

Lessons From a Great Career.

BY J. B. GAMBRELL

A few days ago D. L. Moody died at his home in Northfield. After C. H. Spurgeon, he was the most noted Christian worker of this generation. The two men were strikingly alike in many particulars, and they were the warmest of friends. Both were short and heavy. Each had a fat unintellectual looking face. Both were men of great plainness of dress and speech. Both had great stores of common sense. Each had running through him a rich vein of quaint humor—Spurgeon more than Moody. Both were orthodox clean up to the hilt and fervently evangelical. Each was incessant in labors. Each had many interests in hand. Each depended solely on the Word of God and the Spirit of God for success. Each believed in predestination clear through, and both were more than commonly fruitful in resources and active in the employment of means. Neither was a graduate of any institution, but both founded and were at the head of important institutions. That two such men, for a generation, should lead God's forces among men carries great lessons. Those lessons need to be gotten by heart by the rest of us, especially the younger workers.

Spurgeon was raised amid the ever-recurring exigencies of a preacher's home. He came up to hear practical questions discussed every day—how a little money could be made to serve the many wants of a rather large family. He was forced to learn the needful lesson of self-denial, and the practical lesson of turning a penny to the best account. Without this training Spurgeon would have been little prepared for his work in London.

A few years ago Mr. Moody's mother died. She had happily lived to an advanced age and saw her son in the midst of his great and glorious work. Mr. Moody made a talk at her funeral in his plain, straight-forward way. Standing with his hand on the head of the coffin, he told of the simple piety and strong faith and purpose of the dead woman. She was left a widow with a large family. They were so poor that sometimes some of the children had to lie in bed to keep warm, while the others put on all the clothes. He spoke of the bewilderment of joy that came to the family, when a kind neighbor drove up with a great load of wood, drawn by four horses, and threw it off at the door. It was almost more than they could believe. Amid penury and constant struggles the lad grew up; but he, standing by his dead mother, said: "We were never too poor to go to church or to learn our Bible lessons." Out of this struggle came a serious minded, hardened, trained worker—a chosen vessel to do a mighty work in the world. To such homes, rather than to the mansions of the great and rich, must we look for the great men in the front rank of God's army. Poverty, if it conquers a family, is a direful calamity, but if the family conquer it by strong faith, high purpose, and the practice of industry, economy and shifty management, then poverty becomes a ministering angel, sent forth to minister to those who shall inherit the earth.

The invaluable lessons received in his rearing made the features of Moody's life work, and were the last on his lips as he gave his dying message to his children. "I have been a very ambitious man," said the dying hero to his children, "not to accumulate money, but to leave you all plenty to do." He then charged them to look after the schools and not let the work suffer. The same blessed work which had filled his heart and hands during his busy life he gave them as their heritage. He could wish nothing better for them. And, indeed, it is the highest possible ambition for any one to be usefully connected with that kingdom which shall gather into it the glories and blessings of all worlds. The dying words of this great saint are commended to those parents whose ambition is to leave their children rich and to put them beyond labor. Alas! for the ruin that comes to families through wealth intended only to pamper the flesh and not to serve God. If there is any truth in religion, Mr. Moody was right.

I am writing this Christmas day, amid the waste and sin of the festive season. While I write there rise before me multitudes of ruined sons and daughters of wealthy families, who never got the idea that life ought to be a service. With money to spend they sought worldly pleasures only, and in the chase they fell into the snare of the evil one and went to ruin. In many cases, the money the parents robbed God of, was at last exorted from them to pay the wages of sin. May God the Holy Spirit, write the dying words of Dwight L. Moody on the hearts of the parents of America. Leave your children, brother, sister, plenty to do.

Mr. Moody's preaching carries a much needed lesson for this generation of preachers and people. Plain! It was plain as plainness itself. He delighted, like Spurgeon, in Saxon words, which were short and strong. His sermons came right out of the Scripture: To hear him was easy, but you never got the idea that he was a great preacher. Not at all. What he said came to you as something you knew as well as he did, only perhaps you never thought of it that way exactly. Taking the sermons we heard him preach as specimens, and they no doubt were, his preaching had the finest qualities—just

the qualities which many would never notice, so good were they. You did not see the sermons; you saw the thing the sermon was about. You certainly saw the thing he was talking about, and that is the business of a sermon. The best hearing is when the atmosphere is least disturbed by other sounds. Moody talked. A short, stocky man in a business suit, looking as if he might be a well-to-do butcher or shoe merchant, stood before you. His voice is excellent and carries the ring of confidence. He begins in a direct, business way. There is nothing of the preacher tone in his voice, but the tone of command. If he wishes anything done, he says so in the tone of a strong, kind commander. It is done at once. He reads his hymn and maybe stops to comment as he goes. Then he reads his Scripture lesson. You know he believes it. Then he preaches—talks. There is no oratory, no effort, but plain talk about the things in the text. He believes it all. You feel he does, and so clear is it, why shouldn't he believe it and you too? Never do the slightest openings appear for a doubt to slip in. Where is doubt? It is excluded. After this manner the sermon went to the class, delivered in a conversational tone, strong enough to reach the limits of the crowd. There is very little gestulation, and no attempt at oratory, and yet it is speaking of the highest order.

The truth delivered is left with the Spirit to use. But the preacher is now transformed into a worker. Every arrangement has been made in advance to follow the lead of the Spirit in dealing with individual souls. In the after meetings the truth is applied and enforced in face to face meetings. Here Moody's rare common sense and good management comes into full play. Mr. Moody, beyond most preachers, held to the truth and spirit to save and sanctify; but beyond most men he planned his work and brought every possible human agency into full play. This is back to the Bible. A great quality in Mr. Moody's preaching and work was his rigid pursuit of the main things. He never ran off after the small questions which engage so many writers and preachers. These small questions he treated very much as an earnest workman would treat a fly that might light on his nose. A slight brush was enough, and all the attention the fly would receive. By methods so simple, so plain, this great servant of God succeeded. These are the real methods of the true preacher. It is the truth made plain and blessed of God that saves. Let us not forget this lesson.

But running through the life and work of this servant of God was an ever controlling purpose. You could not mistake it. He was aiming to do something as much as in him lay for the world's good. This purpose, like a strong running stream, drew everything into the current and swept everything on in the direction of his godly life.—Standard.

Prayer as the Discoverer of Want.

It is nothing against the truth that much prayer fails for want of definiteness—a truth of which we have to remind ourselves constantly—to say that the object of prayer is quite as much to enable a man to find out what he wants as it is the means of his telling it. No need is greater, in this increasingly noisy world, than the need of knowing what we want. This is a matter genuinely subject to inspiration, and the last thing to be taken for granted; yet nothing is supposed to be so settled, so axiomatic, as that a man knows what he wants.

To this assumption that we know what we want, that here is no field for discovery, are due half the repulses which we meet in prayer. It is this sense of discovery alone which can lift prayer out of the region of mere duty, and set it on a level with the passions of the soul. But what chance of discovery or surprise is there for those who have just the same subject matter forever,—meat, drink, raiment, or the obvious things of life? The chief defect in the prayers of the heathen was, according to Jesus, that most of them might have been taken for granted, and that they had ruled out of their prayer the tracts where surprise is possible. How many men are rebelling against the course of their prayer because it has become just memoriter praying for things they used to want, or things they think they ought to want, while all the time the great dim restlessness in them comes to no expression and no conclusion. Men reproach themselves for not having more fervor in prayer, when the wonder is that they have as much fervor as they do, if you consider what they pray for. Far more important than that two or three should agree on what they want, is it that a man should agree with himself as touching his desires. Looked into more searchingly, the apparent unconcern of God, the most chilling suspicion which we experience in prayer, comes to signify only that the whole man was not present in the prayer. Divine things do not negotiate with a tenth of man, and the command which makes prayer difficult is, "Wherever thou art, be all there."

Happily there are times when our praying just goes a way of its own, regardless of what we were going to ask for, and in the process a light is struck upon something we want a great deal more. For a man who has been contending with God all along that what he wanted was this or that trifle, there can be no greater transformation than to discover that he is restless for a nobler thing than he ever gave himself credit for. It is an assurance of more manhood than he supposed himself to possess. Who has not felt, though ever so vaguely, the utter incongruity of his way of describing his own wants?

There is hardly any experience more liberating than the discovery of a great ignorance in one's self. And no freedom can be sweeter than that of the man who has for years walked hopelessly up and down in the narrow

definition of his own troubles, absolutely convinced that he knows just what they are, but who has now been let out into knowing that he never knew. The idea of relief through a new trouble, the cure of want by simply wanting enough, the peace which takes the place of distraction when we refund all little desires into one great one that orders the rest into their places, a man does not come to all this himself. It is the end of a very long and elaborate leading when a man enters his prayer thankful to know that here it is not half so much his place to show God what he wants as it is God's place to show him. Peace is to know, to utterly know and acknowledge and get to work upon, a want that is commensurate with all this inward stir and dissatisfaction.

There is something very disheartening about the easy dogmatism afloat nowadays concerning what "the people want," as if it were of all things the most obvious. The trouble is that, when you ask men what they want, you have put them at their supreme disadvantage, and, if they try to tell you, they will nearly always tell you the wrong thing. That is what is wrong about statistics. Christ did not ask the disciples what they wanted. He told them. The work of the prophet is not to ask people what they want, but to know more about it than they do, and tell them; to stare longer than the average man is capable of into the great nebula of his desires until it begins to clear into a face; to credit men with better desires than they ever confess to, and go on serving the real need of them long before they come to themselves enough to know what it is. The reason why prophecy is dying out is because those who ought to be prophets are going to men, rather than to God, to find out what men want.

If we could believe what men say about their chief wants today, we should have to believe that with a very large proportion of our fellowmen their greatest want is to be cared for, to be noticed, to be loved. How much social service and religious energy and church organization is devoted wholly to the filling of this supposed want, and how little it progresses in the making of manhood! The number of people who are sure they could do better in another city, or that they can be happy where they are only on condition that people should care more for them than they do, is legion, and our best service to them is, with all possible kindness, not to take them at their word. It might go without saying that we want to be loved, and yet men repeat without ceasing, in their prayers, something so obvious that the veriest stranger in the street car could see it without a word being said about it. Let a man harden into thinking this to be his real want, lest one should sink to the level where this really is his chief desire, God holds a man in many arrests and breaks him down in one disappointment after another, until he comes within hearing of the one want whose office it is to end the disturbance of his nature, the wish to love rather than be loved, to live in outgoings, to take the initiative, and so to be free.

The reality of prayer still lies ahead of him who thinks that prayer can only begin when he really knows what he wants. To know what one wants is the greatest answer to prayer. Our needs would turn out to be not so many, after all, if we could only introduce some order and precedence among them. All unknown to us, the real reason why we so often dread prayer is that we feel, and have always felt, unequal to telling what the trouble is. So far it has never occurred to us that it is rational to go to prayer in order to find out. God is a jealous God, and prayer will keep on being a failure and disappointment so long as the man who prays tries himself to do the very thing that only God can do, or to make a preliminary of prayer the thing which is often the highest outcome of it. There come now and then days in which we are simply aware of a thorough-going unrest in ourselves,—and such days are getting very numerous in these times. The very wording of such experiences would itself be the greatest relief, but that is just what we are incapable of till we are taught in prayer. God gives our vague wants back to us, reasoned, illuminated, ordered and touched into strange grandeur which we never suspected in them, and in the very disclosure of our gravest wants making us feel more than ever like men. Nothing can so add to the liberty of prayer, nothing, perhaps, can so remove from it the careworn and anxious quality which so often makes it forbidding, as to feel that we are never more welcome there than when we know not what we want.—Sunday School Times.

Gospel of Wonder.

BY J. P. MCCASKEY.

In a world like this the gospel of wonder should be taught second only to the gospel of grace. In the schools it should be taught to the children among their earliest lessons, and all the way; and later, side by side with that greater gospel in which the Christian world believes. In these early years, when happy childhood peoples fairyland with its bright creations, when the imagination is so easily roused to activity, and the eye sparkles and the cheek is aglow because the heart is awakened, it is then, when the mind is plastic, and impressions are deepest, that the lessons of beauty, of fitness, of wisdom, of power, may best be taught—the lesson of goodness, of love and constant care by day and by night, through sun and storm, in all the round of the majestic year. Here should be learned this gospel of wonder, whose influence upon the forming mind and mouldering thought can never be lost or forgotten.

"Hail, holy Light! offspring of heaven first born!" What is it? from what exhaustless fountain does it flow? What is its sublime office? Who made that sevenfold