light upon it is interesting, and we will “scoop up” for our readers, the bubble or so that has floated from the general stream into our eddy editorial.

The first story we have to tell is rather to the disparagement of ghosts, and goes to show that the mind may remain pretty much the same, for a while, after death, weaknesses and all. It was narrated in a letter to a private gentleman of this city, by an English friend with whom he is in familiar correspondence. Names cannot be given, for the reasons we specified in the first sentence of this article, and it was written with no thought of publicity—but the writer is a man of remarkable mind and attainments, and the correspondence is mainly upon topics of religious and moral progress. We briefly give the facts:—

The wife and children of Mr. W. had been very much disturbed for some months, by unaccountable knockings. An occasional and inexplicable waving of their bed curtains was another phenomenon that troubled them. They occupied an old house, of which Mr. W. had a long lease; but, as he wished to dispose of his lease and move to another part of London, and as he thought these phenomena were tricks that would be explained, he forbade a mention of the circumstances, as likely to prejudice the lease, and they were a family secret accordingly. Though not a physician, he was a man of considerable medical knowledge, and, a female cousin being subject to fits of epilepsy, he had tried experiments of animal magnetism for her cure. These had been partially successful, when, on magnetizing her, in

one of her fits, she changed from a passive state to a look of intelligence.

“What a singular old woman is in the room!” she suddenly exclaimed.

No one being present but Mr. W. and his wife, he questioned the epileptic, getting gradually a description by which they recognized his grandmother, who had been dead several years. He requested her to ask the old lady what she wanted.

“She is most anxious to speak to yourself,” was the reply.

Farther parley induced the venerable ghost to open her mind through a second person. She was distressed at the neglect with which her dresses and ornaments were treated, her favorite and valuable things left to mould in out-of-the-way corners, in a way that was insufferable, even where she was.

Having entirely forgotten the existence of these articles, Mr. W. inquired where they were. The old lady at once gave explicit directions where they could be found, and *found they were*, in the very places described, and in the very condition which had vexed the unchanged memory of the departed. They were attended to, and there were no more supernatural noises for some months.

A recurrence of an attack, while the cousin was on a visit to the house, some time afterwards, brought animal magnetism again into play, and, at the moment of the patient's subjection to the influence, a violent knocking was once more heard. The patient did not, this time, become clairvoyant, and no communication was received in any intelligible shape from the unlaid grandmother. The knockings at night were resumed, however, and Mr. W. determined to try if he could himself get a demonstration, and, in that case, to speak his mind, with the hope that deafness was not among the ills that ex-flesh is heir to. He took a book and kept himself awake till after midnight, and then tried to *will up* the knockings. At two, they suddenly resounded, and he then pro-

ceeded to give his grandmother a lecture. He laid before her, in plain terms, the way she was disturbing the family, the risk of damaging his interests, and the better things she ought, for decency's sake, to appear to be thinking about, between this and judgment day. As he went on, the knockings, by their increased rapidity as they broke in, from time to time, expressed displeasure; and, at the last allusion and its reproof, there was a perfect storm of rappings. Mr. W. then bade his grandmother good-night, and went to bed—*since which the knockings have been no more heard.*

Droll as this is, it is narrated with perfect sincerity by a strong-minded and highly educated man, we call on the reader to credit this much—though he may put what construction he pleases on the circumstances it details for facts. Supposing it true, it would suggest a query reasonable enough, viz:—whether those who were wedded most exclusively to this life and its trivialities, are not those who cling most to it after death, and are not most eager and most likely to stumble on some way to speak to us. Ghosts have continually appeared, to see about property, buried money, and such mere matters of this world, whereas no intelligent ghost (that we ever heard of, at least) has once put his nose back, through the dropped curtain of time and desire, to tell us a single thing that is either useful or agreeable. And yet, that all ghosts, gentle and simple, see things with their new eyes which would be most interesting for us to know, can scarcely be doubted. Is it possible that none but a “low” ghost would have any communication with us? The reader will follow out the idea.

To a second instance:—

A gentleman of our acquaintance, who had been a politician for many years, (and, of course, had no nerves that anything unsubstantial could much worry) heard of a farm which could be bought cheap, because “the house was haunted.” Feeling simply obliged to the ghosts for the accommodation, he became the pro-

prietor, and moved there with his family for summer quarters. His wife had no objection to the disqualification of the place, for she was a Swedenborgian, and was willing to see any spirit who had an errand to her. They had been there but a short time when the “knockings” commenced. The new tenant was a famous cross-examining lawyer, and would believe nothing on plausibilities. He set all his wits to work to discover how the ghosts did their pounding—for they were the blows of a sledge hammer apparently—and, the house being a wooden one, the disturbance to sleep and comfort amounted to a serious nuisance. He was wholly unsuccessful. Three days ago he told the writer of this that it was still a complete mystery. His wife (to her own belief,) has seen a spirit walk through the locked door of her bedroom, but as it made no communication, they remain in the dark as to its object. The place has no history beyond crops. It has been occupied always by such people as none but very illiterate ghosts could have had any acquaintance with.

One instance more:—

A family of young people, whom we know very well, moved into a new three-story brick house, in the upper part of this city, last year. Spirits are supposed to haunt only antiquated dwellings, but, here, they even got the start of rats, cockroaches, and other nuisances, for, unaccountable knockings were heard before the coming in of the bill for the first quarter's rent. They sent down to order the servants to stop pounding, on the evening when they first heard it, but the cook was alone and had done nothing of the kind. They lit candles at night, and, again and again, ransacked the house from garret to cellar, to find out what that confounded knocking could be, and discovered nothing that would any way explain it. Being young people, full of health, and with no unsettled accounts worth a dead man's while to come back about, they are getting gradually indifferent to it, already alluding to the matter with more fun than terror.

It is a point gained, (as a riddance of fright on such subjects,) even if we may reasonably question whether all ghosts are respectable enough to be worthy of notice. If, indeed, (as we suggested in our paper of last week,) a new and intelligent medium of electricity is to be subjected to our service—if spirits who will, now, at command, move tables and shake chairs, are to be put under the control of the living—they, are of course, *inferior to the spirits still in the body*. Is it not a class of the damned who are about being turned to account? Was there not wanted, in the progress of the world, an *intelligent slave*, to play the messenger between our intellects and the clearer perceptions of the spirit world, and has not Providence given us a clue to communication with this new agent, in these electrical knockings which may be the first lessons in an alphabet of spirit language?

Of course there will be much less sinning, when a ghost can be put on the stand for a witness; and, indeed, it is in this view, mainly, that we fear it to be a thing for which the world is not quite ready. That spirits are coolly looking on and listening, whatever we do and say, is a fact that has not hitherto been much of an embarrassment to us—but, *when they can go and tell!*—virtue becomes inevitable! The pulpit's duty—encouragement to these knockings—is very clear; but will it be popular, on the whole, to know things easier than at present, and will people be willing to see established, (what seems very likely,) a system of communication between the other world and this, for a trifling *ghostage*, as now between cities for a trifling *postage*—news by ghost easy as news by post? It is a subject which, as Bulwer says, “opens up.”

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