

THE FAMOUS TRAVELLERS.

1. *The Priest.* "By chance there came down a certain priest." This is a most likely occurrence, as Jericho was one of the residences of the priests. About 12,000 priests and Levites, who used to attend the temple at Jerusalem in courses, resided in Jericho. And who would be more inclined to render help to the wounded man than this fellow-countryman of his? But no, he passed by on the other side of the ravine. He did not even stop to look at the sufferer, much less to enquire what he could do for him. And he was either going to or returning from the sacred duties of his office. Ah, yes, how true it is, one may occupy a very sacred position, and yet have a cold, hard heart! This is not true religion, only its counterpart. Doubtless he had *excuses* enough to satisfy his own mind. He was tired, or in a hurry, or it was a hopeless case, or he could not bear to look on suffering, or he was afraid of the return of the robbers. These were excuses, not reasons. There is a wide difference between the two. But let us be plain with ourselves. Do we ever pass by human want that we ought to relieve? Do we ever keep out of the way of those who need our help? Do we not conjure up excuses to quiet our conscience, and make our Christian service easy?

2. *The Levite.* The Levites performed the humbler services of the temple, such as cleaning, carrying fuel, and so on as chorists. They were also writers, preachers and teachers. The scribes and lawyers were frequently of this tribe, which, in fact, was set apart by Moses as the intellectual body of the nation. This Levite "came and looked on him." He did a little more than the priest, but resisted the good impulses which probably stirred within him. His intellectual training did not make him compassionate; nor did his relation to sacred things move his sympathies. He was an example of spurious holiness—sanctity divorced from charity.

3. *The Samaritan.* The Samaritans were half heathen, a mixed race of Jews and Gentiles, accepting the Pentateuch only as their Bible, erroneous in some points of doctrine, and greatly despised by the priests and Levites. Our Lord selects this case, but does not mean to teach by it that the Jews as a people were worse than the Samaritans, nor that religious people are less compassionate than worldly people. Yet it is a fair inference that some men are better in practice than their wrong creed would lead us to expect; while others who are theoretically right may be practically all wrong. The Samaritan "had compassion on him." From this feeling all the subsequent actions flow—*he had compassion.* And the first step in becoming "good Samaritans" is to obtain this feeling—this sympathy large enough to enfold all men as brothers, and to give help in time of need. But how is this quality obtained? Edicts of law, good resolutions, beautiful moral examples, and the whole array of human contrivances fail to create it. It is learned from Christ. It is the product of its purest and highest form of the indwelling spirit of Christ—where he dwells and has sway, there is compassion.

THE SEARCHING QUESTION.

The great Teacher, after describing this vivid scene, asked the question, "Which now of these three proved nearest unto him that fell among thieves?" The lawyer had asked, "Who is my neighbor? Whom am I to love as myself? And Jesus gives these three characters, and asks which of these showed by his acts that he was indeed a neighbor? But no answer could be given, "He that showed mercy." "Go and do thou likewise," said the Master. He to

whom you ought to show mercy in order to become his neighbor is your neighbor, was the substance of the Master's reply.

PRESENT-DAY APPLICATIONS.

If you really belong to the kingdom of heaven on earth, you must possess and cherish and display the spirit of loving your neighbor as yourself. Your neighbor may not live next door; he may live at the other end of the city among the neglected ones. You are neighbor to the man whose ground joins yours *underneath*—the man on the opposite side of the globe. Your neighborliness is especially needed by those who are attacked by the great world's robbers—drunkenness, poverty, oppression, malice, slander, and the like. You are to treat the poor, the outcast, the degraded, as your neighbors, and give them all possible aid. You are to treat the Indians, and the foreigners, and the colored race, the ignorant, the neglected, the imprisoned, as your neighbors. Every village, town, city, hamlet, countryside in Canada, has some portion of this duty on its hands. It can only be performed in the spirit indicated by this parable, "Love your neighbor as yourself." The person who refuses to do this has fallen far below the Christian ideal. The nation that neglects it is robbed of one of the elements of national greatness.

FLASH-LIGHTS.

1. The religion of Jesus is the religion of compassion.

2. Being in the line of religious work does not make a man religious. Having a share in Christian service does not make a man Christ-like.

3. My neighbor is everyone who, in the providence of God, is brought into such contact with me, that I can and ought to affect him in some way for good.

4. The course of events is always being so ordered as to bring new persons within our circle, that we may act toward them a neighbor's part.

5. Christ teaches that the sphere of the Christian's heart is the whole world, and that the sphere of his hand embraces every one he can help.

6. Humanity is better than orthodoxy if only one can be had; and inhumanity is worse than heterodoxy, if one must be endured.

7. It is the characteristic mark of genuine love that it does not ask whether or not, the neighbor *deserves* love, but whether or not he *needs* love.

8. Some manifestations of love—the attentive look, compassionate heart, the helpful hand, the willing foot, the open purse, the ready remembrance, that mere kindness does not earn eternal life. "Love thy neighbor as thyself," is only half of the law. The other half condems us if not fulfilled—"thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

9. Things that prevent us from being neighborly: (a) *Pride*—for neighbors are often far below us in social position. (b) *Business*—for we do not always place first our Father's business. (c) *Sloth*—for neighborliness requires time and pains. (d) *Timidty*—for it needs a courageous man to be a good neighbor.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

Appoint a week in advance three active, and three associate members to bring in two-minute answers to the question: "How I try to love my neighbor as myself." Request the replies to be written. Cut out the "Flashlights" from the ERWORTH ERA and pass the slips among the members present to be read after the address on the topic. This plan might be tried frequently with profit. Make the summer meetings of the League short but substantial. Don't exceed fifty minutes.

JUNE 10.—"LIVES THAT LIFT."

Luke 13: 28, 31.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., June 4. Lives that lift. John 5: 23; Matt. 12: 29; Tues., June 5. Remembering others. Rom. 15: 7-9; Wed., June 6. Meeting responsibility. Matt. 20: 31-40; Thu., June 7. Laying our weights. Gal. 2: 1-14; Fri., June 8. Bearing burdens. Mark 9: 1-13; Sat., June 9. Lifting men. Gal. 9: 12-20.

Our Lord taught the meaning of his kingdom not by definition, but by parables whose beauty, strength and naturalness were well fitted to convey to all minds, the origin, nature and results of the kingdom of God. One parable taken by itself does not explain fully the Saviour's conception of the kingdom which he came to establish. For example, the parable of the mustard seed, and the parable of the leaven, each emphasizes a different phase of the kingdom of God on earth. That of the mustard seed is *extensive*; that of the leaven *intensive*—the first refers to the growth and size of the kingdom; the second shows mankind as animated and transformed by divine influences. The mustard seed portrays the kingdom as an organization, ever widening and efficient, whose leaven bestows the permeating spirit, which is the central life and force of the kingdom's power.

AN ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE.

The parable for study contains a great principle or law, which operates both in the kingdom of nature and of grace. It is the law of silent, unconscious growth, development and assimilation. This law has many wonderful illustrations in the natural world.

The growth of the vegetable kingdom is a standing miracle of the power of God. The farmer sows his seed, which to all appearance is withered and lifeless. But each grain contains, hidden within its shrivelled exterior, the germ of life which needs only time and favorable circumstances to develop. It is put into the ground, concealed from view. It dies, but from its death there shoots forth a living blade. It grows, strengthens, branches, reproduces, ripens. It is now golden grain ready for the blade of the reaper. The seed, small though it was and unproving, yet contained life, producing germination and reproduction—first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

LEAVEN ILLUSTRATES THE LAW.

The process of leaven is no less remarkable. A handful of leaven is hid in a little more than a bushel of meal, according to the parable. That leaven, which usually consisted of a lump of old dough in a high state of fermentation, and which, like our yeast, was to ferment the bread, contained a latent principle or power, which was sure to produce a change in that mass of meal which concealed it. Quickly the process of fermentation begins; the parts nearest the leaven are first affected; the work of agitation goes on silently but rapidly; the mass begins to rise; the living principle extends its influence until its own life is imparted to the whole, and the desired change is wrought in it.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Now, to these marked developments of a hidden and expansive life in nature, Christ compares the kingdom of heaven which he came to set up. There is a latent life, a silent, unconscious power in Christianity that works out the purposes of God in a manner truly wonderful. God has chosen to regenerate this sinful world in the same manner that leaven operates in bringing about its astonishing change—the law of silent, expansive, all-permeating, and all-prevailing spiritual influence. And this central and essential law has signally marked the entire history of Christ's kingdom in the world. It is hidden. It has not drawn to itself much observation. It does not even