

Pastor and People.

A STRIKING CONTRAST.

It occurs in the life of Christ, and is placed on record by the three evangelists, the contrast in each narrative being sharply marked, so that valuable insight is afforded in reference to the experience of our Saviour in His earthly ministry of mercy to the body, and eternal salvation to the soul of sinful and suffering man. By the people of one section of the land His coming was met with dismay, while by another section His presence was the token of wonderful blessing, and He was hailed with unbounded joy. Immediately upon His entrance into Gadara He performed a miracle which might have stirred the whole population with profound gratitude, especially such as in themselves or their friends had need of healing. For had there been any proper appreciation of the divine character of Him who thus appeared unexpectedly among them, they would have brought out their sick and suffering in scores as glad subjects of the healing power. It was not so, however. The loss of their swine, which was closely associated with the cure of the poor possessed maniac, filled every heart with alarm. And so that presence, which had only a few hours before stilled the stormy sea, and now gave quiet to the still wilder distractions of a human soul, became the cause of utter consternation. It appears remarkable that at least the Jewish element in the population of Gadara did not at once perceive in the destruction of the unclean and forbidden swine a monition of some more fearful judgment which might fall suddenly and terribly on such unlawful traffic, involving the good as well as the bad in fearful loss and suffering; for those 2,000 swine, if not owned by Jews, were tolerated in the midst of Jewish people. The reader of the Gospel narrative, even at this distant day, cannot repress a rising regret at the more than foolish conduct of those excited people, and the perfect unanimity of their folly—of their self-destroying action—when "the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes roundabout besought Him to depart out of their coasts, for they were taken with great fear." In complying with their blind request, Christ was consistent with His own counsel afterward given to His disciples, and so forced neither His presence nor His mercies upon the unwilling. And yet, though ready to comply when "prayed to depart out of their coasts," He did not leave them to the fate of their own worldly blindness, involving spiritual death also, and so He left at least one witness who might be among them a constant monument of His divine power and saving mercy so freely offered to them; to the cured maniac who, prompted, perhaps, both by his fear of the demons' return and by his love to his Deliverer, "requested that he might be with Him," Jesus replied, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

Now mark the contrast. "And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side"—only across the narrow sea of Galilee—"the people gladly received Him; for they were all waiting for Him." Yes, they knew something of the value of the divine "power to heal" among them, and so "they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed," and He healed him. So great was their faith in Jesus that even Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, fell down at His feet, beseeching Him that He would come into his house and heal his only daughter, who was a-dying. And as He went with the ruler, "a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind and touched the border of His garment and immediately her issue of blood was stanch'd." And so those who had need of healing, of all classes and of every age and sex, came in this glad day of salvation, and so great was the demand upon Christ by a people who realized their need and saw their opportunity, that then appeared the emergency for endowing the twelve disciples with extraordinary power and authority over "all devils and to cure diseases," and to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Nor is this wonderful contrast in the life of Christ without a practical application to our time of Gospel privileges. It is not an evidence of the weakness of the messenger, or of the worthlessness of his message, when he is not received wherever he goes with marks of appreciation and welcome. Much depends on the character of those to whom he comes.

Again, it is sometimes charged upon the exponents of the Christian religion that they betray a weakness of faith in the realities of their teaching in not urging salvation more earnestly upon sinners. The charge may be in a measure true, and yet if the example of Christ be any guide to us we must learn from it to mix our evangelistic persistency with great wisdom and prudence. Over-zeal in some cases may be quite as fatal to the rescuing of the perishing as utter indifference. To say that the duty of religion is not satisfied till we take the unbeliever by the collar, and tell him that he shall eternally perish unless he repents, may do very well as an oratori-

cal burst of holy zeal, but to attempt it in practice might prove too clearly a mistake. On the whole, men have "minds of their own," and think that they "can take care of themselves." And for such has Christ not made abundant provision? To the great mass of Christians to-day His command is: "Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee," rather than "Go thou, and preach the kingdom of God." Few, indeed, are the Christians who do not come into daily contact with relatives, neighbours and friends who give no evidence of saving faith, and who, if the Saviour Himself appeared among them, would pray him to depart out of their coasts. If those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious would, by word and deed, in private as in public, let their light shine, unbelievers would be forced at least to "marvel" at the power of the Christian faith, and, sooner or later, they might even believe on the same divine Lord.—*Rev. R. H. Craig, in N. Y. Observer.*

ALL'S WELL.

The day is ended. Ere I sink to sleep,
My weary spirit seeks repose in Thine:
Father I forgive my trespasses, and keep
This little life of mine.
With loving-kindness curtain Thou my bed,
And cool in rest my burning pilgrim feet;
Thy pardon be the pillow for my head—
So shall my sleep be sweet.
At peace with all the world, dear Lord, and Thee,
No fears my soul's unwavering faith can shake;
All's well, whichever side the grave for me
The morning light may break!

UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE.

There is much of unconscious influence flowing out in schools, in society and in all the callings and relations of life. A teacher got a dirty scholar to wash his face. When he went home, the mother scarcely recognized the boy. However, it pleased her, and she washed her face. Her husband returned from his daily work, was struck with the changed appearance of his wife and washed his face. It spread through the family, among the neighbours and all along the dirty alley. The change was very marvelous.

In 1856 I entered Jefferson College. My roommate was a stranger to me. He was a Christian, and I was not. The first night we were together, he retired before me. But before going to bed he knelt at the bedside in prayer. Like John following Peter into the sepulchre, I followed him in secret devotion. For thirty years the unconscious influence of that example has been affecting my daily life.

This unconscious influence may be very silent. So is a burning lamp, but it gives light to all that are in the house. It may seem to be a very little thing. So is the pebble that falls into the ocean, but it starts a circle of waves that widen more and more till they reach the farthest shore.

Nor does death end it. It was said of Abel's faith, "And by it he, being dead, yet speaketh" (Heb. xi. 4). John Bunyan, Luther, Calvin, the Wesleys, Harlan Page and Harriet Newell still live in the influences of their lives. And so with Voltaire, Hume and Paine. Ingersoll's blasphemous utterances will still live, and poison the souls of young men after he is dead.

To live is a tremendous responsibility! In this sensitive world our influence goes out, touching all around us, and it goes on and on, touching those now unborn, after we are silent in our graves. What shall it be? Like the Dead Sea that withers and blasts everything on its shore? Or like the river Nile, that gives life, verdure, fruitfulness and beauty wherever it flows?

Do not say you are ignorant, unknown and have no influence. It is not true. Every one has some influence. Even a child was the means of reforming a drunken father. "And a little child shall lead them."

No influence! The old Romans were accustomed to place the busts of their distinguished ancestors in the vestibules of their houses. They did this that they might be reminded of their illustrious deeds. If the cold, lifeless, speechless marble had an influence in awakening noble aspirations, is it possible for rational and immortal men to live and not be felt? We cannot help influencing some soul for weal or for woe. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

The highest and best conscious, or unconscious, influence can only be exercised by a consecrated Christian. Cultivate Christian character. Live near to the cross and close to God. So living, your influence will be felt for good. Like the lighthouse, it will shine out in the darkness. Like the fragrance of the flower, it will sweeten all that it touches. Like the fern leaf that fell on the sand ages ago, and left its beautiful impression on the rock for ages to come; so the influence of Christian character will endure. It will rise higher than the stars. It will rise to heaven, and give joy to the angels, to our friends in glory, and to our blessed Redeemer on His media-

torial throne. And through the grace of Christ it will secure for us "a crown of glory that fadeth not away."—*Baltimore Presbyterian.*

TRAINING AND PREPARATION FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHING.

The Sunday school teachers of the Presbyterian Churches of Northern London held a conference on Sunday school work, recently. The need for special training for the work is almost universally acknowledged, but that peculiar power which can lead a band of voluntary workers into the spirit of self-sacrifice to thoroughly attain it is a gift not common. It was to this end that the conference was held, and it was Dr. Oswald Dykes, the Convener of the Synod's Committee on Instruction of Youth, who took the chair and gave the opening address. Two subjects were submitted: "The Training of Teachers for their Work," and "Their Weekly Preparation for their Classes." Dr. Dykes submitted that there was a very close connections between training and preparation. It depended almost entirely on what the preliminary training of a teacher for his work might or might not be, how far he required special preparation from week to week, and what the nature of that preparation ought to be, or what help would be suitable for him. Given a well-furnished teacher, with adequate apparatus of knowledge and tact and skill, then weekly preparation would be one thing; but with an ill-prepared, ill-informed teacher, how different would be the preparation he would require! Of course there were "helps" many, and they were sometimes used as crutches by the lame and impotent. These would be almost unnecessary to the well-trained teacher. Yet he would not blame those who were not quite so well informed as was necessary—if they were doing their best. If blame there was, it was to be laid to the Sunday school system or to the Churches themselves, who have not provided training. But what were the essentials necessary? First, a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Second, a knowledge of auxiliary information to throw light upon Scripture, such as the outlines of general history as they bear upon the history of God's ancient people, sacred geography, and the manners and customs of the east. The third was a knowledge of the doctrine or teaching of Scripture as reduced to system. A well-digested manual of doctrine such as the Shorter Catechism, well and thoroughly studied, was essential. To be an intelligent Christian was one thing, to be an intelligent teacher was another. The Synod had asked Dr. Morrison, the head of the Free Church Normal School in Glasgow, to prepare a manual upon the art of teaching. It was now in the press, and he hoped that it would be eminently serviceable. Mr. Wales, of the Highbury congregation, gave a most interesting account of the weekly preparation class for teachers at Highbury, which had been carried on with great success during the last ten years. The discussion was continued by Mr. Webb, of Marylebone; Dr. Pringle, of Greenwich; Mr. J. Y. Henderson, of Kingston-on-Thames; Mr. Garden, of Richmond; Dr. Gauld, of Highbury, and many others. It was brought to a close by Dr. Edmond.—*Zephon, in Christian Leader.*

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S LEADING.

Why is it that I am not suffered to come to Thee by the near way? Wherefore am I forced to seek the promised land through the longest road—the road of the wilderness? There are times when I almost seemed to have reached Thee at a bound. There are flashes of thought in which I appear to have escaped the wilderness and to have entered already into Thy rest. I am caught up to meet Thee in the air, and the world fades away in the far distance, and I am alone with Thyself. But the rapture and the solace are short-lived. The world returns again with double power, and a cloud falls over the transfiguration glory; and at the very moment when I am saying, "Methinks it is good to be here," a voice whispers in my ear, "Go back, and take the journey through the wilderness."

My soul, thou must not murmur at that message; it is a message of love to thee, and a message of love, to the wilderness. Thou hast need of the wilderness, and the wilderness has need of thee. There are thorns in the desert which must be gathered ere she can rejoice and blossom as the rose, and the gathering of her thorns shall be the gathering of flowers to thee. Thou canst not do without the thorn. To be caught up to meet thy Lord in the air would be too much exaltation; it would lift thee above the sympathies of the toiling crowd. Better to meet thy Lord in the wilderness than in the air. Thou wilt find Him travelling by the long road—the road of Gethsemane and Calvary. Join thyself on the journey to the Son of man. Help Him to carry His burden of human cares over the wastes of time. Enter into fellowship with that cross of His which was the pain of seeing pain, and verily love shall make the long road short; thy feet shall be as the feet of the roe; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places shall be made plain; for the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and the glory of the Lord is love.