

Serpents in the Wall.

BY REV THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Human life is not an open prairie, over which every body may roam at will and do as he likes. Our Heavenly Father loves us too well to allow us to follow the devices and desires of our own depraved hearts. He has, therefore, fenced us around with his righteous and infallible Word; and some of the most vital portions of that Word are in the form of commandments. "Thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" are planted all along our pathway to define the limits between right and wrong—between what you may do and what you may never do. God never takes down his fences, or lowers them by a hand-breadth. Let the rose-water pulpits preach what they will, Sinai is not an extinct volcano in Bible theology. Churches may "revise" their Confessions of Faith as often as they choose, but the Almighty never allows his laws to be revised—or repealed. In these days we need more of the sacred authority of law in our homes, more enforcement of law in the community, more preaching of divine law in our pulpits and more "law work" in the conversion of souls who can represent and serve Jesus Christ by keeping his commandments. The very essence of sin is—breaking down or breaking through God's fences.

There is a verse in the Book of Ecclesiastes that is seldom thought of or preached about. The little verse (which every young man ought to copy into his memorandum book) is this: "Who so breaketh through a fence, a serpent shall bite him." I quote it from the Revised Version. Most Old Testament scholars are agreed that the reference is not to a hedge of bushes, but to a stone wall. It was the custom in Palestine to surround vineyards with a wall of stones, and these were a favorite haunt of snakes. The idea of this pungent text is that if anyone undertook to break through the inclosure of his neighbor's vineyard, he might find a sly policeman there in the shape of a snake; and the bite of the snake would be deadly poison. This is only a picturesque way of putting it that the "way of transgressors is hard," and the "wages of sin is death."

We commend this truth to those who are yet in the morning of life. Why? Are counsels and sermons to them especially needed because the young are worse than those who are of older growth? Nay, verily; for in the biographies of Scripture many of the most flagrant offenses—such as the drunkenness of Noah, the lecherous deeds of Lot and of David, the criminal parental conduct of Eli, and the sins of Solomon—were all committed by men advanced in life. No indictments recorded against youth could be worse than these. But the prime object of all preaching and teaching in a pulpit, or out of it, is prevention. A faithful warning, well heeded by the young, may save them from the bitter experiences of character corrupted or life hopelessly wrecked. A buoy well placed, a signal-lamp well lighted, is better than all the life-boats that may be launched when it is too late. Youth also is the period of ardent impulses and venturesome risks. Commonly it is stronger at the engine than it is at the air-brakes. It is immensely important, therefore, to prevent young men from attempting to break through God's fences, or even to loosen a stone in his divinely ordained walls.

Take, for example, the most familiar case of all—the temptation to tamper with intoxicants. An ounce of prevention is worth a ton of attempted cure. God has built up his solid barricades against alcoholic drinks that antedate all statutes of prohibition; with his statutes no legislature dare meddle; just as soon attempt to repeal the law of gravitation. In the solid wall of Total Abstinence are immutable principles founded on the constitution of the human body and in the inherent qualities of all intoxicants. They are not needed by the healthy; they seldom cure the sick; they involve the risk of damnation to body and soul. On the forefront of the wall of abstinence God has kindly hung this warning: "Look thou not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it goeth down smoothly; at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Yet, in spite of all warnings, millions of young men venture to break through this fence, with the reckless hope that they will dodge the adder. But when the poison of that serpent gets into the blood and brain, it is a desperate battle for life; and where the grace of God gives one John B. Gough the victory, the vast majority of fence-breakers die of the venomous bite. My friend, never loosen a pebble from that wall!

What is true of intoxicants is equally true in regard to the indulgence of all sensual appetites. The Creator has built a solid barrier of chastity; everything beyond that wall, whether it be the lustful look or the wanton wish, involves licentiousness. It is infinitely easier to keep clean than it is to wash off the impurities from a soul once polluted. No man or woman, young or old, can venture to dislodge a single stone from the wall of purity, but out darts the serpent! Upon that inclosure the divine hand has written the solemn but loving admonition: "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can he walk upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?"

There are two kinds of fences that I must briefly allude

to before closing this "sermonette." This one is the inclosure that every wise, godly parent builds around his own household. And it is not to be constructed either of nothing but sharp pickets of prohibition. The daily example of father and mother, the whole daily home influence ought to be a solid and beneficent barrier, strong enough to shut in, and also to shut out. When a son or daughter does break through such fences of loving, parental authority, woe be to them! The parable of the prodigal son is the story of a fence-breaker; and it is not every transgressor that sets his face homeward again, or has such a loving parent to extract the poison of the serpent's bite. What the home is to the child, the church of Christ is (or ought to be) to its every member. Its walls mark a distinct separation from the customs, practices and spirit of the outlying world. The pure commandments of Jesus Christ are written on every stone. Inside of that fold is safety, peace and spiritual power, outside of it prowls the wolf. To every Christian who has ever entered the inclosures of Christ's love and vowed fidelity to his Master, comes this tenderly solemn warning—"Whoso breaketh through this wall, the serpent shall sting him!"—Independent.

Weat "Education" Means.

BY MARY E. WILKES.

It is coming to be more and more recognized—particularly in America—that "education," to be genuine, must fit men and women for practical life; not by degrading them or tying them down to the drudgery of existence, but by lifting up practical work and putting it on a basis where it becomes a worthy part of the art of living. Our best seminaries and women's schools now teach house-keeping as a matter of course.

The brief period of residence at a boarding-school is usually succeeded by the practical duties of a woman's life. For the large majority of women, the occupations and interests of home are to be the permanent and engrossing interests of life, and school-training must have a direction in harmony with this fact. The drudgery of routine, the ever-recurring, practical duty in domestic, not less than in professional life, becomes less wearying and more stimulating in proportion as it is seen to have a spirit within the wheels, a relation and purpose beyond and above the task itself.

A woman should know how to make her occupation enriching to her own intellect and spirit; to make of household duties an ever-developing art; to bring to it all the training of education; to enlarge and adorn her sphere with all the acquirements of school; to feel no painful incongruity between these and the duties of her life.

To do this well a complete scheme of girls' education cannot exclude preparation for the chief employment of life—the life-long interest and care of homes.

In one of our most progressive seminaries for young women may be seen on a Saturday afternoon a low platform, in a lecture-room, a cooking stove of the best modern pattern; near it the demonstrating table, tools and material, the tools being the best cooking utensils; the materials are as they are sent from the market.

Here the instructor prepares the various dishes set down in the order of the day, prefacing her work with a recipe, which is copied into the note-books of her pupils. No better lesson could be given in the value of keeping a "level head," than is given by this quiet, self-possessed lady, who talks clearly, connectedly and without weariness; explaining all her processes as she goes on, giving no place to luck in the exact and uniform methods of her work, while the complete course of a dinner is made ready—each dish, in its order, to be tested by the interested audience of coming housekeepers, who have anticipated this finale with napkin and spoons.

The class frequently "receive" in dresses fitted and made by themselves, in connection with the dress-cutting class. The aim is not to make cooks and dressmakers, but to ennoble women's lives; to inspire the confidence of knowledge, to uphold the unity of the intellectual and practical life, to suggest occupation for vicissitudes of fortune—by elevating sentiment in favor of giving time and effort and all painstaking to the high purposes of home.—Sel.

Why Men Don't Go to Church.

In a recent address upon the above subject, the Rev. Madison C. Peters, D. D., said: "The world does not want for preaching, but it is in need of the right kind. A homely but true adage is, 'A sermon, like a pudding, must have something in it.' Farmers never get together and discuss how to get the cattle up to the rack; they put something in the rack. To hold the people you must hold the pulpit. Ministers can visit their people better by sermons than by calling on them. Be in earnest. Better boil over than not boil at all. Entusiasts always get converts. Spiritual power does not diffuse by the force of mere argument. It needs the overflow of heart to give the lips full speech. Strike out straight from the shoulder, speak to men in direct, simple, forceful, fearless language. The preacher is a voice, not an echo. Hit sin, and hit it hard. Preach the

gospel, and apply it to everyday life. The all-penetrating, all-pervading, all-animating and all-inflaming motive of the preacher should be love for the souls of men. Before the almightiness of the cross there can stand no resistance, and that sermon in which Christ is not presented as the Saviour of sinful men will be to the soul only the beauty of the snowdrop and the sublimity of the desert. The church must in its methods of work thoroughly adapt itself to the condition confronting us in this lightning-footed twentieth century, and show itself equal to meet the demands of this age—an age on ages telling.—The Standard.

Shining.

There are people who are all the while trying to shine, though not in a Christian sense. It is an ambition with them to shine. Not a little vanity lies back of it, and the meanest sort too. They want to eclipse other people in their receptions and feasts, in dress and house. The world is full of people eager to shine. Not a few like to shine in conversation and they store their memories with brilliant quotation and other people's wit to supplement their own. They are profuse in allusions to the author's they have read or heard of. It is a method of self-glorification.

Now the Christian idea of shining is just the reverse of this. The image of the lamp shining not for its own sake, but for others' good, suggests both the quality of unconsciousness and unselfishness in every true life. A Christian who works for Christ with an idea in his mind that he is thereby shining, or a preacher who ascends the pulpit with a thought like that in his heart, will quickly reveal his insincerity and forfeit his influence with reasonable men. The one who tries to shine has little light to give.

The chief thing to do in the matter of shining is simply to feed the lamp and trim the wick. Then shining will be easy and natural. When there is real life in the soul, there will be an expression of it, just as surely as light reveals its presence. Some are apt to think of their light as simply a reflected light, and of themselves as reflectors. But Christ called his disciples lamps, not reflectors. The lamps hold the illuminating fire. There must be light within us before light can shine from us. The Christ-given light is his own life imparted unto us. We are his lamps, for the fire that kindles the soul first came from him. Let that light shine.—The Commonwealth.

Co-operating With the Teacher.

Outside the schoolroom hospitality there is a hospitality of the home which all parents ought to extend to the teachers of their children. The most devoted teacher cannot come to know her boys and girls well under the school roof. Let them meet in the home, around the tea-table, in that sweet part of the day which Longfellow calls "the children's hour." At these moments the teacher will see in her incorrigible boy or dull girl a certain nobility and charm, or a gleam of talent, which lie hidden during study hours. A child will have a new incentive to study in pleasing a teacher who is "mother's friend," and the teacher herself will take greater pains with the boy or girl from a friendly home.—Isabel Gordon Curtis, in Good Housekeeping.

Among hymns of heaven "The Sands of Time are Sinking," with its refrain,—"In Immanuel's Land," takes high rank, and deservedly. For no other hymn on this theme brings out with such emphasis as the secret of heaven's attractions for the Christian heart the personal presence of the "Lamb that was slain." The hymn is a selection from a poem of nineteen verses, the fruit of a long and loving study of the "Life and Letters of Samuel Rutherford, and founded on what are said to be his last words, "Glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land." It was introduced to the public as a hymn by the Rev. Dr. Wilson-Barclay, Free Church, Edinburgh, in "Songs of Zion." Since then it has passed into common use. Edinburg. REV DR. CAMPBELL.

At a dinner of the Royal Academy in London, Thackeray and Carlyle were guests, and at the table the talk among the artists around them turned upon Titian. "One fact about Titian," a painter said, "is his glorious coloring." "And his glorious drawing is another fact about Titian" put in another. Then one added one thing in praise and one another, until Carlyle interrupted to say with egotistic emphasis and deliberation, "And here sit I, a man made in the image of God, who knows nothing about Titian, and cares nothing about Titian." Thackeray who was sipping his claret and listening, paused and bowed generally to his fellow guests, "Pardon me," he said, "but that is not a fact about Titian, it is a fact, and a very lamentable fact about Thomas Carlyle.

Prayer is the preface to the book of Christian living; the text of the life sermon; the girding on the armor for battle; the pilgrim's preparation for his journey. It must be supplemented by action, or it amounts to nothing.—Phelps.