

stays until his feet press the streets of that city whose maker and builder is God. The chronicles of peoples and the histories of individuals attest the success of God's leading.

In all the ways and deeds of life God leads. Then let us follow with joyous fidelity and implicit trust. Sometimes led up by the Spirit in the wilderness to be tempted, falter not, for he was there. We must need go through Samaria at times. Do not hesitate, nor turn aside. He entered its metropolises and mingled with its people. In ministrations to the defiled and long-suffering, sick and sorrowful, thy life may be appointed. "Thy well, if each task, each burden, each labor of love is done in him and for him who went about doing good"—Epworth League Bible Studies.

NOVEMBER 10.—"NATIONAL BONDAGE"

Hab. 1: 1-17; Amos 6: 1-6.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Nov. 4. In bondage to Egypt.—Ex. 1: 7-14
Tues., Nov. 5. In bondage to sin.—Rom. 6: 1-6
Wed., Nov. 6. In bondage to pride.—Matt. 23: 23-33
Thurs., Nov. 7. In bondage to the world.—Gal. 5: 16-26
Fri., Nov. 8. In the service of God.—Josh. 24: 14-24
Sat., Nov. 9. The liberty of Christ.—Col. 2: 13-23; 1: 3

This is a temperance lesson only in the broadest sense of the term. To be true to our texts, we had better cut loose from this sub-title altogether, and without any predilections endeavor to see what "National Bondage" is clearly set before us in the above passages.

These present messages, from two men, Amos, who spoke about 750 B.C., and Habakkuk, who lived about a century and a half later. Each prophet sees terrible social evils rampant in the land, and each according to his personality makes earnest protest against them. Habakkuk in deep trouble of spirit calls upon God to solve the awful puzzle. Amos, on the other hand, calls in haste upon the people to awake from their fatal slumbers are with a strong arm the Lord God intervenes to utterly blot their nation from the earth. Habakkuk boldly but reverently questions God. Amos searchingly questions man.

HABAKKUK.

What Habakkuk gives us here is above all a concrete illustration. From his times, of what actually happens in an invaded and terrorized land. The brutalizing and disheartening effects of foreign tyranny, the abnormal way in which society is thereby thrown away, the vitiating effect of this in lowering the moral and spiritual ideas of the people; these are spread to our view with bitter and startling vividness. We in our land are not in this case, therefore we cannot apply the prophet's words to ourselves. But it is certainly true that the evils come to a people under political tyranny, so they come likewise to the nation which, though under no foreign yoke or menace, is in bondage to "principalities and powers," just as really oppressive as in this case was Egypt or Assyria.

And yet it is from Amos that we get this definite moral lesson best, and that without any wrestling of Scripture. Let us turn, then, to him, retaining in our mind Habakkuk's vivid, concrete picture of actual political bondage, but now looking for guidance as to a spiritual and moral bondage, which may be ours as truly as it was Israel's in days gone by.

AMOS.

The passage from Amos gives us at least three evil powers to which the nation was in fatal bondage. Pride of Church and State, unhealthy optimism, and selfish refusal to bear responsibility in proportion to privilege; or, more briefly, hollow pride, blind hope, and selfish love of comfort. And surely as we

look at these they seem very familiar, too familiar. Is our nation free from their power to-day? Let every thoughtful leaguer answer.

PRIDE.

The Israelites were proud of their religion and of their nation. And why not? Had they not a wonderful past? Had not Jehovah established their worship and laws? Had they not a beautiful ritual, and great hymns and inspired Scriptures? In doctrine were they not orthodox, and in their polity were they not traditionally precise? And, too, as they had indeed fallen in a way since the time of Solomon, yet did not many hold that the fall was more apparent than real? And, at any rate, had they not had late success in war? Then, too, had not their political security been emphasized in another way? More than once, within the memory of the older ones, when the dreaded wave of the Assyrian power had rolled down upon them, it had dashed its fury to spray against northern Syria, and they had but felt the trembling of the ground, as with distant roar it had fallen and subsided. But to this pride in religion and nation, what saith the Lord through Amos? Of the first, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yet though you offer me your burnt offerings, and meal offerings, I will not accept them;" and of the second, "I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore will I deliver up the city with all that therein." And why? Read Matthew 23, back seven centuries, and no other answer is needed. While priding themselves on their religion, they virtually had none. Of ritual and orthodoxy they had a surfeit, but of the life of God in the heart, and expressed toward fellow-men, they had almost naught. As a nation they were living far out on the sand, at low tide. The rising of the waters was inevitable, but they would neither see nor consider. They had been false to their national ideal, and had refused to learn the lesson of history. Their glorious past, instead of being to them salvation, would be but greater condemnation.

And what of us in our day? Do we pride ourselves, as Methodists and Britons, on our past? What of the present? Do we glory in God's leading of great souls in our church and nation in former days? Nay, but does God lead us? The question is not whether we have kept inviolate the hallowed shells and forms of our fathers, for these may be ineffective in our day. But have we fallen heir to their life and spirit? Or are we in bondage to a blind and infatuated denominationalism or patriotism, which will not allow us to see faults in, or to make advance on the past? To be true to our fathers, we have to do even greater things than they have done, and must even strive to be nobler than they in spirit, and higher in our ideals. If we find ourselves content with anything less as citizens and worshippers, let us beware of the bondage to the letter that killeth, or the form or institution from which the growing life has departed. It bore the curse of God in the time of Amos, and will to the end of time.

FOOL'S HOPEFULNESS.

It was when, in a spirit of unhealthy optimism, Israel was striving to cheerfully blind itself to all uncomfortable problems, and was smiling in contentment upon the bright side of national and social life, that Amos broke in with his awful alarm. And, alas! with what result? In bondage to a blind optimism, they smiled in contempt at the foolish words of this pessimistic shepherd, and with fierce cry of "Madman! Heretic! Traitor!" they forced him to be silent. Ah, but the prophet was right. Nor was

he in truth a pessimist, nor were they true optimists. Folded arms and closed eyes, and a hopeful smile when wrong is being done, and action is urgently possible, was folly then, and is folly now. Let us ever be filled with hopefulness. The pessimist never can save the world. But let us not curse our church and nation with the passive optimism that will not see sin and wrong, and will not act, but merely have an idiotic hope.

"Act—act in the living present!"
Heart within, and God overhead."

Hopeful effort is the only power that can free the slave—whether man or nation or church—of the apathetic, lazy, blind hopefulness which linds men down to inaction in the midst of the ringing calls from God and the strife of life's battle.

SELFISH REFUSAL TO BEAR RESPONSIBILITY.

Proud and hopeful, in fancied security, the people lived in careless comfort. There might be deep national and moral problems. What of that? They themselves were in comfort. That settled the matter. In blind security, says the prophet, they seek pleasure and are not grieved for the affliction of Jacob." This phrase is the climax, and is swung out in startling contrast to all that goes before. And the sad thing about it for us is that now, 2,600 years afterwards, we Canadians are busy forging this same fetter upon ourselves. Privileges ever eagerly sought after, but responsibilities so often shirked. Who bear the burdens in our churches, in our Leagues, in all our movements for progress, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and political? The few, the very few. And how many make refusal with light heart. They are as one under an opiate. They are slaves, and as yet know it not. And a nation of slaves means a nation in bondage. We as citizens willing to accept the inevitable responsibilities of citizenship? The church fails, the League fails, the nation fails in proportion as its members lightly throw off upon others the political, the intellectual, the spiritual responsibility which can be borne by them alone. Look at the evils of intemperance, corrupt methods in politics, narrow and Pharisaic orthodoxy, foolish and repulsive practices in dealing with crime, exclusive and narrow patriotism, the vicious influence of great soulless corporations, the contrast between luxury and poverty, and at hundreds of other things which exist in our time! What will God's judgment be upon us as a nation, if we can see these, and, with a careless shrug of the shoulders, or with a helpless wave of the hand, turn to other things, and refuse to bear our responsibility as citizens for their correction so far as we can? Or are we so in bondage that we cannot stir? Then the Lord help us. But this is not the case. The fetters may be broken. The truth shall make you free." Humble following of the guidance of God, in our religious and national life, brotherly feeling for all suffering, national discontent in the face of all folly, active, hopeful effort for upward progress, unselfish willingness to do our small part in solving all moral, religious, intellectual, and other problems, these, with a broad Christian charity will make us as a church and nation free indeed.

ALFRED E. LAVELL.

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The autumn session of the Central Business College, Toronto, has opened out this month under most favorable conditions, with largest enrolment of new members in its history. The reputation of this excellent school seems to be of the right kind, and has been honestly won by its ample equipment and its first-class work.