



THE good though quaint Billy Bray taught a striking lesson in gratitude for daily mercies when he said once, in his characteristic manner. "Well, friends, I've taken vinegar and honey, but, praise the Lord, I've had the vinegar with a spoon, and the honey with a ladle." Why should we mar the sweetness of living by giving undue prominence to the sour things of life? The sweet and the bitter may be both inevitable, but the former experiences far outnumber the latter, and to those who cultivate the wholesome habit of numbering God's mercies and giving praise therefore, the "honey" will be deliciously palatable and the "vinegar" taste neutralized and so forgotten. Let us cherish Billy's spirit of joyousness and know the sweetness of living close to the Lord every day.

IT is of little avail that we overload our lives with unnecessary burdens. Often indeed we impose upon ourselves too heavy a load of care by our very love to trust the Lord with the worries that press us, or to share with Him the distresses that wear our hearts away. This is well illustrated by Rev. J. H. Jowett, who says that one day an aged woman, after struggling with a heavy basket, got into the train with him, and when seated, still kept the heavy load upon her arm. A working man, seeing that she was falling to take the advantage of getting fully released from her burden, said in a kindly tone, "Lay your burden down, man; the train will carry both it and you." The point of the great preacher is plain. Too frequently we bear our own burdens instead of laying them by faith on the Lord, forgetting that His grace and power are sufficient to carry both us and our load. "Cast thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain thee."

THERE is economy that is parsimony. Prompted by selfishness, it eventually leads to loss. I read recently of a farmer in Aisby, South Lincolnshire, who over thirty years ago built a stack of wheat in his yard, and made a vow that he would not sell under "sixty shillings a quarter," to which price it is said wheat has not since attained. The stack, black with age, still stands in the yard. You say, "What a foolish man!" Yes, the price of that wheat, wisely invested during the past generation, would have increased several times over. Meanwhile the grain has been diminishing and his unwise vow has entailed much loss. Yet, do not be too hard on him. What he has done with his wheat, many a young man has done with his life, and soon his thirty years have gone, and what should have been invested for profitable returns has lain unused and unimproved. Only by use comes increase.

IN his lectures to his students, Mr. Spurgeon commended what he called "the preacher's deaf ear," suggesting thereby that there are occasionally some things spoken which the preacher may well leave unheard, or at least unnoted. The same is true of the Sunday School teacher. It is neither wise nor tactful to take notice of or

make comment on every word you may hear, either in the class or out of it. Some persons are peculiarly sensitive, and sounds that might profitably be ignored are apt to "get on the nerves," and consequently cause trouble, if not actual pain or real suffering. Boys and girls often make a noise without intending to be fractious or disorderly. Observation of such, followed by reprimand therefore, may only aggravate the offence. I make no excuse for disorder, but simply ask for "a square deal" for the class, and remind the teacher that it may be better to have a deaf ear than to be hypercritically alert and sensitive. The chronic spirit of fault-finding has spoiled many a teacher's influence, and while a wholesome discipline is necessary to class progress, an occasional "deaf ear" and "blind eye" will not prove a hindrance, but rather a help thereto. It pays sometimes to neither hear nor see all that is said or done.

TO hear just what is of value is not always easy, and to cultivate the habit of instantly forgetting what one hears but which is not worth remembering, is perhaps still more difficult. There are many things spoken that one would be the better for not hearing, and certainly they should not be repeated. Yet one is constantly exposed to these unwholesome sounds, and tempted to repeat unprofitable words. There was a large measure of sound sense in what Edison said to an aurist once when he called on the great electrician with a proposal to cure him of his deafness. It is recorded by F. A. Jones in his life of the renowned inventor. Edison declined the offer of the specialist, and when asked why, he said, "I am afraid you might succeed." And, with a smile, he added, "Supposing you did. Think of the lot of stuff I'd have to listen to that I don't want to hear! To be a little deaf has its advantages, and on the whole, I prefer to let well enough alone." One does not want to be so organized that he cannot hear, but it is a wise decision when one resolves that he will not hear whatever may be unworthy of his attention. And if one thus refuses to hear, he will never be disposed to repeat what lacks merit or tends to some measure of damage or loss. The closed ear and the still tongue are much needed in this age of distracting sounds and senseless gossip.

PERIODICAL appeals by chain-letter and other methods of address for the support of enterprises wholly foreign to our church in any of its spheres of philanthropy, are especially recurring. My advice has been asked several times recently about such calls. There is before me as I write a chain-letter purporting to be in the interests of a hospital ward in New South Wales. It is obviously misleading, if not wholly untrue and unworthy of confidential support. Break the chain into its constituent fragments, and the sooner the better. A letter from a League President in the Bay of Quinte Conference first called my careful attention to an entreaty letter for certain mission work in Benaria. It seems that all our matters are being approached in this manner. My counsel is that our societies pay strict attention to our own business,

and I assure them that our Forward Movement for Missions can readily find instant and wise use for all the money they can raise. Pay no attention to all such vagrant and outside appeals, and give your whole attention to our own proper and urgent missionary duties. They will keep us busy, all busy, and always busy.

This advice, of course, does not apply to such world-wide appeals as are made necessary by the present famine in China. The Christian Family Union is worthy of the support of every Christian and your contribution to it cannot be too liberal or too early.

WE are all more or less responsible for the moral and social atmosphere about us. Character is contagious. So is gloominess of spirit. The old sage never spoke more truly than when he said, "A merry heart doeth good like medicine." Frown, and before long someone will frown back at you. Smile, and you will not long smile alone. A friend tells how on a dull dreary, cold day, in a somewhat cheerless car, he was feeling quite miserable. The other occupants seemed to be so also. Another passenger entered. His face was bright, his greeting cheerful, and he was whistling to himself some tune. "Count your mercies." In a short while everything seemed different. The wind outside was none the less bleak, the clouds were just as heavy, and the weather prospects generally were not improved; but somehow the inside of that car was changed. The contagion of good cheer did it, and the whole social atmosphere was clarified. It is so everywhere, and blessed are they who cultivate this grace and diffuse its blessings on their fellow-men. Let us see that we put life and brightness into other lives by cultivating them in our own.

THE little red-and-white button, the emblem worn by thousands of members of organized Adult Bible classes, is full of significance. That it represents high standards of life is illustrated by this suggestive incident, for which I can personally vouch. A young man with the button on his coat entered a railway coach in winter. Being cold, he retained his overcoat for a time. The news agent came along. Seeing the man thus seated, he offered a pack of cards for sale. As the passenger turned in his seat, the overcoat opened somewhat and displayed the class button. When he saw this, the newsboy simply said to his prospective customer, "If you wear that, it's no use for me to offer you this," and he replaced the cards in his basket. In such a remark and by the action that followed it, he paid a high compliment to the button. In his mind, playing cards and the Bible class emblem didn't go well together. That it could not properly be associated or connected, I hope every man wearing or qualified to wear the little button will be equally wise, and that the good sense of the newsboy will characterize all our members. The button stands for the highest ideals of character and conduct. To honor it by being worthy of it and consistent with it, is the only true use to make of it everywhere we go.

RESULTS of personal influence are not limited to the lifetime of the individual exerting it, but may be seen in coming generations. This is so for both good and evil. Perhaps no more pathetic or impossible appeal was ever made being approached in this manner, my counsel is that our societies pay strict attention to our own business,