

sense of the word. It is likely that "tree" is used here somewhat loosely for any large plant taller than a man. In any case, travelers tell us that the little birds alight in great numbers among its stalks to peck at the seed pods.

The seeds are small, though botanists know seeds that are smaller. They are at least among the smallest of seeds. To the

Old Jews the term "a grain of mustard seed" meant a very small quantity; and Mohammed used the word in the same sense in the 21st chapter of his Bible, the Koran: "Just balances will we set up for the day of the resurrection, neither shall any soul be urged in aught; though, were a work but the weight of a grain of mustard seed, we would bring it forth to be weighed."

THE LESSON APPLIED

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Vs. 24-30. In this parable our Lord makes it very clear to his followers that they must count upon the presence and power of evil to the end of the world. The millennium of a perfect day was not to be immediately inaugurated. Human nature, as it comes into the world to-day, is pretty much the same raw material as in the days of Methuselah, and countless years from now will also be quite the same. Tares and wheat grow together. Let us face the concrete fact, but let us not allow ourselves to become unduly impatient in regard to it. Let us be always seriously concerned about the fortunes of the kingdom of God, but let us not be over-anxious,—so over-anxious as to draw the sword of physical force like Peter and as the Roman Catholic and even Protestant churches have often done. We are not to pull up evil by the roots drastically, for many in so doing have pulled up by the roots the very finest of the wheat. There is very much evil that we may safely leave over to the close of the ages. Then the Lord will deal with them.

In the meantime, let us put our trust in the adequacy of the moral and spiritual suasion of the Christian gospel to do the work of winning the world. It is said that in all mosques which once were Christian churches, it is customary for the mullah to preach with a naked sword in his hand in order to remind the people that the Mohammedan religion was propagated by the sword and must, if necessary, be retained by the same means. The Christian church assumes no such attitude. She depends upon the peaceable penetration of the word of God.

Vs. 31, 32. In this parable our Lord would have us believe that, although evil must be counted on to offer serious opposition as long as human nature is human nature, nevertheless the kingdom of Christ, in spite of its small beginning, will one day be a great and mighty power in the earth. We have allied ourselves with a finally victorious principle. Let us not be pessimistic as the manner of some is in these days. St. Paul was shipwrecked on Malta, he and his fellows gathered faggots from the field to make themselves a fire. As they warmed themselves, a viper came out of the smoke and flame and fastened itself upon the hand of Paul. He flung it off into the fire from which it came.

We have suffered the shipwreck of many things through the storm of the Great War and we are gathering such materials as we can for a fire to warm civilization. Out of somewhere crawls the viper of pessimism, and it would set its teeth into the flesh of every worker. Let us fling it off. Pessimism cannot save the world. Let us rather be of good courage. Even when we cannot see our way let us continue to believe in the final triumph of the Christian cause. Such a faith is the only ground of a never-failing Christian courage.

The London Christian Life tells the story of a young Frenchman who was awarded an unusual decoration. He had performed no great feat of arms, nor stood conspicuous in the engagements, but he had been the man who, day by day, encouraged the troops. By his extraordinary cheerfulness, he had managed, during the awful days spent in the trenches, to enable the men to rise above those