

Messenger and Visitor

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WHO ARE POOR.

There are different classes of poor people in this world. There are some who live in very humble abodes where the floors are uncarpeted, where the coal bins and the larders are but thinly supplied and all the luxuries and many of the comforts of life are lacking. These are poor, but not the poorest. Some of the poorest people in the world live in hot houses well warmed and well lighted, with the carpets on the floors and pictures on the walls and the many things that minister to comfort and elegance. A man's poverty does not necessarily register itself in his style of living nor is one's wealth measured by his bank account, or in the amount which he is able to spend for the gratification of his own appetites and desires. A man is to be esteemed rich in proportion to the means he invests for the happiness of others. One is seldom found so poor that he has nothing to bestow upon some other whose circumstances are a little harder than his own, and if one can give nothing more than words of sympathy from a heart that longs to relieve, he is still able to give much. The poorest people in the world are those without sympathy,—who can see the need of their fellow men and feel no kindly impulse to relieve their necessity, who can listen to the appeal of the worthiest of causes and still harden their hearts against them. It is not the widow who has only two mites in the world and casts them into the Lord's treasury who is really poor. It is the man, who with his increasing fortunes is planning to build greater store-houses and barns in which to bestow his fruits and his goods, in order that he may indulge his sensual, selfish soul to the full;—this is the picture of poverty abject and unmitigated. Everyone may not be able to escape from the pressure of that poverty which is necessarily connected with a narrow income, but every one should be able to find escape from that more bitter poverty of a selfish and miserly disposition which can have no large enjoyments in its possessions because it has not learned to use them for the glory of God and the help of humanity. An empty pocket book may be a symbol of poverty, but a still more expressive one is a withered heart. One may be very poor in regard to worldly possessions, and still keep his maxims intact, still be honest, devout toward God and helpful toward his neighbor according to the measure of his ability. But what is there to redeem the poverty of him who, with abundant means at command, has so steeled his heart against every appeal to his benevolence that the desire to give is no longer felt? Such an one is well called a miser, that is a wretched one, for he has by his selfish folly refused the way of happiness in which all the children of God are enabled to walk.

THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN.

Matthew's account of the feeding of the five thousand, which constitutes our Bible lesson for next Sunday, should be studied in the light of our Lord's teaching concerning himself as the bread of life, recorded in the sixth chapter of John's gospel, since John's narrative shows that the Capernaum discourse was quite closely connected, chronically as well as logically, with the miracle on the other side of the lake, and was intended to set forth to the multitude the true significance of the miracle.

Thus understood, this miracle, great and wonderful as it is, becomes significant to us not so much as a proof of divine power on the part of Jesus, as a parable embodying the essential truth that the satisfaction of the world's hunger is found alone in him. It is plainly evident from the Gospel narratives that the physical needs of the people,—their hunger, their sicknesses and all the ills which resulted from outward, temporal conditions, appeared powerfully to the sympathy of Jesus. He was ever ready to extend his hand to relieve their afflictions. But he ever made it plain that his mission to the world was not merely to heal diseases, to relieve distress and to make the conditions of life comfortable. The fundamental truth to which his own life was

conformed and which in one way or another he was constantly proclaiming to the world was that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." There was no life worth living which did not move in harmony with the divine will. And this harmony with the divine will must be made vital and perpetual by a faithful and unreserved acceptance of Him whom God had sent. He had not come to abrogate the law that man's bread must be earned by toil, or to change any other normal condition of human life on earth. He had not come that he might reign in temporal splendor in accordance with the maxims of the kingdoms of this world and in fulfilment of the popular hope. To follow him merely because he had miraculously supplied their physical hunger and in the expectation of similar temporal benefits to be received at his hands was fatally to misapprehend his mission to the world. It was not any benefits which his miraculous power enabled him to bestow upon men, but what he was in himself that gave the mission of Jesus its supreme significance. If Christ is to be anything to men he must be the thing of supreme importance. He must be to them as the very food and drink upon which their lives depend, so that for them there is no real life apart from him.

It is as true today as ever it was that what men need is a Saviour with power to bring their hearts and wills into harmony with God. The Christian preacher and teacher of this generation needs to have strong and practical convictions on this point. The disposition shown by the people for whom this miracle was wrought, to hold a low view of Christ's mission to the world and to care for the bread which supplies immediate physical wants much more than for that bread which satisfies the spiritual hunger of the world, is much in evidence in these days. Philanthropy is indeed a gracious handmaid of Christianity, and where the spirit of true religion is manifested philanthropy will not be absent. But Christianity is infinitely more than a scheme for making men comfortable in this life or even for making them decently moral. If Christianity can do anything for a man that is greatly worth while doing, it can lift him above the sphere in which the things which minister to comfort, luxury and worldly respectability exert a controlling influence. It can open his eyes to the fact that the pearl of great price, to possess which a man may well sell all that he has, is not a temporal but a spiritual possession. Christianity does not indeed ignore the present life. It does not despise any good thing. The man who lives in fellowship with Christ finds life here in this present world a hundred fold better worth living than the man, whoever he may be, who despises that fellowship. But the soul which has really fed on Christ understands well that its own and the world's hunger can no longer be satisfied with the loaves and fishes which minister to temporal needs.

Another lesson of this parable-miracle is connected with the part which the disciples played in feeding the multitude. "Give ye them to eat," said Jesus. But how could they give them what they did not possess? It seemed an utter impossibility to satisfy the hunger of five thousand people there in the wilderness. But the problem was not too great for their Master. What was impossible with them was possible in connection with him who could multiply the meagre provision which the disciples could furnish according to the needs of the multitude. The disciples soon found that the more they gave the more they had to give, and when all had been filled, there remained to them many times more than they had at first. It is a great miracle. Many persons doubtless find it hard to believe. But an incomparably greater miracle is in progress in the world today. The problem of how to satisfy the world's hunger was before the mind of Jesus. And that problem, too, was not too great for him. He has sent his disciples forth to give the bread of life unto the world. The provision in their hands may seem sadly insufficient, but there is an exhaustless fountain of supply, and the more they give the more they are enabled to give. The more unreservedly the Christian dispenses the bread of life, the larger becomes his ability to feed the world's hunger. The provision is not exhausted with the multitudes who partake, nor with the years and centuries that pass. There is enough not merely that each may take a little, but that all may eat and be filled. For Jesus came that men might have life and that they might have it abundantly.

THE WAR.

An account of the movements of Japanese and Russian troops in Korea and Manchuria would doubtless be of great interest and significance if it could be had, but a rigorous censorship prevents such news from reaching us, and such reports as are given to the world are for the most part either unimportant or untrustworthy. There was early in the week a report of a sea fight between the Russian Vladivostok squadron and the Japanese squadron which had just previously bombarded Vladivostok, resulting disastrously to the Russian vessels, but this piece of news was evidently invented, as there has been no confirmation of it from any source. The fact in this connection seems to be that the Japanese squadron has been searching unsuccessfully for the Russian vessels, the probability being that the latter were all the time safe and out of sight of the Japanese,

in Vladivostok harbor. The Japanese army occupying the plain before Ping Yang is reported to be receiving constant reinforcements of troops, some of which come by the way of Seoul and others having been landed at points farther north on each side of the peninsula. There is a report which may be characterized as important if true, but which seems hardly probable, that a considerable force of Japanese having landed on the east coast of Manchuria, is now north of the Yalu and midway between that river and the Manchuria railway. That part of the country was supposed to be occupied in force by the Russians, and the presence of the Japanese there at the present stage of hostilities is, to say the least, unexpected. But if the Japanese forces are in the position reported, they are intended no doubt to outflank the Russian forces entrenched on the Yalu. An encounter between Russian and Japanese torpedo boats supported by cruisers occurred near Port Arthur on the night of Wednesday or the morning of Thursday in which, according to the Russian Commander's report, one Japanese torpedo boat and one Russian torpedo boat destroyer were sunk. The Japanese fleet afterwards bombarded Port Arthur at long range, but, according to Viceroy Alexiëff's report, without serious damage either to the forts or to the Russian fleet. Later reports, however, including the official report of Admiral Togo, indicate that the sea-fight and bombardment of Thursday were of a more serious character than would be gathered from the Russian official report of it, and more disastrous to the Russians. In addition to the taking of a Russian torpedo boat, which afterwards sank, the Japanese torpedo boats are reported to have inflicted serious damage on Russian boats which they engaged at very close quarters. Admiral Togo reports that one of his torpedo boats sustained injury and there was a loss of seven killed and eight wounded, but says nothing about the sinking of a Japanese torpedo boat. He does report, however, that his boats succeeded in laying special mines at the entrance of Port Arthur Harbor. The bombardment to which the forts and the town of Port Arthur were subjected was a severe one. In the Japanese squadron of six battleships there were twenty-four twelve-inch guns, and each gun is said to have been fired five times, making a total of 120 heavy projectiles fired into the city. The gunners were aided by observers on Japanese cruisers so placed as to be able to perceive the effect of the firing. The cruisers communicated with the battle ships by means of wireless telegraphy and the gunners were thus enabled to handle their guns more effectively. It is believed that their fire inflicted considerable damage while the Japanese ships suffered no injury from the guns of the fortress.

Editorial Notes.

—The Methodist denomination is flourishing in Ireland. The church statistics show an increase of eleven per cent. during the past decade, while Roman Catholics, Protestants, Episcopalians and Presbyterians show a decrease for the same period. The number of Methodists in the country is given as 62,000.

—Some years ago Dr. W. S. Apsey of Cambridge, Mass., recently deceased, preached a sermon in the course of which he asked the question—"Why should not a Christian man open an account with the Lord on his ledger, and treat it with all the sanctity and promptness that he would his account with any business firm?" Hon. C. W. Kingsley was one of Dr. Apsey's hearers, and at once responded "I will do it" and immediately began to carry out his purpose. Years afterwards when Dr. Apsey was in poor health, Mr. Kingsley wishing to cheer and encourage his beloved pastor, told him about the sermon and its effect upon him, adding: "I want you to know that more than half a million dollars have passed through my personal account with the Lord, and your sermon inspired me to keep the account."

—During the past week the ranks of our Baptist ministry in these Provinces have been broken by the death of Rev. John Coombes who departed this life at his late home at Cumberland Point, Queen's County, N. B., on Wednesday last. We have no particulars of Mr. Coombes' illness, and had not heard of his being ill until the report of his death appeared in a daily paper. Mr. Coombes was a native of Nova Scotia, and his remains were taken for burial to Halifax where a brother resides, but the years of his ministry were spent for the most part in New Brunswick. Of late years, we believe, he had not been regularly engaged in pastorate work. We hope in another issue to publish a suitable sketch of our departed brother's life and work.

—Secretary Morehouse of the American Baptist Home Missionary Society, who has recently visited Cuba, reports that there is an open door in that country for Baptist missionary effort. At Songo, a town of 3,000 people, not far from Santiago, a mission was opened in May 1903, and by February, 1904 more than 80 persons had given the names for baptism. During Dr. Morehouse's visit to the place twenty-six of these converts were baptized by the native pastor. The whole city and surrounding country Mr. Morehouse says, are profoundly stirred by this remarkable work of grace. In both Cuba and Porto Rico there is an immediate call upon Baptists for men, money and meeting houses. Among those baptized at Songo were a leading merchant and two daughters of the mayor besides