

Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

THE ARAB AND THE PEARLS.

BY REV. JOHN FRASER, LATE OF ST. KILMO.

An Arab sat beside a well
Under an Eastern sky;
The wilderness around him lay,
The sun stood fierce and high.

His camel ate the thorny shrub
Out on the desert wide;
The scrip that held his stock of dates
Hung empty at his side.

A weight of care was on his brow,
A famine in his eye;
For he had travelled far that day,
And lo! the well was dry.

And there he sat, the swarthy man,
A sorry sight to see,
And not a drop to quench his thirst,
Nor e'en a crumb had he.

And as he pondered on his fate,
And cast his eyes around;
Fast by the well he chanced to spy
A wallet on the ground.

In haste to eat he took it up;
Not food, but pearls instead;
Alas, it only mocked his woe,
The jewels were not bread.

So to the failing eyes of death
Earth's fairest gems will seem,
We'll count the haubles of the dust
Of little worth I ween.

Vain, vain the lustre of the pearls
The starving soul to feed,
'Tis Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life,
Poor, helpless sinners need.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL LIBRARIAN.

The time is coming when the true worth and responsibility of the position of Sunday school librarian will be better understood than at present. Now, in most schools, it is a position which is found useful in keeping a young man or two in connection with the school who otherwise would not be there. A moderate talent for handling a few hundred books and keeping an account of their whereabouts, with a stock of patience and good nature, constitute the requisite abilities for the average adequate and faithful Sunday school librarian. It ought to be a position of far greater power and influence. The librarian of the future in Sunday school work will be able to judge wisely of every book which comes under his control. He will be the influential one of any committee on library enlargement. He will keep himself acquainted with the wide range of Sunday school literature, and be able to discern between the good, bad and indifferent books. Then, he will also study his readers and cultivate the wise adjustment of books and scholars. A mere name and number on a catalogue will not then be the only basis upon which a scholar takes home a book. The wise discretion of the librarian will be more or less in the scholars' selection of books. All books in the limits of the average Sunday school library are not adapted alike to all scholars, even when as free from waste material as possible. It will be the librarian's work to study the art of adaptation. There ought to be as little misfit reading as possible. The librarian's office is the place to locate the responsibility for this. When the time comes to honour the position in its possible range of influence in Sunday school work, it will be seen how strong an adjunct to the wholesome influence of the school's work the library and its keeper can be.

If any Church has a member, male or female, who covets earnestly the best gifts, let this one become interested in the Sunday school library in itself, and become skilled in the power of discerning good books and adapting them to readers. There might be a very great benefit done by one well able to start and to follow up the effect of a good book upon a scholar's life. All this wealth of influence exerted through a suitable and inspiring book, would, of course, take much time and acquaintance with individuals and knowledge of human nature. But it shows the power which still is dormant in the library department of Sunday school work.—*Church Help.*

THE DEAD LINE.

We hear persistent talk about the dead line in the ministry. The precise meaning of the phrase is not clearly defined, but it is something unfriendly to men of years; it means reduced power, fewer invitations to pastorates, smaller salaries, a presumable decrease of efficiency. It means incipient, if not full, fatality to ministerial usefulness. Some put this evil limit at fifty years, some at fifty-five, some at sixty; but somewhere in that neighbourhood, by common consent, runs that fatal line, and woe to the man whose reluctant feet cross the dread, mysterious boundary. There must, in fact, be something resembling this dead line, or so much would not be said about it. But there are exceptions. Scores of the most popular preachers in this country and in Europe are not young men. Dr. John Hall, Dr. W. M. Taylor, Dr. Talmage, Dr. Tiffany, are all well on in years. Spurgeon and Newman Hall are not young. Bishop Newman, though nearly sixty-three at the time of his election to the Episcopacy, was in his third pastoral term at the Metropolitan Church, Washington, and his success was scarcely less than when he was first pastor there. There are not a few men who do not cross the line at fifty, fifty-five, or sixty.

And this is worth considering also, that there is not one of the famous Churches of the world, so far as we now recall them, that has a youth for a pastor. It would probably not be safe to affirm that a majority of pastors in the leading Churches of the world are over fifty years old, but it would be safe to say that many of them are, and that not one of them can be properly styled a youth. It is not universally true, therefore, that the Churches demand young men for pastors; nor is it true that below the stage of physical incapacity for labour, every man is compelled to cross the dead line. So much the facts indisputably prove.

As we once heard Mr. Spurgeon say, "It is not the gray hairs in the head so much as the gray hairs in the sermon that are to be dreaded." Diligence in study, with a certain determination not to make a "fetich" of our old opinions, will push the dead line into the seventies.

OUR VILE BODY.

The Revised Version of Phil. iii. 21, is, "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory?" The body is not "vile," as our common version says. It is fearfully and wonderfully made. But it is under the curse—made subject to vanity. Yet at the resurrection it will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, it will be transformed and glorified. We learn in this verse, then, that we are to have these same bodies, but in a new form or fashion. Just as a common piece of carbon when crystallized becomes a diamond, these mortal bodies will become like unto the body of Christ's glory. What that body is we learn from the transfiguration that Peter, James and John witnessed on Mount Tabor (see Matthew xvii. 2). Wordsworth says: "Christ at His transfiguration gave a pledge and glimpse of the future glorious transformation of the risen body, and thus prepared the apostles to suffer with Him, in order that they may be glorified forever with Him, in body and soul, in heaven."

GOD'S WORK.

Every sincere labourer in God's vineyard has a sense of responsibility in gathering the spiritual harvest. Jesus, when upon earth, never relieved His true followers of the burden. He said: "Go work today in My vineyard." If the early Christians had disregarded this command, holding that the salvation of the world was not a human task, but was exclusively a divine work, the kingdom of Christ would have been a failure, God's plan for the recovery of the world through regenerated souls would then have been set aside through man's obduracy and disobedience.

But there may come an hour in the believer's history when he can say. "After all, this is God's work, not mine;" "I have wholly followed the Lord my God;" "Now, therefore, give me this mountain." When the conditions have been all fulfilled on the human side, as they were in the case of believing Caleb, then the soul may rest in the divine promise, in the blessed assurance that God will bring results to pass in His own time and way.—*Christian Advocate.*

SILENT FORCES.

Workmen in the stone-quarries sometimes find a very hard kind of rock. They pick little grooves for the iron wedges, and then, with great sledge-hammers drive and drive the wedges into the flinty rock. And yet, once in a while, they fail to divide the solid mass. The iron wedges and the sledge prove useless and the workmen wonder at the stubborn rock. But there is yet another way. The iron wedges are removed from the narrow grooves. Then the little wooden ones, of a very hard fibre, are selected. The sharp, well-made wooden wedges are first put into water. They are then inserted in the grooves tightly while wet, and water is kept in the grooves, and no sledge is needed to drive them. They would break under the severe blows of the ponderous hammer. But the workmen just let the wet wedges alone. They will do what the driven iron failed to do. How so? the dam, wood swells. The particles must have room to enlarge. And the granite hearts of the rocks can not withstand this silent influence. In a little while the solid rock parts from top to bottom and the workman's will is accomplished. It is so, often, in other things. What noise and visible effort fail to do, some quiet power, when applied, will surely accomplish. Teachers may remember this fact in mechanics, and manage some very stubborn natures by the application of the silent forces. The iron and the sledge-hammers often failed; but tears, prayers, and a patient example never fail.

YOUR OWN MASTER.

"I am my own master!" cried a young man proudly, when a friend tried to persuade him from an enterprise which he had on hand; "I am my own master."

"Did you ever consider what a responsible post that is?" asked the friend.

"Responsibility—is it?"

"Yes, to rule yourself you have your conscience to keep clear, your heart to cultivate, your temper to govern, your will to direct and your judgment to instruct. You are master over a hard lot, and if you don't master them, they will master you."

"That is so," said the young man.

"Now, I could undertake no such thing," said his friend; "I should fail sure if I did. Saul wanted to be his own master, and failed. Herod did. Judas did. No man is fit for it. 'Ore is my Master, even Christ.' I work under God's direction. When he is Master all goes right."—*Dr. Bacon.*

SPEAK TO THIS YOUNG MAN.

There is a celebrated painting of the Dutch School of art, which portrays a young man sneaking into the door of a Jewish pawnbroker. The occasion of his visit is visible in his person, which is a wreck, but with lingering suggestions of nobility. Signs of distress are apparent, he looks as if he had spent the night with memories of better days. He offers a bracelet to the beak-nosed Shylock, who regards it with scornful indifference. It was his mother's bracelet, who had worn it at court. He becomes importunate, and at last the Jew condescends to offer a paltry sum. The struggle between appetite, passion and conscience can be seen. There is no friend to stand between him and the destroyer, and he takes it. As the door closes the Shylock gloats over his prize with ineffable cupidity; it is a jewel of the purest water, worth £100. So young men, nobly born and with nobler possibilities, are at the pawnshops of perdition bartering eternal life for the paltry price of sin, a mother's hopes and prayers, a mother's jewel—speak to that young man before all is gone. He may be the only son of a widow, her stay, who is breaking her heart, a child of many prayers.

Perhaps you, too, have a son too far away for your care, and you have to depend on others for this service; speak to the young man as you would have another speak to your son. The obligations of gratitude are upon you, for if you are a Christian somebody spoke to you and prayed for you. Speak to him, for he may be a poor, lonely child out of some godly home in the first onset of temptation in city life, a wandering sheep for whom the Master is searching. He may need counsel and desire it; he will not spurn your kindness. Speak to him or in the judgment he may plead, "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat."—*Philadelphia Presbyterian.*