

CHRISTIAN GIVING.

II.

Next to the recognition of our stewardship, and growing out of it, is the necessity of a systematic method; the setting apart of a certain portion for the Lord's work. This we are taught to do, by the word of God. Obedience to that word is in every case essential to Christian liberty and joyous service. We all know of the law of the *tenth*, as given by Moses. Many, to-day, try to evade that law by saying "That is done away with in the Gospel." We need only repeat the words of Christ, "I came not to destroy the law but to fulfil." Does the Sermon on the Mount, or I Cor. xiii, require less than the Ten Commandments? Nay, but infinitely more. And until we can rise to the full liberty "wherewith Christ would make us free" from our selfishness, we cannot improve upon the rule of the *tenth*, unless by adopting the apostolic plan, by making it just as much more "as the Lord has prospered us." Francis Ridley Havergal has said that "the tenth belongs unto the Lord; giving must begin beyond that."

Another reason for having a separate purse for the Lord's money, is that it is the most satisfactory. It enables us to give "cheerfully, without grudging," as we have "purposed in our heart."

Then we are always prepared to contribute something to every call that commends itself to our conscience. When the Lord's portion is taken from its consecrated place upon the Sabbath and laid upon the plate, it becomes more truly an act of worship than it could otherwise be. Besides, it is the most successful for carrying on the Lord's work. If it were universally adopted all indirect methods would soon be done away with. Instead of the ordinary "socials" and "bazaars," we should have our socials on true Christian principles, or truly carry out Christ's directions, "When thou makest a feast call in the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind, and thou shalt be blessed." This does not involve the condemnation of all indirect methods of raising or earning money, as in many cases, especially that of children or young people, who may have time and latent talent where they have but little money, of necessity they are compelled to earn their gifts; and thus many

individual and organized efforts may wisely be used, which may prove "twice blessed." Obedience to this law of systematic offerings brings blessings both temporally and spiritually.

The third step necessary to this higher plane is the consecration of ourselves with our gifts. Paul, in commending the Macedonian saints for their great self-sacrifice in giving, says, "This they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." We know from personal experience that we value a gift from a friend less for its intrinsic worth, than for the spirit of love by which we know it was prompted; except so far as that intrinsic worth shews the spirit.

The widow in giving her two mites, showed her devotion by giving all her living. It has been said, "no wonder Christ said she gave more than they all, for her gift has been bearing compound interest through all the centuries since!" Her treasure was laid up in heaven, and the heavenly bank has wonderful powers of reproduction. There is no danger of "break-downs" there. A gift to *reach heaven*, must go on the wings of prayer and faith, and sanctified love.

We may smile somewhat incredulously on hearing stories of how the gift of a penny from some little child has been used to bring in a rich harvest of souls for the Master. Why should we doubt it? Does not God's word teach that our gifts will be blessed according to the spirit of faith or self-sacrifice in which they are offered? Dr. J. E. Clough, who was used by God in bringing about the great revival amongst the Telugus in India, says he fought the battle which made him a missionary, when as a little boy he struggled with the question, whether, of seven cents, given him by his mother to buy gingerbread, he should put one cent, or three, or four cents in the mission box? and finally, because he could not divide it evenly, he put in *all*, and himself with it, and went home hungry.

"Not what we give, but what we share;
The gift without the giver is bare."

This brings us to the Thank-offering. Thank-offerings had a place in the Levitical sacrifices with the peace-offerings. King Hezekiah said to the people: "Now ye have consecrated yourselves