

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

MY DREAM.

It was a beautiful Sabbath morning. I seemed to be in a large church, filled with attentive worshippers. All around me were strangers; yet so pleasant were the countenances, whose cheerful smiles seemed to say, "Make yourself quite at home; you are among friends," that the lonely feeling which often comes over one in a crowded church to not one of whose worshippers he is known, troubled me not at all. While waiting for the pastor's entrance, I gazed around the building. It was neat and tasteful, but plain in its construction. My attention was particularly attracted by numerous mottoes on the walls, most of them inculcating the duty of doing good.

Back of the pulpit was this inscription: "On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." In other places I read, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." These, and other passages of similar import, occupied my attention, when the door of the anteroom near the pulpit opened, and a noble-looking old man, with firm, erect step, entered. He was one of those specimens of beautiful old age of which we occasionally see a type. As he gazed upon his people, the love in his heart seemed to shine through and illuminate his whole countenance. After the preliminary exercises, the pastor preached an excellent sermon on Faith and Works. At its close, pointing to the inscription, he said, "We will now prove our faith by our works, by taking our usual weekly contribution. But first, brethren, suffer a word of counsel. Last Sabbath some of you, in your deep love for the cause, made larger contributions than your circumstances would warrant. Remember, Paul says, 'Lay by in store as the Lord has prospered you.' I know it is so pleasant to give to the needy, that we are liable to mistakes in this direction."

I was thunderstruck. "Where am I?" thought I; "in a Christian church, and the pastor cautioning his people against too large contributions."

I remember reading of a similar occurrence in a heathen land, among the new converts to Christianity; but to be an eye-witness of such a scene in a Christian congregation, it seems incredible.

I watched the people closely as the boxes were passed, and became more and more amazed; for nearly every person—men, women, and children—contributed, and did it so cheerfully, even joyfully, that it was a pleasure to see them. "I must speak to that man, and learn the secret of his success with his people," thought I.

After the congregation had dispersed, many of them greeting me cordially as they passed out, I said to the pastor, as he took me warmly by the hand,

"You must have had an unusual collection to-day."

"No," he answered, "no larger than usual. You heard my caution to my people; they enjoy giving so much, that, every now and then, I find it necessary to hold them back, lest some of them do more than they are able." "Why, sir?" I exclaimed, "how have you educated them? Most ministers are obliged to urge, coax, and sometimes drive their people to give."

"Educate them? With the Bible, to be sure. They are Christians, and even the poorest of them want to show their love to their Master by obeying His commands."

"Christians! But you don't wish me to understand that all the Christians in your church contribute for benevolent objects? Why, sir, in the communion to which I belong, two-thirds of the churches do nothing for Foreign Missions, and many of them nothing for Home Missions and other like operations."

The old man raised his hands in surprise and horror, and his voice was very sad as he answered,

"Surely they cannot be Christians. What book do they take as the foundation of their faith? Not the Bible! for almost every page of that volume is luminous with precepts of love and self-sacrifice. A

Christian, and not love to bestow in charity! It cannot be. But may I ask," eyeing me curiously, "what is the name of your denomination?"

I have never been ashamed of my religious home; yet the blood rushed to my face as the question was put, and I hastened to reply,

"But, sir, my denomination is not alone in being derelict to duty in this matter. Almost every benevolent organization is crippled for the want of funds. Many Christians feel that they have no obligations to discharge to others, at least pecuniarily."

"No obligations!" exclaimed the old man. "What is it to be a Christian? Is it not to be like Christ? Why, the very essence of Christianity is to deny self. If there is one duty emphasized, from Genesis to Revelation, it is the duty of giving. Don't you remember the many injunctions to God's ancient people on benevolence?"

"O, yes! but many now affirm those old Jewish laws were only for that people, and have long been obsolete."

"Obsolete, indeed!" repeated the pastor, as a curious smile played around his mouth. But what do these people do with all the injunctions of the New Testament on this same subject? Are they also obsolete? If so, we modern Christians are much to be pitied. If, caring nothing for the interests of our neighbour, we are to look out only for ourselves, our minds and hearts will become so dwarfed that we shall be hardly worth the saving. But, thank God! His commands are yet binding upon us; and it is not only a duty, but a blessed privilege to sow bountifully and broadcast of the rich gifts showered upon us. When my people are converted, they not only lay themselves, but their possessions, on God's altar, and thus each one of them becomes a centre of holy influence, a point from which radiate beams of mellow light."

The old man had waxed eloquent as he preached. His eyes flashed, as his tall form seemed to tower above me. In his excitement his tones became deeper and more thrilling; but while I gazed, spell-bound, suddenly he vanished from my sight.

Behold! alas! it was only a dream.—*Morning Star.*

BEWARE OF THE SNAKE.

You have heard of "the snake in the grass," my boy,
Of the terrible snake in the grass;
But now you must know
Man's deadliest foe
Is a snake of a different class.
Alas!
'Tis the venomous snake in the glass.

PRACTICE VERSUS PREACHING.

"Mother, how much tobacco does it take to make a sermon?"

"What do you mean, my son?"

"Why, I mean how much tobacco does father chew, and how many cigars does he smoke, while he is making a sermon?"

"Well, the tobacco and cigars don't make the sermons, do they?"

"I don't know but they do—they help along, at any rate; for I heard father tell Mr. Morris, the minister who preached for him last Sunday, that 'he could never write well without a good cigar.' So I thought maybe the tobacco makes the sermons, or the best part of them."

"My son, I am shocked to hear you talk so!"

"Well, mother, I was only telling what father said, and it made me think. He said that a prime cigar was a great solace (whatever that is); and he said, besides, it drove away the blues—put him into a happy frame of mind, and simulated or stimulated his brain, so he could work better. I suppose stimulate means to make one think easier; and I've been thinking, mother, if I had something to stimulate my brain, I could study better; and the next time I have one of those knotty questions in arithmetic to work out, I will get a cigar, and see if it won't help me along. You know you often tell me if I follow my father's example I will not go far astray; and now I would like a few cigars, to make my brain work well, so that I can stand at the head of my class."

"I hope I shall never see my son with a cigar in his mouth, it would be the first step to ruin!"

"You don't think father is ruined, do you? and he has taken a good many steps since he has taken the first cigar."

"I think, my son, your father would be better without cigars, or tobacco in any shape; but he formed the habit when he was young, and now it is hard to break off."

"But father says 'we are to blame for forming bad habits, and it is a sin to continue in them.' I heard him say that in the pulpit not long ago. There is old Tom Jenkins, who gets tight every day. I suppose he would find it rather hard to leave off drinking whiskey. But father says 'it is no excuse for a man, when he gets drunk, to say he is in the habit of getting drunk.' He says it only needs resolution and moral courage to break off bad habits."

"But, my son, smoking tobacco is not quite drinking whiskey and getting drunk."

"No, I know that, mother; but I was going on to say that if smoking was a bad habit, father would have given it up long ago. But I don't believe smoking is any harm; and it does some folks a great deal of good. You know how nervous and sledgey father gets when he has to go a day without any cigars; and, besides, he could not write his sermons without them. I am sure, if he could write as well and do as much good without using tobacco, he would not spend so much for it. When I want to buy a little candy, or a bit of spruce gum, father tells me I had better practise the grace of self-denial and save my money for the missionary box. Besides, he says such stuff is not good for me; it will spoil my teeth and ruin my health. Now, I am quite certain that father would not spend so much money—more than I ever spent in my whole life for candy, gum, clothes, and everything else—if he did not believe tobacco was a real benefit to himself and others. Why, mother, do you know anything about the price of cigars in these times? Cousin Edward Wilkins, who smokes a great many, says you can't get a decent cigar for less than fifteen cents; and the best cost forty and fifty cents apiece. I heard Deacon Tompkins say his cigars cost him six hundred dollars a year; for he uses nothing but the very best, and they are all imported. He told father so the other day, when they were smoking in the study after dinner, and I was trying to get my arithmetic lesson. Now, mother, do you think my father and the deacon and a whole host of ministers and elders, and temperance lecturers, and lots of good Christian people spend so much money to keep themselves in bad habits? Why, just the sum that Deacon Tompkins alone spends for cigars, would support a missionary in the West for a whole year, and would be a better salary than most Western missionaries now get. Really, mother, I can't believe that using tobacco is wrong, as long as so many good Christians use it. I don't care so much about chewing. I would rather have some nice clean spruce-gum, like they have down in Dickson's store; I would like to smoke as my father does; and please, mother, give me a little money to get some cigars."

"My son, you may talk the matter over to your father. Ask him if he thinks it will improve your habits and your manners to learn to smoke; if he approves, you may ask him for a cigar."—*N. Y. Republican.*

DR. LEITCH, of London, said to a theological student: "I will give you my rules for preaching; they were composed by myself; they are very short, and I have put them into rhyme:—

Begin low,
Go on slow;
Rise higher,
And take fire;
When most impressed,
Be so possessed,
At the end wax warm,
And sit down in a storm."

THE THREE CROWNS.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him."—James i. 12. (See also Rev. ii. 10)

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."—2 Tim. v. 7, 8.

"And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."—1 Peter v. 4.