

## THE SIN OF IRREVERENCE.

There is danger that our greatest national sin shall be the sin of irreverence. The ancient story of Uzzah's act of desecration in placing his hand upon the holy ark of God is full of serious and important lessons which apply with solemn significance to our age, and our country and our individual citizenship.

In the days of prosperity, irreverence grows most insidiously. When men feel secure in their own successes they are prone to forget the commands of God. We do not depend so helplessly on our heavenly Father when our achievements have given us great confidence in ourselves. National and individual prosperity are at once our greatest danger and greatest security.

The Bible is a most sacred vessel. There is not much danger of bibliolatry, but we need to be much on our guard lest the very availability of our Greek Book shall cause it to be less appreciated. Things are often valued by us in proportion to the sacrifice which has been suffered for them. A gentleman placed a copy of the gospel of St. John on my desk the other day, and said it cost only 2 cents. It was in excellent type and neatly bound. During the days of the persecution of Diocletian, many Christians surrendered their Bibles and the sacred utensils of worship, and in consequence lost their faith. When the Bible goes out of our lives, our Christian character loses its chief support. A man once, in the presence of his family, picked up a Bible, turned its pages carelessly for a few moments, and petulantly threw it down upon the table, saying, "Pshaw! give me Shakespeare!" Perhaps he never knew that the Bible was the acknowledged inspiration of the marvelous lines of Avon's greatest bard; it is certain no man ever prefers any other book who has discovered the extraordinary beauty and power of the Bible.

We must valiantly defend the Bible against irreverence. It is the bulwark of our civilization—the foundation of liberty, the cornerstone of truth. Do we not commit a serious offense against the sacredness of the Book when we indulge in constant jokes and puns based upon the Scriptures? It cannot be anything less than sinful sacrilege to weave the holy personages and incidents of Bible history into ridiculous story. The Bible deals with most serious questions which involve the life and death and weal and woe of the race, and do we not violate its sacred rights when we make it the basis of our fun and laughter? This is a popular desecration which has been committed so long that it has not occurred to many people that they are unintentionally undermining the very book which they desire most to defend.

The Sabbath is a sacred vessel. A divinely instituted day, for rest and worship and home. We cannot spare the Sabbath, but we cannot keep it if it is steadily allowed to become more and more a social and a business day. All vices and enemies of our nation thrive best where the first day of the week is decreasingly revered. Dinner parties and hilarious outings arranged for the Sabbath are direct attacks upon the security of our country. The perpetuity of a nation depends upon the reverence of the people. When the temples are empty, the walls of the citadel crumble. When the altars of worship are neglected, virtue and purity are dethroned, a nation's protectors lose their courage and spirit of sacrifice and there is speedily decline and fall. God has put Himself on record as ready to cause those nations to "ride upon the high places of the earth" which keep His Sabbaths. History fulfils in every century the curses of the Almighty which have rested upon those people who have destroyed His holy day. Why do we argue the question when he who runs may read?

The human body is a sacred vessel. What a marvelous gift is the voice, with its

capabilities of music and speech. Alas, that ever its powers are profaned! Consider, too, the tastes and appetites and muscular possibilities and vital forces. What exquisite joys God has invested in the human body! But, desecrated and disregarded, how this body may become a bundle of clashing nerves, a prison-pen full of cruel and warring enemies. God's great apostle wrote, "If any man defile the temple of God," as the body is called, "him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

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The human mind—soul—is a sacred vessel. A man is not any better than his thoughts. Keep thy heart with "all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Man is the upward looking animal. His mind has been created with powers of concentration and analysis, that he might find out God. When man uses his faculties against his Creator, he has desecrated a sacred vessel. Man's logical faculty and powers of invention are often diverted to the injury instead of the elevation of men. A prostituted printing press is doing much in "vampire literature" to violate the human mind. A bad book or an immodest picture is a poisoned arrow driven into the mind, from which an absolute recovery is not possible.

Josephus says that in the closing scenes of Jerusalem, such were the irreverent and sacrilegious practices of the people, that if the Romans had not destroyed the city, some dreadful judgment like that which befell Sodom would have come upon that city. Thus, indeed, have nations and cities and individuals disappeared under the disintegrating processes of irreverence.

As the bold and wicked Belshazzar was, in revelry and drunkenness, defiling the sacred vessels of the Lord, a white hand came out of the black sleeve of the night, and wrote, in letters of fire, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting!" And that night the irreverent young king was found dead in his palace. The inexorable penalty of irreverence is death!

But they who hear reverently the ark of God, who obediently follow the commands of God, who daily honor in thought and deed the Son of God, who hold in highest esteem the privileges of the sons of God, shall enjoy peace and joy forevermore, for the reward of reverence is life—here and hereafter!

## JAPAN'S NEED.

Every mail from Japan brings additional details concerning the terrible famine now desolating the northern part of that empire. It is said by those engaged in the work of relief that the deaths from privation—in many cases from actual starvation—will exceed by far the casualties in the war with Russia. The district affected practically produces nothing except grain and silk. Both products utterly failed last season. Had the silk been abundant, the people might have had money with which to purchase food from abroad. But as it is, they have neither rice nor money with which to buy rice. Thousands are even now subsisting upon acorns, the bark of trees, or roots ground with straw. It must be midsummer before relief from this year's fields can be obtained. The governmental inquiry reports upwards of 1,000,000 persons already suffering from lack of food. It should be said for the Japanese authorities that they are making commendable efforts to employ the people upon public works and are shipping in cheap food at nominal rates. Though financially weakened by the late war, Japan herself is nevertheless doing more than she ever did before in philanthropic activities. But the desperate case is manifestly one for international benevolence. To help the Japanese in their hour of distress may mean, religiously, a casting of bread on the waters.

## PRESBYTERY OF OWEN SOUND.

The Presbytery met on the 6th and 7th of March in Division Street Lecture Hall, with a full attendance. Rev. J. A. Black, moderator.

Messrs. McClelland and Creighton were present to represent Brooke. They reported that one hundred and fifty dollars had been raised for student supply, and Presbytery resolved to ask for a grant of \$3 per Sabbath and secure a student for the summer. A deputation from Allenford, Elsinore and Skipsness were present. Allenford and Elsinore requested to be made a separate charge, Skipsness objected to be disjoined. After long deliberation it was agreed to appoint Messrs. McNab and Matheson a committee to arrange the services so that the minister will preach only three times a day. It is hoped that a re-arrangement satisfactory to all can be made in October. The standing committee for the year were appointed to take office in July. Mr. Eastman reported a call from St. Paul's, Sydenham and St. Vincent to Mr. Lemon, of Laskal, salary \$800, a manse, and vacation. Representatives were present and heard and the call sustained. In the event of Mr. Lemon accepting it Mr. Eastman and the Clerk were granted power to fix the date of induction, the moderator to preside, Mr. Barton to preach, Dr. McLaren to address the minister and Mr. Eastman the people. Mr. Acheson reported a call from Lion's Head, &c., to Mr. Penman, salary \$800, manse and vacation. The call was sustained, accepted and induction fixed for March 20th. Mr. Acheson to preside and address the minister and people, and Mr. Boyle to preach.

The Presbytery congratulated the congregation on the progress made during the past brief period. The Commissioners to the General Assembly were appointed, viz., Dr. Fraser, Dr. McLaren and Mr. McAlpine by rotation and Dr. Somerville by election. Messrs. Gilbert McInnis, Wesley Baker and Alex. Pringle, Elders, by rotation and Mr. John Clark by election.

A deputation appeared from Desboro, Williamsford and Holland Centre seeking an adjustment of what each should pay for rented house for their minister. The matter was left in the hands of Mr. Currie, the moderator of Sessions, to settle. Mr. Laird, the agent for Queen's University, was present and invited to correspond. He gave an address in the interest of the endowment fund for Queen's which the church is seeking to raise. After discussion the Presbytery resolved to commend the endowment scheme to the congregation, and especially to the men of means throughout the Presbytery.

Mr. Acheson reported for the Home Mission Committee, and Presbytery resolved to apply \$3 for Brooke, \$5 for Desboro, \$6 for Johnston, and \$5 for the Indian Peninsula for an ordained missionary.

Mr. McNab reported for the Augmentation Committee and Presbytery resolved to apply for \$130 for Hepworth.

Mr. Shepherd for Mr. Black read the report on Church Life and Work and adopted recommendations. Mr. Robertson, the Sabbath school secretary, was present and addressed the Presbytery. Mr. Eastman was appointed on the Synod's Committee on business and Dr. McLaren on Assembly's Committee on bills and overtures. Dr. Somerville was nominated as moderator of the General Assembly and Dr. Fraser appointed to make the nomination on the floor of the Assembly. The Presbytery and delegates to S. S. Convention were invited to tea in the Social Room by the Ladies of Division Street Church and the invitation was accepted. Messrs. Eastman and Shepherd were appointed to convey thanks of Presbytery to the ladies. The Presbytery adjourned to meet in Division Street Lecture Hall on Tuesday, the 10th of April, at 10 o'clock, and the meeting was closed with prayer and the benediction.

J. SOMERVILLE, Clerk.