

Pastor and People.

ONLY AN EARTHEN VESSEL.

The Master stood in His garden,
Among the lilies fair,
Which His own right hand had planted
And trained with tenderest care.

He looked at their snowy blossoms,
And marked with observant eye
That His flowers were sadly drooping,
For their leaves were parched and dry.

"My lilies need to be watered,"
The Heavenly Master said;
"Woe sin shall I draw it for them,
Ail cause each drooping head?"

Close to His feet on the pathway,
Empty and frail and small,
An earthen vessel was lying,
Which seemed of no use at all.

But the Master saw and raised it
From the dust in which it lay,
And smiled as He gently whispered:
"This shall do My work to-day."

"It is but an earthen vessel,
But it lay so close to Me;
It is small, but it is empty,
And that is all it needs to be."

So to the fountain He took it,
And filled it to the brim;
How glad was the earthen vessel
To be of some use to Him.

He poured forth the living water
Over His lilies fair,
Until the vessel was empty,
And again He filled it there.

He watered the drooping lilies
Until they revived again,
And the Master saw with pleasure
That His labour had not been in vain.

His own hand had drawn the water
Which refreshed the thirsty flowers,
But He "used the earthen vessel
To convey the living showers

And to itself it whispered,
As He laid it aside once more:
"Still will I lie in His pathway,
Just where I did before.

"Close would I keep to the Master,
Empty would I remain,
And perhaps some day He may use me
To water His flowers again."

—Selected.

For THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

THE ANGEL OF THE HOME.

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

The angel of the home is unseen but not unfelt. It broods upon it, and gives tone and character to all the life there. It breathes its distinctive spirit through every thought of the mind, every feeling of the heart, every act of the life. It is the most potent formative influence which can touch it, and it never ceases to put forth its might. The angel of the home is the spirit that abides in it and rules in it. It fashions its thought, moulds its sentiment, determines its action, controls its life. As it is, so is the life of the home. Its invisible power penetrates everything, and if it find aught alien to itself, it rests not until it is changed into its own likeness, and is obedient to its law.

It creates for it an atmosphere of which we are sensible as soon as we enter the home. This is either warm or cold, kindly or severe, attractive or repulsive. Every one is sensible of this brooding spirit which gives character to the home. Enter the home where ignorance dwells, and it will be seen in the face full of wrinkles and brooding care and trouble; in the prevailing disorder, want of sweet tastefulness, and evident unmanageableness of the diverse matters in hand. Allan Ramsay sings truly in his "Gentle Shepherd": "A mind that's scrupit never wants some care." How uncomfortable we are here! Enter the home where intelligence dwells and how lovely everything is! The cheery countenances with bright beaming eyes, the glad voices ringing with musical firmness, the richly-stored minds so ready to communicate, and the well-ordered affairs, all bespeaking the presence of a presiding genius, such an one as Wordsworth tunes his lyre in praise of:

A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command.

How delightful it is to move in such a scene! It helps to enrich and ennoble our life by imparting to it loftier conceptions of the possible. Enter the home where Piety dwells, and how fragrant it is with the odours of sweet incense! Everything is set to the key of a higher will, and a nobler affection, and a grander purpose than belongs to beings of human mould.

Everything is under law to Christ, and recognizes His supremacy. And what sweet peace and restfulness is enjoyed? What delicious freedom from care? What respect is shown to every member of the household? Each prefers the other in honour. The spirit of a higher life overshadows the entire circle and possesses it with a composed, devout and joyous frame of mind. Such a home, while its sympathies are broad enough to embrace the world, and its love is large enough to take in all men, seems to be insulated from the waves of trouble that roll without, and from the rude shocks that shake others. It is a beautiful illustration of that truth: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." (Isa. xvi. 3.)

Enter the home where Worldliness dwells and you will feel its spirit beating and breathing through everything. It never loses sight of the present world. It is surrounded by great mountains that narrow its horizon and hide from it the infinite grandeur that lies beyond. Every small earthly thing is enlarged by being so exclusively seen. The positions, honours and advantages of time set all the glory and bliss of eternity at a disadvantage. Physicists tell us that the earth is a great magnet. We feel it here, for there is nothing which is not under its influence. All is bound down helplessly by its invisible chains. A godly man finds it hard to pray in such a home. It is exceedingly difficult to think of the Unseen Holy. Selfishness sits enthroned, and sways her sceptre over every interest and every affection so that all is debased.

We might go on without end. The angel of the home breathes a spirit very different beneath different roofs, sweeping the whole heaven from disinterested love down to grovelling selfishness.

This spirit propagates itself. John Foster, famous for his Essays, says of his parents. "They feared not death; they had no need to fear it. I never knew piety more entire and sublime." The piety of John Foster's parents did much for him; it gave him a clear spiritual vision, a love for the Unseen, a sympathy with the revelation of God, a spirit of obedience, which made him humble, holy, happy and influential for good to all coming generations. John Ruskin was born into a home where a spirit of devotion and of art reigned. And he has grandly mingled them in his writings which are so beautiful and true and believing. He has been and is one of our mightiest preachers in this nineteenth century in virtue of this very fact. His words reach far, and are worthy to be heard in the ears of the kingly and cultured as well as by the workmen to whom he addressed "Fors Clavigera." It is in the "Fors" that he gives us so many exquisite autobiographical touches. There he tells that "the real cause of the bias of my after life was that my father had a rare love of pictures." But that only accounts for one side of his nature. There is in him something higher and nobler than this. There is his knowledge of the Bible, and such a love of it as enables him to interpret it in a very powerful way. Whence came this? From his mother. She insisted on his not only reading so much, but memorizing it, filling his soul with the music of its utterance and the wisdom of its thought, and the rapt eloquence of its prophetic messages. That cultivated a richly devout feeling, and a good sound judgment and a profoundly believing heart. These have made John Ruskin a power in Christendom for good. In his "Crown of Wild Olives" he says to mothers, no doubt speaking out of his own experience of his mother's power: "If you fail in your part they cannot fulfil theirs."

How grandly has the spirit of the home been seen of late in the heroic onslaught of Mr. W. T. Stead, of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, on the abounding wickedness among those who can hide it by a screen of gold! He has torn down this screen and discovered to the world the "workers of iniquity." He is the noble son of a noble man. His father was the Rev. W. Stead, a Nonconformist minister of Howdon-on-Tyne for forty years, who, because of the necessary economy of a dissenting minister's household, educated his own children during their early years. The picture Mr. W. T. Stead paints for us is a bright one. "Pre-eminent among the means by which my father used to quicken our wits and familiarize us with dialectics was the Sunday morning breakfast. Each of us—in those days there were six, beside father and mother, making eight in all—had to commit to memory one verse of Scripture. At breakfast, the youngest began by repeating his verse. Each member of the family had to give his or her interpretation of the text. The elder ones contrived to raise almost all the issues of religion and morality in these discussions at the breakfast table. Whatever may be thought of the propriety of beginning the Day of Rest with so vehement a polemic, there can be no doubt as to its value as a means of stimulating thought, familiarizing the mind to the practice of debate, and training the intellect to detect flaws in argument. Since those old days I have had some little experience in discussions with all sorts and conditions of men. I have had to discuss, face to face with the foremost men of our time, the most pressing questions of our day. But never in my recent experience have I had such consciousness of intense mental activity. The experience that came

nearest to it—although it did not equal it—was that of the fierce half-hour in which my late editor (Mr. Morley) and I used to discuss the affairs of the universe before we settled down to work." His father insisted upon his remembering the main points of his sermons; to do this, he took down a condensed report. And this, he tells us, stood him in good stead in after life. "I have often, without taking a single note, been able to dictate or write out three columns of close print, report of an interview, to the accuracy of which the person interviewed has given his emphatic testimony."

The spirit that reigns in the family is a potent spirit for good or evil. It is intensely creative. It quickens much into vigorous life. We do not marvel at the weighty words of Isaac Taylor, or the sweet songs of Jane Taylor, brother and sister, when we know the atmosphere in which their early life developed itself, in which there was so much pure and refined taste, intellectual activity and spiritual power. It would have been a marvel if they had lived and acted otherwise.

The spirit of the home "weights" the life, and impels it onward in the direction that it favours. It is a mighty, ruling spirit, which, having been drunk in through every pore, dominates in the most effectual way all the issues of life. It is irresistible. It gives birth to that beautifully pathetic song: "My Father's God, and to much which is the very opposite of this. This incontrovertible fact leads us naturally to these reflections:

First, We should consider the spirit we encourage in our homes. The unlovely, ungrateful, censorious, evil spirit so easily steals in that we cannot be too diligent to cast it out by every means in our power: by checking it in our own hearts, resisting it manfully as an injurious energy not only now, but tenfold more in coming time; by invoking heavenly help against it so that it may be overcome; by cherishing only thoughts and feelings that are kindly, loving, gracious, that are full of sweetness and tenderness and help.

Secondly, We should cultivate the best spirit possible to us. In saying that I have in my mind this thought that by God's Grace, by the power of His Spirit of Holiness, we can rise to the very highest heights of nobleness and virtue. We can make our lives fountains of blessing. We can breathe an air charged with all that is Christ-like and holy. We can become forces that will be felt on the hearts and minds of generations yet unborn. Our spirit is everything. Is this not what the Master meant when He said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." (Luke ix. 55.) The spirit in which a thing is done determines not only its value, but also its vitality.

Thirdly, A good spirit is the best conservator of the peace, purity and happiness of the home. It is the anchor that holds the vessel in every storm. How many poor souls have been driven out to the roaring, stormy sea by another spirit and wrecked? The shores of human life are strewn with wreckage from this source. There are cries of misery and madness coming out of the bitter feelings cherished in the early days around the fireside. Let the spirit be exorcised, and the good, loving spirit of the Lord Jesus reign in heart and home, and untold blessings will be the possession of parent and child. It will assist most effectually in the regeneration of the world.

HAPPY HOURS.

Dr. Guthrie, during his last moments, kept ejaculating the words, "Happy, happy, happy!" And so he fell asleep in Jesus, without a struggle or a sign.

The Rev. W. Grimshaw, curate of Haworth, said when near his end. "I am as happy as I can be on earth, and as sure of glory as if I were in it. I have nothing to do but to step out of bed into heaven. I have my foot on the threshold already."

Henry Watson Fox, the devoted missionary to the Telugu people in South India, said to his attendants. "If the physician says I cannot live long, I want you all to join in praise. O, it will be glorious, so glorious!" At the last, he said: "I am very weak, can scarcely speak, but oh happy! happy!! happy!!!"

Another said. "I have talked of Death many times, and he has come at last; but my soul is happy in the Lord my God."

"I am supremely happy," said a dying husband to his wife, in answer to her questions: "How is it with your soul? Are you happy?"

Mrs. Kellogg, the wife of a devoted missionary to India, while sensible that she was dying, exclaimed exultingly. "No sickness, no death there! Happy in Jesus, saved entirely in Him!"

John Janeway's last moments were spent in praise. "Come," said he, "let us lift up our voices in praise. I have nothing else to do, and soon I shall be engaged in that sweet employment forever. Oh, why should any of you be sad, when I am so happy? This, this is the hour I have waited for."

Amongst the last words of that holy man, Edward Payson, were the following. On being asked if he felt reconciled, he replied: "Oh! that is too cold. I rejoice! I triumph! I can find no words to express my happiness, and it will last as long as God Himself!"