

said the evangelist, not often omitted, "Webster says an infidel is one that does not believe the Bible. You had better read it more faithfully, and call yourself by your right name."

Selection.

SPEAKING A WORD FOR CHRIST.

Mrs. Adams was an invalid. That is, she was too unwell to expose herself more than absolute necessity required in the inclement season of the year. Yet she was able to superintend her household, and to receive calls from her friends, provided they were neither too long nor too frequent.

The Sabbath before was a mild one, and she had joyfully embraced the opportunity of again joining her Christian friends in the public services of the Lord's house, and in celebrating His dying love at the communion table.

The pastor was peculiarly solemn and tender in his appeals to "the family" around him to be faithful in their efforts to draw others into the "circle,"—the fold to which they belonged. "and this month, this week, dear friends, will you not endeavour to speak a word for Christ whenever and wherever you may have the privilege?" "But," added he, "there must be much prayer, as a preparation for the successful performance of this duty; for 'he that winneth souls is wise!'"

The exhortation fell upon tender hearts; for Spirit was even then moving among them, and preparing the way for "the stately steppings of the Lord."

None felt it more than Mrs. Adams. Deeply did she deplore the giving up of her class in the Sunday-school, her attendance at the evening prayer-meetings, and her weekly visits to the poor and suffering ones around her; and she had endeavoured so to bear her ill health and the depressing weakness she suffered, as to prove her submission to the Divine will. But this was not enough. She must do active work this month; she must speak for Christ. Naturally of a retiring disposition, she had shrunk from direct conversation on personal religion, feeling that *indirect* remarks and general observations were all that were required of her.

Now she was troubled. As she sat that cold, frosty afternoon in her pleasant room, as attractive and cheerful as it was possible for loving hands and hearts and a liberal purse to make it, she sighed heavily as she looked about her. "In everything James has shown his love for me, preferring my society and my happiness, sick and wasted as I am, to all the charms of the gay and intellectual society he is surrounded by; and yet I—" here the voice was choked by tears,—"yet I, O Father, O Jesus, have never begged him to come to Thee, never knelt with him to supplicate Thy blessing; I will, so help me God, this very night. And that long conflict ended,—for it had been her burden for months,—she was prepared for the next one.

The door bell rang, and Mrs. Roberts was announced. "Bring her up, Jane, and if any one else calls, say I am busy." Mrs. Roberts entered and greeted her cordially. She was extremely lively in conversation, full

of the chat and merry gossip of the town, yet with a certain air of conscious superiority, which made one ill at ease in her presence, unless in all points you perfectly agreed with her.

She was Mrs. Adams' next door neighbour, —very wealthy and very stylish, and in her own opinion, very religious. For did she not occupy one of the most expensive pews in the church? and was she not noted for her benevolence, her tenderness to the suffering, and her unflinching advocacy of the rights of others?

To Mrs. Adams she had been most kind,—constantly reminding her, by the most delicate attentions, of the constant place she had in her heart and thoughts. How could she beg her to be reconciled to Christ? But the Spirit was pressing upon her conscience, and urging her to this duty; and she dared not refuse to comply with its promptings.

"She will think me presumptuous; she will think me egotistical; she will think me intrusive; she will think that I think myself better than she is;" urged the poor human nature and the evil spirit, "will you think she should throw aside her reserve, and put on the armour of open battle."

Mrs. Roberts had a singularly open and direct style of mind; and, having noticed that her friend seemed abstracted, inquired anxiously if she was not as well as usual, or if anything was troubling her? The door was opened and the way was made plain, and Mrs. Adams, with a silent cry for help, obeyed it all.

"Yes, my dear Mrs. Roberts," she answered, "there is something on my mind which troubles me sadly. It is seeing those I so love and respect, as I do you and others of my friends, have so little love for Christ. Pardon me if I speak too freely, but I feel so utterly dependent upon Him for all my hopes of heaven, that I long to have all I love, trust and love Him also."

Mrs. Roberts sat still in utter amazement. It was so different from anything she had heard from her friend before, that it was as unexpected as disagreeable to her.

She arose with an expressive look of pity on her face, and kindly taking Mrs. Adams' hand, said she would intrude upon her no longer that afternoon, as she saw she was tired and nervous. "I will send you some jelly for tea, dear, and come to-morrow and take you to ride, if it is pleasant enough," so saying, she hastily left the room.

Poor Mrs. Adams! For a few moments she felt utterly cast down, almost ashamed of her humble effort. "For me to speak to her! If it had been any one else!" But, at this moment, a sweet peace filled her soul; her Father's fulfilled promise to those who follow His voice,—"Great peace have they who love Thy law." Falling on her knees, she thanked her Saviour that He had enabled her to speak "one word" for Him, and entreated that the influence of the Holy Spirit might follow that word, imperfectly as it was uttered, and assist her in all further efforts to win souls to Christ.

It seemed as if Mrs. Adams' trials were all to come at once, for scarcely had she recovered from the excitement occasioned by the conversation with her first caller, before a second was announced—"Miss Green." If it had been hard to converse with her

friend and neighbour, it was far more with a mere acquaintance.

Miss Green had but recently moved into the same street with herself, and was now returning Mrs. Adams' call on her as a stranger. She had pleasant, easy manners and a fluent style of conversation, and rattled on with racy remarks on the town, the neighbours, and the view from the adjacent heights, till it seemed as if the time allotted to a ceremonious call would soon expire. And yet Mrs. Adams felt her heart warm to this stranger with new and sweet emotions. It was the reward of the faithful dealing of the previous interview, and she could not let this opportunity slip.

"A thought struck her. "And what church do you attend here, Miss Green?" "What church? Oh, to tell the truth, we have not taken a pew anywhere. Papa has been waiting to see where he liked best, but mamma prefers Dr. H.'s, and so I suppose we shall have to go there. The manner became serious at once, and her eyes were fixed questioningly upon Mrs. Adams' face; "May I ask," she added, "where you have been accustomed to go? I have not seen you, I think, at any church I have attended."

"No, probably not; I am too unwell to be out as regularly as I wish; but I belong to Dr. E.'s church; in H—— Street."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Miss Green, with some surprise,—"then you are a Baptist; pardon me, but I should not have expected you to go there,—but," added she in a moment, "I am sure I don't know why; I have never been there, but I have had an idea that—that the Baptists were rather," and, confused between her desire to be polite and her real surprise, she could not finish her sentence.

"You mean, I think," said Mrs. Adams, "that you think us rather narrow and bigoted in our views,—many persons have that idea of us—but if you will come and hear my pastor some time, I am sure you will be pleased with his sermon. He is an eloquent preacher, and an earnest, devoted follower of the Lord Jesus."

Miss Green looked puzzled. "And what do you mean by that?" she asked. "Are not all ministers that, and do not all Christians believe in Christ?"

"They should be, most certainly," said Mrs. Adams; "but I think we cannot fail to perceive a great difference in this respect, even in ministers, and much among those who call themselves by the sacred name of Christ."

"Many, I fear, who consider themselves Christians, because they have been educated in a Christian community, have yet no personal interest in the Lord Jesus as their atoning sacrifice—their great High-Priest, their only hope of salvation, the only ground of acceptance with their offended Father in heaven."

"And is that what you believe, Mrs. Adams?" asked her visitor, while an expression of intense interest overspread her fine countenance. "An atoning sacrifice," she repeated to herself: "and do you, whom I hear every one speak of as lovely and excellent—pardon my freedom—feel that you need an atonement for your sins?"

"I feel," said Mrs. Adams, while tears filled her eyes, and her voice was tremulous with emotion, "I feel, my dear young friend,