

VALUE OF GENTLENESS

BEAUTIES AND POTENTIALITIES OF
RARE CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.

"BE GENTLE UNTO ALL MEN"

The Moral Leaveners of the World Have
Always Been They Who Believe in
the Gentler Methods Which Produce
Life, and Not in the Fierce, Passionate
Methods of the Iconoclast, the Anarchist
and the Firebrand.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada,
in the year 1904, by William Bailey, of Toronto,
at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Oct. 30.—In this sermon the preacher tells of the beauties and the potentialities of gentleness and human kindness in the home, in business and in our everyday dealings with friends and enemies. The text is 11. Timothy ii, 24, "Be gentle unto all men."

The great moral leaveners of the world have used but little blasting powder. They are not past masters in the "High Order of Babbling Quarrelers." Like the laborers, lifting higher and higher the walls of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, they make but little noise. They tread the pathway of life with feet, for the most part, sandaled in velvet. Their voices are not an angry growl, but a dulcet whisper. Their breath is not cyclonic, but a summer zephyr. Their countenances are not twisted with the demonic passions of a Hogarth's caricature. Their eyes are not flashing with the lightning of a Mediterranean euroclydon. They are red-lipped and laughing-eyed and rosy-cheeked, with the happy smile of a glorious June sunrise. They believe not in the strenuous life, with its swords and spears and battle-axes and clubs and bludgeons and confagurations. They believe not in hurling storm cloud against storm cloud, until the deluge comes, and the bridges are swept away, and the harvest fields are battered down, as though two mighty armies had turned the valleys into a gigantic battlefield, where the heavens were resounding with the cannonading of the elements. But they believe in the "gentle life." They believe in the golden pulleys of evaporation, gathering up the waters into the reservoirs of the clouds, to be scattered abroad in the blessed refreshment of April showers. They believe in the gentler means, which produce life, and not in the fierce, passionate methods of the iconoclast, the anarchist and the firebrand, which destroy life.

Nature has her storms, eruptions and earthquakes, which in her angry moods carry death and destruction in their path, but the gentle ways are always used by nature to accomplish her greatest good. Standing upon a ship's deck some day, I say, "Where did yonder tall, straight mast come from?" "Why," you say, "hundreds of years ago a bird was flying over the Maine hills toward her nest with a little seed in her mouth. The keen eye of a hawk spied her. When the hawk began to soar higher and higher in the heavens that he might make one terrific plunge upon his prey, the little bird saw him. Before she fled to safety she gave one little frightened cry. When she uttered this cry her bill opened and the seed dropped to the ground. A gentle wind blew up the valley and covered over a sapling. It took root. It grew into a bush. It grew up into a sapling. It rounded out into a great big tree. One day a Maine lumberman came through that valley. With his axe he marked that tree for the shipyard. The tree was cut down. It was dragged to the river and floated down to the sawmill. It was scrapped and fixed for a mast. When this ship was launched that tree was used in its present place for man's use. Nature developed that tree, not in the upheavals of a day, but by the gentle ways of maturing years."

"What will become of that tree?" "Why," you answer, "by the same gentle means with which that seed was changed into a tree nature will also change that tree into something else. Perhaps next week or next

month there will be a storm. This ship will roll and tumble in the trough of the sea and threaten to founder. The captain in order to lighten the ship will put his trumpet to his lips and cry, "Cut away the mast!" When the boat gives a lurch to leeward over will go the mast. That mast will float around the sea until after awhile it will become waterlogged. Then it will sink to the ocean's bottom. Then the waters will cover over that log with submarine deposits. Years later that log will be changed into coke. Then by a gentle process the coke will be changed into coal. Then, years later, the bed of that ocean by certain changes will be lifted. The submerged continent, which now lies buried between Africa and America, again may be raised above the waters and toss back its wet locks and put on another crown of green foliage. Then the miners with their pickaxes will begin to dig out the coal. They will come to the old tree now changed into coal. This tree as coal will then be burned into the open grate of some home to be built a thousand years hence. Then about that burning coal another Ik Marvel may have his reveries, or perhaps before it glows two young lovers may plight their troth while the flames leap and sputter and laugh at the old, old story which they hear—that old, old story of love which is ever new. As nature gently and quietly changes the seed into a bush and the bush into a sapling and the sapling into a great tree, so it will gently change the tree into coke and the coke into coal."

Nature deals gently with her own in her wonder workings. Paul, the old gospel veteran, tells young Timothy, who is about to succeed him, to deal in the same gentle way with the human tress he is about to try to develop into spiritual maturity. Paul practically says, "Kindness and gentleness and love will accomplish far more for Christ than hate or bitterness or fault finding." The old psalmist cried out in rapture, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." May we by gospel gentleness make others great, even as Christ's gentleness can make us great.

The gentle life of the Christian must be manifested toward those with whom we come into closest contact. We first of all should be gentle to our parents, our wives, our husbands and children and brothers and sisters and home associates. We should be gentle when we arise in the morning and prepare for the breakfast table, be gentle when we are fixing the children for school, be gentle when we kiss our wives good-by as we start for the train, be gentle when we come home at night from the store, be very gentle when we tuck away the little ones into their beds for the night, for it is by the gentle words, the gentle deeds and the gentle memories that we hold our greatest influence over our dear ones and not by the rebukes and the censoriousness of our bitter tongues.

We all know that it is only by gentleness we have our greatest influence over our loved ones. Yet, strange to say, when anything goes wrong at the store or in the home and we lose our tempers we nearly always turn our anger against our own children or our own wives or our own husbands or our own brothers and sisters. If the cook is mean and suddenly leaves us in the lurch or the laundryman ruins our best washed dress or we become fatigued from the spring or the fall house cleaning or our clerks cheat us at the store, then we are very apt to vent our displeasure upon our helpless children or our wives or husbands, who have done nothing. The domestic squalls and upheavals are often due entirely to outside causes and not to inside dissensions. Now, my friends, let us one and all learn to guard against speaking harsh words against those we love. Let us deal gently with those who are by our side and who are bound to us by the strong ties of domestic affections.

Remember that in the influence of the "gentle life" in the home we can serve God just as truly in the small things and in the little duties as in the great. "In the effort to appreciate various forms of greatness," wrote Edward Howard Rogers, "we must not underestimate the value of a simple, good life. Just to be good, to keep life pure from degrading elements, to make it constantly helpful

in little ways to those who are touched by it, to keep one's spirit always sweet and avoid all manner of petty anger and irritability, that is an ideal as noble as it is difficult." But that is an ideal which God will let us all reach if we daily go to him in prayer. That is an ideal we all should try to reach, for in order to have our loved ones spiritually sweet we must set them an example and avoid all manner of petty anger and irritability. We ourselves must learn by practice to be true types of the Christian's "gentle life."

Thousands of men are ready to say they will be kind and gentle to their friends. They are not ready, however, to say they will be kind and forgiving to their enemies. They pride themselves upon the fact that they are good lovers. They also pride themselves upon the fact that they are good haters. If a man does them a kindness they store that fact away in the most secure treasure room of the "temple of memory." They will wait, if need be, ten, twenty, thirty or even forty years to pay back that kindness. But though some people never forget a friend, on the other hand, others never forgive an injury done by an enemy. They may have to abide their time a quarter or even half a century, but when the time comes they are as vindictive as though the past injury was of yesterday. Now, my text emphatically says, "Deal gently with the enemy also. Love those who love you. Yes, but love those who hate you and ill treat you and despise you. That is the commandment of my text also."

Dare you disobey God's orders to deal gently with those who have done you an injury? If you do God will make you rue your defiance more ways than one. The "sword of hate" is two-edged and keener than any Damascus blade. With one stroke it slays a foe, but when the swordsmen draws forth the "blade of vengeance," whetted with mortal blood of his dying enemy, this sword springs back with its unused edge and slays the vindictive swordsmen also. Two lives are generally destroyed, and not one. Now, my text demands that you shall try to destroy your foes not by crushing them, but by winning them to your ranks. You are to destroy them, even as Napoleon on his escape from Elba made Marshal Ney and his grenadiers fall at his feet, because they felt he loved them. You are to destroy them by dealing gently with them, by forgiving as well as forgetting the evils of the past.

Our greater sweep than the establishment of harmonious relationships with our personal enemies has the application of my text. To bring the lost sheep back to the Shepherd's fold ought to be the highest wish and desire of every Christian. And that is not to be done by menaces and denunciation. God, as Elijah found, is not in the earthquake nor in the fire, but in "the still small voice." Men may be wooed back to God, but they are seldom driven. And why should we not deal gently with God's wayward children? Do you for one instant think the people who spiritually and morally have gone astray are having a good time? Do you for one moment suppose that the man who, like Laocoon, knows that he and his family are struggling amid the crushing coils of deadly serpents on account of his sins would not gladly be rescued from those enveloping coils if we could only go to him gently in Christ's name and offer to him the peace and the pardon and the hope and the eternal life of the gospel? Ah, yes, my brother, he would, he would!

No man enjoys drinking the bitter dregs of remorse. No man for mere pleasure would allow Satan to keep on faying him alive, as Satan is doing to his victims all around us. Sometimes at first looks are deceiving in reference to this. From the opened door of the saloon or low haunt of vice we hear the songs and the guffaws of laughter. Then we say, "Oh, what a high carnival is this!" But stop. Is that all? Do you see that young man who now comes toward us in seamy attire? His step is staggering. He is bleary-eyed and maudlin in drink. He turns down a side street and staggers on to his lodgings in the upper room of a poor tenement, where live his wife and four or five half-naked and half-starved children. That young man only ten years ago was dressed as well as you. He had then a finer business than you have to-day. He once had just as happy a home. Tell me that man is happy? Is that the man whose wife so proudly stepped to the altar to give herself to him in marriage? Is that the young man her friends congratulated her upon marrying?

Can that fun? Fun to be kicked out of your home? Fun to have the sheriff sell your store over your head? Fun to have all your old friends turn their back upon you and look upon you as an outcast? Through the midnight darkness I hear the echoing of the song of ten years ago now singing, "The wages of sin is death." Oh, no, my brother; that young man is not happy. The worst taskmaster on earth is the devil. No man so much wants to crush the power of sinful temptation as that man who has been compelled to drink the bitter dregs of despair. Do not despise him; pity him, and with gentle words try to win him back to honor and to Christ. He deserves your commiseration. Therefore, if you and I are ready to go to God's outcasts, if we are ready to go to the sinners in Christ's name and say gently, "Brother, Jesus is ready to save you. Jesus wants me to be your friend and help you," there would be no difficulty in most cases about the spiritual rescue. But the trouble with this old hateful and hating world is, as Josh Billings quaintly put it, "When a man starts down hill it seems as though everything was greased for the occasion." And when a man once strikes the bottom of the hill but very few people are ready to fling him the gospel rope and haul him up out of the mud. Oh, men, can you not hear Christ speaking to you in behalf of God's way-

ward children, as David, the broken-hearted father, once said to General Joab about his wayward boy: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom."

Oh, how many sinners could be brought to Christ if we would only practice the gospel of a gentle life! It is said that one of the hardest criminals of an eastern penitentiary was converted by the gentleness of a little child. This little girl and her father were being shown through the prison wards. When the party came to a long flight of stairs the warden turned to this hardened life prisoner and murderer near by and said, "Jack, carry her upstairs." When the hard-featured convict stooped down to pick up the little girl she looked up into his face with a smile and said, "Jack, will you kiss me?" And when he was about to put the little one down she said, "Now, Jack, will you let me kiss you?" No sooner were those last words spoken than the old criminal's heart was melted. God struck the rock of Horeb and it gushed forth with tears of penitence. Kindness did it. The gentleness of a little child accomplished what the blows of the keeper and the iron bars could never do. Oh, man, will you not start forth from this moment to win sinful men and women to Jesus Christ by the omnipotent power of a gospelized "gentle life?"

To save immortals for Christ ought to be the chief mission of man. In view of which fact again I ask the same question I asked before, Why should we not be gentle with the sins and wrong-doings of other people? Has not God been very gentle in his dealings with our sins? When William E. Gladstone, the "great commoner" of England, was dying his son was reading to him this beautiful verse from Paul's epistle to young Timothy, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and no sooner did the son come to the word "sinners" than the dying statesman finished the verse, "of whom I am the chief."

We have seen how man in his devotion to man was ready to sacrifice his all for an earthly master. Cannot we, at least in the same ratio, be willing to sacrifice our lives to the service of Jesus Christ, to bring sinners to Christ through the influence of a "gentle life." Amid a large gathering in London of literary men William Makepeace Thackeray one night said in reference to Shakespeare, whose name was being discussed, "I should like to have been Shakespeare's shoeblick, just to have lived in his house, just to have worshipped him, just to have run on his errands and have seen that sweet, serene face." If the greatest of all English satirists was ready to give such devotion to the greatest of all English dramatists should not we be willing to do what a living Christ wants us to do? Should we not, shall we not, gladly go forth to bring sinners back to the altar of mercy by kindness and Christian love? Charles Wagner, the Alsatian preacher, in pleasure-loving Paris has rung the changes in the power of "the simple life." To-day I preach the gospel of the "gentle life"—the tender gentleness by which God made David great and by which we can, through Christ, make others great, and, through Christ, become great ourselves.

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