

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

WHAT WAS THE MATTER?

Three men were walking home from the weekly prayer meeting at Cherryville.

"Bert Trowbridge makes a good prayer—there is no doubt about that," said good Elder Brown, and he walked along, with a quiet, peaceful look upon his face.

The second one of the trio, Mr. Clark, who kept a grocery in the village, and was supposed to know more about young men than the elder, echoed the sentiment with a quiet derogatory shake of the head, as if not quite certain what to think.

King, the youngest of the three, gave a contemptuous sniff and said nothing.

What was the matter? King didn't believe much in religion; he had only "dropped" into the church that evening, it wasn't his usual habit. But was that all?

This was not the first time the words of Elder Brown had been uttered. In fact it was a pretty well known fact among the staid old Presbyterians of Cherryville, that Bert could and did always make a good prayer. Strangers stopping there always inquired who that young man was who closed the meeting with such a heartfelt prayer. Mind, they did not say *eloquent*—for Bert never was that. He had an intuitive idea of what a prayer ought to be; he had good taste; he knew it ought to be reverent; composed of choice words; uttered as if it came from a heart full of feeling, and went to One in whom the heart trusted. He also believed it was more impressive when delivered in a low undertone—distinctly audible to all in the room, but heard no farther. He also judged a display of words out of place—his was a model prayer. It was the same with his speech. He had been used to prayer-meetings, and he knew just about how much to say and how to say it.

What was the matter?

The night before, there had been a party of the boys meeting in Lawyer King's office. King was a young man just building up a good practice. Bert was there, of course, and was the liveliest among them. Cigars were brought out, and they all smoked. Then they settled down to a quiet evening entertainment of repeating light jokes and dissecting their neighbours. Let the young men deny it if they want to, but ladies are not the only ones who have quiet little gossip parties. The "nobler race" did not drink tea—they take a more injurious article. And in proportion to the vileness of the article imbibed or inhaled, in such a degree is their gossip stronger. But I am not writing about tea parties, or casting a javelin at smoking, or even preaching against gossip in general; I started out to tell about Bert. He did not drink, but that night he smoked, and his stories were the best told, his language the finest, and his remarks about his neighbours the most cutting. That was all. When through, you could not accuse him of any sin—but you were left in doubt as to where he stood. You would not have known him as a Christian at that party. He was no worse than the others, but the others were not Christians.

And this was not the first party of this kind. Bert had a reputation among his associates as well as among the good church members. Now, a man does not have to wear a long face because he is a church member. Far from it. But there are little things which will shew, and the world takes them up. The world has a high standard for Christians to live up to.

After Mr. Brown had turned down the lane leading homeward, and King and Clark were left together, King said:

"Clark, I have been thinking about this thing, religion—and I feel that I ought to accept Christ and be a Christian. I am not a man subject to violent emotions. I have been studying the subject for some time, although people have not imagined it."

"Why don't you go to the Saviour then? He has said, 'Come.' That is all you have to do. You need Him. He tells you He wants you. Why don't you come?"

"I don't want to bring up that old objection of 'I'm as good as you Christians,' but this *has* held me back. To-night when Bert prayed, I was touched to the heart. He seemed to mean so much, and his petition just suited me. No prayer or sermon, I can truthfully say, ever affected me more. But all of a sudden I thought of his manner outside of the prayer meet-

ing; his lightness concerning sacred subjects and freedom in the use of all the slang which our wildest boys use, and I could not believe he was in earnest."

That was the trouble with the prayer—Bert's daily life did not testify to the truth. He was not wicked; but his life was not a daily lesson.

What was the matter with him? Was he a hypocrite?

Clark and Bert were good friends, and the first time they met, Clark told his friend in an easy way, of what King had said.

"I should like to know if I am to be judged by every one around me. Must a fellow bow to the criticism of every one who is inclined to find fault? If I am a stumbling-block in the way of these persons who are so ready to condemn me behind my back, tell me what crime they accuse me of."

"It isn't that, you only appear careless of your Master's business. You never think of shewing Christ crucified to your companions, do you? Do you think they would know you were a Christian if they never attended prayer-meeting?"

"It is only that old excuse. And you know it is the most foolish one a man can offer—pleading the weakness of others as a reason why he should not do right."

"I know it."

And Clark knew also that it was not best to argue with a man. Let him think it over.

Bert did think it over, and this was his conclusion that night—

"I have not intended to do wrong, but it seems I have. I meant no harm by my conduct, but it seems it *has* done mischief. Besides I don't know but it has really affected my religious character. Sometimes my prayers have only been from my lips—but then not always. I have been in earnest. . . . But how can King and the others tell when I am in earnest? Well, I don't believe I'm as bad as they make out. There's no sense in King making a stumbling-block out of me. If I'm not up to the standard, why does he notice me—why doesn't he pattern after Mr. Brown or Mr. Clark? But I am keeping him away—perhaps—I had better be careful—and—I'll go to-morrow and tell him so."

Do you ever have any Bert Trowbridges in your own church?

A week afterward, when King arose in prayer meeting and expressed a desire to lead a better life, it was Bert's shoulder his hand rested upon. And Clark, if no one else, knew how much that meant.—*Church and Home.*

THE WIDOW'S LOVE HONOURED.

About thirteen hundred years ago there was living in the city of Constantine a great emperor called Justinian. When he cast his eyes over the city in which the palace was, he saw that there was no church, or no worthy church, for God, and he said to himself, "I will supply this want. I will build a church with which God shall be pleased. And I alone shall do it. And the glory of doing it shall be altogether mine." And he further said, "God will be pleased. And when I die, and my soul arrives at the gate of heaven, the angels will come out and blow their trumpets and say, 'Enter Justinian, who built the great church to God!'"

So he called together his architects, and masons, and workers in wood, and iron, and brass, and gold, and said to them, "Build me a church for God, such as there shall be none equal to it for magnificence. See that no one is suffered to contribute nail, or plank, or stone to it except myself. And when it is finished, inscribe above the great door of it these words: 'Built to God by the Great Emperor Justinian.'"

And the architects, and builders, and workers in wood, and brass, and gold, began to work. And soon the harbour was crowded with ships bringing marble to build the walls, and the streets with waggons, drawn by oxen, carrying the marble to the site. And by-and-by the walls began to rise. And after a time they were completed. Marble outside gloriously carved; inside, gold, and silver, and precious stones. Then a day to open it was set. And on the day before, above the great door, the words were carved as the emperor had commanded: "Built to God by the Great Emperor Justinian."

At last, on this day that was set, a chariot of gold was brought to the door of the palace, and the nobles, and chief captains, and priests, and all the great

workers who had worked at the church, and all the army came dressed in glorious apparel, and waited behind the chariot. Then the doors of the palace were thrown wide open, and amid the blowing of trumpets Justinian came out, shining in gold, and purple, and precious stones, and took his seat on the chariot of gold. Such a day had never been known in Constantinople. The streets resounded with music and with the shoutings of the people, as the great emperor drove, at the head of his nobles and armies, to open the church he had built to God.

As he drew near to the church his heart swelled with pride. He alone had done the work for God.

He raised his eyes to see the inscription. But what he saw there was not what he expected to see. His face flushed with anger. His brow knit; his eyes flashed fire. Justinian's name was nowhere to be seen. What he read was this: "This house to God, Euphrasia, widow, gave."

Who had dared to mock Justinian in this way? He called for the carver of the inscription; but he, trembling, could only say it was the emperor's name which he had carved. He called for architects, chief priests, and chief captains. They replied in fear, "O mighty emperor, this only we know, that last night our eyes beheld thy name, and not another, graven on that wall."

Then, when every one was silent, the chief priest found courage to say, "My lord emperor, it may hap that this is not of man, but of God. Who knows whether this strange name has not been written by the finger that wrote the ten commandments on stone, and the strange words on the walls of Belshazzar's palace?"

When this was said the emperor began to tremble, and to ask, "Who, then, is Euphrasia the widow?" At first everybody thought she must be some rich lady, richer than the emperor, who, unknown to him, had given more than he to the church. And a search began. And at last the searchers came to a poor cottage, near the docks where the marble for the church arrived. And in that cottage they found Euphrasia the widow, whose name was carved where the emperor's had been. So they brought her straightway to Justinian to be examined.

When she came into the emperor's presence, what he saw was a poor old gray-haired woman with marks of sickness on her face. At first she had nothing to tell. She had not even heard of the inscription. Had she dared to disobey the commands of the emperor? Had she given gold, or marble, or wood, or iron, to the church? No, she had given neither gold nor marble; neither wood nor iron. "Hast thou done anything—anything at all—in connection with the building of this church?" Then the old woman said, "My lord emperor, if I have done anything contrary to thy commands it was in ignorance. This is my history since the church began to be built. I was laid down with sickness; my body was racked with pain. Weary days and nights passed over me, month after month I lay in pain and sickness. But in my loneliness and distress God remembered me, and He sent a linnet to cheer me. It came every day to my window-sill and sang its songs to me. And that song gladdened me, and filled my heart with thankfulness. And when I recovered I said to myself, 'I shall shew my thankfulness to God in what way I can.' So, because I could do nothing else, I plucked handfuls of the straw on which I had been lying and scattered them on the sharp stones which cut the feet of the oxen that were dragging the marble from the cliffs. That was all."

But that was more than the great emperor had given, who yet seemed to have given all. That was the gift of a loving and thankful heart. Even the proud Justinian was put to shame. "Verily," he said, "she has given the most in giving love, and therefore has her name been written by God above the door of this church."

Justinian sinned just as Nebuchadnezzar had done. God had given him riches and power, and he did not give the glory of them to God. And instead of praying, "Lead me not into temptation," he filled his heart with the pride of the thought that he would do a great thing for which the angels of God should give him praise.—*Rev. Alex. Macleod, D.D., in Sunday Magazine.*

"Words learned by rote a parrot may rehearse,
But talking is not always to converse;
Not more distinct from harmony divine
The constant creaking of a country sign."—*Cowper.*