

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

FORGIVENESS.

BY REV. T. F. FOTHERINGHAM, M.A.

In the summer of 18—I found myself in the town of A—, in one of the Maritime Provinces of Canada. There had been a good deal of dissention, and some hard feeling between prominent members of the congregation, so in conducting the prayer meeting I took occasion to dwell upon a forgiving spirit as an essential condition of acceptable prayer. A few days after I met Judge D—in the post office, and after the usual greetings, he touched my elbow, and said,

"Come with me, I want to ask you a question."

We walked down the street to the police court, where, seating myself on the prisoners' bench, himself in the magistrate's chair, the following conversation took place; the subject not altogether inappropriate to the surroundings.

"You were telling us last Wednesday evening that we must forgive our enemies, or we won't be heard. Now I want to know how I am to do it. Am I to forgive him right out and out, so that the wrong will be as if it had not been? If I can't, you say God won't hear me."

"Don't Christ's words seem very plain?" I replied. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses. The words are not mine, but His."

"Not to beat about the bush, let me tell you just what the case is. A member of the Church made a statement regarding me, which was false. I told him so at the time, and he knows it to be false. He did it with a view to injure my Christian character, and he succeeded—some people believed him. Now, what I want to know is, ought I to forgive him before he says, 'I'm sorry?' 'If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, *I repent*; thou shalt forgive him.' Does God pardon the sinner before he repents?"

I answered, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us.' I do not think that if God had cherished the slightest feeling of bitterness or resentment, He would ever have 'so loved the world' as to give 'His only begotten Son,' for those who were very far from saying, 'I repent.' I think that our forgiveness must be such what we feel only sorrow and compassion, not contempt. A man's conduct toward us may reveal his character in such a new and unfavourable light, that we cannot trust him as we once did, but we should have no such aversion to him as springs from soreness on account of the injury he has done us. Of course, I take for granted that you have no malice in your heart towards him."

"Oh! not a particle of that," he replied promptly. "I remonstrated with him; the other elders talked with him; mutual friends told him he ought to apologize, but he wouldn't do it. It's an intensely practical question with me. I see him in church every Sunday, and every time my heart says 'you're a rascal,' so my enjoyment and profit in worship is spoiled. The other night we both led in prayer meeting—one of us must have mocked God. I know I couldn't say 'Amen' to his prayer. It mars my happiness. It comes between me and my God. I want to be rid of it. I spoke to Dr. — about it, and he tried to show me that I was wrong. 'That's right,' I told him, 'if I'm wrong I want to know it. I'll thank you if you will show me where I'm wrong, and I'll at once try to set myself right.'"

"Do these feelings obtrude themselves upon you, so as to mar your private devotions?" I asked. "Do they arrest your freedom in prayer, and restrain the ardour of holy emotion?"

"Sometimes."

"Can you pray for him, then?"

"I have done so; but," he said with emphasis, "it's the hardest thing I ever did in my life."

"Have you prayed for yourself in regard to this feeling?" I further inquired.

"I like your practical way of putting things," he answered; "I like the common-sense way you handled your subjects on Sunday. Now, to come down to the facts of the case, what am I to pray for? Am I to pray that I may think him a generous-hearted, honest man? That would be asking God to make me think

black was white. I know he isn't. Until he says, 'I've done you wrong, and I'm sorry for it,' I *can't* feel to him as I would like to. Just the other day, right in this office here, a man said something that hurt my feelings very much. I said nothing at the time, but a couple of days afterwards I sent him a note that I wanted to see him. He came, and I told him how I felt. He at once said, 'Mr. D., I'm sorry I spoke that way. I beg your pardon indeed.' I replied 'That's enough now, I don't want to hear anything more about it. I think as much of you as ever I did.' The next day he came back again, he felt so bad about it, and said, 'Mr. D., I feel real ashamed of myself. I don't see how I could have spoken as I did.' I told him, 'Don't mention it again, my dear sir, if you please. I'll take it as a favour if you want. It's all over, and I respect you more than ever I did.' Now, that's the way I want to feel towards this other man."

"I don't think that is possible at present," I replied. "You can't shake hands with a man who won't hold out his hand. This much, however, is certain, whatever comes between you and God when you are on your knees is wrong. Sometimes I have felt so utterly helpless and perplexed that I didn't know what was wrong, and I have just cried out like a frightened child. No mother ever came quicker to a timid babe, than God did to me. He soon found out what was wrong for me. Now, can't you do just the same thing. Ask God to take your case in hand, and make you all right. Ask Him to remove this bitterness that makes you so unhappy. The doctor doesn't ask you to make a diagnosis of your disease for him before he will prescribe. He only asks you how you feel. Go to the Great Physician and tell Him your heart aches, and ask Him to prescribe the medicine that He sees best; but mind you don't make wry faces if the medicine isn't just what you expected."

"You said that you could pray for your enemy, but that it was the hardest thing you ever did in your life. You are on the right track. Keep on praying for him, and the exercise will become easier, and your heart tenderer. Then you have another step to take. You must not only pray for those that despitefully use you, but you must 'do them good,' you must 'heap coals of fire on their heads.' Try what love can do. Overwhelm your enemy with kindness. Never mind what other people say about it. Don't let their misconstruction of your conduct turn you aside from your purpose. Miss no chance of doing him a favour. Look at the matter from a higher standpoint. We are to forgive 'as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us,' 'as Christ hath forgiven us.' Well, how has He forgiven us? We must act and feel as He would under the same circumstances. Ask yourself, 'If Christ had felt as I do, would He ever have died for me?' Put yourself in your enemy's place, and Christ in yours, and see how it looks. Christ didn't stand upon His dignity with you. It was the goodness of God 'that led you to repentance.' If He died for us 'while we were yet sinners,' and showered unnumbered blessings upon us while we were ungrateful and disobedient, ought we not to try and imitate Him? The standard is doubtless high, for it is Divine; and we come far short of it, for we are human; but the measure of our conformity to it is the measure of our Christ-likeness. Forgiveness is a grace. It isn't natural, but is a gift and work of the regenerating and sanctifying Spirit."

We parted agreeing to speak further on the subject, but circumstances prevented, and I shortly after left the place.

THE McALL MISSION, PARIS, FRANCE.

DEATH OF REV. MR. DODDS.

The Rev. George Theophilus Dodds, the efficient and energetic assistant of Mr. McAll in his "Mission to the Working People of Paris and France," died on Sunday morning, the 10th September, under very painful circumstances. He had gone with his family to the country for his usual summer rest, and was occupying a cottage which had been placed by a friend at his service. The day after his arrival he was walking in the woods with his wife and children, and collected a large number of what were regarded as mushrooms. These he took home and had them cooked for breakfast, he and his wife and servant eating freely of them, the children happily abstaining. They had breakfasted upon poisonous toadstools! and in a few hours, the three who had partaken of them, were suffering the consequences. The nearest village being eight miles away, and Paris being distant five hours

by quickest train, no immediate assistance could be procured. Fortunately a neighbour happened to call at the house in the evening, and learning the state of matters at once summoned physicians and nurses from Paris. Everything was then done for the relief of the sufferers that was possible, and after a few days they were all supposed to be out of danger. Mrs. Dodds and the servant did recover, but Mr. Dodds had a relapse, and notwithstanding all the skill and care of the physicians, he died on Sunday morning, the 10th September. The funeral took place on Thursday, the 14th, from the Church of the Oratoire, Paris, when addresses were made by M. Recolin, pastor of the Church, by Rev. Theodore Monod, and Rev. Dr. Hitchcock of the American Chapel. Mrs. Dodds—a daughter of the Rev. Dr. Horatius Bonar, of Edinburgh—has since been suffering from mental depression, and with her five little children has been removed to her father's house.

Mr. Dodds, who was in the very prime of life, full of energy, and able to speak French and German almost as fluently as his mother tongue, was looked to by the friends of the Mission in France to fill the place of its founder, the venerable Mr. McAll, when he should be removed. His death has therefore cast a gloom over the Mission, at a time when it was extending with marvellous rapidity in all quarters. As he visited Canada two years ago, in company with M. Reveillaud, to whom he acted as interpreter, and he himself preached in some of the Toronto churches, he must be known to many of the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN. You may, therefore, perhaps find room for a few extracts from the address delivered by Dr. Hitchcock, on the occasion of the funeral, testifying to the high character of the deceased, and to his eminent fitness for the position which he occupied in the mission field of France. Mr. Dodds was the son of a Free Church minister, and was himself settled for a short time as pastor of a congregation in Scotland, before he left for Paris.

T. H.
Dresden, Germany, 25th September, 1882.

"To those of us who studied his characteristics and watched his career here in Paris, his natural and acquired gifts seemed of a high order, and his qualifications for the special work, to which he had consecrated his life, full and rare. With a mind alert and reflective, progressive and conservative, and well disciplined by patient study, and enriched by extensive reading, he kept himself abreast the thought of the day. His fondness for language and his facility in mastering it were witnessed in his acquisition during his student days of the Latin, the Greek, and the Hebrew, and his familiarity with the literature at least of the Semitic languages. The French and German he learned to use almost with the facility of his native tongue.

"But knowledge alone would not have fitted him, as he proved himself to be, for his special work. He had wisdom and tact. This was often remarked by his colleagues who watched, with admiration, his management of the popular reunions, arresting attention, maintaining order, awakening interest and persuading minds to the acceptance of Gospel truth. He loved his work; and this love had its inspiration in a higher love. His whole soul was enlisted. He had consecrated to it his life. He could have had position and won distinction in his native Scotland—as a scholar, a preacher, a man of letters—he had the gifts and the opportunities for it. But he chose to give himself to France, and not to the rich and educated and cultured of her inhabitants, but to the poor and ignorant, the religiously abandoned, the indifferent, the superstitious, the hostile, the godless. And how beautifully he adapted himself to this special work! He made his home among those he would reach and bless. Using his private means as far as with the strictest economy they could be made to go for the support of his family, he would only receive from the Mission Funds what was absolutely required for their modest support, trusting that, should he be taken away, the Lord would provide for his household.

"He was the editor of the 'Quarterly Record' of the Mission; wrote frequently for the religious journals in Great Britain and in America; had an extensive correspondence with auxiliary societies and friends of the Mission in both these countries, as well as in France; had the charge of its libraries and tract distribution; was frequently called across the Channel to make addresses in its behalf; and was contemplating, in the early spring, revisiting America, and canvassing the Churches in its interests.