

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

THE CURSE OF THE SHIRK.

Many persons plume themselves on their negative goodness. They boast that they are not drunkards, nor thieves, nor gamblers, nor liars, nor bad people. But all the negative virtues in the list cannot make one particle of positive righteousness. Our great leader requires something more of us than mere inoffensiveness. Positive and active obedience is indispensable. One who stands still in his tracks while the battle between right and wrong is raging is a shirk, because he comes not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

We have seen the indifferent shirk. He may feel some interest in his own freedom and the happiness of his neighbors, but his interest is not sufficiently intense to move him to do anything. The forces arrayed against the pure and good are mighty. The enemies of the Sabbath are mighty. The support of the saloon is mighty. The elements which combine to ruin the young are mighty. The enemies of our souls are mighty. The Lord has lifted up a standard against them, and called on us all to follow Him. If anyone is not enough interested in this campaign to put on the armor of God and battle for the right, the curse will fall on his head, because he came not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

The cowardly shirk is among us. He is afraid. Cowardice is a contemptible infirmity. It is more common than most of us think. We do not mean physical cowardice. That is not very common. In every great fire or flood, or shipwreck, or battle, there are many surprising displays of physical courage. There are always men ready to risk their lives for others whom they never met before. But moral courage is another thing. The courage to stand up for the right at all costs is all too rare. Where are the men who are willing to lose money or lose their situation rather than flinch when moral issues are at stake? There are such men, but they are not so numerous as we wish they were. The man who hears the trumpet calling all who will to enlist under the banner of the Lord, and holds back for fear of some loss or ridicule or scorn, is a coward, and will share the curse of those who come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

There are selfish shirks. They are so much occupied with their own private affairs that they have no time nor heart to fight the battle of the Lord. We know not what the occupation of the inhabitants of Meroz was. We do not even know where the city was located. No doubt the people were busy when the trumpet of Deborah sounded the call to the battle for freedom. Perhaps they were keeping sheep, or catching fish, or buying and selling oxen, or plowing fields, or planting vineyards, or gathering grapes, and they thought they could not leave their business to go out and fight against the oppressor. Is this the way patriotic people act? The banner of the cross means more than the flag of any country. It represents all the highest interests of all men to the end of the world. The call

to uphold and defend it and bear it onward means more than the call to any private interest. Let none halt or shirk or shrink back.

Perhaps the inhabitants of Meroz were not in any immediate danger, and they considered the fight altogether in the interest of the rest of Israel, and said to themselves, "Am I my brother's keeper?" This is often the plea of the shirk. Many are content to let the battle roll on so long as it does not roll by their own door. They are willing for the fire to burn on so long as it does not kindle in their own dwelling. But this is a narrow and selfish feeling. Each one is his brother's keeper. Whatever touches the worst man in the city touches me. Whatever threatens the lowest family in the land is a menace to my family. The selfish shirk is the man who fails to appreciate the need of others.

There is a jealous shirk. One can hear the inhabitants of Meroz saying: "We have not been consulted about this campaign. None of our men have been appointed to lead. Who is Deborah, and what has she done to challenge our loyalty? We have no confidence in such unusual leadership." Who has not seen the man who will not march at all if he is not at the head of the procession, or the woman who will not work if she is not chairman of the committee, or the general who will not fight if he is not commander of the army? Army officers have defeated their own side by shirking because of jealousy. It is a mean, contemptible, wicked sin.

Homer understood the shirk, and gave him a large place in the Iliad. Achilles was the chief of the Greek warriors, the terror of the Trojans, and the pride of the Greek army. He was no coward, but he was a shirk. Because of a feud between him and Agamemnon, Achilles skulked in his tent, and refused to fight. Many efforts were made to induce him to be reconciled to his commander and join the forces before the walls of Troy, but without avail. Seven hard battles were fought, the Greeks were pushed back to the water's edge, and the Trojans came near setting their ships on fire, and still Achilles held back. Not until Patroclus was slain did Achilles buckle on his armor. When he made bare his arm the Trojans were driven back with great slaughter, and the mighty Priam fell at the hand of Achilles before the gate of the city.

Many a man who might have been the pride of the Church and the terror of evil doers has refused to put on the armor of God because he did not like the minister or leader. If there is any jealousy in our hearts the sooner we get rid of it the better. If any feud keep us from doing our whole duty we should make an end of it now, lest the curse of the shirk fall on us because we came not up to the help of the Lord.—Christian Advocate.

GIVE.

(By H. Isabel Graham.)

Give! at this Thanksgiving season
Thou canst find no righteous reason,
For withholding from thy brother,
What God gave thee for another.

Rise! cast off greed's grinding fetter,
And thy soul shall be the better,
Richer for its glad outpouring,
Thou by sordid, selfish storing,
Of the good God gives.

POPULATION OF THE BRITISH
EMPIRE.

In a table recently published which presents statistics of the British Empire the total population is placed at 392,846,835 and the area at 11,433,283 square miles. There have been higher estimates of the population, and a comparison of the particular estimates on various dependencies or colonies shows many differences. The total given, however, is probably not far from correct, and there is no other empire or governing power that has so many people within its domains except perhaps China. The Chinese Government's own estimate for China, which was made as the basis of an apportionment of the indemnity to the powers after the Boxer troubles was in excess of 407,000,000, but other estimates of recent years would reduce the figure by nearly one-third. The British total is nearly three times that of the Russian Empire and more than four times that of the United States and its inland possessions. It represents, however, a very pronounced diversity of races, with not only the British, but all whites in a decided minority. The population of India is 294,317,000, the British born population only 100,000, the entire foreign population less than 650,000. Thus it appears that the vast majority is made up of natives who submit to British rule. In British Africa the population is 34,000,000, but it is mostly black. The strange races of Asia and Africa make up some 330,000,000 of the grand total of 393,000,000. And actually the ruling force is found in the 43,000,000 people ascribed to the United Kingdom, the closely related people of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and thousands here and there throughout the broad empire. All these people number less than sixty millions—less than one-sixth of the total.

THANKSGIVING HYMN.

Praises to thee we sing,
O Lord our God and King,
Gracious and just.
Sovereign of land and sea,
Thou who hast made us free,
Our thanks we bring to thee,
In God we trust.

If thou shalt guard our land,
Cannon may silent stand,
And swords may rust,
May we e'er do thy will,
All thy commands fulfill,
Guide us and help us still,
In God we trust.

Ruler of wind and wave,
Speak peace when tempests rave,
Loud gale and gust.
For food, O Lord, to thee,
For health, for liberty,
Our thanks shall ever be,
In God we trust.

Lord, when our songs of praise
No more on earth we raise,
Dust unto dust,
God of our land below,
Still thy great goodness show,
Wilt thou a home bestow,
In God we trust.

Mission buildings at Kanchowfu, Kiangsi Province, have been destroyed by Chinese rioters. One French priest was killed.

Thousands have died from cholera in Russia, and the epidemic extends over twelve provinces and is still spreading.