

Christian Endeavor.

TRUE POSSESSIONS AND HOW TO GAIN THEM.

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Feb. 11.—Luke xii, 13-34.

It is very certain that this world can never give true possessions—satisfying portions. Though Alexander the Great conquered the then known world he was not satisfied. As Solomon had procured houses, lands, orchards, vineyards, men singers, women singers—in short, after he had procured all that wealth could purchase or ingenuity devise, he found that all was vanity and vexation of spirit (Eccl. ii, 4-11). Haman had wealth and honors, but he himself confessed that all these availed him nothing (Esther v, 11-13). Cardinal Wolsey found that all his honors brought no abiding satisfaction. Neither the wealth, the possessions, nor the honors of Queen Elizabeth could give her peace when she felt death claiming her as a victim. In the very nature of things the world can never give the bliss for which we sigh. We are spiritual beings and because we are such it is utterly impossible for the things of the world, which are material, to minister to the needs of the soul. They may satisfy the needs of the body, but they were not intended to minister to the soul. God has formed us for Himself and our souls find no rest till they find rest in Him.

I. What are true possessions? They consist not in what a man has, but in what he is; not in worldly store, but in character; not in worldly honors or wide-spreading fame, but in truth, sincerity, integrity and purity. They consist in being rich toward God; in what will be recognized at the judgment, or in coin that will pass current when we cross the line which separates this world from the next. Now wealth will not be recognized at the judgment, neither will worldly honors nor fame. Since this is so, some of the millionaires of earth will be paupers in eternity, and some of those who sat upon thrones here will have their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers in the world to come. But what will be accepted before the great white throne? Character. This is really the only thing which cannot be taken from us here, and it is the only thing which we shall carry beyond the grave. We brought nothing into the world and it is certain that we shall carry nothing out except character.

How sad to think that so many are struggling to gain possessions which cannot satisfy even here, and which, though they could satisfy can be enjoyed for only a few years at most! The man with the muck-rake in his hand can be found in every community to-day. When that California vessel "The Central American" caught fire and was sinking, the stewardess ran into the cabins of the passengers and collecting all the gold she could find, tied it in her apron. A boat was lowered, but in her eagerness to get into it she sprang from the deck, missed her aim and fell like a stone into the water where the weight of her treasure soon buried her out of sight. What folly! And yet can we not see that lamentable folly around us every day?

II. How are true possessions to be gained? By seeking first the kingdom of God—that kingdom which is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. xiv, 17). We seek that kingdom first when we make a complete surrender of ourselves to Christ as Saviour and Lord; when we consecrate ourselves to His service; when we labor to advance His glory in the earth, and when we leave ourselves and all our concerns in His hands. When we do this true possessions come, and with them there come all things that are necessary for the present life. Our only care should be to bring our wills into perfect harmony with the divine will, or, in other words, to live a life of vital godliness. Living thus, we shall find that godliness is profitable for all things, having promise for the life that now is and for that which is to come. Queen Elizabeth once gave an important commission to a rich English merchant, but he declined to take it saying, "Please your Majesty, if I obey your behest, what will become of these affairs of mine?" His monarch answered, "Leave these things to me; when you are employed in my service I will take care of your business."

"Fear Him ye saints, and then ye will Have nothing else to fear; Make you His service your delight, Your want shall be His care."

ing, it kept the church continually in mind of the worker, and united her more closely and firmly to it, by the thought that she was actually needed, and was rendering all the assistance that she could. Labor for the church produced love for the church, and may we hope increased love for the Lord who loved the church and gave Himself for it."

AN IMPROVED CHURCH SYSTEM.

Dear Sir,—I wholly agree with you that the system of Presbyterian government does not work smoothly at the present time, and we cannot disguise from ourselves that a change is desirable. As you have invited discussion on this subject I trust it may not be out of place for me to offer some suggestions.

We cannot blame young men because they are called to churches in preference to those more advanced in years. Men from forty to sixty and even seventy years of age are more matured in judgment, intellectual ability and Christian experience and more capable of giving instruction in the way of truth than they themselves could be in their younger days. Our present method of choosing ministers cannot be said to work satisfactorily, is a source of weakness, of constant trouble, and is, I fear, not scriptural. I do not think the teaching of the church, as set forth in the Acts of the Apostles, ever contemplated settling ministers as pastors over particular congregations. The elders chosen in the churches as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles were chosen to rule over particular congregations the same as elders are now chosen in our Presbyterian churches, whose duty it was to rule over and administer the affairs of the congregation by which they were chosen, and to whom they belonged, something similar in all probability to the rulers of synagogues. Ministers like the Apostles and evangelists should belong to the whole church, having no particular charge except those assigned to them by the Presbytery to which they belong. Presbyteries should continue constituted as they are now, with an elder from each congregation and every minister living within its bounds. Assemblies and Synods should have the same powers and privileges they have now, and be constructed on the same principle; the stipend that should be paid to each minister, and all matters common to the whole church decided by them, while all local matters should be left to Presbyteries subject to an appeal from its decisions to a higher court, such appeals to be final. The General Assembly should have the power of deciding and assigning to which Presbytery such minister shall belong and he should be at least three years continuously in one Presbytery.

The ministers should be wholly under the control of the Presbytery, directed by it and assigned to such a charge as the Presbytery in its wisdom directed and the present method of calling ministers should be abolished, requiring only to be licensed by the Presbytery the same as now. Whatever minister was considered suitable to any congregation could be sent there, but a minister should be removable if the Presbytery thought it advisable any time. There would be no necessity for providing congregations for ministers with certain bounds, but churches could be built in suitable places, to induce people to go to church, and not compel them to travel long distances where generally they will not go, but eventually gravitate to the nearest place of worship by which large numbers are now lost to the church. At present every effort is made to build up centres and encourage strong congregations, and the formation of outside stations generally is discouraged, because this may interfere with some existing congregations, and many weak churches or stations, which possibly have grown cold and careless or are unable to give sufficient salaries, or contributions are dying out, and often without preaching on Sabbath, while the Presbytery may have within its bounds half a dozen able ministers doing nothing, and because these congregations or stations cannot or will not pay a certain stipulated amount per Sabbath they have no service, and it is only a question of time until they become extinct. We know this is the case now, and it is deplorably destructive of the growth and prosperity of Presbyterianism, and saddest of all destructive of souls and the church of Christ. A minister of the Gospel under our present system of calling ministers, cannot be said to have that liberty and independence of speech and action

that should be enjoyed by a minister of the Gospel. They require to speak out, and should speak out sometimes in tones of thunder, they often, however, dare not speak out for fear of giving offence, it may be to some of their strongest and most influential supporters and therefore they must be dumb.

Salaries should be raised by the whole church and not by each congregation for its own pastor, which is Congregationalism, some receiving too much and a large number too little; some eased and some burdened, which is not Presbyterianism; some make sacrifices to maintain the means of grace and the contributions of others are trifling.

Under this proposed system there would be no mania for young men, or sensationalists, but for able and faithful men to expound the Word of God. There would be no stations without means of grace, little or no distinction between young or old, but every one would devote his talent to the work of the Master.

Presbyteries would have complete control over congregations and sessions because temporal things would not absorb their time as it almost wholly does now. Almost everything that creates friction now between Presbyteries and congregations would be removed, the church would be more spiritual, more separated from worldly things which now engross its best energies and thought, and in the language of the Apostles, Acts vi, 4, they might give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

I believe this or something similar to be the remedy for existing evils and grievances which we now deplore, and I pray that some means, under the blessing of God, may be devised by which our beloved Presbyterian Church may advance and continue in the future, as in the past, a light burning but never consumed.—I am, respectfully yours,

A PRESBYTERIAN.

Brussels, January 6th, 1894.

THE PROHIBITION CONVENTION AND THE CHURCH.

A circular has been addressed to ministers asking them to secure the appointment of persons to represent their respective congregations at the Prohibition Convention being held in Toronto this week.

Without dwelling on the difference of opinion regarding Prohibition, which exists amongst the members of the Presbyterian Church, is there not need of some caution in regard to this matter of appointing representatives to conventions which are not connected with the church, or under its control? The goodness of the cause—or what appears to a majority of church members to be such—does not alter the principle. The practical question is this: Is it wise and right for the church to interfere directly in political movements, and to subordinate her spiritual authority to that of a heterogeneous convention? The theory of the church is that spiritual rule is exercised through regularly constituted church courts—Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies—and that there is a well-ordered system of representation in these courts. Now, we have a new element introduced—a convention to which representatives are to be appointed by "every church and society, that may choose to appoint them, "church congregations" being on precisely the same footing as "prohibition clubs" in the matter of representation. Suppose that the Convention should arrive at one conclusion regarding action to be taken in this matter, and the General Assembly should arrive at a materially different conclusion, which of these authorities will the "church congregations" which have sent representations be supposed to obey? The Prohibition movement is necessarily a political one. Is it not possible for members of the church who are Prohibitionists, to carry out their views as citizens, without drawing the church into a false position? Even if a large majority of members of the church are Prohibitionists, as I believe they are, does it follow that they are right in using the machinery of the church to carry out their views? Suppose that the clear majority of the church were ardent Conservatives, and felt strongly that the well-being of the Dominion depended on maintaining the policy of the Conservative party, would they have the right to ask pastors "to lay before their congregations" a "call" to a Conservative Convention? What would the Liberal minority say? The next "call" may be to a convention on Woman Suffrage; then we may have one on the Single Tax. Why not? Let us clearly understand the lines on which we are moving, and let us have some care, lest, in using the machinery of the church to effect specific legislative changes which seem to the majority desirable, we lose sight of the higher purpose for which the church exists, viz., to build men up in Christian character, so that they shall carry the spirit of Christ into their citizen-life as well as into every other sphere of action.

Yours truly,

D. J. MACDONNELL.

Toronto, Jan. 27th, 1894.

service. The work was not left to anybody who might happen to be benevolently disposed, but was regarded as the primary duty of the church. It is not contended that this is her highest or main work, but it is her primary work, the A B C of the Gospel, and the best test of our sincerity. And though the doing of it well is a condition precedent to and a great element in the success of the main work of spreading the Gospel, yet it should not be done simply as a means to that end, but from pure pity and love. We are bound to give the cup of cold water with or without the Gospel.

As it is now, a man of exceptional goodness here and there rises and does his work, and the rest of us applaud from our pews. If there is one thing more than another certainly declared in Christ's teaching and example, it is that we all must have this exceptional goodness, and all must go forth to this work, or we are nothing in His sight. Hadn't we better take note of this?

Written for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

THE GROWTH OF A DOLLAR.

BY E. S. M.

In these days, the question of church debt comes before most congregations, and various and often doubtful are the ways and means adopted for wiping it out. One of the most recent methods employed has been what has been called The Talent, and has been worked out on a large scale, and with marvellous financial success. The sphere of operation was St. Andrew's Church, Kingston. In that congregation no fewer than 230 ladies received in trust one dollar, called The Talent, to be used according to each one's discretion, for the reduction of the church building account. Reports were handed in along with the returns at the close of the year, when it was discovered to the surprise and delight of the meeting, that the 230 Talents had gained beside considerably over \$2,000. There had been no fuss, no parade, no bazaars, no public entertainments, no oyster suppers, or sumptuous feasting under any name. Each worker had pursued her calling quietly, unostentatiously, and with steady perseverance all through the year, keeping her progress a secret, until it came as a startling revelation. The grand total announced represented simply untiring labour on the part of the ladies, for the law of working laid down was that only clear profits were to be returned. How each one worked forms an interesting story, and several such when read at the meeting had a most stimulating effect upon all who heard. The result was, that in a body the ladies took up the work again for another year, declaring that what been done was only an experiment. Even those that had taken no part in it the previous year, entered with great spirit into the second endeavor. A little pamphlet with the title, "How a Dollar Grew; or How to Wipe out Church Debt," has just been printed, in which reports of workers, full of interesting details and brimful of suggestions, are given. It will, we doubt not, be an excellent guide to congregations who need money and know not very well how to get it—to get it honorably as well as abundantly. It may also produce other happy results specified by the minister in an introductory note. His words we gladly quote: "Apart from the financial success of the scheme, there has been other most beneficent results. Some of them are these: 1. It made the members of the church better acquainted with each other, and interested in each other's work. 2. It showed not only the strength of a united pull, but the strength of the individual pull, and gave glad surprise to many who fancied that they were of little value to the church. 3. It gave to many, who by reason of delicate health, and the infirmities of age, sorrowfully thought of themselves, so far as church-work was concerned, as laid aside like a broken bow, blessed opportunities of being really helpful, the knowledge of which was sunshine in their secluded lives. 4. It affords a satisfactory answer to the many voices that are always calling away the energies of members of the church and dissipating them among things, good they may be, but outside the church, whilst the church is in need of every one's utmost. 5. And last, but most gratify-