

Pastor and People.

Written for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN

"HE BECAME POOR."

BY REV. WM. JOHNSON, M.A.

A humble scribe unto the Master came,
The first convert who bore that honoured name,
And said: my "Master, I will follow Thee
Where'er Thou goest." Loyally spake he,
And meant the same in all sincerity.

The Master kindly looked at him and said:
"Foxes have holes, and birds of air have nests;
Each creature hath its home wherein it rests—
"But I, I have not where to lay my head;"

Or in the sacred language let it be:
*Ouk ekei pow teen kephaleen klince.**

How strange! The Christ of God to own no land,
Nor home, nor chamber, wherein He could stand;
Nor bed, nor pillow, whereon he could lie
Betimes and calmly close His tear-dimmed eye,
When each day's enervating work was by.

Within another's house He slept, He ate;
Within another's boat He crossed the sea,
When He had hushed the storms of Galilee.

Upon another's colt He rode in state;
Upon a sailor's squab He slept, for He
Ouk ekei pow teen kephaleen klince.

For others' weal He spent His latest breath;
Within another's tomb He lay in death.

'Twas for our sakes that He was humbled thus
That all the wealth of heaven might come to us.
Take courage, brother, in this wilderness:

Go on, the clearing soon will come in view.

Repine not at the plainness of your fare,

Or at the bareness of the garb you wear:

A few short years will level all for you.

In poverty, you have good company:

Ouk ekei pow teen kephaleen klince.

Fort Macleod, N.W.T.

* "He hath not where to lay his head."—Matt. viii. 20.

THE VISITOR'S BOOK OF TEXTS.

REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D., PH.D., GALT, ONT.

We have lately been deeply touched by "The Diary and Letters" of the late Andrew A. Bonar. They are a perfect spiritual Leyden jar, touch them and you get a shock—an uplift, an inspiration, a quickening. This book has awakened a new interest in everything pertaining to Rev. Dr. Bonar. The man is always more than what he does. And coming into living contact with the man interprets for us his works, throws a flood of light on what before was dark, and enables us to appreciate it more fully. In the diary on the 20th of March, 1855, we have this record: "Thursday, 20th—Memorable day to me, the anniversary of my ordination. The Lord so ordered it that this was the day of our minister's prayer meeting, and eight brethren of us were met at Rait. During this year I completed the 'Text Book for Visitors,' the first proofs of it arriving to-day, which is remarkable. O that it may be blessed to many ministers and elders!" This is about the only reference to a book which is simply invaluable to a Christian worker. No better contribution of help is given in dealing with the various classes of men, through the word, than is given here to those who would save some. It is altogether a remarkable book. Modest but mighty, unpretentious, but carrying in its bosom much more than many so-called great books we hear of to-day. One, from the title, would expect it to be somewhat of a book of Bible readings; texts being grouped under leading titles; subjects being proven or illustrated by lists of texts. But it is very different from this, let me say, totally different. It brings to the front and keeps to the front much that is apt to slip into the background and become lost to view. It is a reviving cordial for the awakening of a living and large consciousness of what we should do, and how we should do it. In all this it discovers to us the true nature of Dr. Bonar. It shows us the instinctive workings of his heart; his hungry longing to be helpful to seeking and sorrowing souls; his determination not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is not a collection of bare texts. Many of them have notes of explanations appended, which are like dashes of light thrown on them, or like the hard flint smitten with the steel, emitting sparks that kindle the explosive powder of mighty forces. Take these as samples just to whet the appetite for more. Roman v. 10, "Much more, being reconciled, we shall be

saved by his life." Christ is now living above to apply His finished work, and attend to every wound, want, wish, of His redeemed ones. It is He that shall meet us when we land on yonder foreign shore.

2 Tim. iv. 22, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." Christ personally as well as officially; Christ with all He is and has—Luke xiii. 16, "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

1. Christ speaks in the tone of authority, as the woman's seed who bruises the serpent's head. 2. He intimates his determination to take what prey He pleases from Satan. 3. He does it on the Sabbath; giving rest on the day of rest in His character of giver of rest. Psalm lxxi. 18, 19, "Now also, when I am old and greyheaded, O God forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength to this generation, and thy power to everyone that is to come. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high."

1. Here is a saint seeking grace to use his last days in the way of giving testimony to the Lord's power, telling what he knows of the Lord's acts of might to the sons of men. 2. God's righteousness is another favorite theme, God's righteousness in his providence, righteousness in his judgments, righteousness in receiving sinners through His beloved Son.

Isai. xxxviii. 1, "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death; and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, came unto him and said, set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live."

1. Friends must speak truthfully to sick friends, and tell the sick the real danger of their case. 2. They must remind them of what is preparation for death. 3. Isaiah did this to a king. 4. Preparation is having a part in Christ.

2 John i. 8, "The elder unto the elect lady . . . Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Here is an aged saint admonishing another to persevere to the end in lively faith, and to join with him in seeking a full reward for a life-time service.

These are just picked at random. One reading the book receives a real stimulus and a strengthening of the moral fibre much needed in the free and easy times that are passing over us. It is a spiritual tonic. It helps to intensify real earnestness in endeavoring to do difficult duty. It is a directory much needed to-day. Part first deals with the sick. The sick believer troubled by temptation; in connection with his sickness; through bodily pain. The sick believer dying. The sick believer whose spiritual state is unknown to you, ignorant, self-righteous, anxious, a backslider, hardened because skeptical, indifferent. Part second has special words to seven classes that may be found in the sick room. The believer, the nominal Christian and unbeliever, the aged who are sick, the young who are sick, children who are sick, the attendants on the sick, the friends of the sick.

Part third treats in seven chapters of the sorrowful. It is therefore an exceedingly rich book. Each chapter has an introduction that is specially fine, giving such wise suggestions, directions and counsels, that they form a very valuable addition to our pastoral theology. Here is the introduction to the first chapter entire, "A believer is sick." It may be taken as a sample of the other introductions prefacing the various subjects. 1. Let me call to mind, it is the Lord's will that I should visit the sick. Think of Heb. xiii. 3; Jas. v. 14; Matt. xxv. 36. Jesus used to do so. John xi. 1-3. Let me then go saying, "Lord, send me," for it is as if Thou wert asking, Whom shall I send? (Isaiah vi. 8.)

2. I need His presence with me, Exod. xxxiii. 14, 15. And so my prayer ascends for "the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, that he may testify of Christ." (Jno. xiv.) Lord Jesus give me the tongue of the learned, that I may know to speak a word in season to him that is weary. (Isaiah l. 4.) Lord, open thou my lips.

3. Let me remember the awful sin of "healing slightly" the hurt of any, for this is marked as the greatest of all sins of those who teach. See Jer. vi. 14; viii. 11; Ezek. xiii. 10-16; Lamen. ii. 14.

Armed with such thoughts, I seek to ascertain on solid ground (not taking it for granted, not even though most others think so), that the person is a believer. If he is so, then perhaps I take up such a text as Psalm xl. 17, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me." I repeat it to the sick. Perhaps, I exhibit it as holding up before his eyes a picture of himself, 'poor and needy' in soul and in bodily frame, full of weakness, the body's state a type of the soul's. Then, I hold up to view the Lord full of might and mercy; "The Lord thinketh upon me," as Stephen under the shower of stones was thought upon by "the Son of man at the right hand of God." I try to leave very specially this impression, that the thoughts of our God to us in Christ are thoughts of peace and not of evil—a flow of mercy to us the guilty. And then I pray, not in many words, but holding up fully the case of the believer, and seeking to do so cordially and fervently, like the friends, Mark i. 30, "telling of the sick, and inviting the Mighty One's aid."

These will show how rare a book this is, and how much its stirring words are needed. It is a perfect treasury of gospel truth. How close to the line it hews! How wisely he brings out the distinctive features of the grace of God! How carefully he keeps before the mind the absolute need of the Holy Spirit! How rich and precious and refreshing it is! It is quick with considerations for every one who visits among the people with the intention of doing them good. No book could be more suitable for the study table of a young minister. It will save him from many mistakes and give him the best counsel, and alas! too often much-needed counsel. How many have to blunder their way into some knowledge of what this book imparts!

What it takes a life-time to learn by toilful experience, may be got here in one golden day. We give this little book first rank in the list of books on pastoral theology. Let any one use it diligently and prayerfully and it will keep him out of the rut of formality and freshen his delight in true gospel work.

THE GENTEEL DOOR TO HELL.

The great majority of those who are enslaved by strong drink did not begin their career of self-destruction in the dram shop. While the lower classes of drunkards are victims of saloons, the most respectable sort began with the social glass. It was at the social party, or in the billiard room, or the club, or at the wedding that the fatal habit was formed. Not many begin to drink alone, or from sheer appetite for stimulants. The glass was offered to them by somebody, and from want of moral courage or from a desire to appear "gentlemanly," they consented to drink. I was once at a wedding in a "genteel" circle of society where the popping of champagne corks was like the rattle of musketry. Within a few years I met the oldest son in that family a confirmed drunkard. His parents had tempted other people's sons and had ruined their own! The man who sets a decanter on his table sets a trap for his boys that may land them into perdition. The young lady who offers any intoxicant to her young gentlemen friends deserves to become that wretched object, a drunkard's wife. The drinking usages are sadly on the increase in this country—in social life, at restaurants, at clubs, and even in the fashionable shopping resorts for ladies! While the chief discussion is about prohibiting saloons, Satan is stealing a march on us by tempting young men to be tipplers. The only safeguard for any young man—even though he be a professing Christian—is entire abstinence. He never knows what latent appetite he may have within until the spark touches the gunpowder. A young man of my acquaintance—a church member—found, before he was aware, that he was becoming a slave to the bottle. He said to me—"My young associates invite me to drink with them and they are ruining me. After this when they ask

me to drink I shall knock them down!" He was terribly in earnest, and no wonder; he had been playing with vipers at the mouth of hell! For two reasons every conscientious young man ought to pledge himself to total abstinence. First, for his own sake, for he doesn't know how soon he may become a tippler. Secondly, for the sake of others whom he may tempt to ruin by his example. Let Dr. Keeley or any other man who is making money by "cures for drunkenness" say what they will, the reform of inebriates is difficult and rare. The one time to stop drinking treacherous intoxicants is to stop before you begin—Rev. Theo. L. Cuyler, D.D.

THE POPE'S ADVICE TO PREACHERS: "STUDY THE BIBLE."

The Pope in his recent "At Home" uttered some sound advice to his Italian bishops, which it would be well if all Christians of every denomination should follow. "The preachers," he said, "are henceforth to be chosen with full regard to their obedience to instructions from supreme authority; they are to introduce nothing of pedantry or worldliness into their homilies; they are to draw their subject matter from the decalogue, the precepts of the church, and the duties of the various classes of the community." They are further admonished against the tendencies of the day—that of courting the popular ear by substituting for sermons, addresses which appeal to the intellect and to the imagination, and never move the will or modify the character. They are admonished to banish from the pulpit the pompous palaver so much in vogue on themes more speculative than practical, more civil than religious—a style well enough fitted for the political journal or the university class-room, but quite out of keeping with the house of God. Finally, the Pope exhorts preachers to repair to the fountain-head of all sacred eloquence, the Bible; to adopt the original and true form of discourse—to wit, the apostolic; to shun the theatrical mouthing, the sonorous commonplaces about "Fatherland," "modern science," and "evolution," which tickle the ears of an audience, but send them out of church as wise as when they came into it. On the whole, the Pope's advice is just as suitable in the columns of a Protestant journal as in a Papal encyclical.

We need to let "evolution" take its swing, and go back to the "fundamentals," as our forefathers called them, or else "the hungry sheep" shall assuredly look up, because they are not fed, as Milton said they would.

THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

What is the aim of Sunday-school teaching? Communication of religious instruction? Partially so, but only partially. Rather the great aim is this—the conversion, the salvation of our scholars, the bringing to their hearts and minds the Gospel of the life and death of Christ. That is what Sunday-schools are for, and if they fail in that, I believe that whatever subordinate success they may have, they fail all around, and the work given and the time spent by thousands of teachers on Sunday schools is all vain unless this is the result: the bringing of the young minds into contact with Christ's death as will change the child's heart and sway its nature. If I did nothing to-night, save the burning into your conscience of that one thought, that the aim in our work is to make Christians of our scholars, I should have done more for them than by anything else I could say.—Dr. Alexander McLaren.

Luther's ten qualifications for the ministry will afford food for thought. They are:—1. He should be able to teach plainly and in order. 2. He should have a good head. 3. Good power of language. 4. A good voice. 5. A good memory. 6. He should know when to stop. 7. He should be sure of what he means to say. 8. And be ready to stake body and soul, goods and reputation, on its truth. 9. He should study diligently. 10. And suffer himself to be vexed and criticised by everyone.

Be you ever so high, the law is above you.