

### THE POWERLESSNESS OF THE GOSPEL.

"The gospel is the power of God unto salvation." Its potency is almost immeasurable. It can take the most degraded specimen of humanity—one in whom you can scarcely see a trace of the Divine image, one who is little above the beast in his aspirations and none in his life—and if allowed to work untrammelled, transform him into one of the fairest among the sons of God. It can take a nation baptized in human blood, the terror of civilized man, the active, vigilant, determined agent of Satan, and so influence it that it becomes one of the most efficient means in the hands of God for the suppression of wickedness and the promotion of truth.

But while this is true, there is a powerlessness in connection with the gospel which must not be forgotten. It has no power to act where it is not present. It will never influence a man who does not hear it. Though it to-day possesses the same power with which it was endowed by its Divine Author, it will never, and it never can, lead the race out from the kingdom of Satan and into the Kingdom of God until it comes into individual contact with all the children of men. It is like leaven, like the best of leaven. If you keep it enclosed in a vessel it will never change an atom of meal though you have ten thousand measures near by. Even if you bury the vessel containing the leaven, bury one hundred of them, in the meal no change will result; and this is the fault of neither the one nor the other. All that was needed was to bring the two into contact, and then a transmutation would have taken place.

The gospel has power, but it is a power which is inherent. If you put a stone into the meal no change is seen. It does not matter how large the stone is, nor how costly, nor how old, nor how beautiful, nor how skilfully placed in the meal, it is dead so far as power over the meal is concerned. And it is very unfortunate for our fallen race that much of the so-called gospel which men are so diligently inserting in the minds of their fellow mortals, is nothing more than stones which they have dug out of their own minds, shaped by their own hands, carved by their own skill, and inscribed with their own individuality—as impotent to do the race any good as are the idols which the heathen make and worship. And still men say the gospel of God's grace has lost its inherent power.

But not only is the gospel powerless to act where it is not present, not only can no substitute fulfil its office; it has no power to propagate itself. Has the leaven? No! It is carried from one particle to another and by one to another, and thus spreads throughout the whole mass. If any portion of meal is isolated and remains so, the leaven will never reach it; not even by an unseen influence. It must have a bridge upon which to cross or a boat to carry it over. It never leaps across chasms. If Christ intended the gospel to be self-propagating He would not have said to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation." It would be like commanding them to carry the lightning from the east unto west, or sending them throughout the whole world carrying the rays of the sun. Christ would have addressed to the gospel this command: "Go and make thyself known to all nations;" and he would have given it the power to obey. But he has given it no feet by which to climb the mountain side, or cross the burning desert, or tread the trackless forest. He has given it no wings to carry itself over rivers, lakes, and oceans to every place where man is found. He has not commissioned it to build bridges, nor ships, to make engines nor roads. It goes only where it is carried. And still men, sitting in indolence, enjoying the blessings of a civilization made possible by the gospel, openly declare that the

gospel of God's grace is a failure, because the kingdoms of this world have not become the Kingdoms of Christ. And who is to blame? The truth has been entrusted to man in order that he might carry it to every island of the sea, in order that into depths of every forest he might go bearing the good news of salvation, in order that every mountain fastness might resound with the echoes of the glad tidings of peace. And "how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace."

Not only is the gospel powerless to act where it has never gone, and powerless to go; it cannot enter an unwilling heart. It cannot push back the bolts and it will not break them. It cannot untie the knots and it will not cut them. This power was never given to it. It is no fault of the sun that his cheering, health-giving rays never enter the blind eye. He shines with undimmed splendor whether he is seen or not. Niagara has not lost her voice because the deaf man never hears her thunder tones. Leaven is no less leaven because it fails to change the nature of iron filings. And the gospel is no less the power of God unto salvation because men refuse to believe it; neither is it any less the gospel because it does not change the nature of horses. It has no power to save the man who will not be saved. It will stand at the door of his heart. It will knock and knock and never cease knocking until he who guards the entrance closes his ears so that he hears no sound. It will plead with the tenderest tones that the bolts may be withdrawn and the door flung open. It will speak of the cheerfulness it carries wherever it goes, the light and joy and peace that always follow in its train, of the door which it can open, and which no other power can, into the realms of unchanging, eternal felicity. But until man opens his heart the gospel will never come in. It leaps no fences, it takes down no bars, it unlocks no doors; and it cannot.

H. W. S.

### News of the Churches.

#### ST. JOHN, N. B.

Good audiences and interesting meetings. Some are turning to the Lord, others are "almost persuaded."

There has been seven additions since last report—five by confession and baptism, and two by relation. The annual excursion of the Sunday-school was held this year at Watters' Landing on the St John river. All enjoyed the delightful sail in the steamer "Clifton."

Bro. H. Murray preached at Nauwigewank the second Lord's day in July.

Dr. Belding of New York passed through the city on his way to the annual meeting at East Point, P. E. I.

#### DEER ISLAND, N. B.

Home again! This remark was made by the writer when I landed at the pleasant village of Richardsonville on Monday, July 6th.

I had been absent from home nearly eight weeks having been to New York for medical treatment. I could not, were I disposed, describe accurately my feelings during the last five months, during which time I have been a great sufferer, caused by a dangerous ailment of the kidneys. I assure THE CHRISTIAN readers that I had despaired of ever being cured, when on the thirteenth of May, Bros. James Ward and James Richardson called at my house and presented me with a purse of money (a donation) from the congregation at Lord's Cove to enable me to go to New York for medical treatment. So, on the 14th I started, and had not been gone many days when I had another surprise, viz., a donation of money from the congregation at Leonardville.

I am glad to write that I have returned home in better health, and am better prepared to do my Master's work, and to minister in holy things to the people on this Island, who have been so good towards me, and so very indulgent. I am very thankful to my heavenly Father that there is a chance (very small, though) for my ultimate restoration to health.

I have the pleasure also of reporting one addition, by baptism, to the congregation at Lord's Cove since my last report.

Lord Cove, N. B.

FRANK C. OVERBAUGH.

#### EAST RAWDON, N. S.

We have just closed a good meeting in East Rawdon, with seven added to the church, the brethren built up on their most holy faith, and much precious seed of the Kingdom sown in the hearts of many. Bro. E. C. Ford did the preaching. The interest increased to the close. We should have been pleased if Bro. and Sister Ford could have remained longer in this part. We have lots of work over here for such faithful workers as they; but they had arranged to go to Pictou county. We think it but doing justice to the cause of truth and righteousness to say that according to our judgment we do not know any one better qualified to do the work of an evangelist than Bro. E. C. Ford.

J. B. WALLACE

#### SHUBENACADIE, N. S.

The Quarterly Meeting held at this place and reported in my last letter, was continued over the second Lord's day, and notwithstanding the rain that fell almost incessantly all the week, our meetings were well attended, and a growing interest was manifest. Two made the good confession and were baptized, and the brethren seemed greatly encouraged. The church here is not large, numbering, perhaps, less than thirty, but is composed of as good brethren as we have in any place known to me. Their opportunities for doing good are encouraging. They have a nice little house in which to worship, and have a good standing among the people. But in order to be successful here in building up, a suitable man must be found to spend part of his time at least, laboring among this people. It was our privilege to spend but a few days with these brethren, but our stay was long enough to be assured that a good work can be done by the right kind of a man.

From Shubenacadie we went to spend a few days with the brethren at

#### EAST RAWDON.

Bro. John B. Wallace—not "Rev."—had urged us to come over and help him, which we consented to do. We began our meeting here on Wednesday, July 1st, and continued just thirteen days. We were favored with fine weather, having rain only one night. The interest increased from the very first. On Friday evening we had one confession, and another on Saturday. These were baptized on Lord's day morning. The meeting on Lord's day morning was well attended, and we were encouraged to continue through the week. As there were two other appointments in Rawdon for the afternoon and evening, it was thought best to have no other meetings in our house that day; so an appointment was made to preach for the brethren at the Gore in the evening. We enjoyed this meeting, having the privilege of seeing a number of the brethren whom we had not met for some time. Returning to Rawdon on Monday, we continued our meeting through the week, with five more confessions and baptisms, making seven in all. This success in so short a time but shows what might be done with a prolonged effort.

But this report would not be complete if I should neglect to speak of the mass meeting we had on the second Lord's day we were in Rawdon. At