

PHARISAIC LEAVEN.

THE Pharisee is so well and so frequently described in the New Testament that everyone is familiar with his principal characteristics. To all outward appearance he was one of the most decorous and well-behaved men in the community. Had public meetings and popular institutions been common in his day, he was just the man who could impart dignity and respectability to almost any public assemblage by presiding over it. He would have been chosen a member of every committee for which he could spare the time. When great occasions arrived, his name would have been chronicled among the distinguished persons present, had newspapers been published in Jerusalem in those days. To outward view his faults were by no means conspicuous, but he was far from faultless, as the words of Him who knows what is in man make abundantly plain.

The Pharisee is not yet extinct. The order of things in which he so conspicuously moved has long since passed away, but he survives. Palestine is not his only habitation, nor is he found exclusively among the Jewish race. Pharisaism is not confined to religious life, though it has been chiefly associated with it, and in that connection has become most familiar. It pervades every manifestation of human activity. There is such a person as the political Pharisee, and he is quite as decorous, dull and repellant as his religious congener. He affects to believe, and possibly persuades himself into the belief that all virtue and goodness and honesty belong to his party and to himself pre-eminently, while these excellencies are not discernible in the leaders or among the ranks of the opposite party. If there is the political Pharisee there is also the political Sadducee, who frequently in the hearing of his neighbours maintains that there is no such thing as honest politics, that both parties are alike bad. That is one of his profiles; when he turns the other, the resemblance to the Pharisee is rather striking. He means you to understand that he is greatly superior to his neighbours of both parties, that he could not condescend to be identified with either.

In social life the Pharisee is by no means a comparative stranger. Several discerning and keen-witted observers profess to see it in the very ways and work of what is known by the distinctive name of society, with its artificiality, its rigorous code of observances, its pretence, its exclusiveness, and its heartlessness. Some even hold the opinion that there are rare leaders of fashion who would sooner violate the moral law than be guilty of an offence against social etiquette. They are, however, in the main good citizens, and on most occasions conduct themselves with becoming and praiseworthy propriety. An overweening sense of their own excellence and importance need not be severely resented; it can without difficulty be easily overlooked. So careful is the social Pharisee of his good name that he rarely risks bringing it into disrepute; yet he is human, and liable to err. Men of social eminence and standing have been known, in their unguarded moments, to conduct themselves foolishly, and thereby bring them into intimate relations with the guardians of law and order. To save a proud and honoured family name from the stigma such unworthy behaviour would attach to it they have been known, on the spur of the moment, temporarily and self-denyingly to assume the familiar cognomen of some other citizen.

The literary Pharisee is not altogether unknown. Many passages could be culled from the writings of even very meritorious authors that would fully justify any claim they might have to the Pharisaic character. No one would think of accusing Byron with making pretensions to moral excellence or religious zeal, but in giving poetic relief to his feelings he addresses Southey in language closely resembling that employed by the New Testament Pharisee. The eminently superfine tone of certain magazines and journals that claim to circulate among the most refined, intelligent and cultured readers of the day, have a chronic tendency to express their opinions with a haughty dogmatism, and a superciliousness that is quite the reverse of conciliatory. To decide whether the literary Pharisee or the Philistine were the less objectionable personage would require some consideration, but it is probable the chances would lean in favour of the Philistine.

The religious Pharisee of the nineteenth century is not a more amiable individual than his prototype of the first. It ought, however, to be conceded that the

appellation is bandied about without much justice or discrimination. It comes with great readiness to the tongue. It is far easier to apply to another an odious epithet, more or less descriptive, than it is to make a just and approximate estimate of a complex character. Thus it happens that a dull, prosaic, well-meaning individual who is thoroughly sincere, and who has no thought of exalting himself as a very superior person, may incur in some minds the suspicion that he is consciously or unconsciously playing the Pharisee. There is a strong tendency to describe a person who is zealous and active in religious profession and work as given to self-righteous exaltation, and that not only by those who seek an excuse for their own failures, but by those who ought to know better. Formalism is a powerful factor in the development of Pharisaism. The power of outward example is good so far as it goes, but it is limited. It is not in itself an evidence of healthy spiritual life, only a veil that but badly serves to conceal spiritual inanition. When the mere formalist begins to claim, by word or act, a moral and spiritual superiority over the modest and unassuming, he has begun to blossom out into the present-day Pharisee. He soon reaches the stage when most people see written on his phylactery, "Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou." When the propagators of some particular religious theory affect to look down upon those who do not see things exactly in the same plane with them, and cast suspicion on their sincerity and motives, you see a manifest approach to the pharisaic spirit which, from the nature of the case, is unlovely and repellant.

The germs of pharisaism are latent in the human heart. The conditions for their development are everywhere. If not guarded against, this evil will soon acquire life and strength. The cultivation of a charitable and meek spirit will help to conquer the tendency to spiritual pride and arrogant self-exaltation. Above all the contemplation of the life and spirit of the Meek and Lowly One will help us to attain the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is the farthest remove from the boastful self-assertion of the unlovely Pharisee.

Books and Magazines.

OUR YOUNG FOLKS AND THE NURSERY. (Boston: The Russel Publishing Co.)—As usual, this bright and attractive juvenile monthly for the little folks is filled with good and suitable reading with fine illustrations.

THE PEARL OF DAYS. (New York: Wilbur B. Ketchum.)—This monthly is designed to promote Christian Sabbath Observance, and its contents are admirably fitted for the purpose. In the number for this month there is an article by the Rev. John Mordy, of Niagara Falls.

THE TREASURY FOR PASTOR AND PEOPLE. (New York: E. B. Treat.)—The September number of this admirable magazine is an excellent one. It is undenominational and thoroughly evangelical. The portrait of Dr. W. R. Huntington, rector of Grace Church, New York City, forms the frontispiece, and his sermon on "The Christian Name of God" is the first article, which is followed by one on "The Service of Goodness," by Professor E. V. Gerhart, D.D., and by an "Expository Lecture on Believers' Sonship Attested by the Spirit," by Principal J. M. King, D.D. The "Leading Thoughts of Sermons" are very suggestive. And the articles on "Studies in Church History," by Rev. A. Gardner; "The World's Missionary Conference," by Dr. Gideon Draper; "Christian Unity and Co-operation," by Dr. Judson Smith; "Unconscious Christianity," by Dr. John H. Barrows; "The Song of Solomon," by Dr. A. Moment; "Hearing and Heeding the Word," by Professor Hunt; "The Power of Social Life in the Church—Strength in Weakness," by Dr. Maclaren; "Jeremiah and the Princesses of Judah," by Dr. C. S. Robinson, and "The Bible in Public Schools," are each full of noteworthy ideas. Pastors will find "Some Don'ts in the Pulpit," by Rev. S. A. Northrop, words in season. "The Prayer Meeting Talk," by Rev. J. G. Haigh; "The Letter from Tarsus," by Rev. J. H. Jenanyan; and "Palestine," by J. L. Hurlburt, D.D., with Dr. Moment's "Light on the International Lessons," are helpful. The usual departments are full of good things.

THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

CHINESE LETTER.

Dr. Hunter Corbett, who visited Canada a little over a year ago, writes from Chefoo, China, as follows:

Our theological class is now in session, and I am kept so busy, I find little time for letter-writing. Dr. Nevius has Theology. Church Government and Pastoral Theology fall to me. Our nine young men of superior intellect and good education are deeply interested in their studies, and give promise of great usefulness. They are now in their last term. Some of them are excellent speakers and clear writers. Pray that a great multitude whom God will own may soon be provided for this destitute land. We must have a great number of lay preachers, but also a number of thoroughly educated and consecrated men to be put in responsible positions, and who can train others, are to be prayed for.

I am just back from the class. The joy of being permitted to assist in the training of godly young men who are anxious to more fully qualify themselves for preaching the Gospel, is beyond the power of words to express. These men all know that if they would accept, there are positions open to them where they would receive good salaries, such as they have no hope of ever receiving in the ministry. One man left a position of honour where he was receiving \$14 per month, and accepted \$5 per month as a preacher. Some years ago a young man in the interior became an earnest Christian. His wife died, and having no one but himself to support, he spent much of his time in going from village to village to tell of his precious Saviour. At one village he heard of a case that greatly awakened his sympathies. A girl had an attack of smallpox, and lost her sight. The family into which she had as a child been betrothed, hearing of it, sent word they would break the betrothment. In Chinese laws this is as binding as marriage. The parents of the blind girl were angry and dreaded the thought of having for life to support her. So they begged her to jump into the well and thus end her useless life, as they regarded it. This Christian man visited the family. He finally told the girl that he was a Christian, and greatly hated by many of the heathen, that he also had a very homely face, but if she would promise to study the truth and marry him he would do his utmost to be eyes to her, and make her life joyful. They were married, and she became an intelligent, happy Christian. She often goes with her husband, and while he is talking to the men on the street under the trees, she is freely admitted into the homes of the people and tells the women and children what Jesus did for her, of her hope after death, and pleads with them to believe and be saved. God blesses their humble labours. I have no doubt they will reap at last a rich reward. Ten years ago the Presbyterian Synod of China met at Hang Chow. A very wealthy man invited the Synod to visit his new and costly mansion. The ladies of our party were admitted into his harem. They saw twenty of his wives from eighteen to sixty years of age. Each had a suite of rooms. One of the young women wept and seemed in the greatest agony. Her feet had not been bound tightly enough when a child, and they were re-bound to reduce them to a suitable size for a ladies' foot. I recently learned that this rich man invested heavily in satins and silks, and lost his fortune, and died a broken-hearted bankrupt. Meantime he gave \$1,000 each to sixteen of his wives, and sent them to their relatives or old homes. In the famine of 1877, this man sent a shipload of rice to the famishing. His countrymen regarded him as upright and generous.

A late paper tells of the selection of four young maidens for concubines for the young Emperor of China. Is it not sad that in this day of Gospel light the head of the nation should act as was done 2,000 years or more ago? One of the military officers who was formerly stationed at Chefoo, but is now operating, with foreign engineers and machinery, a gold mine in this province, had twelve wives. He had shrewdness enough to have them all live apart in different cities where he had kindred or held office. A few yards from our door a man had a grave prepared for himself and two wives. The graves were walled with brick and opened into each other as rooms of a house. Pray much for this nation. Only the Gospel has power to purify the home and fill the heart with purity, hope and joy.