

Pastor and People.

TWO-EDGED PROVERBS

II.—"EVERY LITTLE MAKES A MICKLE."

(Concluded.)

This common proverb leads us, however, still higher. If we mount into the region of spiritual things, we find it even there. The "mickle" or the "much" of a developed "Christian" is the result of many littles in the disciplinings and experiences of the divine life.

It is not any of his littles that can save his soul, that great mickle—that vast "much," at which angels wonder—is the sole prodigious work of Christ; but our spiritual life is exercised and fed and strengthened by littles.

This life here is led in littles. The martyr's stake is not kindled now; the life of the man of God is not a struggle with outward foes, or a fleeing from open persecutors; that life is to be led in shops and factories and fields and quiet homes, and amid what perhaps many would call very inglorious scenes. But it is here, nevertheless, that we are to set forth Christ, and here that we are to be trained for heaven. It is by "littles" that the man of God is made perfect.

Faith is educated by littles. It becomes stronger every effort it makes. Just as the muscles become stronger every time we move our limbs, so faith becomes more powerful every time it acts.

Self-denial is exercised by littles. Every small thing we forego, every time we are willing to retreat into the background, and see another preferred, forms and fashions the character for heaven, moulds the soul's life which is to be.

The saints in their eternal and glorious home shall be "mickles"—"muches" made up of many past littles. And this will be equally true of the other sad side of the picture. The spiritual being of the lost shall be the aggregate of many littles, bad littles having gathered and consolidated themselves into a bad "much."

What lessons do we learn from this? There is another common proverb which says "Every little helps." And what are our littles helping us to—whither are they helping us to go?

One lesson that we learn is to put that question to ourselves—not to allow ourselves to be drifted on to ruin on the bosom of a current made up, after all, of only very little drops.

What kind of "mickle" are the "littles" of our life making? We ought to know whither we are going; what kind of place we are becoming fitted for.

What has been said about this proverb should teach us not to despise littles, no matter what form they come to us in. He that despises little things, by little and little shall he perish. It was a little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands to sleep, that brought poverty upon the sluggard as one that travelleth, and want as an armed man (Prov. vi. 9, 10). It was the "little" foxes which were doing the mischief in Cant. II., and they found something suited to them—the tender grapes; and these little foxes were not to be let have it all their own way, but were to be caught, and their mischief put an end to; for though they were small themselves, their power of doing harm was great. "Take us the foxes—the little foxes that spoil the vines—for our vines have tender grapes."

Neither on the good nor on the bad side may we despise the little things—in each a great mickle lies before us.

Remember, as regards the bad, that what you pooh-pooh as small, nevertheless goes on its way, to live, and work itself out, and join itself to other like things, to overwhelm you by-and-by, as the avalanche made up of single snow-flakes overwhelms the traveller in the Alps.

You cannot do little mean things, without getting the mickle of a miserable character; you cannot indulge in little lazinesses, without becoming slothful; you cannot decline little duties, without becoming untrue in your spiritual life.

Take care how you look at littles by themselves, not bearing in mind that they are parts of a great whole. If you do this you may find yourself ruined before you know anything about it. Seldom any man takes a gigantic step in evil all at once; he comes to it by little and little. The littles familiarise us with the mickle.

Many a man who has been going into debt for little things, a shilling or a sovereign now, and a few shillings then, is amazed and displeased when a bill comes in to him for perhaps £100. And yet he cannot reasonably or justly object to it in any way. He ordered and had the goods; each article seemed nothing, or next to nothing, at the time; the big account is the mickle of them all.

But we must take a bright side of this proverb also. It will never do to stop at the dark side of truth; we should be miserably depressed if we did, and should never get on.

There are many small things in good, as in evil; and here, too, "every little will make a mickle."

As people seldom fall into great wickedness all at once, so they seldom attain to much good.

There is indeed one great mickle—the soul's mighty "much"—which is done not by little and little, but all at once; and that is its salvation. He that believeth shall be saved; that work is once and for ever. But there is the sanctification of the heart; the purifying of the life, the attainment of personal holiness; and all this seldom, indeed never, comes all at once. It is here a little, and there a little; the growing in grace, the making small advances day by day.

Do not despise the day of small things; do not undervalue, either in yourself or others, small improvements; they are all steps in the ladder which you must climb, and, when all put together, will lead you very high. Trust this as their issue. You might be very much discouraged if you were to look only at the end; it might seem so high, so far off, so unattainable. But you shall be led to it by imperceptible steps; the littles will bring you there.

Thank God for every small improvement. Even though it were but very small compared with what you would have had it be, thank Him heartily for it; let it be added to what went before; and add something more in the way of improvement to it, be it never so small, and you shall find that you are advancing towards the mickle, the "much" of being perfected.

Do not be altogether discouraged about others either. Christ is not discouraged. We are told that the bruised reed does He not break, and smoking flax does He not quench. He recognized Peter's little faith, though it was but "little," when he was about to sink. Our Lord noted also the "little" strength of the Philadelphian Church (Rev. iii. 7), and there was a blessing in that, though it was but small.

Encourage every one to little efforts. Generously recognise these littles. Rejoice in your own littles, and thank God that you have been able to make them. Look forward with hope and trust to that day when He who said, "Well, thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities," will recognise your honest littles, and show you, to your great astonishment and delight, how much they come to in the aggregate. Then you shall see the spiritual side of this proverb, and wonder at the wide circumference of the common saying, "Every little makes a mickle."

Prayer for the Press.

The position of the minister and of the teacher depends greatly on personal character. An immoral man cannot long occupy the pulpit or the schoolroom. Not so with the journalist. The people know him only by what he writes. Ability to write what will interest readers, and promote the sale of the journal, is the main thing sought. A good moral character is not a pre-requisite for employment on the public press. Hence its great power may be wielded by unprincipled men. It is true that journalists are in a great measure controlled by public sentiment and the wishes of their patrons. An infidel may be the editor of a religious paper; but he will try to keep his infidelity out of the paper, or to introduce it only covertly. Possibly somebody will ask, what harm can come from the immoral or irreligious character of a journalist, if it does not appear in his journal? We reply, it will most certainly appear, and probably in its most dangerous form. But even if it does not, any positively good influence must be wanting. The power of the press, as well as that of the pulpit, should be positive, and always on the Lord's side. The unconscious or involuntary influence of a man is often greater than the voluntary. So with a journal; it may carefully avoid offending its respectable readers, and yet its daily influence may be prejudicial to the best interests of society. What a powerful influence for good would our multiplied journals exert if their conductors were all God-fearing men. Praying for an object opposes the petitioners to labor for that object. If a man earnestly prays that the press may be what it ought to be, he will ask if he can do anything towards making it such, and in most cases he will find that he can do something. Journals, like other things made to sell, will be suited to the taste of the purchaser. An experienced journalist and decided Christian made the remark that a daily newspaper conducted on the highest ability on strictly Christian principles, could not meet its expenses for a single day, and that in a land where there are thousands praying daily for the coming of the kingdom of God. We have known a minister to preach on the "perversion of the press," and yet regularly read a newspaper whose aim was to injure Evangelical religion. In this, as in other cases, our conduct should be in keeping with our prayers. It has seemed to us that scarcely any other class of our Church workers are so completely left out of their religious sympathies of Christian people as are the conductors of the religious press.

Scripture and Science.

The danger of compelling science to defer its teachings to the popular language of Scripture has passed away. The schools have been emancipated completely from the authority of the Church, and the danger is now rather in the other direction. We are in much greater danger of forgetting that there are some subjects bearing on science in which the Bible may be said to speak with authority, than we are of including all sciences within the bounds of Biblical interpretation. Psychology and ethics are cases in point. If Scripture be a revelation at all we can never admit that it has nothing to teach us of the relation of sense to spirit or of mind to body, which is the subject-matter of ethics. The sciences, properly so called, in which matter and its laws are chiefly concerned, may lie outside of the path of Biblical interpretation, but not so with those more personal questions which concern ourselves and our duty. A Biblical psychology and a Christian code of ethics seem to us to be a necessity of the age. If the Scriptures are to retain anything like their authority they lay claim to, as an authentic and authoritative declaration of the will of God to man.—Bible Educator.

Profit and Loss.

The Scriptures declare that whatever any human being gives to Christ is more than balanced by what he receives in return; the divine benediction is of far more value than any human tithe. "Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better."

Such considerations as these are very important, when a wild selfish world around us is rejecting the Saviour because he asks duty and surrender. What he asks is less than what he offers. In a calm measurement of profit and loss, he is a gainer who deals with Christ. Something he loses, something he receives; but on the whole, he has the advantage.

In the surrender of the soul at the cross, the Saviour says, "Give me the tithes of your heart's best services, and I will give you my blessing in return," and our question is, whether we shall get as good as we give? There is but one reply.

Our Lord, so far as we can read His thoughts from His actions, seemed always perfectly to understand that some sifting process was needed, in order to distinguish, among the multitudes that followed Him, those who were sincere and those who were only curious. One day occasion he turned suddenly upon the crowd with these startling words: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." He did not seem in the slightest degree concerned, even as he uttered this saying, so abrupt and so searching as to be almost harsh; he wanted people to understand that the Christian life was no easy one. Better they should know that early than late. Better they should make a calm estimate beforehand, and then decide.

It is from this item of gospel history that our familiar expression, "counting the cost" is taken; but we apprehend few persons are thoughtful enough to observe, in the two illustrations our Lord adds, that one of them refers to counting the cost of beginning to live for Christ, and the other refers to counting the cost of resisting Him. It is a solemn thing to become a Christian, we admit freely, but it is a much more solemn thing not to become one.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." The force is here felt on the instant; let him who has a religious life and character to erect, soberly calculate whether he can hold out, if he should determinately begin it. Most men would rather shrink back under the pressure of such a question.

But then another question is to be considered: How shall one meet the inevitable future, if he decides coolly to resist God? "What king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand; or else while the other is a great way off he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth conditions of peace." Here arises another dilemma. If we refuse to surrender to God, are we just prepared to resume operations?

When one yields his heart, and becomes a meek and lowly follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, he receives the benediction of peace and rest. Can any one doubt as to whether, in that case, the less is blessed of the better? Alas, there must be most inadequate notions of what it is to be under God's favor, or under God's frown, before one can pause to institute such an inquiry. In Job's time he found a man who had the temerity to say, "My doctrine is pure and I am clean in thine eyes." To him he could only answer, "Oh that God would speak and open his lips against thee! And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom that they are double to that which is. Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." Thus much is true of all. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well," is the condition of manifest and extraordinary favor.

The Kingdom of Heaven.

"The kingdom of heaven," spoken of by our Saviour in His sermon on the Mount, may be regarded as a state of mind and heart rather than a place. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and "Blessed are the pure in heart." It is a state of infinite happiness and blessedness; a state where sin and sorrow are not known; a state where there is "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." It is a state where there is "no more sea," no shipwrecks with their heart-rending scenes of anguish; "no more curse," no slander, no reviling, no crimes to vex and grieve the heart; no broken hearts there.

Poets have sung and authors have written concerning this kingdom, but we must leave it where the Bard of Israel left it when he said: "In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." We must leave it where Paul left it when he said: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." We must leave it where John the beloved disciple left it when he said: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Beloved reader, are you an heir of this heavenly kingdom, and shall it be yours to enter therein? "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

A MOVEMENT has recently been made in England to admit the public to the British Museum, National Gallery and other public buildings on the Sabbath. But when the question came before the House of Commons the measure was promptly put down by a vote of 278 to 87.

The True Brotherhood.

What is it which still produces the rupture of brotherhoods throughout the world? The mournful fact stares us in the face, that even the family bond is insufficient of itself to preserve peace; and the natural conclusion, confirmed by experience, is drawn, that bonds of kinship or of nationality will of themselves prove ineffectual for the display of brothership. These are the facts, and hard facts they are, which now form the staple of serious reflection to every thoughtful mind; and one but hastily scans the signs of the times who is not convinced that the world will hear a great deal more of them before they disappear. Many have been the attempts of good and wise men, and also of bad and ignorant men, to account for and overcome them; but somehow or other their stubbornness has hitherto resisted those endeavors. The earnest soul is almost despairing of a remedy, and strong hearts are bending under the weight of accumulated failures. There have been associations without number, classes have banded themselves together, clubs, social and political, have arisen, national and international have been called into existence, reigns of brotherhoods have been inaugurated; and yet, wistful, God's fair green earth is soaked with the warm blood of thousands—brother slain by brother—yet, wistful, nations are breathing out threatenings against nations. The millennium of Fraternity does not seem near at hand. Nor are there wanting organizations of a more spiritual mould, with somewhat more of the divine life within them, speaking of philanthropy and high religious aim. They are doing a good work, but it must be confessed that the work to be done is manifestly increasing on their hands. Even the Church itself, with its mighty resources, is now upon its trial, and it must speak out and say whether or not it has buckled on the armor God has provided, and is fighting under the banner of King Jesus.

And what does it say as to the social chaos that now exists? What does it say to the theorists and experimentalists of our age? What does it say to the disciples of the Master? It says, "Thou art thy brother's keeper." Christianity will remove that fatal isolation in which men have set themselves; it forbids that ruinous independence of man on man, which has been and is the cause of our weakness and our wars. It tells the world that there is one God, the one Creator, who made not only men, but men, men who are bound together by the ties of creaturship, by human bonds which cannot be broken without results the most disastrous. And above this, it proclaims that that same God is a Father, whose children are, or should be, united by bonds of love, the rupturing of which must inevitably disturb the universe. The world to-day but witnesses to the penalty incurred by breaking the law of God. This heaven-ordained brotherhood involves not merely the political and social, it includes the moral and the spiritual—it affects the whole man. It is a brotherhood which embraces, within its large and loving arms, the concerns of what we call every-day life, and the interests of the immortality of God bestowed. Masters and workmen must bear about with them its essential principles; fathers and sons must be animated by its spirit; friend and friend, yea, man and man, must acknowledge this sacred, this divinest tie.

This heaven-born religion is not a professional matter any more than it is professional to breathe. It is as necessary to true life as is air to the panting lungs. This religion is not made up of items. We may get on without Episcopalianism, without Presbyterianism, without Congregationalism; we may get on without Calvinism, without Arminianism. But without God!—deny our God, and there is no brotherhood; deny our Christ, and there is no brotherhood; for—and let the world only give this truth full scope—Jesus Christ is the centre of all brotherhood; in him meet all the bonds of humanity; from him flow out that life and that love which quicken the hearts of all men; and to Him, in the midst of our sins and sorrows, the weary go for rest, the lonely go for sympathy. He is the grand and true representative of humanity, and mankind will reach their end, will attain their high and holy destiny only when they follow Him—who came to earth, proclaiming in His life and in His death—who reigns in heaven, proclaiming in the sweetest and most earnest voice of love and mercy—"I am my brother's keeper."—Alexander Hamilton, D.D., in Sunday Magazine.

Thoroughly Furnished.

Said a living pastor in our hearing the other day: "If I were to go over my own history again, I could abate much anxiety, save a good deal of time, and avoid a great and unnecessary waste of work. One conclusion I have reached with such measure of certainty that I am willing to call it a conviction. The most effective learning—the most available scholarship—the cheapest acquisition of helpfulest force in the ministry—as the world now runs, is found in a thoroughly familiar acquaintance with the whole Bible."

We should like to give this sentiment our endorsement, and then send it along. We know a man who trusted for his success to singular attainments in language. He spent two years to our certain knowledge in the seminary committing to memory page after page of Gesenius' Lexicon. He told us he intended to master the entire vocabulary of the Old Testament tongue. We assert simply under the stern logic of years that he has never come to much any way. Then we also knew a fellow-student who set out to be a philosopher. We heard him preach two sermons after he graduated. He used the word character thirty-one times in that one discourse, before we got tired of keeping the tally—character of an action; character of a motive; character of mental state; and so on. Of late he has given all that hair-splitting up; taken to expository sermons heartily; and now he has character to his ministry. Then we knew another man who was determined to be a theologian. We heard him dilate for a not half-hour in July upon the difference between "sinful tendencies" and a "tendency to sin." The last knowledge of his usefulness we ever had was gained from a chance

meeting in the street, when he informed us that he was living in the vicinity, was planning to write a book on the "Seat of Regeneration;" could we let him know of a place for now and then a chance supply over a Sunday?

Let no carelessness prevent what we are trying to say. We propose no fling at anything. We believe in the whole curriculum of a secondary course, and in a patient and thorough pursuit of each of the branches of ministerial education in turn. But we would force all these to be means to an end. The point we make is found quietly but intently stated in a remark let fall by one of the intelligent hearers of a specialist pastor. "Oh I wish," said he, "that our minister would sometimes just preach on a textual text."

We have never found anybody able to make much use of the Mosaic heresy, but we think all of us ought to know about it. We have considered those men best furnished for real pulpit work who familiarly know the path Paul traversed on his first and second missionary journey; who remembered the water in which the prophet caused the iron to swim; who could tell exactly what each epistle to the Thessalonians was about, and could give an analysis of the Sermon on the Mount; who could draw the parallel between Hagar and Mount Sinai, and rehearse the analogies between grafts in an olive-tree and the conversion of the Gentiles. And this requires wide reach of knowledge in all the branches of learning at once.

That is to say, saving souls is the special work of the ministry. The word of God is the instrument. Every man must handle it carefully and well. And our point sole and singular, is this; that, not much extraordinary scholarship nor uncommon attainment, but ordinary intelligence and calm discretion of judgment, are what are most in demand for Scripture explanation and enforcement.

It is true that we are exhorted to "covet earnestly the best gifts." But the best gift for any common man is the power to use wisely what he has, and give over straining for unnatural results. It is said that at one of the early revival meetings in London, the great prime minister of England was present. At the close, Mr. Gladstone came forward and took Mr. Moody by the hand. "I wish I had your body," said he, with a pleasant smile. Then Mr. Moody made reply: "I wish I had your head." Mr. Gladstone again retorted: "I wish I had your lungs." To which Mr. Moody answered: "I wish I had your brains." And so they parted. It would be a fair question whether either of those men would be improved by the interchange of qualifications between them. Mr. Moody might not do well in managing the Eastern question, and Mr. Gladstone would certainly fail in the Hippodrome.—N. Y. Christian Weekly.

Random Readings.

I SHALL then call the times bad, when they make me so.—Landon.

TRUTH is the foundation of all knowledge, and the corner of all societies.—Dryden.

THERE is no outward sign of courtesy that does not rest on a deep moral foundation.—Goethe.

MANY people are busy in this world gathering together a handful of thorns to sit upon.—Jeremy Taylor

WHEN will talkers refrain from evil-speaking? When listeners refrain from evil-hearing.—Augustus Haro.

Not all who seem to fall, have fallen indeed; What though the seed be cast by the wayside, And the birds take it—yet the birds are fed.—Charles Kingsley.

It is a strange desire, to seek power, and to lose liberty; or to seek power over others, and lose power over a man's self.—Bacon.

Remember eye the ocean-deeps are mute, The shallows roar; Worth is the ocean—fame is but the bruit Along the shore.—Schiller

THE prejudices of ignorance are more easily removed than the prejudices of interest; the first are all bludily adopted, the second wilfully preferred.—Bancroft.

INDEPENDENCY may be found in comparative, as well as absolute abundance; I mean when a person contracts his desires within the limits of his fortune.—Shenstone.

To do injustice is more to be avoided than to suffer injustice, and the reality, and not the appearance of virtue, is to be followed above all things, as well in public as in private life.—Plato.

Do you know a book that you are willing to put under your head for a pillow when you lie dying? Very well; that is the book you want to study while you are living. There is but one such book in the world.—Joseph Cook.

THE Bible itself must be brought out as the best defence against infidelity—the Bible itself, not only as the great standing miracle of history, but as containing unearthy ideas for which no philosophy, no theory of development, can ever account.—Taylor Lewis.

I TAKE goodness in this sense, the effecting of the best of men, which is that the Grecians call Philanthropia; and the word humanity (as it is used) is a little too light to express it. . . . This, of all virtues and dignities of the mind, is the greatest, being the character of the Deity.—Bacon.

Mr. Moody says: "I tell you, the world has got tired and sick of sham." That there is much sham Christianity, there can be no doubt, and that it stands greatly in the way of sinners and building up the Church, no one will deny. But there is, also, more deep, fervent piety than the world sees, and more than such men as Mr. Moody are likely to give credit for. In quiet places, hidden from the world, serenely doing their duty, and in everything glorifying God, there are devout men and women living near the Saviour, radiating a sweet influence all around them, and preparing themselves for the rest of heaven. The "workers" are apt to feel that there are none good but such as sing and shout in public places, forgetting that the prayers of an imprisoned saint may be of more value than the abundant labor of an evangelist.