

the devil. Wherein, then, lies the mischief of it? In this: that it instils its poison through the medium of ridicule before which young people so easily wither. A sneer is usually conceived under some expression which is laughable; and in a smart, contemptuous, reckless speech which sets the company in a roar, one may do more harm than he could do in arguing for a week. Indeed, in nine cases out of ten, if a young person would but reason about the thing at which he sneers, he would only prove how little his words and opinions are entitled to any weight whatever.

To say nothing about the mischief which is done in this way among those young people who have more or less respect for religion as connected with our Sunday schools and churches, it is believed that this habit of sneering is the most potent instrument of evil with persons of similar age connected with printing and manufacturing establishments. It is well known that such persons, to say nothing of their elders, have, as a rule, perhaps little or no respect for the institutions of religion. Well, how did they come by it? Are they especially read and qualified to argue in matters of this sort? They would make no such pretensions. But that is a rare establishment in which there is not some witty, tonguey, reckless person who is always raising a laugh at the expense of Christian people. He "gets off" such epithets and oddly biting and profane expressions that they have all the weight of knock-down arguments. And yet they are not arguments at all, but only bitter, malignant words, spiced with wit, or with what passes for such in the company. Let young people be carefully guarded against such a habit as this, whether they would influence others, or suffer from their influence. If they must pass through the period of doubt and misgiving, be it so. But caution them against that malign, Satanic spirit which would instil the poison of a sneer, where it is void of knowledge, and kill by ridicule, when it could not harm by reason.—*The Church Sunday-school Teacher's Weekly.*

BESEECHING.

The Gospel contains few commands, but many entreaties. Jesus invited, persuaded, exhorted, but seldom commanded. Miraculous mercies were not given on condition of service, but in general zeal to relieve the distress. If the healed became loyal to their Redeemer it was not from compulsion, but from the choice of their own hearts, the voluntary love and gratitude of their own souls. In the same spirit the apostles taught. Their letters to the churches abound in counsel, advice, entreaty, warning, invitation, promise, but the language of authority is seldom used. This fact denotes the genius of the Christian system and Christian life. The service of Christ is, pre-eminently, freedom. Arbitrary rules, exact regulations, specific organization, uniform prescriptions, are unknown, and great liberty for every believer is allowed, the chief restraint being the internal force of love responding to the gentle beseechings and advice of the inspired Word. Thus the Lord begins at the heart and works out; relies upon love rather than law; takes away the love of sin, and thus removes the terror of the law; makes men free from wicked purposes, so that commands are not needed, since persuasion is effective.

THE OBJECT OF THE MINISTER'S WORK.

The great work of the ministry is to declare the perfect reconciliation of God to man accomplished. God has announced complete forgiveness through the Saviour's death, complete cleansing through the perfect obedience of Christ. What a work is this! Who has ever risen to the majesty of its meaning? No words can do justice to it, no learning, no eloquence. No epic poem can reach the heights of its grandeur.

The minister's message is the announcement of what God has done. His object is to bring men to accept this finished work. By the death of Christ, communion with God is made possible. Men are now urged to make it actual. God is reconciled. Be ye reconciled. The appeal is made immeasurably urgent by the greatness of the work already accomplished. All themes which relate to real life are within the

preacher's range, but all as they are connected with the sacrifice of Christ. His death touches every act and every feeling of a saved man. His death gives Him a claim on every thought and every movement of every man. He died for all, that they which live should, every moment in the whole range of their conscious being, live not unto themselves, but unto Him. The minister's usefulness will be in proportion to the clearness with which he apprehends this supreme truth. When it is vividly felt, it will pervade his spirit. It will influence his manner, his choice of words, the tones of his voice. The devotion of Dr. Judson to his missionary work in Burmah is an illustration of the power of this single motive intensely realized. His whole life was a seeking after that people to bring them to God. It is said that one day, during an excursion up one of the rivers, while the vessel was lying at the shore, he walked a short distance up the bank. He met a heathen woman of high caste. His one object, ever uppermost in his mind, impelled him to address her. He could not speak a word of her language. But he silently approached her, with glowing face and moist eyes, gently pressed her hand, pointed upwards, turned and walked back to the boat. Soon after she met a native, and said, "Brother, I have seen an angel of God."

Ministers who have been successful according to the divine standard, have so longed for the salvation of men that this desire has penetrated their whole being. Said David Brainerd, "I cared not how or where I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. When I was asleep I dreamed of these things; and when I waked, the first thing I thought of was this great work." Of Joseph Alleine it is said that "he was constantly and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls; and to this end he poured out his very heart in prayer and preaching." But if the requirements of his office are so great, how great his need of help! The more deeply he enters into the spirit of his work, the more keenly he realizes his deficiencies. Sometimes the distance between his actual condition and the ideal set forth in the Scriptures almost crushes him. The immense amount of work to be done, the fact that the vast results which God proposes hinge on human efforts, almost paralyze the mind, to which it is disclosed. Even the great apostle, again and again, oppressed with the burden of his responsibilities, bursts forth with the petition, "Brethren, pray for us!" What need of prayer by the churches, if they would have their ministers sustained as God's messengers of mercy to men!

The minister's authority is not merely as a neighbour or a Christian friend, but as an appointed messenger of the Lord Jesus Christ he comes to men. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us."—*The Rev. A. E. Dunning, in Sermons by the Monday Club.*

SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF TACT.

Many people are so ignorant of all the *convenances* and proprieties of life that they have no other idea of tact than as a species of hypocrisy, and never fail, on opportunity, to characterize it as such. But to the mind capable of the least discrimination the two are as wide apart as are the North and South poles. For hypocrisy is the dumb show of lying, but tact is rather a method employed to avoid lying. Hypocrisy says, "There is no pit here," and skips gayly across; but tact, saying nothing at all about the pit, cries, "Ah, how pleasant it is in the other direction! let us go that way!" Hypocrisy never hesitates at a lie; tact never allows occasion for one.

Tact is, in fact, the great lubricator of life; it oils the machinery, smooths away trouble, looks far ahead, perhaps, to see it, and turns things into another channel. But, however tact avoids the necessity of falsehood, it does not suppress the truth; it simply prevents reference to the facts, it has a sort of self-respect, which does not blazon its affairs abroad; it does not consider itself as using deceit when merely keeping its own business in its own breast.

Tact has, moreover, a way of surmounting difficulties that no other power has. Hypocrisy, so to say,

burns its ships behind it; it puts its back against a lie and fights, but tact always keeps its retreat open, and always has forces in reserve. Tact seldom makes the assault, it never conquers; it wins without battle. "When we show any one that he is mistaken," Pascal declares, "our best course is to observe on what side he considers the subject—for his view of it is generally right *on this side*—and admit to him that he is right so far. He will be satisfied with this acknowledgment that he was not wrong in his judgment, but only inadvertent in not looking at the whole of the case." And tact never had a higher exposition. Yet tact is as different from cunning as it is again from falsehood. Cunning goes about seeking devious ways; it feeds on itself; it becomes a disease; it deceives itself and debases itself all the time that tact is moving on serenely in a loftier atmosphere—loftier, at any rate, since tact is at least the child of intellect, while cunning is often the offspring of mere idiocy.

There is nothing more useful in a family, as a cushion to every fall, a buffer to every blow, than this agreeable tact. It always knows the right thing to say, the exact thing to do; it knows how to lift the pleasant hand at the very moment for smoothing ruffled plumage; it knows, on debatable questions, how to put others into such good humour that it can carry its point; it turns conversations from dangerous approaches; it never sees what is best unseen; it does not answer to that which requires a scathing reply if heard at all; it remembers names and faces; it has the apropos anecdote; if it does not go out of the way to flatter, neither does it go out of the way to blame; where it cannot praise it is silent, and it never consents to mortify any.

Thus tact, it would appear, is as species of kindness; a dislike to wound as well as a desire to give pleasure; perhaps, also, a species of selfishness in its automatic shrinking from crying, quarreling, and discomfort of any kind.

Once in a while, when some great blunder is made that no tact ever quite repairs, we are led to wonder what the world would be without it. Somebody once said that without hope the world would be naught; for destitute of that, we should not perform the simplest operations of life; we should not go out of the door lest we should fall down; we should not lift our hand to our head lest we should remain there. Quite as badly off should we be without tact; all the flavour of life would be crude as some undisguised acid; there would be a perpetual recoil among the atoms of family and social life as of oil and water; every roughness would rasp, every sharp thing would hit and hurt; peace, harmony, and enjoyment would be things of no existence. Certainly, it must be conceded that tact is to our nerves what beneficence is to our morals. It is, moreover, a thing easily cultivated; its presence is one of the sure signs of gentle breeding, and its absence always leads us to believe people sprung from clowns; for, save for the awkward exceptions already acknowledged to prove the rule, where people of culture and of gentle behaviour are to be found, there is tact to be found with them. *Harper's Bazar.*

THE DO-NOTHING CURSE.

"Curse ye Meroz," said the angel of the Lord (Judges v. 23).

What had Meroz done? Nothing.

Why, then, was Meroz to be cursed? Because Meroz did nothing.

What ought Meroz to have done? Come to the help of the Lord.

Could not the Lord do without Meroz? The Lord did do without Meroz.

Did the Lord, then, sustain any loss? No, but Meroz did.

Was Meroz, then, to be cursed? Yes, and that bitterly.

Is it right that a man should be cursed for doing nothing? Yes, when he ought to be doing something.—*Waltham.*

THE Rev. Dr. M. M., Secretary of the London Missionary Society, and his two associates have reached Zanzibar. Dr. Mullens's trip is for the purpose of superintending the establishment of the mission at Ujiji.