

## Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

### CALVINISTIC COMFORT NEEDED ON THE DEATH-BED.

BY A PASTOR.

A young man, far gone in consumption, sent for me to visit him. I found him in great weakness and prostration. He professed to be a believer in Christ, and, at times, he said, his faith gave him great peace and comfort. He believed in the willingness and power of Christ to save him, and he said that if he did not go to heaven he knew it would be his own fault. His chief cause of alarm and distress was that at times he was so exhausted that he could not keep up an exercise of faith, and realize a conscious sense of comfort and security. When this conscious sense of faith and peace became suspended, he tried to rouse himself to an exercise of faith under the alarming apprehension that his relationship to the Saviour was lost, and that nothing of his religion remained. He had not been trained in the Presbyterian Church, and his views of the nature of the covenant and the security of Christ's people were very defective. I explained to him that the security of believers arose more from Christ's hold on them than from their hold on Christ, and I quoted Christ's words: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Big tears filled his eyes and rolled down his wasted cheeks at these words, and with an expression of unutterable thankfulness and relief, he said: "You don't know how much good you have done me—that point was never explained to me before; I see it now, and I believe it firmly, that when I am so weak that I can't exercise faith as I would, Jesus keeps me." After reading the Scriptures and prayer, I came away impressed with a sense of the eagerness with which the comfort of Calvinism is grasped at by those who have been taught to regard the term itself with aversion. A testing time comes at last when the strong support found in the doctrines of grace becomes absolutely indispensable.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

### ASSURANCE.

BY A PRESBYTERIAN PASTOR.

It was a little company—the place, a minister's study; and we slid into a free and lively talk about assurance. We had just come in from a service in the church, preliminary to the Lord's Supper.

"The assurance that I wish to enjoy," said one, "is that of being saved at last when the crisis comes—the awful hour of dissolution. For I have it not, never had it; and I am in a great struggle."

"It is not in the Bible," replied another; "such an assurance is not in the Bible for you, nor for any believer. That you are now in a state of grace or reconciliation to God, sin all forgiven, may be matter of assurance, and so, of consolation, joy, peace; but that you shall eventually be saved, or enter at death into everlasting life, will depend on something else, on this—that you persevere in faith and holiness and fidelity to Christ through and through unto the end."

And to illustrate the point the last speaker further said. "The life of a believer is a 'race,' a 'fight.' He 'runs' to obtain a prize, he 'fights' to win a victory. The assurance of triumphant success comes, therefore, at the end. 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course . . . ; henceforth there is laid up for me.' It even seems as if a doubt of the final issue were a force that the believer needs at every step of his career to spur him on to constancy, to exertion. Such is the doctrine of the Bible. 'We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of the confidence steadfast unto the end.' 'To him that overcometh will I give.'"

What now struck us was the misapprehension of those who, in what they teach about faith and its assurance, leave this part of Christian experience out of view—a grave error. It leads to negligence, to false security, and even to an antinomian spirit, and it goes far to account for what so frequently occurs in periods of "revival," when the wave is subsiding—the fall of so many from the heights of a baseless, fictitious assurance into all their old habits of worldliness, levity and sin.

Doubting in a believer is not sin. It is not a sign of the want of faith, or a vacillating or weak faith; nor is it an obstacle to faith, nor a bar to consolation. It explains, it alone explains, the fact that a believer is persistently and with "fear and trembling working out his own salvation, pressing toward the mark."

"So fight I, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Solemn admonition!

SPURIOUS silver of speech is current, but base gold of silence is not unknown. A man may transgress as truly by holding his tongue as by speaking unadvisedly with his lips—C. H. Spurgeon.

### PRESENT NEED.

For present help, dear Lord, I ask,  
For grace and strength to-day;  
Though yesterday rich blessings brought,  
To-day, they must again be sought;  
For present help I pray.

What'er the past has given me  
Of solace by the way,  
Of doubts dispelled, of heart renewed,  
Still I must plead for daily food  
To strengthen me to-day.

And should the future years be mine,  
'Twill then the present be;  
My greatest need, is grace to bear  
The portion of life's daily care  
Thou givest now to me.

So trusting in Thy promises,  
My soul finds present rest;  
"Lord, I believe," I cannot see  
My path through life, yet trusting Thee,  
I know Thy ways are best.

—Kate M. Frayne.

### WORRY.

"The greatest characteristic of modern life is worry." It is rather more than twenty-one years since I first read that sentence. I see again the two handsome volumes, fresh from the publisher, sent by the author. I see the thick, cream leaves as I cut them. I am aware of the pleasant fragrance of a new book, clear to some as the smell of hawthorn blossoms. I catch my first view of the large, clear print. And the short sentence, which (as befits its importance) was likewise an entire paragraph, looks me in the face as it did then.

"The great characteristic of modern life is worry." There is something in temperament; something in surroundings; and peaceful seasons come (God be thanked) in the life of most. But the statement is true to the experience of most. It was true to the experience of the man who made it. I think I may say it is true to yours. Just once, a few years ago, a worthy mortal, who is now far from worldly trouble, said to the writer that he "preached too much about worry." I looked into the worthy mortal's face. It was worn and lined with care, which spoiled his nerves and his temper, as well as lined his face; and a little before he had told me that certain vexations in his lot were breaking his heart. "Is there more worry in my preaching than in your lot?" was all my answer; and the good old man shook his white head and said no more. Not but what he retained his opinion. For there used to be folks who thought there was something wrong about sermons which treated of realities in their homes and hearts, and which (in fact) they could understand and feel to be true. And the right sermons were those which dealt with mysteries which neither preacher nor hearer could comprehend, and which had no bearing on actual life and well-doing.

In cheerful moods, when bodily and mental health is high, you smile at worry, and make little of it; you cannot imagine how you let it worry you so much. In desponding moods, when you have run down, when the constant work which keeps you on your feet has ceased for a too brief blink of rest, when you are weak in body and soul, you break down under worry; you burst out into the cry that you cannot stand this any longer. For perhaps as many poor human beings wish (like Elijah) that they were at rest, under multitudinous and ceaseless worry, as under single great overwhelming trials.

Now, worry is disagreeable. It is a thing you don't like. And, roughly speaking, everything you don't like is a temptation. I recall vividly, over many days, the true saying of a very little girl. "I'm always good when I am amused." The saying sets forth a large and serious truth. Now (1) anything you don't like tends to make you bad; and (2) whatever tends to make you bad is a temptation. Well, worry tends to make you snappish, discontented, irritable, hasty of speech to servants and to children, disagreeable to any poor visitor who comes with a long story of trouble, and looks for sympathy and help. Worry tends to make you chafe at the arrangements of the Disposing Hand above you; it is pushing in the direction of "curse God and die." You know it is. I therefore say that worry does not directly tend to make you good, but rather bad. If we are to do anything that is pointed at by the serious counsel. "Grow in grace," we must resist the primary tendencies of worry. We must counterwork them; evade them; somehow get the better of them. All this is one step in what I wish to say to you, unknown friend.

What I wish to say to you now is that we must take worry in hand with determination. And this is just what, in fact, we fail to do. There are many folks who will pray earnestly for God's grace and put their whole mortal nature upon the stretch, in the matter of what they think greater duties and greater temptations, who, as for worry and its tendencies and forming influence, let themselves slide; and this does them the greatest harm. It is the besetting sin that we are specially bound to resist. It is the atmosphere

we are breathing hour by hour that it most concerns us to see that it be healthful. And the moral atmosphere in which most professed Christians of middle age must needs live in this nineteenth century is the atmosphere of worry. The sins which do most easily beset professed Christians in these days are the sins to which worry is the great temptation.

You agree with me, I think, that if we are not spiritually to deteriorate, between each two years, probably each month, we must take worry quite resolutely in hand. And the question is, how? *Pulpit of To-Day.*

### PENALTIES OF FALSE WITNESS.

Possibly it occurred to us in early life that the Ninth Commandment is one-sided. It forbids us to bear false witness against our neighbour, but (as poor old David Deans suggested to his daughter Jennie) it makes no mention of false witness to a neighbour's advantage. Doubtless the reason of the omission is that very few are likely to tell falsehoods to the end of making a neighbour seem wiser and better than the fact. The little falsehoods of actual life are always ill-natured. The "lecin' body" is always spiteful, when treating of others; it is only when speaking of himself (which in some cases includes his brothers, cousins and aunts) that the falsehoods are kindly. It must be confessed that these last are very irritating to bear. To hear a good man continually puff himself and his belongings is nearly as provocative as to hear him continually running down everybody else. And it is quite certain that the disposition to tell falsehoods both to the end of damaging competitors and of exalting one-self, may abide in human beings who possess many good and great qualities. The inconsistency is strange and lamentable, but it is true. The most famous Lord Chancellors, the most persuasive preachers, great and good men, and women of very high and not consciously insincere Christian profession, have said and done dishonest things; notably have told notorious falsehoods with the purpose of injuring a competitor, or even one who was not a competitor, but was getting credit for some merit of service. There have been those who could not bear to hear good spoken of any mortal but themselves, or to hear of good done by any mortal but themselves. And, as a rule, the malicious falsehood was always ready, to the end of tripping such a one up. I speak what, unhappily, I have very strong reason to know. The grievous thing is, too, that you may never know how you were whispered down behind your back. Or you may learn it after years have passed; after this mischief is done; when circumstances have so changed that it would appear inhuman to avenge yourself. You can contradict the falsehood that is brought to your ears, but how about the falsehood which was told against you secretly, which did the harm it was meant to do, but never was heard save by the friend alienated, or the eminent person it prejudiced against you?—A. H. K. Boyd.

### "HOW TO GET THERE."

Two or three generations ago there were pious men in every Scotch village noted for their frequent use of Scripture language and metaphor. A tall man was spoken of as a "Saul among the people," and a disagreeable man as "a Mordecai at the gate"; a bad woman was a "Jezebel," and a miser, an "Achan"; a profane man was one who spoke "part in the speech of Ashdod, and part in the Jews' language." A keen politician, a pious church member, during the voting for a member of Parliament, anxious to know the state of the poll and the prospects of his candidate, asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Many of those men of quaint phrases were farm-labourers or cobblers, who, though they had read few books, knew their Bibles, and the knowledge made them excellent judges of sermons.

The Rev. John Macnab preached at a communion-season on "Heaven." It was a long sermon, but the people thought it as beautiful as a series of dissolving views. It had, however, one defect—the length of the descriptive part left no time for the "application." Old George Brown met the preacher at a friend's house, and astonished him by the *resume* he gave of the sermon.

"It was really a grand sermon as far as it went," he said, after he had finished his report. "I never enjoyed a description of heaven better. Ye told us a thing about heaven except hoo to get there; and Maister Macnab, ye'll excuse me, my young friend, for sayin' that that shouldna hae been left out, for ye'll admit yersel' if that's awantin' a's awantin'. Ye'll mind the king's son's feast? The servants didna only tell that a thing was ready, but they compelled them to come in."

The young preacher was too intelligent not to see the aptness of the criticism, and when George had retired, he said to his friend:

"I have been criticised by learned Professors and Doctors of Divinity, by fellow-students and relatives; but that good old man has given me more insight into what preaching should be than all the others put together. I hope as long as I live I shall never again, when delivering God's message to my fellow-men, forget to tell them 'how to get there.'"