

Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

WITH WILLING HEARTS.

There is need, it seems to me, of more teaching on the subject of contributing to the support of religious work. I have read THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN regularly for a number of years, yet I can recollect but few articles in which this most important matter received the consideration that it deserves. And this is the more surprising to me since I know that there are many able men in the Church who feel strongly that there is room for a mighty elevating of the standard here. I do not refer so much to the amount contributed as to the manner or spirit in which it is given. Not long ago, in conversation with a friend who had recently been interested in the building of a new church, this subject was discussed, and his testimony was, "It is almost impossible to get money for church work by a direct appeal to the people. The money must be 'raised' by some 'scheme'—you must have a social or a bazaar, or something of that sort!" The congregation of which he spoke may have been one of those exceptions of which "Knoxonian" discoursed so pointedly a little time since; but I am afraid it was not one of a very small minority. I do not wish now to discuss, directly, the "social" question. Let me satisfy my conscience by the declaration that the amount handed into a church treasury as the proceeds of the ordinary social is very far from being an offering without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; and pass on to point out

(1) That the necessity for socials as a means of raising money would cease if the people were alive to their duty and privilege in coming up to the help of the Lord.

(2) That, therefore, as the growth of certain weeds indicates poverty of soil, the prevalence of such socials shows a low state of spiritual life; and

(3) That the pastor and office-bearers who encourage such socials are not only neglecting the training of their flock on a most important point of religious duty, but are actually debauching the consciences of the people.

For convenience, I use the word "social" to cover all money-raising schemes, as opposed to reliance upon the direct, systematic and (if not spontaneously—at least) freely-given offerings of the people.

Unless we are prepared to deny that it is a duty, just as binding as any other, to give in some reasonable proportion to our ability, for the support of religious work, prepared to deny that giving is an act of worship, I am unable to see wherein these money-raising devices are much less heathenish than the prayer-wheels of the Chinese. I know some very zealous people who speak and act as if the conversion of the world depended on the amount of work done by themselves and others. If they admit Providence to a share of the work at all it is only as their agents—they are the principals. Whatever formal acknowledgment of it may seem to be implied in certain prayer-phrases which they have got into a habit of using, they practically overlook the truth that God, out of the infinite stores of His wisdom and power, has chosen a plan for the conversion of the world wherein He can call us to the high privilege of co-operation with Him. And, overlooking this, they naturally do not examine it in the light of the Bible records, which, if they did, they would discover this further truth, that our co-operation is important first and chiefly in respect to its influence upon ourselves. Diligent preaching and teaching of this would settle this "social" question—would quicken the spiritual life of the people—would bring down a fuller blessing upon mission work—and would, *ex parte crede*, enrich church and mission treasuries in mere count of dollars.

Without the blessing of the Lord our work is vain. Will His blessing follow contributions wheedled out of unwilling pockets by devices, too often of a questionable character? Will His blessing rest upon a Church which permits, even encourages, a resort to such devices for is there not in the fact that such devices are resorted to an implication dishonouring to Him.

I trust that some abler pen than mine will put this matter before our Church as it ought to be put before it. I trust that ministers and office-bearers will take it into prayerful consideration. If faithful, earnest sermons, winged with prayer, on such texts as Exodus xxxv. 5; 1 Chron. xxix. 9; Malachi i. 8 *et seq.*; and Luke xxi. 2, 3, 4, would not work something like a revolution in any such congregation as that to which the friend I have mentioned referred, that are we of all men most miserable, for our preaching and our faith alike are vain.

A MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY.

Phillips Brooks for spiritual impressions and impressiveness is the greatest minister in the American pulpit. Last week, in a course of lectures on the principal professions by eminent members of each, he addressed the students of Harvard College on the ministry. It is significant of the interest of the students in the

man and the subject that long before the hour the room was filled to overflowing.

Mr. Brooks has no narrow conception of the Christian ministry, of its work, of its demands, or of its worth. He believes that the clergyman should be a leader in every moral and religious movement. He believes that his field is the world, in the sense that every question relative to human welfare holds relations to, and makes demands upon, the minister. He believes the ministry need not limit the minister's growth as to opinions or conceptions of doctrines. The profession seems to him the noblest and broadest, and in many ways the most attractive and richest, in holy influences. Its promise of usefulness to a young man is auspicious. He says, as reported:

"Now, what of the ministry of the future? We look forward to a greater simplicity, and to a greater union of those two kinds of things, the natural and the supernatural. I know no difference between these two except that of progress; the supernatural of to-day may be the natural of to-morrow. And so a man sees his field growing larger. Things which were once arbitrary are now manifesting their essential natures. And there is to be a closer connection between the truth which religion teaches and the morality which it brings. One cannot hope to teach God, except as He folds Himself about our hearts. The institutions of the past will be filled with new vitality. A man who puts his hand to the plough of the ministry to-day puts himself before the riches of all ages. The ministers of the future may have a hard fight to maintain, but if they exercise the reality of strength, they will have no losing fight. No life is so fine as that one which cultivates itself for the good of its fellow-men. Such a man is saved from selfishness and conceit. He stands in a peculiar relation to the world of ideas and the world of action, and is demanded by both. If I am right, the ministry is the noblest of all professions."

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

THE NAME OF JESUS.

BY JOHN IMRIE, TORONTO.

Sweet name, what cadence in the very sound!
What heavenly music in the utterance found,
When whispered in the ear of dying saint,
Thou' spent with pain, and pulse and heart beat faint;
Yet, at the name of "Jesus" doth his eyes
Seek ours in love, and peace, and glad surprise,
And then forever close in sweet content
To open them in heaven—a life well spent!
Oh, Jesus! Thine the ever potent power
To charm, to heal, to bless, in trial's hour;
Let all the world Thy name with reverence hear,
And trust Thy power to save; with holy fear
Approach the footstool of Thy matchless grace
And find in Thee their soul's dear resting place!

SENSITIVENESS TO MORAL DANGER.

It is said that if the least breath of acid-tainted air pass over the delicate litmus paper, instantly its purple flashes out into red. The sudden change of the paper from purple to red is a better argument for the presence of the acid, for all practical purposes, than the most thorough analysis of the chemist. So there is a certain sensitiveness of the soul to the unseen but ever present moral atmosphere that enfolds the characters of others. We cannot avoid receiving impressions from those with whom we come in contact. By a mysterious but ever present law of our being we not only give but receive impressions.

This native susceptibility to impression would expose us to untold dangers were it not for the sensitive consciousness of the moral nature to the unseen influences which flow out from the characters of others. We cannot approach moral danger without knowing it. There are persons from whose very sight we shrink, whose very presence suggests evil unthought of before. It is impossible to enter an atmosphere freighted with poison invisible. Ere we know it, its presence has been detected by this sensitive consciousness, which is to the moral nature what the delicate litmus is to chemistry, and the alarm bell of the soul has been rung. This delicate sensitiveness to evil is something that ought to be cherished and cultivated, for though it brings new possibilities to pain, it in like measure strengthens the safeguards of virtue.

It is also well to see that there are no weak spots in the character where the germs of moral disease may find a lodgment. Men may walk unharmed amid an atmosphere loaded with malaria, or may breathe for a time air that is charged with the germs of disease without suffering harm, because the disease germs can find no weak or unprotected spot in which to begin their deadly work.

While in the world it is impossible to avoid inhaling a moral atmosphere, that is as disease-laden as the air of an overcrowded city or of a malarial district. But with a knowledge of the danger to which we are exposed, and armed with a robust and healthy spiritual constitution that stoutly resists and persistently throws off the impurities that assault and endanger, we may walk with safety the foulest paths and most perilous ways.

A story is related of an Arabian princess that aptly

illustrates the danger of having a single weak or unprotected spot in the soul nature. She was presented with an ivory casket by her teacher that was not to be opened for a year. When the year had passed, with trembling haste she unlocked the treasure; and lo! on the satin lining lay a shroud of dust; the form of something beautiful, but the beauty gone. A slip of parchment contained these words: "Dear pupil, learn a lesson in your life. This casket, when enclosed, had upon it only a spot of rust; by neglect it has become the useless thing you now behold, only a blot on its pure surroundings. So a little stain upon your character will, by inattention and neglect, mar a bright and useful life, and in time leave only the dark shadow of what might have been."—*Associate Reformed Presbyterian.*

WILL NOT GOD PROVIDE?

I do not doubt that I am speaking to some here this morning who have had many losses and crosses in their business. Instead of getting forward they are going back, and perhaps even bankruptcy stares them in the face; or possibly, being hard-working men, they may have been long out of employment, and nothing seems now to be before their eyes but the starvation of themselves and their little ones. It is hard to bear this. This is an iron that entereth into the very soul. But dost thou doubt, O believer, dost thou doubt as to whether God will fulfil His promise, wherein He said, "His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure?" Wouldst thou question the advice of thy Master: "Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek?" "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them." And so you think that your Heavenly Father, though He knoweth that you have need of these things, will yet forget you! Perhaps your affliction will continue upon you till you dare to trust your God, and then it shall end. Full many there be who have been tried and sore vexed, till at last they have been driven in sheer desperation to exercise faith in God, and the moment of their faith has been the instant of their deliverance; they have seen whether God would keep His promise or not. And now, O true believer, what sayest thou to this picture? In the cold, cold winter, when the snows have fallen thick on every tree, and the ground is hard and crisp, ye have sometimes seen the charitable man open wide the window of his house and scatter crumbs along the white snow, and ye have seen the birds come from all the trees around, and there they eat and were satisfied. A slanderer, who lives next door, tells you that man starves his children. Do you believe him! Feed the sparrows and neglect the offspring of his loins! Give crumbs to birds and not feed his sons and daughters! You feel instinctively that the kind heart that remembers the fowls of heaven must yet more remember his own offspring. But what sayest thou to this picture concerning thyself? Thy God heareth the young ravens when they cry, and giveth liberally to all the creatures that His hand hath made.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

LIFE'S FRICTION.

Life is full of friction, and he who is most disposed to assert himself is the man who will feel the friction most unpleasantly; but that is just because he needs it most. Just as friction tends to wear down the irregularities of surface, and to reduce all that unduly asserts itself, even so the long friction of life is designed to modify our idiosyncrasies, and to check our selfishness, and to discipline our self-will, so that we may be the better fitted to play our part as the mirrors of Christ.

Have you ever thanked God for the trials and worries and disappointments and cares of life, because they are designed to bear so important a part in affecting your sanctification? What would become of us if we could have everything just as we might wish? Should we not become, like spoiled children, a nuisance to ourselves, from our peevish willfulness, and to everyone else with whom we might have to do? Yes; thank God for the long friction of life; but oh, let us see to it that we gain by it, and do not lose. I notice that some people seem injured by this very discipline, which is designed to benefit us; and, alas! not only worldly people. We are not surprised at that; but even true Christians seem sometimes only driven further from God by the very things that should bring us nearer to Him. The long worry and the many cares of life should make us feel how needful it is to lean hard on Him who alone can calm the stormy waves of life's rough sea, and make all things alike work together for our good. But how common a thing it is to meet with backsliding and unstable souls, who will tell you that they have had so much trouble and care, and so many difficulties in life, that they have lost the hold they once had on God, and no longer walk with Him, as they once did; and when this is so, the friction of life does harm instead of good.—*Rev. W. H. Aitken.*