

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### PRESBYTERIAN PULPIT.

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Congregations, like families, have their disagreements. However desirable it may be that brethren dwell together in unity, it is not always attainable. Thus, instead of harmony there is occasional discord. Prejudices and incompatibilities find their way into congregations as they do into other societies. Fires of jealousy, however, do not continue to blaze. Time, the healer of differences, and other and higher soothing influences produce tolerant and kindly feelings, and brethren learn to respect and love those with whom they have contended. Paul and Barnabas had a sharp contention about John Mark, but all parties were afterwards cordially reconciled.

About thirty years since grave differences arose among the members of Knox Church. They resulted in a number of people leaving who were afterwards formed into a new congregation. In due time a large, commodious and elegant building was erected for them at the corner of Queen and Mutual streets. As many of the members of the new congregation were either from the North of Ireland or of Irish descent, the church was named after Dr. Cooke, the able and eloquent exponent of Presbyterianism in Ireland. The substantial building is of white brick in the Lombardian style of architecture, the ornamentation being simple and in good taste. It is large and commodious, and can accommodate an audience of about a thousand people. The church has a frontage on Queen street of fifty-five feet and is flanked at each side by tower and spire. The spires, of equal design and proportions, rise to a height of one hundred and ten feet. Though without the modern adjuncts of churches recently erected, it has a spacious basement where the Sabbath School meets and where congregational meetings are held.

On a recent Sabbath morning the pastor, the Rev. John Kirkpatrick, preached a profitable discourse of which the subjoined is an outline :

"Occupy till I come." Luke xix. 13.

There can be no doubt in our minds as to the import of the parable from which our text is taken. The object of it is clearly set forth in the 11th verse of the chapter, Zachaeus had joyfully received the Saviour at his house and the disciples murmured, saying, "That He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." The new convert forthwith expressed his loyal and loving obedience to the Lord, saying, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold." The Master's approval immediately follows:—"This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." And then He added the parable, why? "Because He was nigh to Jerusalem and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear." Whatever their false and deceptive imaginations regarding the character of the kingdom may have been, they were now suddenly dissipated; and whatever their personal misconceptions as to the nature of their relation thereto, and the corresponding obligations involved, may have been, they must now have been removed. "To sit upon His right hand and on His left in His kingdom" was an honour, which, however fully it may have represented their ideas of the work they had undertaken, came very far short of the Master's estimate of it. They are not to be called *masters*, their honour lies in the fact that they are *servants*. They are called to fight, to build, to labour, to work. The cause needs their assistance and consecration. The kingdom is to be established through their efforts. The world is to be redeemed, Nations are to become disciples. And all this is to be accomplished largely through their personal faithfulness in the use of the very least as well as the greatest gifts the Lord has been pleased to impart to them. He, like the nobleman, has gone into a far country, to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. Our commission is to go in His name and teach, "go work to day," the night is rapidly coming, when none of us can work. The time of judgment from the scrutiny of which no visionary pretext will cover us, is near; the hour of reward and rest, from the glory of which none can keep us back, is close at hand. "Occupy till I come."

While we have sought thus briefly to indicate the immediate connection of the text, it is quite true that, taken in its general sense, it will admit of a variety of applications. For example, it will admit of being applied to the employment of our time—occupying it fully for God. How few seem to realize the vast importance of time. And yet every moment is precious. Life itself only represents our moments in the aggregate. How many only begin to realize the true value of time when the best of their life is spent. When their opportunities for doing good are almost over, they begin to wish they had redeemed it as they ought. Not one of these precious moments belongs to us. God calls them all His own, our very existence in His. And if we belong to God in the highest sense, we will anxiously seize every passing opportunity and use it for His glory, as we pass through life and stand face to face with its difficulties and cares and duties. No part of human life is so

insignificant that we can afford to be indifferent to a single day, or hour, or minute of time. It is the trifling little items which run up the powerful bill against us at its close. How often has the soul, with all its bright and godlike powers, become impoverished and enfeebled through our failure at this very point. As a rule, men who succeed in life beyond their natural attainments and abilities are those who have the power of economising the fragments of time, so that nothing is lost; and the men who feel disappointed in after life are those who are weak in this particular. It is a very simple, but a very sound maxim which says with regard to pecuniary matters, "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves." So it is with regard to the economy of time; "Take care of the hours and the years will take care of themselves." Little grains of sand make the mountains, and little drops of water make the sea. Let every moment of our time be occupied for God—every moment will tell upon eternity. But looking at the words of the text rather in their position and natural connection, in the passage we learn the following lessons:—

1. *They speak of the absent Lord who will come again—*  
"Till I come."

2. *They speak of the great end of the Christian life—*  
"Occupy."

3. *They indicate the position and prospects of the Christian after Christ's coming, to reckon with His servants and reward the faithful.*

Under the first of these heads we may remark that whatever difference of opinion may exist among professing Christians as to the particular time, nature, and circumstances of Christ's coming, all are united in the belief that He will come. And while the Church is called to mourn an absent Lord, is it not matter for deepest gratitude that He has given her most distinct assurance in relation to a truth which lies so near to her best interests and the comfort and edification of all her members. No language can more positively express the fact than the words which our blessed Lord Himself employs to make us certain of it.

The two men in white apparel, who stood by the wondering disciples on Mount Olivet, declared "ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." "To them that look for Him, will He appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." The provisions made for the Church's comfort during this temporary absence of Christ in his bodily presence sufficiently indicate and confirm the hope of all Christians in this truth. The spirit has been imparted to, and He remains with the Church for ever. It was expedient on many grounds that the Saviour should go away. The Comforter has come. The faith and hope and love of believers, are perfected. Christian work has become all but universal, and the fruits of the Gospel are gathered in every land at once. The Church, too, quickened by the Saviour's spiritual presence, looks hopefully forward to the glorious issue of her present conflict. In the Sacrament of the Supper instituted by Christ before He suffered, these two grand thoughts are kept before us: we look back to His sacrificial death on the one hand, and we look forward to His coming again, upon the other; we do this in remembrance of Him, and we show forth His death until He come. This coming shall be marked by every token of power and glory. His holy angels shall be with Him and He shall be constituted judge of quick and dead. He shall dispense appropriate rewards in view of services rendered, and shall take His people home to mansions of glory.

The great object of the Christian life is to fulfil the law of Christ, to do that what he has commanded us; and like faithful servants we should be as diligent as if we felt the constant presence of our Master. His eye is ever upon us, and He will reward every man according to his works. We are "occupiers" of the ground and can not afford to be idle. He has left us the noblest example and there is a pure pleasure in doing His work, for "we are workers together with Him." No Christian can afford to go back. Our watch-word is ever "forward" and the Church can ill afford to lose any portion of her Master's heritage. Her work shall not be done until the kingdoms of this world are laid at the feet of Jesus. She must keep the garden of the Lord clear of weeds within, and defend it against the attacks of enemies without. The trees of the Lord's planting should be vigorous and healthy, they are planted by the rivers of water, but they need constant tending and care. The lambs and sheep of the Lord's fold must be fed, and lost ones must be sought and found and carried home. There is much to do—more than enough for all—why should we stand all day idle while Christ's poor are to be fed, His sick nursed, His weeping ones comforted, His imprisoned ones set free? "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." "Occupy till I come" we have been placed in a position of trust, we are ambassadors for Christ. Satan's kingdom is to be destroyed, the kingdom of grace is to be advanced, others as well as ourselves being brought into it and kept in it, and the kingdom of glory is to be hastened.

For this great work of destruction and construction ample resources have been provided. We may not see clearly the Master's plan or have His design fully in our minds, it is not necessary we should, but we can use His weapons, we can lean upon His strength, we can follow His directions, we can do "whatever our hands find to do," with all our might. Our place upon the wall may be obscure, or otherwise, let us try to fill it. While the words of our great Commander fall ringing upon the ear, "Hold the Fort," let the Church in faith reply "by Thy grace we will." In the measure in which either the individual or the Church discharges this duty in the same measure, will they be found faithful.

The rewards of faithful service are sure and will be rendered to every man according to his work. The devil works his servants hard and pays them ill. Christ's servants shall have a glorious reward. His recognition and approval of the least they have done will be more than enough to justify all their desires, and will be commensurate with their efforts.

There seems to be some distinction made in this parable

as to the extent and proportion of the honours reaped by the servants, but in the parable of the talents we have the other side of the truth presented. Here all receive the same gracious commendation irrespective of the number of talents bestowed. If we are taught in the one case that our honours will be proportionate to our diligence and faithfulness, we are taught in the other that our reward at last shall depend upon our making a right use of the talents we actually possess, whether they be few or many. The right use of even one gift entitles to the "well done!" The rewards shall be eternal. How poor are all the honours of the world when compared with the honour which all the saints enjoy! The lustre of earthly crowns grows dim, earthly laurels fade away. But for the righteous is reserved "an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It is the privilege of every believer to say—

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which cannot fade.

The righteous Judge at that great day shall place it on my head,

Nor hath the Sovereign Lord decreed this prize for me alone

But for all such as love like me the appearance of His Son."

In conclusion let us try to realize to what an extent our eternal future is in our own hands. Our title to heaven is all of Christ, our justification before God is dependent upon the merits of another; but our reward and the degree of glory to which we are to rise, may, in one sense, be measured by our works. Not absolutely by what we have done, but rather by the degree of believing devotion with which we give ourselves to the Master's service. "If any man serve Me him will My Father honour."

On the 20th of January, 1851, a meeting of persons favourable to the establishment of a new Presbyterian Church in Toronto was held in Victoria street. Steps were taken towards the organization of a church in connection with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. At a subsequent meeting held on January 28th in the school-house, corner of Duchess and Caroline streets, it appeared that about 170 families had signified their intention of joining the church in process of formation, and Messrs. John Greenlees, J. B. Boyle, George Coulter, John Carr, Robert McClelland, John Henry, Samuel McLain, and Thompson McCleary were appointed a committee for the purpose of raising funds, etc. In the course of the same year the congregation was organized by the Presbytery of Toronto as a congregation in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Canada, with a communion roll of fifty-four members, most of whom were from the north of Ireland.

On the 26th of March, 1852, a call was extended to the Rev. Robert Irvine, of St. John, N.B., and on the 24th of June of the same year he was inducted as the first stated pastor of the new congregation. Mr. Irvine continued pastor until the 12th of May, 1854, when he accepted a call from Knox Church, Hamilton.

During his incumbency the congregation met partly in St. Lawrence Hall and partly in a frame church on George street. This property was purchased by the congregation. Dr. Irvine, who died recently at Augusta, Georgia, was an eloquent preacher and succeeded in gathering around him a numerous congregation in the church on George street, during his brief pastorate. After several ineffectual attempts to secure a suitable successor a call was extended on the 3rd of July, 1856, to the Rev. Andrew Marshall, formerly of Ireland, but then labouring as a missionary in New Brunswick. The call was accepted and Mr. Marshall's induction took place on the 6th of August of the same year. On this occasion Rev. Thos. Lowry preached, Dr. Willis addressed the pastor, and Mr. Reid the congregation. On March 31st, 1857, Mr. Marshall, owing to declining health, resigned his pastoral charge with the object of returning to Ireland. It has fallen to the lot of few ministers in so short a period to make so many friends as did Mr. Marshall, and he is still remembered affectionately by many, not only in Cooke's Church, but in the community at large. After an affectionate leave-taking he returned to his native land, where he shortly afterwards died.

On the 5th of May, 1857, a call was given to Rev. William Gregg, of Belleville. This call was accepted and Mr. Gregg's induction took place on the 8th July of the same year. On this occasion Rev. James Nesbit presided, Rev. Mr. Burns, of St. Catharines, preached, Mr. Lowry addressed the minister, and Mr. McTavish the people. In 1872 Mr. Gregg resigned the charge of the congregation, having accepted a position as Professor of Apologetics in Knox College, a position which he still holds. During his pastorate of fifteen years, Cooke's Church may be said to have attained the height of its prosperity. Its roll of membership included such names as Judge Patterson, the late Hon. George Brown, and many others who have