

## Pastor and People.

### GOD'S APPOINTMENTS.

This thing on which thy heart was set, this thing that cannot be, This weary, disappointing day, that dawns, my friend, for thee; Be comforted; God knoweth best, the God whose name is Love, Whose tender care is evermore our passing lives above. He sends thee disappointment? Well, then, take it from His hand. Shall God's appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?

'Twas in thy mind to go abroad? He bids thee stay at home? Oh! happy home; thrice happy if to thy guest He come. 'Twas in thy mind thy friend to see. The Lord says, "Nay, not yet." Be confident; the meeting time thy Lord will not forget. 'Twas in thy mind to work for Him. His will is, "Child! sit still"; And surely 'tis thy blessedness to mind the Master's will. Accept thy disappointment, friend; thy gift from God's own hand. Shall God's appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?

So, day by day and step by step, sustain thy failing strength, From strength to strength, indeed, go on through all the journey's length.

God bids thee tarry now and then, forbear the weak complaint; God's leisure brings the weary rest, and cordial gives the faint. God bids thee labour, and the place is thick with thorn and brier; But He will share the hardest task, until He calls thee higher. So take each disappointment, friend; 'tis at thy Lord's command! Shall God's appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?

—Margaret F. Sangster.

### PRAYER AND WORK FOR MORAL REFORMATION.

On a recent Sabbath the Rev. Dr. R. J. Laidlaw, of St. Pauls Church, Hamilton, preached the annual sermon for the Hamilton Royal Templars. He chose for his text Isaiah lviii. 6, and spoke as follows:—

If the Lord could accept all the homage paid to Him in the form of public worship on this or any other Sabbath Day, and if He could answer all the petitions presented to Him in the thousands of thousands of prayers that are offered throughout the world, the kingdom of God should come with power before the end of the week. But the Lord cannot accept all the homage paid Him, and cannot answer all the petitions that are presented to Him. He has evidently as little regard for much of the homage of His professing worshippers now as He had for the homage of those who were known as His people in Isaiah's time. His word to them was, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord, I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of red beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth; they are a trouble unto Me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."—(Isaiah i. 11-17). "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

Worshippers of God need not expect their homage to be accepted and their prayers answered if while worshipping they are winking at wrong doing. In every Christian community there are heinous sins sanctioned by society, and covered by the cloak of old custom, as respectable ways of seeking pleasure or acquiring wealth. So inwoven are these sins with the whole texture of modern civilization that they seem to many to form an essential part of it. If they are regarded as evils at all they are looked upon as necessary evils. It is thought that a man cannot take his place as a member of a civilized community without either committing some of these sins himself or winking at the commission of them in others. Some Christian people who hold this doctrine and practise it are very zealous worshippers. They often pray earnestly for the revival of religion, and wonder why God does not answer their prayers. They think some other person is not zealous and prayerful enough, or that there must be something wrong somewhere, as there certainly is. There is iniquity in the hearts of those zealous worshippers themselves, and in the hearts of many others in the community who bear the Christian name, and therefore the Lord will not hear His people's prayers. There are a thousand Achans in the camp, therefore the Lord will not lend His countenance to His people, though they claim to be fighting in His name. To each of God's servants in the community there is addressed this message: "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet seek they Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul and Thou takest no knowledge?" Here is the answer. "Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure and exact all your labours."—

(Isaiah lviii. 1-3.) There are many public forms of wrong-doing for which every member of the community must be held responsible; but to-day I will deal with only one—the traffic in strong drink. I mean the traffic in strong drink as it is carried on in our own country. I do not hold with some good people that it is a sin to manufacture a single ounce of alcoholic liquor, or that it is a sin to buy or sell stimulating liquors in any quantity, or to use it for any purpose whatsoever. In my present arraignment of the liquor traffic of our country I will assume that a small quantity of alcohol in the form of spirituous liquor may be needed for mechanical purposes. I will also take it for granted that a small quantity is also needed for medicinal purposes, though I am aware that many do not admit this. I am willing to concede that small quantities of alcoholic liquids may be required for other legitimate purposes, and I believe that proper provision should be made by the Government of the country for procuring as much of these stimulants as may be actually necessary. But while granting all this, I hold that the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks as at present carried on, either under license from the Government, or without such license, is an iniquitous traffic.

I do not say that no one can buy or sell or use any quantity of wine or strong drink under the present regulations without committing a sin, but I hold most firmly that these regulations themselves are sinful, and that the carrying out of them in the vast majority of cases is still more sinful. If the Government authorized only the manufacture of as much alcoholic liquor as is actually essential, and gave no man liberty to sell it as a source of personal gain, but placed a salaried officer in charge of the dispensing of it in every community under proper restrictions, and at the actual cost to the Government of making and dispensing it, but never allowing any one to take up the business of dealing in it as a profit and as a source of personal gain, I believe that the lovers of temperance and truth would have little cause for complaint. But as it is, what do we find? We find that since intoxicating drink is a poisonous stimulant, the use of it as a beverage even in small quantities creates an appetite for it. We find next that the use of it as a beverage is not a necessity. The number of people who never use it, and do well without it, is a practical proof of this. And they are not a class by themselves—persons of peculiar temperament. They are people of all races, creeds and characters. They are to be found in all countries and in all kinds of climate. They belong to all classes morally and socially—Christian and pagan, intelligent and ignorant, high and low, rich and poor, vigorous and feeble. There are men and women of all these classes who never use intoxicating drinks as a beverage and never miss them; on the contrary, they enjoy themselves vastly better because of their abstinence. This is proof enough that the use of intoxicating drinks is not a necessity. We find, further, that the free and needless use of these stimulants is fraught with incalculable danger. Danger to health, danger to reputation, danger to morals, danger to spiritual life, danger to mental vigour, danger to success in secular pursuits, danger to domestic happiness, danger to every interest that man counts valuable or holds dear; and not in the case of persons of a certain class or a certain temperament only, but in the case of people of all ranks, classes and conditions; for what is true of the varied conditions of the people who prosper by abstaining from the use of intoxicating drinks, is equally true of the varied conditions of the multitudes who are ruined through the unnecessary use of such drinks.

Now all these facts are well known to our law-makers. Yet, what do they do? Arrange for the manufacture of only as much of these poisonous stimulants as, on the most liberal estimate, is actually necessary? Oh, no! Arrange for the dispensing of this dangerous article in such a way as will never make it an object to the dispenser to dispose of it in large quantities? By no means. On the contrary our rulers regard the manufacture and sale of this unnecessary and dreadfully dangerous article as a legitimate source of revenue. It is true that far more than all the revenue that is reaped from giving private individuals license to engage in the manufacture and sale of it for their personal advantage is needed to meet the damage which the traffic causes the country. But still, as if under an infatuating spell, our legislators license in every community as many persons to sell this poison as can demoralize the community sufficiently to enable every license-holder to live and make gain at the expense of the welfare of the community and of every interest that should be dear to those from whom he reaps his profit. Then our legislators license as many manufacturers of this poison as may be necessary to supply the enormous demand which their licensed agents succeed in creating. If our legislators studied not to restrict the traffic in intoxicating drinks, but to make it as flourishing a business as possible, and as remunerative as possible to every one who engages in it, except the poor victims from whose empty pockets, wasted lives, and ruined homes both the personal gain and the Government revenue must in large part come, they could not adopt a better plan than the system at present in operation. Will anyone say that this is not an iniquitous traffic? Will anyone say that our rulers are morally guiltless in enacting such regulations? or that those who stoop to make gain for themselves by taking advantage of these enactments are innocent at the bar of conscience. Conscientious persons who find themselves so situated that they appear to have a willing connection with this traffic, grieve over it, and get out

of their unhappy position as soon as they can, and the common sense of the community commends their conduct. How could it be otherwise? Everyone knows that complicity with the liquor traffic is inconsistent with self-respect and with love for what is pure and good. Could I be a preacher of the Gospel and the proprietor of a saloon? Dare any minister or elder or deacon or class-leader or Sabbath school superintendent go into the saloon business and expect to retain the respect of the community, not to say the approval of the Christian Church? It were an absurdity to think of such a thing. This of itself should be enough to condemn the whole business, from the action of the Government in legalizing it down to the little hole-and-corner saloon which empties the Government's poison into homes which otherwise might have been happy. I hold that the blood of souls is on the skirts of human Governments in this matter, and that the money that is realized from this death-dealing traffic is the price of blood.

What is the duty of all Christian people with reference to this traffic? What must every God-fearing man in the country do in order that his hands may be clean and that his prayers be not hindered? He must see that his own hands are clean. He must keep clear of all connection with this traffic. He must never let or lease his property for the propagation of it. He must have no fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. He must be the foe of the saloon and do what he can to secure the constant decrease of the number of places where intoxicating drink is sold. He must enquire into the principles and practices of men who seek his vote, whether for a position in Municipal, Provincial or Dominion legislation, and to keep his hands and his conscience clean by supporting only those who will seek to wipe out this part of our country's disgrace. If any of us have sinned in failing to do this in the past, let us do so no more. Preaching and praying and fasting and abstaining will amount to nothing if we send men to represent us whom we know to be in favour of perpetuating the present traffic. We may berate them as being guilty of all sorts of sin when we read their enactments, but we must remember that we sent them to represent us. If we sent them, knowing their character and views, they are our true representatives and the Lord sees them to be so. It is impossible to cheat God. To pray to-day and to poison the streams of life in the community to-morrow does not deceive Him. In His sight the prayer itself is poisoned. It is unworthy of being presented to Him. He cannot accept it. The Christian Church will never be the power in the world which God has ordained it to be until its membership awake to the absurdity of praying on Sabbath and winking at wickedness in high places and low places all the rest of the week. Christian people may get together and fast as long and as often as they please, but if their own hands are full of blood the Lord will not hear them. It is hard for us to see ourselves as others see us, and it is impossible for professing Christians to see themselves as the Lord sees them. If they could I am convinced that they would find that they bear a closer resemblance to the hypocritical Pharisees of our Saviour's time than to any other class, except, perhaps the devout yet deluded worshippers of Isaiah's day.

Our rulers have laid a heavy burden upon our country—or rather we have placed the yoke upon our own necks, for our legislators have only acted for us. That yoke is sorely oppressing many a heart and many a home. It is a yoke that is galling the necks of God's own people, for they have to bear their end of it. It is bound upon individuals upon communities, upon the Church, and upon the whole country by bands of wickedness, and it is made the more grievous by the fact that it is only one of many yokes of iniquity which are at present to be borne.

The Order represented here to-day is a praying organization and a fasting organization. It is more—it is a working organization. You are aiming at the very result I have outlined as the end to be kept in view, only that you, perhaps, go much further than I have gone. I congratulate you on the remarkable growth of your Society. From a membership of about 1,000 in this Province seven years ago, I understand that your Order (the Royal Templars of Temperance) has grown to be 15,000 strong, or, including the other provinces of the Dominion, 30,000, with some 1,200 members in this city alone. The dismissing of mere entertainment as a prominent feature of your meetings, and the substituting of religious services and direct Christian effort has no doubt had much to do with your past success. The attention given to the circulation of pure literature and valuable information in your monthly newspaper, and now also in your new weekly, has been an important factor in promoting your growth and strength. Still greater things may be expected in the future. The day is not far distant when your efforts will be crowned with a very large measure of success. The absurd legislation of the present will not be the legislation of next century. If not our children, our children's children will look back and pity us for having lived in such a benighted age. Already there are cheering signs of the tottering of the present traffic in intoxicating drink. When its supporters are found acting on the defensive and entrenching themselves behind legal technicalities in order to evade defeat, it is a cheering sign. They are beginning to feel the weakness of their position and may soon be routed before a bold and united charge. One of the most hopeful indications we have ever seen in our city was the recent threat to make martyrs of some of your prominent members. If your Order has begun to be so powerful that its officers and friends are singled out as the objects of attack by the advocates of the liquor traffic, you know of a surety that you have begun to make your influence felt. One or two martyrs now would ensure your success in the near future. Keep right on as members of the Church who believe in doing something more than fasting. There are many other members of the Church who are engaged in the same work in other ways. Let all move on together under the leadership of the Great Captain, who, from His high throne, is sending down to all His companies this word: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke."