

# The Christian.

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## EDITORIAL.

THE SOWER. LUKE VIII

In this parable the Saviour describes the success and failure of a preached gospel in all coming time. He gives such plain reasons why the different hearers of the gospel are not saved, and tells so clearly how it is received and held in the good ground, that attentive and intelligent readers of the parable are filled with admiring gratitude.

At the very threshold suggestive and important truth opens to the mind. It cuts off all expectation of fruit without seed. Men do not expect a crop of grain where no seed is sown, nor would the man be considered sane who reasons that because God is all-powerful He ordinarily gives a crop where seed is sown and at other times he gives it without seed. But it is argued with great determination that although the Holy Spirit ordinarily saves men through the Truth, He sometimes saves without the Truth or Word of God. This parable rebukes all such unreasonable talk and shows plainly that THE seed is the Word of God.

When Jesus explains the parable to His disciples and not to the multitude, some take occasion there from to teach that it is only certain or elect persons who can understand the Gospel and be saved, and that others are blinded and rejected. Let it be remembered that what was here explained to the disciples is also explained to all the readers of the New Testament, so that none can say, "It was not revealed to me." For obvious reasons Jesus tells the men whom He made the first sowers the things respecting their work which He did not tell the multitude who felt no interest in the matter.

The sower sowed the seed which is the Word of God. Some fell on the road through the field, or "way-side." Even this would grow if left, but the devil picked it up. He knew where no seed was left no fruit would grow. Men prejudice the cause of Christ, and will not examine what its advocates have to say. The Devil takes it all up and the saving power of the gospel is lost through unbelief. Nothing can better describe a prejudiced mind than the beaten way-side, and the fowls of the air taking up the seed as Satan catches away the Word before it reaches the heart of such. "The Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed," etc. (Acts xvii. 11).

But some fell on a rock or shallow soil. Even these received the Word with joy. The Gospel is glad tidings of great joy to all people. It is sent to all, and even the weak-minded receive it with joy, they are glad to hear of the great love of God in Christ and think that all others will also receive it joyfully and that it will be very popular. But they are sadly disappointed to find that the majority of the people reject the Gospel and treat those who receive it as ignorant enthusiasts. They find it hard to bear the reproach of Christ—wish that others

would be on His side. But it not they will go with the multitude. They think that they find either in the teaching of Christ or the deportment of His disciples just cause of censure, they are offended and in time of temptation fall away. They have no root in themselves, think that they have no reason to be right unless everything pleases them. How easily Satan ensnares the weak and wavering!

Some fell among thorns, which sprung up with it and finally choked it. Those who receive the Word take an interest in Christian duties, such as secret and social prayer, the Lord's house and table, reading the Scriptures as their soul's daily food. The desire to be rich and the cares and pleasures of this life are the thorns which grow up and, if possible, choke the Word. One says to himself, "I am too busy to-day to attend to prayer and reading," or, "I don't feel like going to meeting to-day." This may be done without any thought of giving these up any more than "just this time," but he finds that each first step on "the down-grade" makes the next easier, until he loses his relish for what he once held dear. And he brings no fruit to perfection.

It is most interesting to hear Jesus describe the difference between the three failures and the one success. The difference was not in the seed, nor in the sower. It was the same seed in every case and it fell from the hands of the same sower. The difference was in the persons or places where the seed fell. It should be noticed that the success of the Gospel is described in fewer words than are used to describe each case of failure. Its success is as easily understood as its failure, and each is brought by Jesus to the capacity of every rational reader. The Gospel is intended for all, adapted to all, and solemnly sent to every creature. (Mark xvi. 15-16). God will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. ii. 4). So where the gospel is a success is its rule, but every case of failure is its exception.

Jesus says nothing of the cultivation of the soil for the seed, such as ploughing, harrowing, cleansing, etc., but leaves the impression that the Gospel is suited to man's fallen and lost condition, and that he is cultivated, reformed and cleansed by receiving and retaining it. A man must become as a little child to be suitable soil for gospel seed; not because a little child is more cultivated than a man, but because he is more honest-hearted and more nearly resembles the virgin soil.

"But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart having heard the Word keep it and bring forth fruit with patience." Could anything be plainer? When we speak of honest and good-hearted persons everyone understands us; and these are the kind of persons who hear and keep the Word and bring forth fruit with patience—the good and honest-hearted toward God. A man who deals honestly with men will do his utmost to render to all their due, and to give an equivalent for everything he receives.

Dishonesty is so mean and inexcusable that even bad men despise it in others. It never extenuates a crime in an earthly court; nor will the Judge of the living and the dead excuse the dishonest transgressors. When He by the Spirit of God cast out devils, and the leaders of the people dishonestly said He did it through the prince of devils, He declared that this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would never be forgiven. It is an awful thought that dishonesty will be the great cause of men's condemnation under the Gospel's light and privileges. They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Dishonesty will condemn each class in the parable which brought forth no fruit. The way-side hearers for not keeping the Word till they examined it for themselves. Those on the rock for taking offence and following the multitude to do evil. Those who received it among the thorns for giving up the greater claims of God for the lesser claims of worldly cares and pleasures.

But the honest-hearted hearer of the Gospel is taken with its goodness and grace. It tells him of his sins against God, for Christ died for his sins. It declares a love that exceeds all other love, and calls

on him as a lost rebel against God to cease his opposition and to accept a full and free pardon through the blood of Christ. He sees how reasonable, how just and how gracious are the Saviour's claims, and although the world, the flesh and the devil plead with him to resist these claims, he will rather yield to a loving Saviour than to them. From day to day he keeps His word, attends to His commands and brings forth the fruit of righteousness with patience. The blessed hope of soon meeting his Saviour and seeing Him as He is, purifies his heart, as Christ is pure. Surely honesty to God is the best policy for time and eternity. D. C.

IT WAS after prayer-meeting on Thursday evening, the night before Christmas, that, having scarcely entered our home, we were surprised to hear a commingling of voices at the front-door, followed by footsteps coming up the stairs. On looking over the banister we saw a number of young men come filing up with smiling faces and "How do you do?"—and then marching straight to a room were followed by the inmates of the house, curious to learn the secret of such strange movements. After taking convenient positions, an oblong box having been placed upon the table, one of the young men drew from his pocket a paper and commenced reading:—"To T. H. Capp—Dear Sir; We, the members of the Young Men's Association of Coburg Street Christian Church, are desirous"—If we could persuade ourselves that the complimentary terms were deserved by us, or could we eliminate them from the address without somewhat mutilating it, we would give it to our readers that they might see the Christian spirit of these young men. But suffice it to say that the address closed by wishing us (the family) a Merry Christmas and a Happy New-Year, and a wish that we might be spared for usefulness in the cause of Christ; signed in behalf of the society by the president and secretary. The oblong box contained a complete set (10 volumes) of Thomas Carlyle's works. I scarcely know what was said in reply, but after a few words, expressing our thanks for such kindness, and exchanging with each other the compliments of the season, the young men bade us good-night.

WHAT the women will do with the liquor question, when they are entrusted with the power of franchise, is foreshadowed in the recent election of mayor for the city of Toronto. Mr. W. H. Howland, a prominent temperance and Scott-Act man, and a Mr. Manning, the representative of the anti-Scott Act and rum party, were candidates for the office of mayor. The fourth of January came, and with it election day; yes, and much interest and curiosity, too, for the women were to exercise for the first time in their lives and in the history of Toronto, the power to vote under the municipal franchise. Notwithstanding the fact that during the whole day the rain fell incessantly, the largest vote ever known in that city was recorded, and Mr. Howland was elected by a majority of nearly two thousand. Says a writer: "It is mainly due to their (women's) vote that Howland owes his big majority."

AT ORANGEVILLE, Ont., the police magistrate has, in the discharge of his duties, been fining those persons who, setting at defiance the wish of the people, were found violating the Scott Act. Well, what was the result? How did these law-breakers, these enemies of all righteousness take it? Just what we might reasonably expect. Read the special sent to one of our dailies and we have the answer:—"An explosion took place at the residence of Police Magistrate Monroe, and on examination it was found that dynamite cartridges had been placed on the sill of the kitchen door, the door was blown in and considerable damage done to the building. The inmates fortunately escaped without injury. This is the second attempt on the police magistrate."

THE PAST YEAR has indeed been a sad one to Montreal in more ways than one, but especially in the mortality of its citizens caused by the ravages of small-pox. In looking over the report as given

monroe