

And this very insignificance of our appearance there renders us but the more fit to meet our Lord.

And then God becomes great to us. We realize his saying that he is Our Maker. His faithful-nesses present themselves to us. The arms of everlasting compassion support and encircle us. Sadness of heart gives place to joy. Anxious thoughts become calm and glad. The soul becomes attuned to the worship of the eternal love of God. And when his Holy Spirit thus ministers to our spiritual needs and imparts his quickening touch, the hymn of praise rises from the heart and with us it is literal fact that God, our Maker, giveth us songs in the night.

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“I CRY, BUT THOU HEAREST NOT.”

To get no hearing, as one stands at the closed door, and it is not opened, makes one anxious. He then knocks harder, and when this brings no reply, he calls, and calls louder and louder. And when still no sound is heard, and there comes no answering voice, fear strikes the heart lest some accident has befallen child or brother whom he knows is near.

To get no hearing, when in distress one has called for help, and has waited and waited for a response and it did not come, how often has it turned courage into dismay.

To get no hearing! What restlessness it brings when fear is harbored whether it is well with child, or brother far off, and one writes and writes again, and no reply follows, and a telegram is sent with prepayment for an answer and no answer comes.

To get no hearing! It makes the heart faint

when a beloved member of the household is seriously ill and we approach the bedside and call the beloved by name, in a whisper first, and then louder, till we find that the patient does not hear us.

To get no hearing! It is overwhelming in cases of accident in mines or with a landslide in digging trenches, when victims are, as it were, buried alive, and one calls and calls again, and listens with bated breath for some sound or answering sign of life, and silence continues unbroken.

To get no hearing! It caused such anxious forebodings when, not many years ago, Martinique was overturned by an earthquake and telegrams were sent to the place of disaster to enquire after conditions of things there and no telegraphic signal was returned.

The prophets of Baal experienced this tense anxiety on Mount Carmel when, "from morning even until noon" they cried: O, Baal, hear us. And they leaped upon the Altar * * * and cut themselves * * * with knives and lancets * * * but lo! there was no voice, nor any that answered. (I. Ki. 18:26). And greater anxiety still filled the hearts of the prophets of Baal when Elijah, from his side, cried out: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me," and obtained the coveted answer, and "the fire of the Lord consumed the sacrifice."

But the saints of God in the earth have not always been similarly favored. Read the complaint of Asaph in Psalm 83: "O, God, keep not thou silence; hold not thy peace—as one deaf—and be not still, O God." Or consider David's distress which he voices in Psalm 28: "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not silent—or as

one deaf—to me; lest if thou make as though thou hearest not, I become like them that go down into the pit.” And what is stronger still, call to mind the Lama Sabachtani of Golgotha, echo of the prophetic complaint of Psalm 22: “O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season also I take no rest.”

And this is the difference between the religious man of the world and the devout believer on God. We have nothing to say of the man of the world pure and simple. He does not pray at all. He never cries to God, and never expects an answer. But the people of the world are not all like this. Many are not wholly irreligious. They still observe religious forms. They have not wholly abandoned prayer. It is mostly, it is true, a mere matter of habit. To say grace at the table before one eats, a so-called “blessing,” which consists mainly of a “whisper,” and upon retiring at night a short prayer of thanksgiving and supplication. This kind of prayer is revived in days of trouble, and in moments of anxiety, when a loved one at home is sick unto death, or reverses in business bring a man low. Then the religious man or woman of the world prays and calls. And when prayer brings no help, and danger is not averted, and no answer is granted, the seemingly futile prayer falls heavily back upon the heart embittered by disappointment.

The case is altogether different with the devout believer on God. The saintly man of prayer seeks his Father. From experience he knows that it is possible here on earth to hold communion with the Father who is in heaven. He has confident assurance of the hidden fellowship with God.

Along the pathway of life, which is sometimes rough and thorny, he knows what it is to "Walk with God." Blessed experience has taught him that in this secret fellowship communion is mutual, so that he seeks his Father, but also that the Father gives himself to be found of his child. In such moments he can not say: God is here or there, for he feels and perceives that God is with him. He can not prove that God talks to him, and yet he hears the voice of the Lord. This is not seemingly, but actually true. It is no self-deception, but rich reality. And he follows after the good shepherd, comforted by the staff and the rod whithersoever they lead. With the religious man of the world it is mere form, devoid of heart. With the devout believer on God it is sacred, blessed mysticism.

There is discipline in this holy mysticism. Fellowship with God is not only broken once in a while, but frequently. Once there was no representation of invisible communication. But now there is, since we are in touch with people thousands of miles away from us. Now we can speak with others whose faces we can not see, but whose voice we receive in return. So far have we advanced that telegraphy permits communication without wire or any visible, tangible guidance. And now we understand how this communication can be disturbed, interrupted and sometimes altogether broken.

God's saints on earth have such mystical communication with their Father who is in heaven. They have a mystical telegraph, a mystical telephone, a mystical means of communication without wire or any material appliance. And as little

as a primitive man can understand our telegraphic communication, so little can the man of the world understand the mystical fellowship of the earnest believer on God with the Heavenly Father, who is both far off and close by. And the believer on God understands how this fellowship can be interrupted, and even entirely broken off. For there are times when the soul calls and seeks God, and nothing comes back; when no sign from above is vouchsafed; when it seems that God is lost; when everything remains silent; when no voice comes and no answer.

Why God withdraws himself at such times can be surmised, but can never be fathomed. The cry from the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" holds us face to face with an impenetrable mystery. But even here surmisals may serve an end. We awake in the morning and our first thought is of God. This gives us the blessed sense of God's nearness, and as at the hand of God, we begin the day. But some other morning this is different. We perceive nothing of God. Our heart is not joined to the Eternal. Pray as we may, there is no fellowship. O God! hold not thyself as one deaf; why dost thou not hear me? But religion operates. The loss of Divine fellowship makes us very unhappy. Some sinful inclination of the heart has caused it. Some secret sin has prevented it. The heart has been troubled about many things that have excluded the Lord from the inner life. And the loss of fellowship is good. It makes us examine ourselves. It makes us unite the heart again to fear his name.

Bodily conditions, too, may interrupt Divine

communion. A headache may depress us and prevent the mind from free utterance, or lessen our sensitiveness. This also may act as a spur to give the body rest and calm in behalf of fellowship with God.

At times, however, the failure of obtaining a Divine hearing can not be explained from one cause or from another. We find nothing that accuses us. And yet God withdraws himself from us. But even then conjectures regarding the cause do not fail us. The believer on God sometimes overestimates his piety. He enters upon terms of familiarity with the love of God. He loses sight of the distance that extends between him and God. He takes it as a matter of course, as a something that ought to be, that fellowship with God is his portion. He even counts it at times as a mark of special holiness that he seeks Divine fellowship.

This can not be permitted. It makes common what is, and always will be, holy grace. Experience teaches at such times that nothing strengthens and deepens the appreciation of fellowship with God as the temporary want of it. When for long times the soul has had no hearing, and when at length an answer comes from God, there enters into this secret communion a still deeper blessedness, and the soul bathes itself in the fulness of the love of God.

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“SEEK YE MY FACE.”

It was common at one time for Christian people to speak of their conversion with joyous pride. It was said: “At such and such a time I came to know the Lord.” Afterward this was changed. Then it was said: “In such and such a way I