

## Pastor and People.

### MAKE CHILDHOOD SWEET.

Wait not till the little hands are at rest  
Ere you fill them full of flow'rs;  
Wait not for the crowning tuberoses  
To make sweet the last sad hours;  
But while in the busy household band,  
Your darlings still need your guiding hand,  
O, fill their lives with sweetness.

Wait not till the little hearts are still  
For the loving look or praise;  
But while you gently chide a fault,  
The good deed kindly praise.  
The word you speak beside the bier  
Falls sweeter far on the living ear;  
Oh, fill young lives with sweetness.

Ah, what is kindness on cold clay lips  
To the rose mouth we press,  
When our wee one flies to her mother's arms  
For love's tenderest caress?  
Let never a worldly babble keep  
Your heart from the joy each day should reap.  
Circling young lives with sweetness.

Give thanks each morning, for the sturdy boys,  
Give thanks for the fairy girls;  
With a dower of wealth like this at home  
Would you rifle the earth for pearls?  
Wait not for Death to gem Love's crown,  
But daily shower life's blessing down,  
And fill young hearts with sweetness.

Remember the homes where the light has fled,  
Where the rose has faded away;  
And love that grows in youthful hearts,  
O cherish it while you may!  
And make your home a garden of flowers,  
Where joy shall bloom through childhood's hours,  
And fill young hearts with sweetness.

### WAYSIDE WORDS.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D., GALT.

"The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the master of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd." And they are so whether they are massed together in studied discourse, or dropped in brief or broken sentences upon occasion. They are either a blazing torch, casting its light abroad for the dispelling of the darkness, or they are sparks with a solid core of fire that may ignite a forest or kindle a powder train that may explode a mine. Plato tells us in his "Banquet," by the mouth of Alcibiades, that the very fragments of Socrates and his words, "even at second-hand, and however imperfectly repeated, amaze and possess the soul of every man, woman and child who come within hearing of them," and he goes on to say, "I have heard Pericles, and other great orators, but though I thought they spoke well, I never had any similar feeling; my soul was not stirred by them, nor was I angry at the thought of my own slavish state. But this Marsyas (Socrates) has often brought me to such a pass that I have felt as if I could hardly endure the life I am leading. . . . For he makes me confess that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my own soul, and busying myself with the concerns of the Athenians." This is a remarkable testimony to the moral power of Socrates. It shows in a striking way the force of truth. The words of a good man are mighty for good; they are the energy of his spiritual nature put forth for the correction of error, the enlightenment of ignorance, the direction of those who are out of the way, the arousing of the mind to thought and concern, the saving of the soul. How often are they uttered without premeditation! They are like the juice of the grape that exudes for very ripeness. It is interesting to gather a handful of these together, just to encourage us to speak the word God may give us to utter at times when we remain silent.

Edward Irving once, paying a flying visit to Bathgate, was induced to call on a young man who was dying of consumption. He was so pressed for time that the visit had to be made at six o'clock in the morning, just before he started on his journey. Entering the sick chamber, Irving went up to the bedside, and looking in the face of the patient, said softly, but earnestly, "George M—, God loves you; be assured of this: God loves you." When Irving departed, the young man's sister coming in found her brother in tears and in joy not to be described. "What do you think? Mr. Irving says God loves me," cried the dying lad, overwhelmed with the marvellous discovery. The sudden message had brought sunshine and light into the chamber of death.

One day as Robert Murray McCheyne was passing along the street in Dundee, he laid his hand upon the head of a child, who, at his touch, looked up into the calm, solemn countenance of the minister. "Walter," said McCheyne, "do you love your own soul?" Without another word he passed on. The little boy marvelled much at the strange question. Often did he deeply ponder it, and it became a thought in his heart, and the thought through grace, a living germ. Walter became a Christian, a student and a minister, and ere he died won many souls to Christ. At Kelso, while visiting a little girl, he said to her: "God gives last knocks. When your heart becomes hard and careless, then fear lest Christ may have given a last knock." We can imagine how impressive these words would be!

Dr. N. Murray, the famous "Kirwan" of the United States, tells us that in his youth he met an old disciple, ninety-one years of age, and in taking leave of the venerable

pilgrim, left with her young friend a charge which he had never forgotten: "Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in all the ways you can, and as long as you can." Was this the first utterance of these words in this form? How often have they been repeated since in homes, and in Sunday schools in the hearing of impressible children. And were they only acted upon how soon would the face of the world be changed; how soon would the wilderness blossom as the Garden of Eden! Dr. W. P. Mackay, of Hull, England, whose life of faith and abundant labours of love all reading Christians know something about, was once attending the feeding markets in company with Duncan Matheson, the Scottish evangelist. They had been speaking of entire consecration to the Lord, and the noble work of preaching Christ and getting souls saved. Dr. Mackay says of that time: "My mind was not very clear as to my own path. I was seeking light as to my future course—whether I should give myself entirely up to preach the Gospel, or enter a professional course. Many young men are similarly placed, and often require an encouraging word when all around seems doubtful or dark. We had to go in different directions. He (Matheson) crossed over to the other side of the platform, and his last words before our train came up were in his manly accents, 'Go and read George Müller, of Ashley Down.' I had never heard the name before, but I put it down in my memory. On the first opportunity I read his history. And for the first time in my life saw the meaning of practical everyday faith. I had known about faith to save my soul, but this opened up quite a new aspect of God's glorious truth." Here is the secret of Dr. Mackay's power unveiled. Faith, faith, faith in God. This is the key to his useful and honourable life.

George Cowie, of Huntley, a quaint minister, full of the Holy Ghost and of power, on the occasion of a lad leaving his native place, said to him: "Young man, you are like a ship going to sea without compass or helm." These words led to his conversion.

When Richard Knill revisited Bideford, in the South of England, after his return from Russia, he took aside two boys, and having made them repeat the prayer, "O Lord, convert my soul, for the sake of Jesus Christ, amen," until it was impressed on their memory, he charged them in the most solemn and affectionate manner to continue to offer it till it was answered. They did so, and both became ministers of extensive usefulness, one in the Wesleyan connection and the other in the Established Church.

The Rev. John McPherson, of Dundee, visiting a sick one late at night, as he left the house a gleam of light fell from the window upon the pavement, and revealed the word, "Eternity!" He says: "I started back, and felt I was treading on holy ground. On the morning of the day on which Robert Annan fell a sacrifice to his heroic endeavour to save the life of a drowning boy he had chalked that word upon the pavement."

I could not help calling to mind another young man, who moved in a different sphere—the late lamented Hon. James Gordon, son of the Earl of Aberdeen. That young nobleman was deeply impressed by reading that portion of the sketch of Annan's life in which the incident just referred to is related. Eternity! Eternity! kept ringing in his ears. Thus he was stirred and blessed. So deeply moved was he by the story that on leaving home for Cambridge he requested that the word eternity should be carved, at his expense, on the stone on which Robert Annan had chalked it, so that it might preach for ever afterwards to all who passed that way.

Is there not light and life in words incidentally dropped by the way? Behold how much wood is kindled by so small a fire! If evil words do much mischief, good words work much blessing in the souls of men. They are as nails fastened by the master of assemblies. If we would know the secret of successful speech, these incidents teach us that it lies in living fellowship with God. How important, therefore, the command, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Herein is teaching for the Christian who would be largely used in doing good, and also for the parent at home; and for the minister of the Gospel abroad. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." We all know by experience how difficult this is! But it is in respect to this as well as everything else that lies within the realm of Christian duty that we need to "watch and pray." Keeping in the Spirit and in communion with Christ Jesus, and in charity with all men, our words will be as goads. In the lovely picture painted in the first psalm of the godly man, it is said that "he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

His "fruit" is his actions; his "leaf" is his word or words. And these shall not wither—they are imperishable. How? Everything born of God's good Spirit is charged with a life that is eternal and blessed.

### THE TWO TALENTS.

One of the most common excuses for inactivity in spiritual work is a want of ability; not a total want of ability, but the absence of the great ability which is possessed by some of the more favoured members of the Church. No one is willing to acknowledge that he is altogether without mental strength and moral influence; he would vigorously resent such an imputation. But he compares himself with others, and he sees, or thinks he sees, that they are "head and shoulders" above him in this regard. He expects them to do the necessary

work, while he lives in idleness. Such thoughts as these may not be expressed in words, but they often have a place in the heart: If I could speak with eloquence of such a minister, I would preach the Gospel in season and out of season; if I could exhort with the power of such an evangelist, I would never grow weary in telling the story of the cross; if I could teach with the skill of such a teacher, I would always have a class in the Sabbath school; if I had the learning of such a scholar, my pen would never be idle in defending Christianity against its enemies.

It ought to be remembered that in the sacramental host of God there is a place for those who are private soldiers, as well as for those who are officers, and that in the family of the Heavenly Father there are errands for the children, as well as tasks for the adults. In fact, a large part of the work required to build up the Church is adapted to medium ability. A man may not be a Samson, and yet in certain lines he may be more useful without miraculous physical strength. All the early Christians did not have the natural talents and education of Paul, and yet Paul did not do all the spiritual work of his day. A few rifled cannon of long range are essential in a campaign, but unless the rank and file have their guns and sabres and use them as they were intended to be used, it is not likely that the army will be victorious.

Mr. Spurgeon cannot preach the Gospel to all the world. There is work to be done which Mr. Moody cannot do. The fact that there is but one living Spurgeon and one living Moody is conclusive evidence that God does not intend to convert the world through men of extraordinary ability. The greater part of the necessary work in the home, in the Sabbath school, in the social meeting, and in personal intercourse has always been done, and probably always will be done, by those whose praise is not in all the churches. Until the Lord appoints an entirely different plan of service from that which has been followed ever since the ascension, there will be abundant room among the workers for men and women of limited education and moderate ability.

Those who possess only a small ability will be called to as strict an account as their more favoured fellows. In the parable of the talents, the servant who had received two talents had to pass through the same examination as the servant who had received five. We are accountable for what we have, and not for what others have. Because a man had few opportunities and limited abilities will not excuse him from appearing before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. It is worthy of special notice that the servant who was faithful with his two talents received precisely the same commendation as the one who had been faithful with his five talents. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The history of the Church is filled with illustrations of the way in which God has honoured moderate ability when consecrated to his service. The reason of this is among the things revealed. God would take away all ground of boasting; he would magnify himself; he would show the groundlessness of every excuse for inactivity. He uses the weak ones of the world to confound the mighty, to show that it is not by might or power, but by His Spirit that sinners are to be converted.

The common excuse of want of ability is not a valid one. Whatever else the parable of the talents may teach us, it certainly puts emphasis upon this lesson: the man with one talent, was punished, not because he had only one talent, but because he did not use the one talent which he had. The same parable seems to imply that those who have the fewest talents are the ones who are most likely to hide their talents in a napkin. This is the case at the present time if we may judge from the frequency with which self-styled unfitness is urged as a reason for doing nothing for the Master. No one can tell how much he can do with a single talent till he has tried.

There is to be a redistribution of the rewards of the great king, and that redistribution will be made, not according to the number of talents a man received, but according to the way in which he used them. The rule by which the crowns of the future will be bestowed will not be ability but faithfulness. When that rule is applied by the impartial Judge, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first."—*United Presbyterian.*

### SICK-BED MINISTRY.

Every place of worship has its sick and feeble ones, whose infirmity prevents them from attending public service, and whose longing and thoughts Sabbath by Sabbath follow wistfully those still able to enjoy the public means of grace. Yes, and their prayers are with preacher and people too; it may be for this very reason that they are kept here below, holding up in their weakness by the might of their pleadings the hands of Christian workers, and watering the seed sown by their supplicating tears.

The genial authority of "Daniel Quorn" tells us of the little meeting that fellow believers held in the room of a bed-ridden old lady, whose canary grew so excited with the singing that it had to be subdued by covering up its cage.

"I wonder why God does not take you away to rest," said an influential gentleman to a weak and weary woman who lay sick and in poverty. This gentleman was noted for his benevolence, and his use in the world was apparent; but why should old Betty linger here? "I think I stop here to pray" she said; it had been her prayer continually that his heart and hand might be open to various good works on different sides, and he had become one of the most benevolent helpers around. Who can estimate the power that lies in the pleadings of the sufferers we call "helpless?" Who can measure the scope of their ministry of prayer? "When used in faith," says Bonar, "weakness is the mightiest thing on earth, for it affords room for God and the power of God to work."