

## A CLEAN TONGUE.

At the close of an evangelistic meeting in a country town, I was requested to speak with a young man who remained behind under spiritual anxiety. He was a working man, well dressed, with a very grave, and yet sweet expression. He was not well informed, but eager to get instruction. He told me that he had been brought under conviction at an evangelistic meeting about a week before. His terror had been great on the first discovery of his sin, but as glimpses of the Gospel gradually opened to his mind, the fear was diminishing, and hope beginning to dawn in his heart. His words were few, and his intelligence defective. To a question regarding the effects of his new-born spiritual earnestness upon his life, he replied, with much simplicity, "My tongue is cleaner now, sir." Explanations followed, from which I learned that he had been given to the use of vile and profane language. This seemed to have been the besetting sin that bulked largest in his view when the spiritual eye began to open. He saw the abomination, and with the instinct of the new birth, although yet only a babe, he began to throw it off.

The expression arrested me. How close the likeness here between soul and body, both in disease and in health. Next after the condition of the pulse, it is the state of the tongue that the physician desires to know, as an index to the patient's health. Foulness on the tongue is not the disease, but it is an effect which the disease produces, and so becomes a symptom of the disease. When the ailment is cured, the coating of uncleanness disappears from the tongue, and the organ resumes its pure natural color. The moral foulness of the tongue that indicates spiritual disease in the heart is very loathsome and very rife. Wherever boys are left without careful

parental training, they seem to glide into profanity as if by a law of gravity. The peculiar aggravation adheres to this sin that it defiles all on whom it falls. Sounds reach ears as light reaches eyes; one cannot escape. While you are walking along the street on your lawful business these sounds fall on your ears—these blasphemous thoughts are thereby conveyed to your mind—engraved, it may be, on your memory, so that you cannot wash them off.

When the physician finds the tongue of his patient foul, he does not occupy himself with efforts to scrape the coating off. He administers remedies with the view of reaching and removing the malady that is coursing through the system with the life-blood. If he succeed in subduing the fever that throbs in the heart, the incrustations will of their own accord quickly drop off from the tongue. This method holds good also in the spiritual disease. We must reach the root. The swearer cannot cast off his profanity, and remain otherwise as he was. When he gets a new heart, the lips will be found renewed also. When he comes to Christ for pardon of his sin, then he will begin to cease from sinning. It is a secret of the Lord, revealed to them that fear him, but concealed from others, that a man does not really loathe and dread his sin until it is forgiven. It is when he knows that it shall not condemn him that he puts it away. He never really learns to hate it till he knows that it has crucified Christ. The Apostle Peter writes a list of impurities that disciples should cast away from their hearts and their lips—"all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings;" but he does not expect that these can be shaken off, except by the power of God's forgiving love already experienced, for he says, lay these aside, "if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."