

Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

ELISHA AT JERICHO.

BY REV. JOHN ROBBINS, GLENCOE.

The residence of godly men in any place is a great blessing. Elisha's presence in Jericho transformed the place. He took death out of the waters and put fertility into the ground. His work in Jericho made it blossom as the rose. So the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the great factor to bless and purify the world. What is the testimony of Christ? Speaking to the college of the apostles he said: "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Ye are the light of the world." Salt has two properties: To save from decomposition and to season. The Gospel of Christ is intended to preserve the world from moral decomposition, and to season and sanctify and bless human society. Take all the people of God out of a city, let every family altar be razed to the dust, let the churches be closed, and Ichabod written upon their doors—and what have you left? "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth," cried the Psalmist. He knew that if the godly man ceased, the ship of state would drift upon the rocks and be dashed in a thousand pieces. Has not God written the value of godly men upon the doom of Sodom? Abraham drew near to the majesty of Heaven and interceded for fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, ten righteous. God would have spared the city, but ten could not be found. And because all the salt had been removed, God blasted the ill-fated Cities of the Plain with the breath of His nostrils. And their epitaph is: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" See your responsibility. Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world, but if the light which is in you be darkness, how great is the darkness, a darkness like the darkness of Egypt that may be felt!

Elisha was typical of Gospel measures in that he went forth to the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there. Elisha did not content himself with casting the salt into the stream, but he sought the spring. He went forth on a journey, perhaps of miles, for he knew that if the fountain was impure the streams would be impure. But if the salt purified the spring, then the streams would be sparkling and pure. So the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ must go forth to the springs of society and cast the salt therein. Elisha did not, like Moses, smite a rock and provide other sources of supply for Jericho. He purified existing springs. So the Church of Jesus Christ must take society as it is, and purify it, depending upon the promised gift of the Holy Ghost. Was not John Knox an Elisha? Did he not go forth and cast the salt of the Gospel into the springs of the religious life of the people, into the springs of educational life, and into the springs of social life? And as a result what have we in the Presbyterian Church to-day? I answer a Church that has never bowed its knee in the "house of Rimmon," to the apostate Church of Rome; a Church that has joined learning and the pure Gospel of Christ in a blessed union; and a Church that has blessed families innumerable in every part of the globe.

Is not the Church of Christ, in its missionary enterprise, casting the salt of the Gospel into the springs of heathen life? No other method will succeed. The Duke of Wellington, who knew whereof he affirmed, declared that to educate the Hindoos without giving them the Gospel would be to make them clever fiends. Dr. Duff cast the salt of the Gospel into the spring of Hindoo life. The work of the minister to-day is to go forth to the springs of church, educational and social life and cast therein the salt of the Gospel.

Now, Lord, in answer to our prayers,
Let learning and religion meet.
Pleasant the city stands and fair,
Of piety the ancient seat;
But oh, the streams that murmur round
Are nought, and barren is the ground!

Oh Christ, the true Elisha thou,
Our Saviour Lord, and God most high,
Thyself dispense the healing word,
The Gospel cruse with salt supply;
And cause the Prophet's Son to bring
And cast the salt into the spring.

The blessing came to stay. Elisha did not make Jericho his place of residence. He passed on in pursuit of his holy vocation. Like the ancient worthies, he had no continuing city. "Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." God buries His workmen, but He carries on His work. The blessing of the fertile ground and the purified waters came to stay. So with the results of all consecrated labour, the blessing comes to stay. There is a natural law here in the spiritual world. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I

sent it." God's blessing abides upon His holy hill of Zion. "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." Where is the hand that wrote the twenty-third Psalm? Long since mouldered into dust; but that Psalm has been the triumph of ten thousand times ten thousand of God's dying saints. Where the apostle that wrote the eighth chapter of the Romans? Long since glorified, but it remains in the church militant as the pillar and ground of the truth. The blessing came to stay. Fifty years ago Great Britain was astounded by the revelations of the abounding wickedness of the Eujan isles. A race of cannibals, they gloried in their shame. A missionary was raised up, and he went forth to spend and be spent for them. He laboured to translate the New Testament. Ten years after commencing his work he lay down to die. After commending his wife and children to God, his last prayer was: God save Fiji. Ten years ago a minister from Australia was sitting in a mission house in Fiji, with the missionary. A bell rang. "What is the meaning of the bell?" said the minister. The missionary replied: "At the ringing of that bell, ten thousand family altars will be set up." The blessing came to stay.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

A PRAYER.

BY JOHN INRIE, TORONTO.

Lowly and prostrate,
Kneeling before Thee,
Craving the spirit of prayer;
Wretched and lonely,
Seeking Thee only,
Leave me not now in despair.

Father of mercies,
And God of all might,
Hear Thou the sigh of my heart;
Groping through darkness,
Yet seeking the light,
Pardon and peace now impart.

Oh I to be nothing,
And Christ to be all,
Oh I to be ransom'd by Thee;
Saved from destruction
And power of the fall,
Through Jesus, who died for me.

Humbly I ask Thee,
Jesus, my Saviour,
Bend Thou Thine ear to my cry;
For strength and for grace,
While running life's race—
Lead Thou me on till I die!

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

"IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS."

BY REV. S. HOUSTON, M.A.

Love to Christ, if it be of the right kind, will of necessity be followed by a life of action rather than a life of mere contemplation. There is a mysticism of a kind which is far too prevalent even in these days. Many who do not know the meaning of the word are affected by it nevertheless. They shut themselves in from the world as much as possible, they give themselves to solitary contemplation of divine things, as they think of divine things; they are absorbed in what we may call day-dreaming. They think so far as they do really think that in that way they escape contamination with the world. They make for themselves a little Paradise of their own. The hermit life in olden times, that is life in religious houses in brotherhoods and sisterhoods, was one form of this mysticism. The great, busy, seething world was barred out of sight and so out of mind, as they vainly imagined. In modern times there are other phases of the same thing. There are sensual forms of mysticism as well as mental and spiritual forms. In every one of its aspects it is an unhealthy mode of life. It nourishes selfishness of the most intense kind. With those that act so, enjoyment is the test of religion. Such is not the religion taught in God's Word, and it would be very easy to show that such is not the right road to happiness even if a different way was not found in the Bible. The legitimate result of loving Christ is the keeping of His commandments, is the being actively engaged in doing what He says as well as in listening to His words. The man that loves Christ will no doubt at times, yea oftentimes, sit at the feet of Jesus and drink in His words, but all the time will not be spent sitting there. He will be like Martha as well as Mary, he will serve as well as sit. He will not lose himself in the good time, as it is called, which he himself will have; he will exert himself in the direction of helping others to a participation in that good time. It is not his own will that He came to do, but the will of his Father which is in heaven, and so he does not aim either consciously or unconsciously at pleasing himself.

THAT is just what hearts that are sick want—comfort; and they have it in Jesus Christ, and in the Fatherhood of God, and nowhere else in such measure and with such pertinency of application.

PREACHING FROM EXPERIENCE.

Whatever proof we may draw from history, the Christian teacher should always be able to draw the strongest of all proofs from his own consciousness and experience. This is strikingly shown in the case of Paul. The supreme teacher always fell back upon his own spiritual history. He told that history to kings. He told it also to public assemblies. He wrote it continually to Christian churches. Paul did not recite a lesson, he related an experience. He reasoned indeed, as never prophet reasoned before, yet his argument was always gilded by the sanctity of his character. Before men could touch his message they had to discredit his integrity. He himself was the healed man, and beholding the man that was healed, his enemies could say nothing against the doctrine which he proclaimed. So with present day preachers. The preacher will often be judged by the man, and it is right that such judgment should take effect. Oftentimes many of the people may be unable to follow the preacher in his high reasoning, or in his spiritual communion with God; for a time they may lose sight of him as he ascends the mountain and proceeds to solitary fellowship with the Infinite and Eternal; he may use words which are open to controversial criticism and which may be perverted as to their plain meaning by men of ingenious mind; but the people who know their pastor will always be able to see the healed man within the public teacher, and beholding the man which was healed, they will have confidence in all his doctrine and desire. Remembering his purity, his beneficence, his readiness to forgive, his incessant interest in all the details of human necessity, they will fall back upon his character with thankful delight, even when they are unable to follow his highest flight of reasoning or eloquence. What was done by Paul was also done by John. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life." Here is personal testimony. Men who can speak in this way place their feet upon the solid rock of fact—not fact in any broad and distant historical sense, but fact in the sense which comprises their own individual experience. Peter, too, uses language to the same effect when he describes himself and fellow-apostles as "eye-witnesses of His majesty." Other men have been forced by too eager and ill-reasoning admirers into competition with Christ. We have been told that there are men who have been equal to Jesus Christ in moral sublimity and in moral power. Without rudely contradicting such persons we may boldly say that the teachers whom they thus idolize never came in our direction when we were dying. We never heard of them in our soul's keenest agony. They did nothing for us when a sense of sin shut out the light of the sun and overwhelmed us with a burden too heavy for our strength. It was then that Jesus of Nazareth passed by; it was then that Jesus of Nazareth delivered us from the fearful extremity; and now we cannot forget that when all hope was excluded and all self-help was exhausted, Jesus of Nazareth came to us, stooped over us and made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and by His whole priesthood delivered us from the slavery of sin and brought us into the glorious liberty of grace.—*Dr. Joseph Parker.*

CHRISTIAN HEROISM.

It may be that the too great prominence given to the softer sides is one reason why many young men hold aloof from the cause of Christ. It may not be the want of manliness on their part after all it may be because they have not had sufficiently brought before them the manliness of Christ and the supreme need of strength and courage on the part of His followers. Here is where much of the strength of the "Salvation Army" lies. We may object to their methods; but their spirit is what we all need. We who preach the truth ought to appeal more than we do to the heroic and soldierly and noble spirit of self-sacrifice in redeemed human nature; and our people, our young people especially, ought to respond. "Ye that are men, now serve Him against unnumbered foes." We need not ask our young friends to put on uniform, but we do ask them in Jesus' name to show the same spirit which leads so many in the Salvation Army to brave the scorn of those who despise Christ and mock at all that is holy. We do ask them to take their stand as followers of Christ, whatever their companions may say, and however much any craven spirit there may be in them may try to hinder them. We ask them to sacrifice their laziness and love of ease, their selfishness, whatever there be that hinders them from joining themselves to Him who is the Grandest Hero of all history. Come, and confess Christ, and take a share in the great enterprise of helping in the name of Jesus to save men, women and children from their sins!—*Rev. J. Munro Gibson, D.D.*

NEVER leave your way to seek a cross, nor go out of the way to avoid one; appointed crosses are real blessings.