

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

SOME WEIGHTS WHICH HINDER.

By Rev. John J. Cameron, M.A.

"Let us lay aside every weight," Heb. 12.1. There is no doubt that the Apostle, in penning these words, had before his mind's eye, the Isthmian games, which in ancient Greece were annually celebrated with great pomp and joy. The racer, before he began to run, was obliged to lay aside every unnecessary garment, everything which would have the least effect in hampering his movements or retarding his progress. The Christian life may be likened to a race-course in which each believer is a runner. Like the Grecian racer, he is called upon to lay aside every "weight" which would impede his progress as he runs, towards the heavenly goal. These weights may not completely destroy our spiritual life, or wholly paralyze our efforts; but certain it is, that if we allow them to cling to us, they will clog our spiritual movements, rob us of our present peace, and prevent us from running our Christian race so successfully as we otherwise might. Let us specify some of these weights which the believer must lay aside if he would run the Christian race and win the Christian's prize.

First among these weights is despondency over the past. There are some Christians who are naturally inclined to despond. It may be owing to the temperament which they inherit, or because of some dark sorrow which has come into their lives from the effects of which they have never fully recovered. As they look back over the past of their lives, and think of the wasted time, the neglected opportunities, the despised mercies, the sins of thought, word or deed of which they have been guilty, despondency fills their soul and the language of their hearts is "would to God I could recall the dark sin-stained past and live it over again." But alas! it has gone forever. Gone its mispent hours, its golden opportunities, its despised privileges; gone into the silent irrevocable past nevermore to return. It is of the very nature of despondency to fill the soul with gloom, to clothe the sky of life with a leaden hue, and to dry up the springs of Christian activity.

Another "weight" which may have the same effect is anxiety for the future. While there are some Christians who are prone to brood over the past, there are others who are equally prone to be unduly anxious about the future. They are constantly borrowing trouble and crossing the bridge before they come to it. They magnify molehills into mountains, and lambs into lions. As they peer into the future with timid eye, lions of difficulty seem to start up before them. Their faith grows weak and their hope dim. They fear the failure of their plans, and the result is that this intense wearing anxiety for the future, robs them of their joy and eats up all resolution and energy for present duty and action.

Another "weight" which may clog the wheels of life, and prove a hindrance to our Christian progress in the soul enslaving pursuit of some worldly object be it wealth or power, the apparently harmless amusement or recreation, or even our worldly occupation or business. Any of these may become a "weight" to keep us down, to rob us of our peace, to hinder the growth and mar the usefulness of our Christian life. These things are not wrong in themselves. Their wrongfulness lies in the manner in which and the degree to which they are pursued. So long as we subordinate their pursuit to the pursuit of God and His righteousness, no wrong is done; they become in that case, conducive to our moral and spiritual well-being. Instead of being weights to sink they become

buoys to float us. It is quite right to pursue and even to possess wealth to pursue the occupation or profession which we have chosen with all the energy we can command, as also to indulge in the innocent enjoyments and recreations of life. But when we pursue any earthly object to such a degree as to lose sight of the claims of God and the higher life to which He calls us and thus sacrifice upon its unhallowed shrine the welfare of our immortal souls, then does it become a weight to burden us which if not removed will go far to dwarf and deaden what spiritual life we possess. The ancient warrior who went to battle clad from head to foot in his iron armour found himself ill able to use his limbs freely and cope successfully with the opposing foe; but were he to divest himself of his unwieldy armour, how much more freely could he use his arm and win his way to victory. So there is many a Christian who cumbered with much seeming as was Martha, or burdened with some anxious care, or undue devotion to business or pleasure, makes but little headway in the race of life, but who, if divested of the oppressive burden, would move joyfully forward, victorious over every opposing foe, and a source of inspiration to those around him.

Another "weight" which may prove a serious hindrance to spiritual progress is some besetting sin in which we are prone to indulge. These besetting sins assume various forms. They may be sins of appetite or passion, sins of temper, sins of pride or presumption, sins of intemperance or covetousness, sins of sloth or sensuality. Their name is Legion. But whatever form they assume, wearing sometimes the garb of friends, they are our bitter foes—bent on our destruction, and like deadly serpents which, concealed beneath a bed of flowers, sting the hand extended to pluck them; these darling sins sting the soul held captive by their wiles.

It is the duty of each Christian to look into his heart and by a faithful self-examination, know the sin which most easily besets him, in which he is most prone to indulge, for unless he knows it he is not in a position to guard against its insidious wiles, or repel its more open assaults. Self knowledge is, in this respect, the most important of all kinds of knowledge. Its importance was recognized even by heathen worshippers; for on the doors of some of their temples was written the words in golden letters—"know thyself." For as who bak in the full blaze of the Gospel there is less excuse if we fail in this duty.

Our only safety, then, lies in first knowing these weights and then, by the grace of God in obedience to the Apostles' exhortation, laying them aside. That despondency for the past which is so unavailing, that anxiety for the future which impels such distrust in your Heavenly Father's care, the all-absorbing pursuit of that worldly object which is monopolizing your time and attention, that besetting sin which is silently eating away your spiritual life—that evil habit or undue devotion to business or pleasure which you are so unwilling to give up—lay them all aside, and you shall run your Christian race more easily, your peace shall be sweeter and deeper, your joy fuller, your progress more encouraging, your life more fruitful and useful and your final reward greater.

Lord Young enjoys the unique and enviable distinction of being among the solitary living personalities who possess the honor of having had association with the relief of Burns. In his early boyhood days he drank tea with her repeatedly in Dumfries.

The saddest captives are not those behind prison bars, but those in the dungeons of unbelief.

THE DENOMINATIONAL ASPECT OF HOME MISSION WORK.

By Rev. E. D. MacLaren, D.D.

Love of one's own denomination is like love of one's own country, to this extent at least, that it does not furnish the highest motive for the prosecution of religious work. But, like patriotism, denominationalism is one of the motives that may legitimately be appealed to.

Every denomination stands for something, some conception of abstract truth or some conviction of practical duty—which those who founded the denomination considered it necessary to emphasize. Although the circumstances and conditions that gave rise to many of the denominations have largely disappeared, every member of the Church of Christ has some reason for prizing above all others the particular branch of the Church to which he belongs.

Our own denomination stands for a great deal. Our denominational heritage is vast and varied, and the genius of Presbyterianism has not been a barren thing in the life of the countries in which the Presbyterian Church has flourished.

All this must be frankly acknowledged even by those of us who believe that the divisions of Christendom should be healed, and that centripetal rather than centrifugal forces should hereafter hold away in the realm of the world's religious life.

Loving our own church, realizing what it had done for the larger interests of the country and of the world, it is surely reasonable to appeal for more loyal support of Home Mission work on the ground of what that work has already accomplished in the development of Presbyterianism in this vast new land. Our denominational indebtedness to Home Missions may be inferred from the following figures:

The reports submitted to the first General Assembly after the union of the Presbyterian Churches in Canada—the Assembly of 1876—showed that in the whole region west of Lake Superior there was only one Presbytery; that there was not even one augmented charge; that there were only two self-sustaining congregations; that the mission fields were only twelve in number, and that the preaching points in these mission fields were only thirty-two. From a careful study of the reports presented to the Assembly of 1906 it will be learned that during the twenty-nine years that had intervened, the 1 Presbytery had increased to 22; that the 2 self-supporting congregations had become 141, with 60 additional congregations—soon to become self-supporting—receiving aid from the Augmentation Fund; that the mission fields had increased from 12 to 332, and the preaching stations from 32 to 926! The growth indicated by these figures is simply marvellous—"some sixty fold, some thirty fold."

It is quite true that the accomplishment of this magnificent result has involved a very large outlay. The expenditure of the Home Mission and Augmentation Committees during those twenty-nine years amounts to the enormous sum of \$878,875. But even from a financial point of view, the Church's expenditure of this immense amount of money can be abundantly justified. The contributions of the two Western Synods to the Schemes of the Church for the year 1904 amounted to \$82,562. That means that the Church received in 1904 six per cent on her total investment in religious work in Western Canada.

If the "payments to Synod and Presbytery Funds and other benevolent objects, including contributions by Sabbath