

Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM.

BY T. K. HENDERSON, TORONTO.

For of such is the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. xix. 14.

Dear Lord I and is Thy kingdom made of such—
The little ones that gathered round Thy knee,
In all the playfulness of childish glee—
And pressed the border of Thy robe to touch!

The love and innocence and simple trust
Breathing yet sweet of Eden's blessed prime,
That into Thine encircling arms did climb,
And hid their happiness upon Thy breast

Oft had the children served the loving Lord
As living texts on which to hang His thought
When in the temple courts He daily taught
The many-sided minds that heard His word.

Not human learning hived through weary years
Of patient industry and midnight toil,
Nor honours won from weeping nations' spoil,
Can fit the spirit for those higher spheres!

The gracious Master welcomes to His school
All those who leave their knowledge at the gate,
And sit, like gentle Mary, at His feet,
Content to learn upon the lowliest stool!

Was He not once a child I and though there clung
To His maturer years no taint of sin
To soil the whiteness of the soul within—
No stain nor clog of earth on life or tongue—

He trod temptation's path, and knew
The way was strewn with bent and withered flowers,
That erst would gladden e'en immortal bowers,
While yet their leaves were wet with heavenly dew!

And so He guards the tender plants that bloom
In wayside nooks, unsought of human eyes,
And one by one transplants them to the skies,
To grow for aye in more capacious room.

THE GOSPEL AFLOAT.

The first Sabbath Day at sea dawned upon us as we were skirting the Portuguese coast, with the town of Lisbon well abeam. It was a glorious morning. The sea was calm, and in the golden sunlight recalled the apocalyptic figure: "A sea of glass, mingled with fire."

The situation was unique; my feelings were indescribable. Far away from home and friends and church, a weird sadness crept over me. I felt shut out from those associations and privileges which make the Sabbath hallowed. Soon I was able to realize the inspiring truth that, though separated from the dear ones at home and church, I was in no wise separated from my God. I could repair to the same throne of grace, commune with the same Father, and share in the same blessing as they with whom it was my wont and joy to worship. Oh! the unspeakable preciousness of the thought which flashed upon me: "My church is praying for me!" It thrilled me. I felt one with my people. We were separated by a thousand miles of weary waters; but the cord of prayer that binds us to the throne of God brought us nigh in spirit. I prayed for them; I knew they were praying for me. Precious golden link of prayer which no distance can dis sever!

The custom which obtains in the ships of the Cunard service is to have the prayers of the Church of England read in the saloon every Sunday morning. Attendance at this service is compulsory on the seamen; default means sundry disabilities. The captain of the ship expressed his willingness to transfer the service to me. I thanked him for his courtesy, but suggested that the ordinary course on that occasion be followed; and proposed that an evening service should be held, entirely freed from all conditions of compulsion. To this he readily agreed.

At eleven o'clock the ship bell tolled in orthodox church fashion. Its sound was strange, yet home-like, as it called passengers and crew to morning prayer. The seamen, in clean, new, rig-blue woollen jackets and white trousers, filed in, headed by their officers in full uniform, and filled one half of the saloon, the passengers occupying the other half. By arrangement with the captain, I introduced an element which was new to his ship's services—hymn singing. For once in my life I officiated as precentor. We sang:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee,

Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,—
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

And if the execution was not all it might be, the effect was very grand and inspiring. The church service was read passably by the captain; another hymn was sung, and the service concluded with the announcement that at seven o'clock an evening service would be held—a purely voluntary service—to which all passengers and crew were earnestly invited.

I spent the afternoon forward in giving personal invitations to the men to attend this evening service. My heart went out to a class of men, so peculiarly shut out from religious privileges, and yet, in the openness of their disposition, so peculiarly susceptible to religious impressions.

"Six bells" rang out, and very anxiously did I watch the issue of the experiment of a voluntary service on board ship.

My brightest hopes were more than realized. The saloon began to fill; captain, officers, seamen, engineers and stokers poured in until every available space was occupied. My heart was glad at this grand response. How we did sing, undaunted by any possible hypercriticisms of the so-called "New Theology," the grand old evangelical hymn:

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

The sonorous voices of the seamen rolled it forth as though it had been one of their work ditties. Truly, the singing was congregational. It warmed me up to my work. I told them of Jesus, the world's Redeemer, and the certainty of His glorious Gospel, in a few words. My heart was hot with love to Him and them. I pray that the simple words spoken may have a fruitful history!

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,
The darkness thickens, Lord, with me abide.

This brought our meeting to a close.

The sequel of our services showed that hearts had been touched by the power of the Word. Passengers retired to the quietude and coolness of the saloon deck. Never can I forget the scene which then met our gaze. The sea was unrippled, and the air was still. The silence was only broken by the dull throb of the ship's engines. The moon had just risen like a great sun, blood-red; and, assuming a silvery brightness as it rose, cast its silvery sheen upon the still waters. Under the silent stars, with the restful consciousness of God's nearness, we held sweet fellowship, one with another, on that Sabbath night. Some of the passengers, whom I did not know to be Christians, made themselves known to me, others professed anxiety and stated difficulties. One case I must specialize.

A lady from Belgium, *en route* for Smyrna, where she had previously lived fifteen years, and who could speak modern Greek like a native, told me her story. She belonged to a Roman Catholic family in Antwerp. Under Protestant teaching she was led to see the errors of Rome, and to espouse Protestant truth. Referring to my address in the saloon, she confessed to me that she was not in possession of that solid peace of which I had been speaking. Her hope was in Christ, and in Him alone; but she felt her "grasp" of Christ (as she called it) was at times feeble and relaxed, and she lived, therefore, under conditions of uncertainty.

I told her that she was overlooking a very important side of truth. She was cleaving to Christ, and feeling at times the uncertainty of her grasp. I reminded her that Christ was cleaving to her. I quoted the passage: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." (John x. 28.) This seemed at once to introduce her into a new life; it was a vision of God to her. Assurance and peace became henceforth possibilities; and repeated communications from Smyrna and elsewhere since attest to the reality and permanence of the change.—*Rev. W. Scott, in Canadian Independent.*

A MODERN PARABLE.

Everybody had heard that the great elephant was loose, and several families whose gardens he had torn up and whose boys he had trampled upon were certain of it. There was great excitement, and the town

held a meeting to decide what should be done. They did not want to exterminate him; in fact, many of them did not believe they could exterminate him, for he was a pretty big elephant. Besides, he was useful in his proper place—in shows, in India and in story-books.

"Our best plan is to try to regulate him," said an enthusiastic speaker. "Let us build toll-gates all along the route we find he is going to take, and make him pay—"

"Yes, but that leaves him roaming round," shrieked an old woman. "And I don't want my boy killed!"

"Keep your boy away from him; that's your business. Why, madam, don't you know that an elephant's hide and tusks are valuable for mechanical or surgical purposes, and that he is useful in India? Besides there is the toll he will pay. We shall by this means get money enough in the public treasury to build schools for a good many boys who are not trampled to death."

"That's the plan. Regulate him! Regulate him!" shouted the crowd.

So they appointed a great many committees, and drafted constitutions and by-laws, and circulated petitions, and by the time the elephant had killed several more boys and trampled down a number of gardens, they had erected very comfortable toll-houses for the gate-keepers and gates for the elephant; and then they waited in great satisfaction to see the animal regulated. Slowly the great feet trampled onward, slowly the great proboscis appeared in view, and, with a sniff of contempt, the elephant lifted the gate from off its hinges and walked off with it, while the crowd started after him in dismay.

"Well!" exclaimed the keeper, catching his breath, "we haven't made much money so far, but the regulatin' plan would have been first-rate if the elephant hadn't been a little stronger than the obstruction." The elephant's name was Whiskey.—*New York Evangelist.*

GOSPEL WORK.

AS TO SACRIFICES.

There was the Sin-offering, the Burnt-offering, and the Thank-offering. Thus, if the order was inverted or altered, it would indicate the attitude which the worshipper took before God. If he came with a sin-offering or with a thank-offering only, he declared himself a sinner or not a sinner by that act. Such, apparently, was the difference between the offerings of Cain and Abel; and by their offering they became respectively the types of the various ways in which ever since men have viewed the Atonement.

AS TO THE FLOOD.

God brought it about as an act of judgment.—The people of that time had broken away from God. He was not in their thoughts. They had, so to speak, turned Him out of His own world, and in His place they had substituted their heroes as gods, men of prowess and mark, with whom might and physical force were right; and gradually men became atheists—ceased to believe in the God who had so recently brought them into being. To repeat His authority, and to show that He alone was the "Mighty One," God brought the flood upon the ungodly world. . . . Let things come to the same pass again—let men dethrone God, and put in His place a god of their own invention, and they will find that, though He will not again bring upon earth a flood of waters to destroy it, yet the other elements are in His hand, and whensoever He will, He may give the word of command, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, while the earth and all works therein shall be burned up.

AS TO SABBATH OBSERVANCE.

An infidel, boasting in a published letter that he had raised two acres of "Sunday corn," which he had intended to devote to the purchase of infidel books, adds: "All the work done on it was done on Sunday, and it will yield some seventy bushels to the acre; so I don't see that but Nature or Providence has smiled upon my Sunday work, however the priests or the Bible may say that work done upon that day never prospers." To this the editor of an agricultural paper replies: "If the author of this shallow nonsense had read the Bible half as much as he has read the works of its opponents, he would have known that the great Ruler of the universe does not always square up his accounts with mankind in the month of October."