

THE TELEGRAPH'S PULPIT.

The Cumberer of the Earth Treated of by Rev. B. N. Nobles - He Deals With the Parable of the Figtree Which Brought Forth No Fruit.

Luke, xv-7: "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" The primary application of this parable of Jesus from which the text is taken, is readily perceived. The barren figtree was meant to illustrate the Jewish nation, planted of God among the nations of the earth for service, according to the election of grace and from which he had failed of obtaining the fruits of righteousness.

As this figtree had been planted in his vineyard and belonged to the husbandman, so the nations of earth were and are the Lord's. Especially was this the case with the Hebrew nation whom God had graciously chosen and planted among the nations; but in a most important sense this is true of all nations and kindreds and tongues and peoples.

And just as the figtree should have borne figs, so should all nations bring forth the fruits of righteousness. In speaking of the failure of Gentile nations to do this, Paul declares them without excuse, and were he to speak of present day nations among whom the fruits of unrighteousness so abound, he would declare them inexcusable also.

God has a right to ask and expect from all rightdoing, and the downfall of nations has been because of their failure to fulfill His expectations. In long-suffering mercy He may have foreborne to visit upon them His displeasure and remove them as cumberers of the ground, so affording further opportunity of repentance; but in the end downfall came because of their persistence in evil. And the past is but a prophecy of the future. Therefore should nations learn wisdom in the light of this parable.

Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death in a nation as surely as in an individual. Therefore did the antediluvian world perish; therefore were the Amorites of Canaan cut off from the land; therefore were Nineveh, and Babylon, and the kingdoms they represented, destroyed; therefore was Israel sent into captivity, Jerusalem made desolate and the Jews scattered abroad; therefore fell the great Roman empire; therefore Turkey totters to her fall and Spain is threatened. And who knoweth how another world have been cut off ere this had it not been for the intercession of our Lord.

God looks today upon the nations of earth, and instead of good, lo evil. Long time hath this been so and He hath stayed His hand from judgment, while the cumberers of the ground have been continued. These years have been their day of grace, but assuredly if they turn not from their sins the issue must be downfall. Nor shall our own beloved nation escape. God hath planted her and nourished her these many years, even as He did Israel of old. Fruits of righteousness hath He sought, nor altogether barren of good hath she been found, but her great national sins of intemperance and social impurity God cannot always wink at. If she repent not and cleanse herself from these iniquities, assuredly she, like the nations of the past, shall be cut off as a cumberer of the ground. But we must pass on from this consideration of the parable in its application to nations to consider it in its application to individuals.

This figtree belonged to the husbandman. It was planted in his vineyard. It had been cultivated and nurtured there. It was his own. Even so, each and all of us belong to God. He is the proprietor of this earth and of mankind whom He hath created and placed here. The evil one hath no right whatever in this vineyard of God. I once heard a person say the devil was a squatter, and when he explained himself, he said: "A squatter is one who settles on land that is not his." That is what the adversary and his hosts have done, settled on this earth, settled in this vineyard of the Lord, which they do not own a foot of, and have laid claim to the race, their claim is false. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," sang the psalmist. He is the proprietor; all men belong to Him. As the old preachers used to say: We are God's by right of creation; His by right of redemption; His by right of preservation; and some are His by right of adoption and the new birth. This is a fact that is not recognized as it should be, that every man belongs to God—all he has and all he is.

This figtree had been planted and nurtured in expectation of its producing fruit. It was, therefore, a very natural thing for the proprietor to come seeking fruit thereon. The purpose of the tree was to produce fruit. And God's purpose in man's being is that he should bring forth fruit—the fruit of holiness in character which insures righteousness in life. True, God had other secondary purposes also in man's creation. He was appointed to cultivate the ground, and to have dominion over all terrestrial creations, but the ultimate good God sought was not man's sovereignty over and culture of the earth. Rather was it man's development toward the measure of Him in whose image he was created and the maintenance of His integrity and uprightness. This was the fruit which God desired man to bring forth.

Through sinless and in the image of Deity, nevertheless man was an undeveloped being when God breathed into the animal man the breath of life and man became a living soul. He was in his infancy—an infant man so to speak. And if he had maintained his integrity and through the exercise of himself in ways of righteousness, develop his germinal powers and capacities, he would have been fulfilling God's ultimate purpose of good for him. In him He would have found then the fruit of holiness which issues in an unselfish and right life. Now the fruit God sought in the first man He seeks in every man. Perfected manhood, perfected womanhood or rather, manhood and womanhood on the way to maturity and perfection—this, together with attendant righteousness, is what God seeks and has a right to expect in view of all His gracious provisions for the race. Does He find it in you? In me?

This figtree proved to be a barren figtree. The proprietor sought fruit year after year, but found none. It was a barren tree. Now let us question regarding ourselves. We admit God's proprietorship of us. We recognize this morning that we are under eternal obligations to the God of nature and of grace, who has given us through all these years, sunshine and shadow, cold and heat, dew and rain, so making the earth to bring forth and rejoice—who has preserved us from disease and death and provided us with life's necessities—who has given the Son of His love in order to our redemption and life. We acknowledge our obligations to this God. We do not dispute His proprietorship of men and His right to demand fruit—even manhood, womanhood.

But what hath God found? Verily in the race at large He has found no such fruit as He sought. Imperfection, uncleanness, selfishness, sin—human nature dwarfed, twisted, corrupted. These hath He found in the world at large, instead of holiness, purity, perfection. But what hath He found in us? In you, in me? If this morning the divine husbandman would pass up and down these aisles, seeking fruit, how would He find

"JUST TREAD ON THE TAIL OF MY COAT."



The Invitations Are Out for a Scrap.

matters? Have we the fruit of manhood, womanhood to show him—a holy character, an unselfish, right life? As He scans our lives and searches our hearts doth He discover even in immaturity these fruits? Does the conviction force itself upon any of us that we are as the barren figtree and that God is disappointed in us? Then let us mark more closely still this parable, even though it brings distress—the issue will be for our good.

This figtree was a cumberer of the ground. It brought forth no fruit itself and by occupying the place where a good tree might be, it made the vineyard by that much less profitable. So it was judged a cumberer of the ground. Did it ever occur to you my brothers, that if any of us have been living a selfish, worldly life and are barren of the fruits God requires in us, that we have not only disappointed God and failed of our highest good, but that we have been cumbering the ground? Did it ever occur to you that God may be looking upon some of us even now as cumberers of the ground? And that the advisability of our removal may have been already considered? Would it not be a natural thing to do? Does not the fruit grow remove the valueless trees? Does he not prune away the useless twigs and branches because they not only produce no fruit themselves but prevent other branches bearing as they should? These cumberers are removed and ought to be, so you say. But in saying so may we not be passing judgment on ourselves? If for 2, 5, 10, 20, 40 years we have been enjoying God, earth and its abundance, and God's atmosphere and His sunshine and His truth and His protection and His grace, yet have brought forth no fruit upon God, why should we be continued? Wherefore should He spare us longer? Oh men, women, what if God should say of some of us this morning: "Cut him down, cut her down, for why cumbereth it the ground?"

Will you observe, this figtree had one to intercede for it even though it had been barren and unfruitful. "Let it alone this year that I may cultivate and if it bear fruit well; and if not, then I will cut it down." Brothers, let me tell you we are not less fortunate than the figtree of the parable. We, too, have an intercessor, even Jesus. "He ever lives above for the parable. He knows our barrenness and sin and much hath it grieved Him, yet doth He intercede in your behalf and mine. What would have become of us had it not been for His intercession and care! How far have we fallen short of God's standards for us! How meagre indeed are the fruits of righteousness even in the most fruitful! Surely if any of us dare claim to be other than cumberers of the ground! Surely if God had marked iniquity we would have been cut off long ago! But Jesus hath interceded and by His own toil through the Holy Spirit and by the enrichment of truth brought to us through providence and the Word, hath He sought to bring us into fruitfulness. If He succeed, well; if He fail, woe. So I come to the last thought.

This figtree's future was determined during its time of probation. Oh, my brothers, these are our days of probation. Is the dresser of the vineyard succeeding in his efforts to make us fruitful, or is he failing? Is there even the prospect of success—of fruitfulness? Oh, what an awful case when husbandman and vine-dresser pronounce a man hopelessly barren of good and give him over to be removed as a cumberer of the ground! God forbid that this should come to pass in the experience of any of us. But if any of us are still unholily in character and selfish and unrighteous in life after all that has been done for us, may we not be dangerously near to final ruin?

And now just a word to the one who says: "I am that person. I have been a great failure. I am a worldly, selfish man—a worldly, selfish woman; I have never brought forth fruit unto God." Well, friend, what are you about to do? Try again? Turn over a new leaf? Ah, you and I have turned over a good many new leaves and it is not so that very soon the new leaf had been blotted by us like the old? No, friend, that is not the very best thing to do. Rather repent of thy ways and surrender unto the Lord Jesus who has been tugging at thine heart to lead you back to God, where your sins may be forgiven and yourself made strong by His life and spirit to do righteously and become holy, so becoming a fruitful tree in the vineyard of God. Yield to Him and yield to Him now. Who will? Who does?

QUEBEC FIRE.

C. P. Telegraph and Dominion Express Companies Burned Out - Frank Mahon, Manager, Loses His Furniture.

Quebec, Jan. 14.—The main building and offices of the Canadian Pacific Telegraph and the Dominion Express Company, on St. Peter street, were destroyed by fire early today. The fire, which broke out about 5 o'clock, originated presumably from the furnace in the lower part of the building. The switch board and all telegraph instruments were destroyed. The company is said to have no insurance. The building, which belongs to Hon. Charles Fitzpatrick, is insured. The company has already established a temporary office nearby. The Great Northwestern Telegraph office, in the building adjoining the burned structure, escaped without injury. Frank Mahon, manager of the Quebec office, formerly connected with the C. P. R. at St. John, whose wife as a St. John lady, lost all his furniture, which was stored in the burned building.

FRANCE SHARES DISAPPROVAL.

Minister to Serbia Withdraws as Regicides Were Not Punished.

Paris, Jan. 13.—The French minister to Serbia, M. Benoit, has been recalled and another official has been sent to Belgrade to act as chargé d'affaires. This is a result of the failure of King Peter to take

CZAR'S SOFT WORDS.

(Continued from page 1.)

Peikin, now has a position in which he can exert influence for reform, although rank and age generally outweigh ability in the Chinese government circles. Brigadier General H. T. Allen, U. S. A., chief of the Philippine, says that there has been no substantial change in the Japanese proposition nor the Russian counter proposal since they were so loudly set out by The Associated Press in its semi-official despatch from Peikin last week. Constantinople has arrived here from Manila. He formerly was military attaché at St. Petersburg and will join the Russian army, as an observer, in the event of war.

Conflicting Reports.

Washington, Jan. 14.—Mr. Takahira, the Japanese minister here, today called on Secretary Hay and informed him that the Japanese proposition to the last Russian note had been delivered this morning. The reply amounts to a denial of all the important Russian propositions and Japan's counter proposals, it is said, are of a nature that will almost certainly make them unacceptable to Russia. Therefore, a most pessimistic view of the future is taken at Tokyo. On the other hand, advice that came to the state department from Paris, St. Petersburg and Berlin are all of a pacific character. Ambassador Porter at Paris says that pressure is being brought to bear on the would-be belligerents, particularly on Japan by at least one of the great European powers to cause Russia and Japan to come to terms and so avert open hostilities. The czar is also reported to be extremely desirous of preventing war. Taking these two conflicting sets of advice into consideration the official opinion here is that Japan will not yield to any such pressure.

The Japanese minister has supplied the state department an abstract of the last Japanese note. Count Cassini, the Russian Ambassador, on his part, has acquainted the state department verbally as is his custom, with the nature of the Russian note, so that the department is fully informed, but as both these communications have been made in confidence, the officials do not feel they should make them public in whole or in part.

The state department today received a cablegram from U. S. Minister Allen, at Seoul (Korea), stating that the Korean newspapers are trying to incite the people against foreigners and especially against American interests.

The department feels that these interests can be cared for properly by the U. S. gunboat Victrola and the U. S. Marine Guard now in the Korean capital. The European nations also have considerable guards, which undoubtedly could be relied upon to assist in repressing disorder that might threaten any special interest.

Japan Orders 16,000 Ton Battleship.

London, Jan. 15.—The Daily Telegraph's Tokyo correspondent says that the Japanese government, as a part of its programme of naval extension, has placed a contract in England for 16,000 ton battleship. The correspondent of the Daily Mail at Shanghai reports the gradual and extensive movement of Chinese troops toward Shan Hai Kwan, in the Chi Li province, probably with the view of securing the harbor of Ching Wan Tiao, on the Gulf of Liao Tung, and the coal mines thereabouts against Russian seizure.

Massacre of Foreigners Advocated.

London, Jan. 14.—The Seoul correspondent of the Daily Mail says that the native press is advocating the slaughter of all foreigners. United States Minister Allen has ordered all American women and children to remain indoors, and he predicts that rioting by the military is imminent.

M. Collin De Planey, the French minister, has vainly advised the emperor to take refuge in the French legation. Constantinople, Jan. 14.—Two large vessels, belonging to the Russian volunteer fleet, carrying troops, passed through the Bosphorus today, bound for the far east. St. Petersburg, Jan. 14.—Mr. Kurino, the Japanese minister, informed the Associated Press correspondent that the Japanese minister to London, Baron De Rosen, the Russian minister at Tokyo, and that he (Mr. Kurino) would present Count Lamsdorff, the Russian foreign minister, with a duplicate copy of the note which he was not authorized to state the terms of the reply, but he said that it ensured the continuance of negotiations concerning the far east so far as Japan was concerned.

Ginger Ale's Deadly Work.

Little Rock, Ark., Jan. 14.—As the result of drinking ginger ale flavoured with lemon extract, three men are dead from poisoning and two more are not expected to live.

Vapo-Resolena advertisement. Established 1877. Whooping Cough, Croup, Bronchitis, Cough, Grip, Asthma, Diphtheria. Cresolene Antiseptic Tablets. 10c a box. ALL DRUGGISTS.

ALBERT COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL. January Session Opened Tuesday-- J. A. Cleveland Elected Warden-- Financial Statement.

SIGNATURES TOO MUCH ALIKE. Petitions from Cape Breton for repeal of Scott Act Rejected.

PHOTOS BY RADIUM. London, Jan. 11.—Mr. Ulyett, a photographer, has succeeded in obtaining a photograph by means of radium. He says he placed a group of articles in a dark cupboard, and over a box of glass, containing a very small quantity of radium bromide. An exposure of twelve hours was given, after which the plate was developed in the usual way, though very slowly.

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