

SAME OLD EXCUSES.

MODERNS FIND MUCH THE SAME REASONS AS THE ANCIENTS.

NOT ACCEPTING CHRIST.

A Striking Modern Application of the Gospel Parable of the Wedding Feast—All Kinds and Conditions of Men Putting off the Day of Salvation Till a More Convenient Season.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1903, by William Bailey, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Chicago, March 1.—In this sermon the preacher gives striking modern application to the parable of the wedding feast and the varied excuses sent by those who absented themselves, but who desired to conceal the real reason. The text is Luke xlv, 13: "And they all with one consent began to make excuse."

It is comparatively seldom that men are convinced by argument. In every period the great discoverer or philosopher, however irrefutable his arguments, has been treated with incredulity and sometimes with ridicule. The little children used to point their fingers to their foreheads when the Genoa sea captain passed by, and all Europe called Columbus crazy because he believed in circumnavigation.

But though argument and fact are often futile there are two wizards who can always charm—he who can tell a story and he who can paint a picture. With one flash the artist of the brush or pen can carry the truth home. The public speaker who wields the greatest influence to-day is not the scientist or the logician, but the orator who can tell the common people what a thing is like. Christ nearly always spoke in parables. His analogies were the wheat and the tares and the mustard seed and the birds of the air and the figs of the valley. Everybody can understand a similitude.

One of these matchless similitudes is the scene of the text. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a feast to which many guests have been invited. Manners and customs change, but in all periods and in all lands the idea of a feast has been familiar. They have been celebrated from time immemorial. Laban made a great feast when he gave his daughter Leah in marriage to Jacob. Archelaus made a great feast for those who came to his father's funeral. Kenilworth castle blazed and the cannons boomed during the days of Elizabeth, and courtiers drank to the health of the queen.

Let us examine the excuses by which the men of old evaded this feast and see how closely they resemble the excuses by which men of the present day try to justify themselves in their refusal to sit down at the marriage banquet of the Lamb. First, the capitalist's excuse. Hardly had the ancient banquet table been prepared when he can see a courier's horse dash to the house of the host. The messenger is dressed in the liveried costume of one of the rich men of the east. He dismounts and knocks at the front door. When the servant opens that door, the messenger hands in a scroll which reads something like this: "My dear friend, much to my regret, I find it impossible to be with you to-night. I know you expected me, but I have just closed a big deal. I have become the owner of a large tract of land, and I must go out and see it. I pray these have my excuses. Though I am compelled to be absent in body, yet I shall be with you to-night in spirit. Adieu, my dear sir, until we meet at our own table." When the good man of the house receives this letter, his eye flashes. The Bible distinguishes between the rich and the poor in this episode. "Then the master of the house being angry"—He read between the lines of that refusal. He knew that this capitalist was making a poor excuse; he knew that the capitalist as an intelligent investor would never have bought that land unless he had first seen it, examined it, and ascertained that its title deeds were all right. The good man may have had his suspicion that the capitalist of the east, now that he was a great landowner, felt a little above his old landowner and therefore may have thought it was not dignified for him to mingle with ordinary guests at a common banquet, and thus he stayed away. So we find that the hardest men and women to reach in a gospel sense are the rich people. They do not always think it respectable to associate with representatives of the masses in a church pew. They would be willing to go to heaven if they could only go in a gilded chariot, as a king might go to Westminster Abbey and be crowned. They would gladly go if they could only bribe their way there with a million dollar check. But they are not willing to be supplanted after the Bread of Life when their own granaries are full of winter supplies and their thrashing floors crowded with the threshers beating and bruising the grain.

Then man, I would like to speak a few plain, blunt words to you. There are certain blessings that money cannot buy. First, it cannot buy health. Money may enable the consumptive to live among the flowers, and it may make him an invalid's earthly life, but, in the broad sense, money cannot buy health. If money could buy health, the late Cornelius Vanderbilt would never have struggled on as a helpless invalid and been carried out to the tomb when yet a young man. If money was all-powerful, that Broadway merchant who had recovered his sight a few years ago, he offered \$1,000,000 to any surgeon whose knife would cut his curtain of the night in twain.

Neither will money buy love. Money may buy sympathy. It may make servants and so-called friends

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how and cringe before us, but the songstress of love is not a hireling who sings her seraphic strains to the jingling accompaniment of golden coins. True love is won by the heart, not by the purse. True love is found smiling as winsomely in a cottage as in a palace. Neither, O rich man, can you with money buy your way into heaven. If you have no time to seek God in his house on earth, you will not be able to find Christ in mansions in the skies. If you do not honor your Saviour before the angels, who are now assembled about the great white throne of the celestial city, "How much did he leave?" asked a gentleman in reference to a certain deceased rich man. "He left everything," was the answer. "His shroud had no pocket, so far as I could see."

Whom in modern life does this stock owner represent? He symbolizes the practicing doctor or lawyer or small merchant or manufacturer or mechanic or salaried employe engaged in a daily struggle for livelihood. He represents, as Matthew Henry well wrote, the man with "the inordinate care and concern about this world which keeps him from Christ and his grace." He represents the father and husband who on Saturday night says, "Well, I am too tired to go to church to-morrow and do God's work. It is all well enough to think about religion, but the simple fact is, in this strenuous earthly life I must look after my business and keep looking after it all the time." He represents the business man who at first does not intend to do wrong, but, little by little, he allows his business to crowd out his duties to Christ. First, he gives up prayer meeting on account of business; then his daily reading of the Bible; then his Sunday services. Little by little he allows himself to drift away from God until at last the invitation to the gospel banquet falls upon unheeding ears.

The inordinate desire for accumulating wealth has destroyed many a soul. A few score years ago a steamer crowded with passengers was pushing its way over the waters of the Mississippi river. Upon the deck were a great number of California miners returning from the goldfields. Suddenly that steamer struck a sunken wreck and began to sink. The women and the children were taken off in lifeboats. The men were compelled to leap into the water and cling to the floating spars until they could be rescued. Just before the steamer foundered a man rushed up to the deck and leaped into the water and clung to the floating spar. But instead of floating like the rest of the men he sank like a lump of lead. Afterward his body was recovered, and the reason of the sinking was explained. While the other passengers of the sinking vessel were preparing rafts and putting on life

THOUSANDS LISTEN

To The Strange Tale of Mrs. James Bradley—What Dodd's Dyspepsia Tablets Did For Her.

"No tongue can tell what I have suffered," says Mrs. James Bradley of Smith's Cove, Digby Co., N. S. And when it is explained that Dyspepsia caused her suffering thousands of Canadians will echo, "That's true, sure enough." These thousands have Dyspepsia themselves and they know. But let these thousands listen to the whole of Mrs. Bradley's story and if they profit by it as they should, they will stop moaning over Dyspepsia pains and turn instead to singing the praises of Dodd's Dyspepsia Tablets.

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"I advise all who suffer as I have to use Dodd's Dyspepsia Tablets and never to be without them."

preserves this man had been below decks riding the miners' trucks. Under his garments, strapped around his waist, were found bags of gold. It was his desire for wealth that destroyed him. So we find that there are thousands upon thousands of men and women who refuse to come to the Lord's banquet because, like the drowning passenger of the Mississippi river, or like the owner of five yoke of oxen, they would prefer to stay away to make money. Such men feel that they would be willing for a time even to barter away their chance of heaven if they could only sell Christ, as did Judas, for thirty pieces of silver. O my friends, I beg and plead with you not to sell your divine birthright for a mere mess of pottage. Stop! In God's name! Stop before it is too late.

But, hark! Another knock is heard at the door of the good man's house. "Aha," you say, "think of the foolish excuse this third expected guest has sent! He says that he is a bridegroom and that therefore cannot come. Why did he not do as Mr. Moody said he ought to have done—go to the banquet hall and take his wife along?" But, my friend, this excuse of the bridegroom ought not to be to you an object of derision. Of all the excuses which Christ stated in the parable I think this one was the most plausible and the most rational. The bridegroom in the east, by the custom of that time, might be looked upon leniently for answering as he did. The Hebrews considered marriage one of the most sacred and important events of a human being's life. Every young girl spent her time chiefly in preparing for her nuptial day. She was always spinning linen and making garments for the wedding froisseseau. Every young man was taught that his duty to the world and to God was to marry. He did not enter into this marriage relationship in a haphazard way, as do many of the young people of the present time. He did not marry upon a momentary impulse. But the young people were often affianced for years before the wedding day. Then, by the old Hebrew as well as by the Roman law, a bridegroom was absolutely independent of all military and to a great extent, of all civil obligations for a whole year. After the wedding night for twelve long months he was allowed to stay at home under his own roof. So when the bridegroom of the east sent a refusal to come to the banquet he practically said, as hundreds and thousands of wives and mothers are now saying: "I cannot afford to come to Christ's banquet at the present time. I have my home duties to attend to. I pray thee to have me excused."

But, my dear friends, can the husband and the wife truly attend to and fulfill their domestic relations unless they first have been to the marriage banquet of the Lamb? No, no. You know that no husband and father is truly a well equipped parent unless he is a Christian man; you know that no wife is truly an independent woman unless she is a Christian woman. No wife and mother is able to bravely confront the sorrows of the home unless she is a Christian woman. Sooner or later troubles and awful troubles will knock at every bedroom door and say, "Woman, you cannot afford to say, like the bridegroom of old, that you cannot come to Christ on account of your domestic obligations. The simple fact is your home duties and sorrows ought to be mighty inspirations to send you to the feet of Christ."

Besides, parents, how can you have the right influence over your children unless you are consecrated Christian men and women? How can a father and mother tell their children how to love the Lord and use themselves have accepted the invitation to the gospel banquet? Can the blind lead the blind? Can something come from nothing? If you, O parents, desire your children's lives to be redolent with the perfume of righteousness and their hearts and lips to be musical with the songs of heaven, you must take care that they are surrounded with heavenly influences while they are young. If you want them to be at the gospel banquet, you must lead the way and not yourselves answer the invitation with a frivolous excuse.

Let us try to generalize the excuses of the hundreds of other guests under two simple headings. First, I believe that all with one consent began to make excuse because they were unwilling at that time to give up their sins. To hear some people talk, one would suppose that the greatest enemy of the Christian church to-day is indifference. I do not believe it. I believe that the reason you and I do not come to Christ, if we are not already Christians, is because we are not ready to give up our pet sins. We do not stand before God in an attitude of a doubter. We stand in the attitude of defiance. We stand wrapped around by the polluted garment of sin. "And deliberate sin, what is it?" once cried out Joseph Parker. "It is a shut hand, a clinched fist, an upraised arm, the muscles to the full tension, and the object God Almighty's face." Sin is the cause of ninety-nine in every hundred refusals to come to Christ; not skepticism, not infidelity, not agnosticism, not doubt. If I as a messenger of God come to you with the gospel invitation and you refuse to come, I know that in all probability, deep down in your heart, you are concealing some secret sin which you refuse to give up.

The next reason why "they all with one consent began to make excuse" was because they expected at some future time to accept the gospel invitation. This is a most natural supposition to make in interpreting the text. They might have stayed away and made no excuse, but then the host would have been offended and would never have invited them again. They wanted to keep his good will so that he might invite them at some future time. If those

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