

Pastor and People.

CHRIST WILL NOT QUENCH THE SMOKING FLAX.

Christ will not quench the smoking flax. First, because this spark is from heaven, it is His own, it is kindled by His own spirit. And secondly, it tendeth to the glory of His powerful grace in His children, that He preserveth light in the midst of darkness, a spark in the midst of the swelling waters of corruption.

There is an especial blessing in that little spark: "when wine is found in a cluster, one saith, Destroy it not; for there is a blessing in it," Isa. lxxv. 8. We see how our Saviour Christ bore with Thomas in his doubting, John xx. 27; with the two disciples that went to Emmaus, who staggered "whether he came to redeem Israel or no," Luke xxiv. 21; he quenched not that little light in Peter, which was smothered. Peter denied him, but he denied not Peter, Matt. xxvi. "If thou wilt, thou canst," said one poor man in the Gospel, Matt. viii. 2; "Lord, if thou canst," said another, Mark ix. 22; both were this smoking flax, neither of both were quenched. If Christ had stood upon His own greatness, he would have rejected him that came with his *if*, but Christ answers as *if* with a gracious and absolute grant, "I will, be thou clean." The woman that was diseased with an issue did but touch, and with a trembling hand, and but the hem of His garment, and yet went away both healed and comforted. In the seven churches, Rev. ii. and iii., we see he acknowledgeth and cherisheth anything that was good in them. Because the disciples slept of infirmity, being oppressed with grief, our Saviour Christ frameth a comfortable excuse for them, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matt. xxvi. 41.

If Christ should not be merciful, he would miss of his own ends: "there is mercy with thee that thou mayest be feared," Ps. cxxx. 4. Now all are willing to come under that banner of love which he spreadeth over His: "therefore to thee shall all flesh come," Ps. lxxv. 2. He useth moderation and care, "lest the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he hath made," Isa. lvii. 16. Christ's heart yearned, the text saith, "when he saw them without meat, lest they should faint," Matt. xv. 32; much more will he have regard for the preventing of our spiritual faintings.

Here see the opposite disposition between the holy nature of Christ, and the impure nature of man. Man for a little smoke will quench the light; Christ ever we see cherisheth even the least beginnings. How bare He with the many imperfections of his poor disciples. If he did sharply check them, it was in love, and that they might shine the brighter. Can we have a better pattern to follow than this of Him by whom we hope to be saved? "We that are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of them that are weak," Rom. xv. 1. "I become all things to all men, that I may win some," 1 Cor. ix. 22. O that this gaining and winning disposition were more in many! Many, so far as in us lieth, are lost for want of encouragement. See how that faithful fisher of men, St. Paul, labours to catch his judge, "I know thou believest the prophets," Acts xxvi. 27; and then wisheth all saving good, but not borders; he might have added them too, but he would not discourage one that made but an offer, he would therefore wish Agrippa only that which was good in religion. How careful was our blessed Saviour of little ones that they might not be offended, Matt. xii. xiii. How doth he defend His disciples from malicious imputations of the Pharisees! How careful not to put new wine into old vessels, Matt. ix. 17, not to alienate new beginners with the austerities of religion, as some indiscreetly. O, saith he, they shall have time to fast when I am gone, and strength to fast when the Holy Ghost is come upon them.

It is not the best way to fall foul presently with young beginners for some lesser vanities, but shew them a more excellent way, and breed them up in positive grounds, and other things will be quickly out of credit with them. It is not amiss to conceal their wants, to excuse some failings, to commend their performances, to cherish their towardness, to remove all rubs out of their way, to help them every way to bear the yoke of religion with greater ease, to bring them in love with God and His service, lest they distaste it before they know it. For the most part we see Christ patient in young beginners a love which we call "the first love," Rev. ii. 4, to carry them through their profession with more delight, and doth not expose them to crosses before they have gathered strength; as we breed up young plants, and fence from the weather, until they be rooted. Mercy to others should move us to deny ourselves in our lawful liberties oftentimes, in case of offence of weak ones; it is the "little ones that are offended," Matt. xviii. 6. The weakest are aptest to think themselves despised, therefore we should be most careful to give them content.

It were a good strife amongst Christians, one to labour to give no offence, and the other to labour to take none. The best men are severe to themselves, tender over others.

Yet people should not tire and wear out the pati-

ence of others; nor should the weaker so far exact moderation from others, as to bear out themselves upon their indulgence, and so to rest in their own infirmities, with danger to their own souls, and scandal to the church.

Christ refuseth none for weakness of parts, that none should be discouraged; accepteth of none for greatness, that none should be lifted up with what which is of so little reckoning with God. It is no great matter how dull the scholar be, when Christ taketh upon him to be the teacher, who as he prescribeth what to understand, so he giveth understanding itself even to the simplest.

The church suffereth much from weak ones, therefore we may challenge liberty to deal with them, as mildly, so oftentimes directly. The scope of true love is to make the party better, which by concealment oftentimes is hindered, with some a spirit of meekness prevaileth most, but with some a rod. Some must be "pulled out of the fire," Jude 23, with violence, and they will bless God for us in the day of their visitation. We see our Saviour multiplies woe upon woe when he was to deal with hard-hearted hypocrites, Matt. xxiii. 13, for hypocrites need stronger conviction than gross sinners, because their will is nought, and thereupon usually their conversion is violent. A hard knot must have an answerable wedge, else in a cruel pity we betray their souls. A sharp reproof sometimes is a precious pearl, and a sweet balm. The wounds of secure sinners will not be healed with sweet words. The Holy Ghost came as well in fiery tongues, as in the likeness of a dove, and the same Holy Spirit will vouchsafe a spirit of prudence and discretion, which is the salt to season all our words and actions. And such wisdom will teach us "to speak a word in season," Isa. l. 4, both to the weary, and likewise to the secure soul. And, indeed, he had need have "the tongue of the learned," Isa. l. 4, that shall either raise up or cast down; but in this place I speak of mildness towards those that are weak and are sensible of it. These we must bring on gently, and drive softly, as Jacob did his cattle, Gen. xxxiii. 14, according to their pace, and as his children were able to endure.

Weak Christians are like glasses which are hurt with the least violent usage, otherwise if gently handled will continue a long time. This honour of gentle use we are to give to "the weaker vessels," 1 Pet. iii. 7, by which we shall both preserve them, and likewise make them useful to the church and ourselves.

In unclean bodies if all ill humours be purged out, you shall purge life and all away. Therefore though God saith, that "he will fine them as silver is fined," Zech. xiii. 9; yet, Isa. xlviii. 10, he said, "he hath fined them, but not as silver," that is, so exactly as that no dross remaineth, for he hath respect to our weakness. Perfect refining is for another world, for the world of the souls of perfect men. *Richard Sibbes, D.D.*

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

SANCTE, SANCTE, SANCTE.

BY D. M., OWEN SOUND.

Sancte, sancte, sancte, O Deus prepotens;
Primo mane laudetur, O tua lenitas;
Sancte, sancte, sancte, clemens et prepotens,
Deus tribus personis, beata Trinitas!

Sancte, sancte, sancte, pii Te celebrant,
Projeçant coronas ad vitream undam,
Angeli, archangeli, Tibi, omnes prociant
Qui eras, qui es, et eris æternum.

Sancte, sancte, sancte, quamvis absitus,
Egris inquitibus ob delicta coram,
Sacerdos tuipien; ac semper magnificus
Clemens, misericors, plenus amorum.

Sancte, sancte, sancte, O Deus prepotens;
Tunc Te cantant per omnes lucidas
Terras, in Pontis; ac celo quisquæ quâdam volens!
Deus tribus personis, beata Trinitas.

AN OLD TIME NEGRO PREACHER.

As "Brudder Yerkes" took his stand beside the desk he began a teetering motion, swayed, perhaps, by his feelings, as a balanced rock might have been by an earthquake. This was followed by a rapid guttural breathing, not unlike that I have heard among the Derwishes. He seemed to be firing up sufficient physical excitement to start the machinery of his mind. The audience also caught the magnetism before he uttered a word; some voices encouraging him with cries, "Go on, Brudder!" "Bress de Lor!" He suddenly broke into a rapid and rhapsodic speech, pumping up wind and sermon together, with both arms working violently from the shoulders. The words poured as though a mill-race. Sentences without substantives followed, sentences without predicates. Metaphors were mixed like the limbs of different trees whirled by a hurricane. The audience was soon swept along with the enthusiasm of the speaker, and showed every changing emotion on their faces, as well as by their exclamations.

At first the effect seemed to be due entirely to ani-

mal magnetism; but close attention discovered an unconscious logic; a practical arrangement of ideas, and a natural sequence of feeling throughout the discourse, which no lack of grammar could vitiate. In the morning I had attended service in the most respectable Presbyterian church in the place, and had heard a distinguished divine from the North; but I must confess that an analysis of the two sermons showed that "Brudder Yerkes" had the advantage of Dr. . . . in all that goes to make effective preaching. The coloured man's sermon was superior in outline, in aptness of Scripture illustration and in massing of motives, as it was in unction of delivery.

The run of the sermon may be gathered from the following scraps which have lingered in my memory.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

"Oh, chillern, whar am de door? Speks yer t'ink it am de door ob hebbin'. Oh, dem gates ob pearl into de golden city! Oh, de door inter de Fader's house! Oh, let de angels swing 'em wide open on ter de hinges ob redeemin' lub! But, chillern, dat's not de door dat yer and I is a watchin' yet."

"Speks yer t'ink it am de door ob de Church. Wide door, shua nuff! big as de door ob de Ark ob de Cubbinant; an' inter it go all de walkin' an' de creepin' tings, great, an' small, rich an' poor, flyin' saint an' a-crawlin' sinner. But dat's not de door we's a watchin' dis artemoon."

"No, chillern; de door is de door in ter de heart."

"But whar am a star'in' at de door? 'Taint no tramp come ter de shanty, like de debbil, a-stan'in' roun' to eat up suthin' waat he may devour. 'Taint no thief a-hangin' 'bout waitin' ter snatch some soul wid de claws ob de great temptation. 'Taint no 'cendary ter set yer on fire wid de 'ternal burnin'. But it's jus' de bestest frien' yer ebber could hab; wiser dan de white folks, kinder dan de fader what tooted yer when yer was a baby, an' more lubbin' dan de mudder what nussed yer. It's de Lor' Jesus a-stan'in' at de door; His head white as de light ob de noon-shine, an' a-glistenin' wid de dew, an' all ober as lubly as de rose ob Sharon. An' he done bring de bread fur de soul, an' de wine fur de sperrit, an' de pearls ob great price fur de eberlastin' rejoicin'."

"An' whar am He doin' at de door? Only jus' a-knockin', an' a-sayin' 'Oh, poor sinner, let me in! I'se come ter supper wid yer!' Did yer nebber hear Him a-knockin'? He knocks wid de conscience when de sin am a-troublin'. He knocks wid de fear when de doctor am a-feelin' ob de pulse, an' He say, 'I am de great physicianer.' He knocks wid de hungerin' an' de thirstin' arter righteousness, when de husks ob de worl' turn de stomach. He knocks soft and gentle when dar's a coffin in de cabbin. He knocks like de thunder when yer wont hear Him in no tudder ways."

"Better let Him in! Let Him in, Susan! Let Him in, Daniel! He's a-callin' yer by yer name, fur He aint no stranger; knows everybody a heap sight better than he knows hisself. Oh, chillern, let in de Lor' Jesus; an' when de front door ob de heart swings wide open, de hull sky full ob glory will come a-rushin' in too, fur de Lor' Jesus am clothed wid de rainbow, an' walks in de shoes ob sapphire."

"Now whar don't yer let Him in? Oh! it's cause yer got de bar up—bar ob yer selfishness, bar ob yer drinkin', bar ob yer dancin', an' de bar ob yer foolin'. Oh, take de bar down, chillern! Did yer yar de screechin' dis mornin', when de fire done burnt up de cabin an' de little baby in it? O Lor', help Aunt Rachel, an' don't keep her refusin' to be comforted 'cause her baby aint no more. Mudder lef de chile in de cabin an' locked de door. When de fire was a-shootin' from de winder, big men said, 'Open dis door, an' we'll save yer.' But de baby couldn't open de door. Oh, how de tears run down yer cheeks, all fur dat baby! But better cry some fur yerself, now, 'cause de flames ob de eberlastin' burnin' has a-coched on ter de cabin ob yer own life; an' de Lor' Jesus He's a-stan'in' at de door. But some of yer can't let Him in, any more dan dat baby. Yer's frowed away yer strength; yer's lost yer resolution; or yer's all upshot wid de suddingness ob de hell a-bustin' out in yer. Oh! chillern, open de door dis yer bressed munt, before it am eberlastin'ly too late."

The swaying motion was kept up for a few moments after the preacher had ceased speaking, when he suddenly dropped into the chair from utter exhaustion.

"An' now," said the pastor, "when de choir hab stopped cryin', dey will sing a hymn, an' we'll put all de pennies we's got inter de box, and de white folks will put in de silver, for de relief ob Aunt Rachel.—*Dr. James M. Ludlow.*

TO-DAY RATHER THAN TO-MORROW.

It is better to give to-day than to-morrow, for no one knows, how long he will be able to give. God always gives with a liberal hand; and if it is a blessing for us to give, let us not measure our alms with a penurious and covetous spirit. God also cheerfully lets us have the best He has; and if our alms are a sacrifice of praise, let us not corrupt it with the leaven of covetousness, but accompany it with the sweet incense of a complete dedication of ourselves to God.