

The Writing at the Top.



HOW ever could he have got up there ! ”

The exclamation of surprise burst from the lips of one of our party, as we stood near the summit of Table Mountain, in front of a huge, perpendicular slab of rock.

The face of the rock was well-nigh covered with inscriptions. From time immemorial people have found delight, when visiting places of note, in leaving a record of their visit, in the shape of their name or their initials, carved upon some tree or post, or cut upon the surface of some suitable object.

The rock before which we stood had scores of such inscriptions upon it. But one, many feet higher than any of the others, had attracted the notice of my friend, and led him to exclaim in astonishment :—

“ How ever could he have got up there ! ”

The question was certainly a difficult one to answer. There was no ledge on the face of the rock upon which a man could stand to inscribe his name in that position. There was no crack or fissure into which he could insert his foot. There was absolutely no foothold of any kind.

The fact remained, however, that some individual, determined to write his name at the very top, high above all the others, had overcome every difficulty, and had succeeded in doing it. The mystery had yet to be explained; but it was evident that there must be some explanation. The apparently impossible had been done.

Reader, I have a question for you. Weigh it well before you answer it, for it has a deeper significance than might at first appear.

Is YOUR name written at the top?

As I scan the records of twentieth-century life, I see some names written very low down. I find them upon the conviction-sheet of the police-court, and in the newspaper reports of trials for murder, for theft, and for forgery. These are the names of *notorious sinners*.

But I see other names higher up than these. They are inscribed upon the pages of the merchant's ledger. I see them painted over the entrances to well-stocked shops, and upon brass plates on the gates of pretty villas. These are the names of *respectable people*. Honourable in their business dealings, esteemed by a wide circle of acquaintances, their names stand high in the regard of all who know them.

Others there are who have placed their names yet higher. They are to be found upon the church-

membership roll, and upon the subscription lists of the philanthropic and missionary societies. Sometimes one even sees their names upon the list of church officers, local preachers, and Sunday-school teachers. These are the names of *religious people*.

But, reader, you need to have your name written much higher up than that! If you are ever to get to heaven you must get your name written *there*. It must be at the very top. Nothing short of that will do.

In the day of judgment the great question will be, not what sort of a character you have borne on earth, not whether you have paid your way and made a profession of religion, but whether your name is in the book of life.

When John was spending his long years of exile in the lonely island of Patmos he was permitted to see wonderful visions of future events. On one occasion a sight of the dread judgment day was vouchsafed to him. And, amongst other things, he saw that "*who-soever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*" (Rev. xx. 15.)

Is *your* name written in the book of life? Clement could have answered that question with a hearty "Yes." He and his friends are described as men "*whose names are in the book of life.*" (Phil. iv. 3.)

Would to God that every reader of these lines might awake to the immense importance of getting his name written there!

A great hue and cry was raised some months ago in America because certain people discovered that their family records were lost. The pages containing them had been cut out from an old Bible that had been brought from Holland in the year 1660 by a man named Haughwout.

The records were of great importance, as affording evidence of title to certain property. Advertisements were therefore inserted in the newspapers, and a large reward offered for the recovery of the missing pages.

Are you as anxious that your name should be duly recorded as that American family was? With you the issue involved is not that of a mere earthly inheritance; your whole future welfare is at stake. It is of the utmost importance to you that your name should be duly inscribed in heaven.

Now one thing is very evident. It is impossible for you to *write your own name there*.

You may succeed in placing your name considerably higher in the eyes of your fellow-men than the names of others. Your name may be one that commands the respect of hundreds; but, try as hard as you can, and persevere as long as you please, you will never be able to write your name *at the top*.

You may climb the heights of religion and morality, you may reach a pinnacle far above the level of those around you; but, I repeat, you cannot reach high enough to write your name *at the top*.

In this respect all are alike. They come short of *the top*. God looks down from heaven upon men, and declares that "there is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. iii. 23.)

The man whose name is worth millions, and the man whose name is not worth a penny. The man whose name is recorded on the honour-list of fame, and the man whose name appears in the annals of crime. The man whose name wins applause from the world, and the man whose name excites a storm of hisses. There is no difference. All have come short. All are powerless to reach high enough to write their names *at the top*.

How then can a man get his name written at the top?

How was it, do you think, that the man whose name was inscribed at the top of the rock on Table Mountain managed to place it there?

I will tell you. While we stood gazing at it, and wondering how anyone could have got up so high, we noticed something that had hitherto escaped our observation. *The name at the top was written upside down!*

At once it became clear how the man whose name it was had succeeded in writing it there. He had climbed up the rock by a path at the back. Then, leaning over the top of the flat surface, he had written his name, and, naturally enough, had written it upside down.

The mystery was explained. The name at the top had been written *from the top*. In no other way could it have been written.

In just the same way, if *your* name is to be written at the top it must be written *from the top*. That is, it must be written by One who is already at the top. It must be written by God Himself.

And who are they whose names God writes in heaven? Not the names of those who are "trying to do their best." Not the names of those who are *striving* to win His favour. Not the names of those who are seeking by vows, and promises, and prayers, and efforts, to make their peace with Him.

Who, then, are the happy people whose names God inscribes in the book of life?

They are those who have discovered and owned their sinfulness, and who have bowed in true repentance before Him, putting all their faith in Christ and in His finished work of atonement.

All around you you may see men and women who have taken this step, and whose names are written in heaven. Once they were sinners on the road to hell, even as others. But their eyes were opened. They perceived their danger, and fled to Christ for refuge. Their only plea was His precious blood. They were welcomed, pardoned, saved. They "passed from death unto life." No longer "dead in trespasses and sins," they now *live* in the true sense of the word.

They are "alive unto God." Their names are in the book of *life*.

Happy people! To such the Lord has said, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

Reader, what about you? Has God written your name in His book? If so, you may be sure that no power in heaven, earth, or hell can blot it out. "Whatsoever *God* doeth, it shall be for ever." (Ecc. iii. 14.)

It is not enough to be a mere professor of religion. There are those who have a name to live, but are really "dead." They are but shams and counterfeits. They may attempt, as it were, to write their own names in the book of life. All such names God will assuredly blot out. But when *He* writes a name there, that name stands for ever.

In order that, first of all, *your name* might be written at the top, and that, ultimately, you yourself might be there, Jesus had to go down to the very bottom. Down into the dark depths of suffering He went. He was judged, condemned, and punished by God in the sinner's stead.

"He bore, that we might never bear,
The Almighty's righteous ire."

But all that is a thing of the past. The judgment has been endured. Out from the depths the mighty

Victor has risen, and has gone to the place from whence He came.

From His place at the top He sends a message of love to *you at the bottom*, to tell you that *you are wanted at the top*. He longs to bless you and save you.

Will you not trust such a mighty, loving, living Saviour? "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

