

culture which she has never acquired. But we have also many people of good birth who are not particularly cultivated nor very wealthy—who have, in fact, nothing but their class prejudices upon which to found their pretensions to superiority. These may be narrow-minded, but they are charmingly mannered; they know just what should be done, and how it should be done, under all circumstances. What wouldn't some of the Shoddys give for such knowledge? Good breeding is always a good thing, and indispensable to pleasant society. It matters little how much one may know, how much money he may have, or how pious he may be, if he have the manners of a boor he cannot be welcome member of any society. There are, indeed, some who seem to be innately polite, and who are so anxious to give pleasure to all and offence to none, that they rarely make a mistake and very soon acquire the easy manners of well-bred people; but these are in the minority, and we find too many of our self-made people content to be judged by a wrong standard, holding that where there is plenty of money there is little need of manners. Such people have been brought up roughly and obliged to shoulder their way through the world, and they cannot realise that it is impossible to shoulder their way through society. Again, we have many among the commercial community who consider themselves people of class—not that they have had much in the way of grandmothers to boast of, except that they were possibly honest, hard-working, God-fearing women, who brought up their children in industry and good principles, and now their children's children occupy positions which must make the ghosts of the good old grandmothers stare, if anything can be supposed to surprise a respectable ghost. In England it is said to take three generations to make a gentleman, but here we turn out fair specimens in one—that is if we have good material to work upon and catch the embryo gentleman young enough, since it is really essential that even a Canadian gentleman should have some education and a fair amount of early training in *les convenances*. Montreal can boast of many true ladies and gentlemen who are the growth of one, or at most two, generations; but it is not right that these people should consider themselves real upper crust and regular patricians because they or their fathers made their money many years ago. Now, if we could only mix all these classes up as Buttercup did the babies, it would be an advantage to each and injure none. The cultivated people might gain many new ideas from those sturdy self-reliant natures who have forced their way from penury through many privations to their present position, wherein all the luxuries and refinements of life are possible to them if they only knew how to enjoy them, and this they can best learn by contact with refined and cultivated natures. Aristocratic people, too, might gain broader views and begin to realise that there are other things in life worth having besides grandmothers, however good or great they may have been; and arrogant, ignorant, self-made people would soon have their rough corners rubbed off by contact with more smooth and polished natures; and the general result would be a more friendly state of feeling between all classes, greater leniency towards each other's shortcomings, and a greater respect for the good traits which are to be found in all if we will only allow ourselves to see them.

N. Clitheroe.

TO YOUNG MEN.

A Sermon preached in Zion Church, Montreal, by Rev. Alfred J. Bray, January 11th, 1880.

It seems to me a good thing to devote an evening service now and again to a special talk about and to young men. I hope the time has not come—I hope the time will not come—when the pulpit shall cease to have words of warning and guidance and inspiration and hope for young men. Preachers ought to know a good deal about the life men have to live on the earth—for they are by calling and profession students of the Bible; and the Bible is a study of humanity as it stands related to God. There, as in a parable, they see the working of every possible passion—the result of obedience to law and order and God, and the penalty that surely hunts down the sinner. The preacher is—every preacher is a student of the Bible, and for myself I hold that he should be also a student of humanity as it now is. For although time works but little change in that which is the real abiding nature of man, it does work great changes in the general condition in which men have to live their lives. Why in many instances preaching has grown comparatively valueless is because we fail to recognize the altered circumstances of people. We wander still among Oriental scenes, and speak a modernised and Anglicised Hebrew or Greek, instead of taking only thought and great principles which time cannot destroy nor change and applying them to men now. The Bible is full of most practical teaching, and the preacher who will may find there great storehouses of priceless treasure. But he must speak to his own times in open ears to thinking minds and living hearts. I am not sure that the universal practice of taking a text for a sermon has not grown from a mere conventionalism into an abuse. The idea seems to be to first select a text and say all that can be said by way of explanation and support of it. As if the first purpose of all preaching is not to inform the mind, to quicken the heart, to polarise the will, to bring all the man under Divine influence, but rather to support the doctrine which finds, or seems to find expression in the quoted passage. The truth is that we have fallen into

ways precisely similar to those into which the Scribes, or the lawyers, had fallen when Jesus Christ was born into the life of the world. They took the Decalogue, the moral law—the prophecies of Isaiah, the glorious visions of Ezekiel, the Psalms of David, and read them, and expounded them, and what was not mere history—attractive only as dead greatness is attractive—was dull, dry, and lifeless axiom. The Bible was never intended to answer such a purpose. Read the sermons of Moses, of Elijah, of Isaiah, and Jeremiah and Daniel, and you will find that their text was the need of the people and the hour—they dealt with every phase of life, borrowed illustrations from surrounding things and passing events, and judged men, and warned them, and advised them according to the teachings of eternal truth and righteousness. Whoever may come to captivate us by beauty of life and power of speech, Christ will ever remain the most complete man and the greatest preacher the world has ever seen. And if you read Christ's sermons, His parables and speeches, you cannot fail to be struck with His marvellous appreciation of the times in which He lived—of the kind of people to whom He spoke, and of the nature of their needs. The corn waving ripe and yellow in the autumn breeze—the water gleaming at the bottom of a well—the birds filling the sky with great anthems—the shrinking child, clinging to its mother's arm with sweet unconscious trust—each gave Him a text, and from each He preached great sermons, every word of which was full of Heaven's love and truth, and all of which went home to the heart of His hearers winged with beauty from the loveliness of His own life. You remember with what directness He preached to the Pharisees, and the Scribes, and the woman of Samaria, to Nicodemus, and the young man who wanted heaven at little cost! He spoke for the need and the hour, and declared a living gospel of power and peace to living men and women. I am going to try and follow that Divine example in my sermon to young men to-night. I am not going to tell the story of some Hebrew youth, and ask you to copy the original—for, so far as my own experience goes, the intelligent hearer of such sermons occupies himself—if he does not amuse himself—with drawing comparisons and contrasts in his own mind, and proving to himself how utterly the cases are unlike, and how the principles which applied to the one cannot be applied to the other. I will avoid that as far as I can, and speak to and for your life here and now.

And to begin at the beginning—your life and work in the world. For that is first. "That is not first which is spiritual," said the Apostle, "but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." The first need of which we are conscious is the need for food. When I speak to young men my intention is to apply myself to those who have taken possession of themselves—have emerged from childhood and broken away from leading-strings—have entered the world's great arena of conflict—in a word, have undertaken for themselves, yet who do not allow that their ways are irrevocably settled—that their calling in life has been pre-determined, and that they have only to follow on the blind impulses of each day. In childhood and early youth, of course, we are mere creatures of circumstances—a handful of driftweed thrown out on the flowing river of time. The young life breaks forth like a spring that bursts up in a field and says: Here I am, what can you do with me? where shall I run and what shall I do? quench some traveller's thirst, nourish some bit of moss, or destroy some creeping thing? And in those days the stream of life must run into whatever channel it can find, irresponsible as to the way, undetermined as to the end. But there comes a time when youth breaks into manhood; when each one stands on the crest of a hill, looks back on the winding ways he has been led, and on upon the ways he must travel. What has been done by him and for him cannot be undone—the past must stand; but from that point he may choose for himself how and where he will walk. Sometimes a certain path seems marked out of necessity for a young man. Outside influences are brought to bear upon him; the pressing need for providing life with ways and means condemn spirits to undertake most irksome and unwelcome tasks. Very often that continues, and men find themselves through life doing that for which they have nor mind nor heart. But that is owing to personal weakness—to a lack of force of character and decision of will. It seems to me that one may bring himself to a deciding point in this important matter of work for bread and comfort; he may take the measure of his own capacities, the power of his own personality, and then undertake the work for which he is best fitted. The Lord never intended, I presume, to have anything like a failure in life. There is work suited for every kind of capacity. There is no work lying undone for lack of a worker, and there is no worker who need starve and die for want of work. The world is adjusted to humanity, and humanity is adapted to the world. No pair of hands need be idle; no brain need give up thinking; no inventor need imagine the world is not ripe for his inventions; no poet need curb his fancy for song; no artist need sigh and say, "The world will not have fine art productions." The world will have whatever is worth the having; and the matter of real importance for a man is to find what kind of work he can do, and then do it. To a young man it is not too late for him to mend his ways, and I would say to each one of you: If you have no sort of mind and heart for the work you are doing, make a desperate effort to change the nature of it. But to you who are just starting life, just launching yourself upon the work and care and trouble of the world,