

Pastor and People.

THE MASTER'S QUESTION.

Have ye looked for sheep in the desert,
For those who have missed their way,
Have ye been in the wild waste places,
Where the lost and wandering stray?
Have ye trodden the lonely highway,
The foul and the darksome street?
It may be ye'd see in the gloaming
The print of My wounded feet.

Have ye folded home to your bosom
The trembling, neglected lamb,
And taught to the little lost one
The sound of the Shepherd's name?
Have ye searched for the poor and needy,
With no clothing, no home, no bread?
The Son of Man was among them
He had nowhere to lay His head.

Have ye carried the living water
To the parched and thirsty soul?
Have ye said to the sick and wounded,
"Christ Jesus makes thee whole?"
Have ye told My fainting children
Of the strength of the Father's hand?
Have ye guided the tottering footsteps
To the shore of the "golden land?"

Have ye stood by the sad and weary,
To smooth the pillow of death,
To comfort the sorrow-stricken,
And strengthen the feeble faith?
And have ye felt, when the glory
Has streamed through the open door,
And flitted across the shadows,
That there I had been before?

Have ye wept with the broken-hearted
In their agony of woe?
Ye might hear Me whispering beside you,
"Tis the pathway I often go!"
My brethren, My friends, My disciples,
Can ye dare to follow Me?
Then, wherever the Master dwelleth,
There shall the servant be!

UNEXPECTED BLESSING.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

Our life is full of surprises. It takes turns that open out to our gaze new realms and strange realities. How often is it the case, that what we are not looking for comes to pass. It is the unexpected that happens. And that in ways that are most unwonted. On a sudden the commonplace, familiar, prosy paths of life are transformed into fairy scenes about us, by something touching the heart, or awakening the mind or quickening the conscience. A chance word, a sentence from a book, a look, an accidental meeting or failure to meet, a verse of a song, a moment of true thoughtfulness or recollection, or any one of a score of other things may change the currents of one's life and turn them into channels altogether new—may make the life new from the very core—and cause it to flow on under new motives, seeking new ends.

Why do such changes come to men? Why do some men enjoy uplifting and renewing, and not others? What makes the marked differences that obtain in life? The answer Shakespeare gives suffices:

There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough hew them how we will.

God is in human life. Ah! He is more in it than man himself. He governs. His kingdom ruleth over all. His will is not ineffective. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." "A man's heart deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand." There is a special providence in our earthly existence, or rather, may we not say the providence of God is in every part of it special and particular. It does not deal with anything in the mass. It ever individualizes. It is a discriminating action throughout. And it ever bears this clear character—it seeks our good. Its key-note is, "Come up higher." When it breaks in upon what appears to be the natural order of things, it is not to thrust men down, but to lift men up. Its action is gracious and merciful. It is to snatch men, as by miraculous interposition, as brands from the burning. And should we not glorify God on that account! On the 30th of January, 1814, a young man had engaged to meet some others, at a lamp-post, on a certain street in the city of London, to go to a tavern and spend the evening there. It was a Sabbath evening, and this young man kept his tryst, but his companions failed to come at the time appointed. He became annoyed at the disappointment. And while sauntering idly up and down, the people who passed by, hastening to God's house, looked closely at him. At length, among the crowd of church-goers, came Mrs. Tonkins, the wife of the gentleman with whom this young man was employed, "and on discovering his features, we are told, by the light of the lamp, enquired the reason of his remaining there. This he frankly avowed; and, at the same time, expressed great vexation at his disappointment. When with affectionate earnestness, this pious friend endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, and to induce him to accompany her to the tabernacle. And, at length, although with considerable reluctance, he yielded to her importunity. This, however, as he afterwards confessed, was done rather from a feeling of mortification, than from any sense of the superior claim of the Sabbath and the sanctuary." The preacher that night was the

Rev. Timothy East, of Birmingham, who spoke on the words, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" This solemn question was pressed home by the preacher with point and energy, and "the word came with the power and the demonstration of the Holy Ghost" upon the mind of his youthful auditor, and was to him life from the dead. That night God was found of one who sought him not. That night John Williams, the missionary to Polynesia, was converted to God. That night a light to lighten the Gentiles was kindled, the brightness of whose rising was to attract many eyes to the great light of God.

Very similar to this case was that of Colonel Gardiner, whose life was written by Dr. Doddridge. He had spent the evening of a certain day of July, 1719, in some gay company, and had an unhappy assignation with a married woman, whom he was to attend exactly at twelve. The company broke up about eleven; and not judging it convenient to anticipate the time appointed, he went into his chamber to kill the tedious hour, perhaps with some amusing book or some other way. But it very accidentally happened that he took up a religious book, which his good mother or aunt had, without his knowledge, slipped into his portmanteau. It was called, "The Christian Soldier; or, Heaven Taken by Storm," and was written by Mr. Thomas Watson. Guessing by the title that he should find some phrases of his own profession spiritualized, in a manner which he thought might afford him some diversion, he resolved to dip into it; but he took no serious notice of anything he read in it; and yet, while this book was in his hand, an impression was made upon his mind (perhaps God only knows how) which drew a train of the most important and happy consequences. He thought he saw an unusual blaze of light fall on the book while he was reading, which he at first imagined might happen by some accident in the candle. But lifting up his eyes, he apprehended, to his extreme amazement, that there was before him, as it were suspended in the air, a visible representation of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, surrounded on all sides with a glory; and was impressed, as if a voice, or something equivalent to a voice, had come to him to this effect: "O, sinner, did I suffer this for thee; and are these the returns?" He rose in a tumult of passions, not to be conceived; he walked to and fro in his chamber till he was ready to drop down in utter astonishment and agony of heart, appearing to himself the vilest monster in the creation of God, who had all his life been crucifying Christ afresh by his sins, and now saw, as he assuredly believed, by a miraculous vision, the horror of what he had done. With this was connected such a view both of the majesty and goodness of God, as caused him to loathe and abhor himself, and to "repent in dust and ashes." And truly did he repent, laying hold upon Christ Jesus as his Saviour, for from that day till the day he fell upon the field of Prestonpans in 1847, breathing out his soul in Bankton House, close by, whither he had been borne, his life was a life of exemplary piety and holy devotion. Truly marvellous are God's ways. His paths are in the great deep. He comes to those who are not thinking of Him, and looks in mercy upon them, and they are changed. Ah, did He not, whence would come our help!

Another notable instance is that of Brownlow North, the evangelist of the Free Church of Scotland. This is his own account of the experience: "It pleased God, in the month of November, 1854, one night when I was sitting playing at cards, to make me concerned about my soul. The instrument used was a sensation of sudden illness, which led me to think I was going to die. I said to my son, 'I am a dead man, take me upstairs.' As soon as this was done, I threw myself upon my bed. My first thought then was, now what will my forty-four years of following the devices of my own heart profit me? In a few minutes I shall be in hell, and what good will all these things do me, for which I have sold my soul? At that moment I felt constrained to pray, but it was merely the prayer of a coward, a cry for mercy. I was not sorry for what I had done, but I was afraid of the punishment of my sin. And yet still there was something trying to prevent me putting myself on my knees to call for mercy, and that was the presence of the maid-servant in the room lighting my fire. . . . By the grace of God I did put myself on my knees before that girl, and I believe it was the turning point with me. . . . I did pray, and though I am not what I should be, yet I am this day what I am, which at least is not what I was. I mention this because I believe that every man has in his life his turning point. I believe that the sin against the Holy Ghost is grieving the Spirit once too often. On the following day he announced publicly to his friends staying in the house, and to others by letter, that from that instant he had become a changed man, a resolution to which in the strength of the Saviour he was enabled to adhere." A noble stand! He came clear out. He shook himself free from all entanglements. Henceforth he was the Lord's. The way is always easiest for such, as it leaves no doubt as to where the man is.

Captain Hedley Vicars comes into this class. "It was in the month of November, 1851, that while awaiting the return of a brother officer to his room, he idly turned over the leaves of a Bible which lay on the table. The words caught his eye, 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' Closing the book he said, 'If this be true for me, henceforth I will live, by the grace of God, as a man should live, who has been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.' How grandly did he carry this into effect. His life is one of spiritual power, closely akin to Robert M. McCheyne's. He witnessed a good confession till he fell near the Malakhoff

Tower with a bayonet wound in his breast crying: 'This way 97th?'

What grace is discovered in these instances! God breaks in to glorify Himself. Would that these simple stories were used to the same end: the salvation of souls and the glory of God!

THE PLACE OF THE PARENT.

Free institutions are the glory of our nation. All men are recognized as "free and equal." Individual power, influence and rights are emphasized in our national life as in our Constitution. For this freedom let us be grateful.

But the "corruptions of the best things are the worst." That is the English of a Latin and true proverb. And the devil—for, please to remember, dear young readers, that the author and propagator of evil is a real person, and not a figure of speech—takes hold of the best things and corrupts them. In his cunning hands self-respect becomes pride; wisdom, cunning; honest prudence, mammon-worship; a church, a nursery of dead formalists; human rights the foes of such divine institutions as the Church, the Sabbath and the home.

The way in which the mischief works may be roughly put thus: "I am a man, or nearly so," says young Brown. "I am as well educated as anybody in the house, but father insists upon my obeying him as if I were a baby or a slave. I know what I'm about; I have as much right to go where I please as other fellows have, and I mean to do as I please." And Miss Brown declares that she is of age, knows more about a good many things than her mother, who is behind the times a good deal, and that she can choose her company, her dress and her way of spending the evenings. To such decisions are due many bad companionships, unhappy marriages, disgraceful divorces, failures in life, and sometimes shocking suicides. Now, how is this relationship of parents put in the one perfect rule of faith and practice?

It is common to put the ten commandments in two tables, four in the first, six in the second. The first is regarded as containing our duty to God; the second, our duty to man. Even on this basis the fifth commandment is emphasized as "the first commandment with promise" (Eph. vi. 2). In fact it is the only one holding out formally the blessing coming through obedience, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." I have known more than one life mournfully shortened from disobedience to this command.

But there is another way of grouping the commandments, for which high scholarly authority could be quoted if necessary. According to this there are five commandments in each table. Then the first table would run thus (we assume the knowledge of the words of the decalogue by our readers): First, know God and His unity, as against "gods many and lords many;" second, honour God in His spiritual nature, as against images which misrepresent Him and come to take His place; third, honour God in His name, of which irreverent use breeds irreverence to Himself; fourth, honour God in His day; and fifth, honour God in your parents, His representatives to you. Then the law goes forward to the outside world, forbidding the lust of anger and revenge, of the passions, of property, falsehood and going into the heart, all forms of illicit wishes. This is a division not opposed to anything in the Bible, and in harmony with the nature of things, with the human nature and the divine. Regarding parents as God's representatives, we can understand why the apostle should say (Eph. vi. 1), "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," quoting the commandment, and adding "that it may be well with thee." The angels were made as detached individuals. "Without father, without mother, without descent," they stand each by himself. It is different with us; we are a race. One generation shapes the character of the next and then goeth. To shape it rightly two things are needed—wisdom on the part of parents and obedience "in the Lord" on the part of children.

Here now, my young readers, is my counsel to you: Look on your parents as representing to you, for the time, your unseen Father in heaven. Count their authority the constituted authority under which you live. Make it the habit of your lives to obey constituted authority. Then you will obey the school-teacher in his or her place, the employer or officer in his, the civil magistrate in his, and so be good citizens; the Church of God in hers, and so be exemplary Christians. Failure on this line is the ruin of multitudes, the disgrace of our social life, and the reproach of our institutions.

You may quote to me the reports you have read of puritanical severity on the part of parents, and even statements which you have heard from nice people of their own experience. How much importance do I attach to these? Just as much as I do to Mrs. Craik's playful chapter on "Children bringing up their parents in the way they should go." Such censors I have known. "What weaklings you would have been but for this care!" I have been inclined to say, and then to wish that they had the benefit of it still.

Young people, give your parents, who love you, toil for you, plan for you, deny themselves for you, their right place. Give them your confidence. They know more about men and things than you can. Others will flatter you, and then perhaps laugh at you when your back is turned. Your parents are your disinterested friends. Obey them. Even when they give no orders, do what you know they would like you to do. Deny yourselves for them. Study their comfort. As you grow older, become their friends whom they can trust. Let them lean on you. Do all this from regard to Him who put them over you in His place, in love and loyalty to Him, and He will count it honour to Him and give His blessing. You will find this in the life that now is, and the next, one of the best and most fruitful types of Christian endeavour.—Dr. John Hall.