

A PLEA FOR MISSIONS.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM COCHRANE, M. A.,
BRANTFORD.

It is not in the pages of the novelist that we are to learn the sorrows of humanity, or have our sympathy and compassion excited in behalf of the sufferings of our fellow-men. Tears have thus been made to flow from eyes but little accustomed to weep over real misery,—but seldom does such sentimental grief take the form of practical benevolence. Truth is stranger than fiction, and the wretchedness of society far beyond what mere imagination can conceive. Nor is it by having told us, by other lips, or reading the reports of the varied benevolent associations of the day, what ignorance and poverty and vice exist, that we can form any adequate conception of the real wants of the world. It is by bringing ourselves into daily contact with the masses in our towns and cities; by visiting the homes and hovels of the poor; by seeking out the abodes of drunkenness and death that still are found in Christian lands, that our pity is to be excited and our charity developed.

Thus did the Saviour of men when in the world. "He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Day after day without abatement he was engaged preaching and healing the multitudes that came from all parts to avail themselves of his omnipotent skill. None were ever sent away unblest,—none unhealed. Maladies that had baffled the skill of the most experienced physicians, and diseases that refused to yield to the most skillful treatment, fled at the approach and word of Christ. Mingling thus from day to day among the poor and disconsolate, and hearing from their lips the sad details of their misery and woe, he had compassion on them. He yearned over them, and turning to his disciples, said, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few."

The multitude are described by the Evangelists as "fainting," "scattered abroad"—"like sheep without a shepherd." Under any circumstances a multitude of people cannot but deeply affect any reflecting mind. Their diversified histories, their varied trials and destinies, are all calculated to awaken serious and profitable thought. But in the multitudes that followed the Saviour there was perhaps more to sadden than in ordinary crowds. Among them were to be found the blind, the deaf, the halt, the maimed, and the paralytic. Many of them were poor in worldly circumstances, and many were hungry and weary because of the distances they had come. But they had other troubles than those which spring directly from the body and are associated with the common ills of life. Their souls were agonized under the pressure of bitter experiences. They fainted, not so much because of physical infirmities, as mental and spiritual evils. They were harassed by the deepest anxiety,—beaten down, plagued and tormented. They were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd; abandoned, neglected, outcast, disowned—lying about in the wilderness of this world, a destitute of all outward comfort and inward hope. Unlike the flock watched and tended by a kind shepherd, and led by green pastures and still waters, these crowds that followed the Saviour were left unprotected and unprovided. If their bodily diseases called forth the sympathy and interposition of Christ, his heart was still more pained when he saw that no man cared for their souls. They had not only their full share of griefs, and cares, and privations, and sorrows that belong to sinful humanity, whether under an oriental or occidental sky, but they were ignorant of the only possible means whereby these earthly trials could be surmounted. They were spiritually blind, heavy laden under the burden of sins, and destitute of all true peace. Pardon and purity; comfort and consolation;—life and immortality beyond the grave, were terms altogether unknown to them. Their souls yearned for something the world could not supply, but what it was, and how it could be secured, they could not tell.

Many at the present day, in Christian and in heathen lands, are in similar circumstances. They are fainting,—scattered abroad like sheep having no shepherd. Under the gospel dispensation, as under the Jewish, multitudes are to be found ignorant of the way of peace; having no consciousness of the nature of sin,—of the deep depravity of their character in the sight of God, and of their need of atoning blood. They are hungry and thirsty, but know not that living bread and living water are near at hand. They are wearied with the remorse and accusations of conscience, but

have never heard Christ saying unto them, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Like helpless children who have strayed far from home and know not how to retrace their steps, or like the foolish sheep wandering far from the fold, and exposed to the dangers of the desert and the attack of wolves, so are men, wherever found, who are destitute of the solid and lasting comforts which religion affords the troubled soul.

Christ had real sympathy for these fainting ones. "When he saw the multitudes he had compassion on them." It was not so much the individual sorrows of the multitude that called forth his pity as the sin that caused the sorrow and filled their life with woe. Sorrow and suffering were not originally man's lot; at creation he was innocent and happy—pure and peaceful. There was nothing in his condition to call forth the pity and compassion of his Maker, nor would there ever have been, had not sin changed man's relations to his God and polluted the springs of his nature. But as soon as man fell all this was changed. Henceforth man must either be the object of divine sympathy, or the victim of divine vengeance. This compassion which Christ felt for sinners when in the world, and which he still feels for guilty man, was the impelling motive in his voluntary surrender of himself to death. Before a single act of clemency or pity could be shown, forgiveness must be purchased, and God's anger pacified. From the fountain of blood opened on Calvary, compassion and pity still flow to the sons of men. That compassion is as strong now as it was when Christ offered himself upon the cross. Like as a father pitieth his children, does the Lord pity, not only those who fear him, but those who fear him not.

Pity and compassion among men is too often a passing emotion confined entirely to the lips. Very frequently it never reaches the heart, even when it prompts to acts of seeming benevolence. Such is not the character of Divine compassion. Its sincerity and genuineness is abundantly proved, by what it cost to exercise compassion. All the tears that the Redeemer shed, and the anguish of soul that he bore, were because of man's weakness and suffering. God deals with men as with erring and ignorant children. He wins us back to his love, more by kindness and pity, than by rebuke or punishment. Like the compassion and solicitude that the mother feels for her wandering child, so, in an infinite degree, is God's compassion for the race of men. It is boundless in extent,—all comprehensive in its sweep, and lasting in its duration. Through life he is a never failing friend—in death a strong deliverer.

Similar compassion Christ's followers should feel for dying men. If we relieve their physical wants and seek to ease their sufferings, we are still more called upon to heal the hurt of their souls. It is a poor philanthropy and a spurious morality that exercises itself in providing for the body and not for the soul; that imagines and teaches that men and women can be raised to purity and happiness by mere social comforts and secular knowledge, apart from the blessed provision offered in the Gospel for the wants of man's entire nature. True pity goes beyond the mere wants of the present; and feels for men, not simply as tried and harassed by the common ills of life, but as miserable and wretched throughout eternity, apart from the salvation that is in Christ. We are to pity those the most who have no pity for themselves;—in proportion as they are unconscious of their misery, we are to be solicitous for their present and eternal welfare!

The true method for the world's evangelization is further taught us in this connection. Laborers must be sent into the harvest field. The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. It is by human instrumentality, accompanied by the outpouring of God's spirit, that men are to be converted. What the world wants is men thus filled with the spirit; ready to go forth and gather in precious souls to the fold of Christ. The language implies the necessity of a regular gospel ministry, both in Christian and in heathen lands. The great work of spreading abroad the truth as it is in Christ, is not to be left to mere individual effort, or to special efforts put forth in special circumstances, but it is committed to men, who, counting the cost and willing to endure every form of suffering and self-denial, make it the business of their life. Such men were the first apostles, who at the bidding of Christ cheerfully surrendered all they had, and followed him; and in like manner, those who are called to the work of the ministry in modern times, relinquishing all worldly engagements, must devote themselves entirely and exclusively to the great work of saving souls.

This divine order, however, does not exclude all Christians from becoming laborers in the world's harvest field. Some may work by the pen,—others by speech,—others by giving or suffering. There is abundant room in the church for every gift. None need be excluded who pity fallen humanity. Nor are we to wait, as some feel us, for an unusual and enlarged outpouring from on high. That the church and the world need such a visitation of the spirit, is believed by all God's children, and that such a period of gracious revival shall be experienced is not a matter of doubt to all students of prophecy. But to delay individual or united action as a church, because of such promised outpouring in the latter days, is at once unreasonable and unscriptural. Our commission is, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel"—and "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." If this promise of divine aid was sufficient for the early church, it is surely enough for us.

As in the days of Christ, so now the harvest is great and the laborers are few. If in his day there were large numbers accessible to the gospel and willing to receive it, how much more true is it now, when the population of the globe has so greatly increased, and when there are so many

openings for a pure Christianity? Never was there a period in the history of our race when the hearts of men were more prepared to give a candid hearing to the claims of truth. Never was there a time when the nations of the earth were more accessible to missionaries and evangelical agencies. Century after century of disappointment and fruitless search after happiness and rest in human systems of religion, have made men eager to grasp something more substantial and enduring than reason can furnish. Were there but the men and the means at the disposal of the Church, scarcely there a spot on the face of the globe where the voice of the preacher might not be heard, and a large revenue of glory reaped to the honor of the Master. But the laborers are still as few comparatively as in the days of Christ. Compared with the millions that now stand waiting for the living word, there was as large a supply in apostolic times as there is now, when all the Evangelical churches are more or less actively engaged in missionary enterprise. Doubtless the past half century has given a wonderful impulse to missions, contrasted with former days of spiritual deadness and parsimoniousness; but with all that has been done, we see but the beginnings of what is demanded and what is commensurate with the wants of the Church.

Such a state of things is well fitted to fill the Christian's heart with sorrow, and at the same time inspire him with a desire for personal consecration in the cause of Christ. It is sad when the fields are waving with golden grain, and there are found no reapers to cut it down. We can imagine such a condition of affairs, though it but seldom occurs. Ruin—scarcity—famine—stagnation of commerce are the results. But who can estimate the result of millions of souls perishing for lack of knowledge; thirsting for the water of life, and dying of spiritual drought! As in the Valley of Vision we may say, "There are very many in the open valley, and lo, they are very dry."

Let us learn, finally, the necessity of prayer for an increase of laborers. "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would send laborers into his vineyard." The work is God's. "Divine operation waits upon human co-operation. God will do in answer to prayer what will not be done without prayer. Loud faith in the church produces slow development of the work of salvation." Christ is the Lord of the harvest. The seed is his—the field is his—the harvest is his; successful laborers are his gift and choice, and furnished by him with gifts and graces appropriate to the work;—and always sent in answer to the prayers of his people. There never was a period in the history of the Church, when God refused to answer the cries of his people for additional laborers. In every great emergency, standard-bearers have been raised, to advance the cause of truth, and overcome the powers of evil. The certainty of such supply is our warrant for aggressive efforts in Home and Foreign fields.

If we thus realize the wants of the world, we shall not as a church be slow to provide the means necessary for the successful prosecution of Home and Foreign missionary operations. Hitherto we have done but little compared to our means and opportunities. The ultimate conversion of the world to Christ is not a matter of uncertainty; but the hastening or retarding this glorious period depends to a great extent upon the fidelity of the church. Whether thousands of the now living but perishing heathen shall or shall not listen to the glad tidings of salvation depends upon the united prayers and immediate action of the church. If we sincerely desire the speedy overthrow of error, the enlightenment of the degraded, and the universal spread of Bible principles, we shall neither be slow to pray nor to give for the increase of laborers. Let the watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem and the members of our Zion give the great Head of the Church no rest, nor hold their peace day nor night, till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

THE GLENGARRY MISSION.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—In your issue of the 4th inst. I observe an article headed "Mission to Gaelic Roman Catholics," and bearing the signature of J. W. Will you allow me a short space in your paper to present the true position of this mission, as it is of the greatest importance that the church at large should be made acquainted with it.

It is quite evident that the writer of that article is entirely ignorant both of the nature of the mission and of the number of Protestants in and around Alexandria. "The feeling," he says, "which sustains this movement is akin to that which influences the churches in Scotland to care for the Scottish Colony of Saint Martin d'Auxigny, in France." The comparison which he draws between these two settlements is not a very happy one—in fact there is no analogy whatever between them. The Scottish colony in France was settled early in the 15th century, many years before the Reformation, so that all the members of that colony belonged to the Church of Rome; whereas a number of the Roman Catholics in Glengarry are descended from Protestant families. In the village of Alexandria alone there are a number whose parents, and some who themselves, were originally Protestants. The evil of intermarriages has no doubt contributed to a great extent to this falling away; but to a far greater extent has it resulted from the Church's having neglected so important a mission. Now, what we ask of the Church is, that a minister be settled in Alexandria, who shall act as pastor to the Protestants in and around the village, and who shall, at the same time, carry on the work of evangelization among the Roman Catholics. This is the only way to counteract the Catholic influence, which is so strong in the vicinity, and which has been so detrimental to the Protestant cause in Alexandria.

Besides, the establishment of this mission would in all probability result in the people of Alexandria and vicinity forming themselves in the course of time into a self-supporting congregation. The Protestants who worship in the place number from 75 to 100, and these principally belong to the village. The services of the Sabbath are kept up by the students of Montreal College. They have done their part nobly. Had it not been for the interest taken in this station by the Students' Missionary Society, it would doubtless have been destitute of the preaching of the Gospel altogether.

"J. W." thinks that the ministers of the remote districts have both the ability and the will to do the work required. He certainly is not aware of the relative positions of these different stations, or he would never have made such an assertion. Alexandria stands between two congregations, the one on the south thirteen miles distant, that on the north nine miles. Now is it reasonable to suppose that these ministers—who have all they can do in their own congregations—can undertake and prosecute successfully the work to be done in a compass of twenty-two miles? However willing they may be, to talk of their ability to accomplish the work is perfectly absurd. Their congregations will admit of no such extraneous work. He then closes by asking the question, "What hinders the work of Evangelization from proceeding among them in the ordinary way?" I would, in turn, ask "J. W." what we are to understand him to mean by "the ordinary way" of Evangelization. If we understand rightly the meaning of the expression it is the very thing the Protestants of Alexandria and vicinity are seeking to have established among them, viz: The Preaching of the Gospel. A. B.

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON IX.

March 2, 1878.

ESCAPE FROM SODOM.

Gen. xix. 15-26.

15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

16 And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest though be consumed.

18 And Lot said unto them, O, not so, my Lord:

19 Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

20 Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: O, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

21 And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.

22 Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of this city was called Zoar.

23 The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

24 Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;

25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

26 But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

COMMIT TO MEMORY verses 15, 16.

Read in connection with v. 15, Num. xvi. 24, 26; with v. 16, Heb. i. 14; with v. 17, Matt. xxiv. 16-18; with vs. 18-22, Gen. xviii. 32 and Ps. cxlv. 19; with vs. 23-25, Ps. xi. 6; and with v. 26, Heb. x. 88, 89.

PARALLEL PASSAGES.—2 Cor. vi. 2; Luke xvii. 28-30.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Regarding God, "There is one law-giver who is able to save and to destroy" (James i. 12); regarding man, Luke ix. 62.

The points of this lesson can be clearly put in the following order:

1. A MERCIFUL GOD.—Verse 16, "the Lord being merciful unto him." The mercy of God appeared in giving Lot warning (v. 13), and an opportunity of getting his connections out of the place; also in hastening his flight (v. 15); in laying hold on him and forcing him away; in agreeing to spare Zoar for his sake (vs. 20, 21) and in waiting till he had reached the place of safety (v. 22).

And Lot, with all his faults, knew God's mercy, and set down to it his deliverance, v. 19, "thou hast magnified thy mercy."

Learn,

(1) Everything good comes to fallen man through mercy. Eph. ii. 4.

(2) Mercy finds a way of escape from a doomed world. Luke ii. 78.

(3) Mercy sends messengers to bring us into that way. Matt. xxviii. 19.

(4) Mercy urges us even with violence into that way. Luke xiv. 23.

(5) If we have any hope, it is in God's mercy. Ps. xxxiii. 22.

II. MINISTERING ANGELS.—When reading this passage, we must not miss the change of persons. In v. 15, "the angels hastened Lot." In v. 16 the men (angels like men) laid hold of his hand. When they had brought him out, their work, so far, was

done. A divine person now comes in, v. 17, "when they had brought them forth abroad, he said." It is to this Person Lot makes request. It is he that grants it, and saves Zoar. He is the same who heard Abraham, ch. xviii.

But the faithfulness of the angels appears in hastening Lot; caring for all belonging to him; in laying hold of his hand and the hand of his wife and daughters. They did their work with their might. The slowness and folly of Lot and his wife did not hinder them. They did not throw up the work in disgust, nor quit it in despair. They had instructions from their Lord, and they obeyed. They set an example to teachers, ministers, and all Christian workers. Oh, for grace to do God's will as the angels do! Let us hasten and lay kindly hands on sinners, to get them—any way—out of Sodom!

III. LINGERING LOT.—What cause was there for haste? God's angel was about to descend; the angels had their work of judgment to do, and were in haste to do it. The natural conditions were being miraculously used for punishment, and, speaking after the manner of men, the angels were ready to be fired, for even in miracles God often uses natural forces; and Lot was told so (v. 12), and he lingered!

He was nephew of Abraham; knew the Lord; was a good man at heart; knew the sin of Sodom (2 Peter ii. 6-8); was vexed by it; had heard the angels' orders; yet he lingered! How is this to be explained?

(1) Possibly confusion of mind had something to do with it; circumstances new and startling; self-control difficult. We are to judge charitably. Some other things Lot did at that dreadful time can only be explained by his being surprised, and in that state of mind when one does not clearly know what he is doing. We should pray for self-possession.

(2) But, after allowing for all this, we must believe that he is now reaping the fruits of seed he has sown. He had lost the habit of promptly obeying. Sodom had become dear to him. His effects were in it. His friends were there. Perhaps some of his family remained behind. His sons-in-law certainly did.

(3) Possibly he might have hoped that something would occur to prevent the necessity of going—persuaded himself that destruction was not quite so near; that some help might come, as Abraham had come and delivered him when in danger before. However it was, he lingered. He needed firmer faith.

Objection: "But Lot was a righteous man." Yes, but a righteous man may err like Lot, take wrong steps, be imprudent, or selfish, or worldly. He may want firmness, decision, or in a particular case, faith and obedience, like David, or Peter, or Elijah. Though life does not become extinct, as in death, it may be suspended, as in a faint. Then he suffers, even though a Christian. So Lot suffered. His removal to Sodom was a failure, for

(a) He was grieved by the sin of his new neighbors, for whom he parted with Abraham: ch. xiii. 10, 11.

(b) He was disliked by them, "This fellow," &c., v. 9.

(c) Even his sons-in-law did not believe in him (v. 14). Inconsistent believers carry little weight.

(d) He lost all he gained in the ruin of Sodom. Remember Lot.

He was saved, yet so as by fire; saved, but almost lost.

IV. HIS LOST WIFE.—We use the word "lost" in relation to her earthly life. The Scriptures do not follow her into the next life, and we may not pronounce where they do not. "The Lord is judge." She was almost saved, yet lost. Watch the events.

The plain—now the shallow part of the Dead Sea—probably was rich and fertile; had at least five cities; Sodom the chief, so most mentioned; Gomorrah second (Jude vii.); Admah and Zeboim other two (Hosea xi. 8), and Zoar the fifth, for which Lot, terrified at going so far as the mountains, begged (vs. 18-21). Then "the Lord rained" &c. (v. 24); the ground likely sunk ("flee to the mountains"); and a complete overthrow of the cities occurred—the fiery storm showing God's hand in it, and the burying of the place, his hatred of its sins. Many allusions to this awful event in Scripture. See Ps. xi. 6; Jer. xx. 16; Isa. i. 9.

This part of the story being finished, the sacred writer returns to the fleeing party. At some part of the way, before the accused spot was entirely cleared, Lot's wife—in regret at leaving, in unbelief, contrary to the express command of God's angel (v. 17)—looked back, and was consumed on the spot, her body becoming encrusted with the salt which still marks the desolate Uddum, as the place (Sodom) is still called.

See in this awful judgment the meaning of Luke ix. 62; the force of Rev. xvii. 14, 15; Luke xvii. 31, 32; Heb. x. 88, 89.

Objection: why forbid looking back? Because it is a sign of the heart being wrong; and because God would shroud his acts in awful mystery.

Remember Lot's wife. She was married to a good man; an angel held her hand and urged her to flee; she was fleeing, but she did not follow on, and she perished in the doom of Sodom.

We may be in pious families; have God's messengers sent to us; may seem to be escaping from the wrath to come; yet, our hearts not being engaged, may perish. "Remember Lot's wife."

TOPICS FOR EXAMINATION OF CLASSES.

How many cities on the plain of Jordan—names of the chief—how Lot came to be there—character of the people—how described in the New Testament—how their place is now covered—God's messengers to Lot—how described—who talked with Abraham—who heard his prayer—who heard Lot's prayer—the part performed by the angels—who rained down fire—Lot's folly—how explain his lingering—how he was hastened—who accompanied him—why bidden to flee to the mountain—whether did he go—his wife's sin—the consequence—the New Testament warning—lessons from Lot's career—evils of a bad choice—the true character of Lot—the evil mixed with his good—how God punished the evil and the warnings to us.

*The statement was made at a recent Missionary Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, that in one county of two hundred thousand inhabitants in the State of New York, seventy per cent of the people are altogether ignorant of the first principles of Christianity, and thousands never hear the divine name mentioned. That such a state of things should exist in a Christian country, and that for missionary zeal is startling. What if in parts of Canada there should be found similar ignorance?