

The Power of Gentleness.

BY REV. A. JUDSON KEMPTON.

What a challenge was that which that mocking, insulting, brutal mob of thieves, priests and passers-by hurled at Jesus when they reviled him and said, "If thou be the Son of God, save thyself; come down from the cross!"

What an answer to that challenge was the reply which Jesus made, when, giving them no word of anger for their scorn, nor even one dark scowl, he looked away over their wagging heads into the blue of the eternal heavens and prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

It might be a question for careful discussion, whether any word that Christ ever uttered, not omitting the beatitudes, nor the golden rule, nor the word of power which healed the ten lepers, nor that which gave sight to the blind, nor that which raised the dead man Lazarus, nor that which stilled the tempest on the Sea of Galilee, whether any of these more satisfactorily prove to us his divinity than that gentle word,—I think it was the gentlest word that was ever framed by human lips—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

We do not recognize the power of gentleness. We mistake kindness for weakness and think the gentle man lacks strength. That is what the Jerusalem mob said of the man who was hanging on the cross. They laid hands on him in Gethsamene, and because he was gentle and would not fight, nor allow his disciples to fight, they thought him weak. They gave him a mock trial, and because he made no answer they thought he could say nothing. They made a crown of thorns and set it on his head, and because he wore it they thought he could not be a king. They smote him on the mouth and they spat in his face, and because his eyes did not blaze with anger, and because he did not rise in wrath to make a whip of cords and scourge them from his presence, they grew bold and thought that after all he was a coward. They nailed him to the cross and challenged him to come down, and because he prayed, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do," they concluded that he could not be the Son of God!

Gentleness is the expression of kindness; and kindness the permanent result in one's own character of habitual love. When love passes by she leaves a perfume. That perfume is kindness. When love often passes by that perfume remains. Where love abides and makes her home, the whole atmosphere is kindness through all the house, and, if a human heart become love's dwelling place, that character is filled with kindness, which is expressed by gentleness.

Gentleness, therefore, is the grandchild of love, and kindness is her mother. When gentleness meets you at the gate, know that kindness and love live in the house. It is love not cowardice who dwells there. The daughter of cowardice is cruelty and her granddaughter is cravenness, and if you cannot tell the difference between gentleness and cravenness, you deserve to mistake love for cowardice.

It was not the nails through his hands, nor the spike through his feet, that held Christ on the cross, it was love. Hateful as was that blood-thirsty mob, as they turned their mocking faces toward him, he saw that they were not all bad, they were still men, not demons, (had they been demons, utterly evil, with no possibility of becoming good, he would have come down and he would have waved them back to hell) but they were men, and, though they were murderers they still had the possibility and the right to become sons of God. Christ saw that it was possible for him to win their love, though the price was terrible, for it was death at their hands. Before they could understand him, before they could believe on his name, before they could love him, they must kill him.

And so, to win their love, and to win my love and yours, He who was the infinite gentleness and love of God personified, looked away over the wagging heads of that mocking mob, into the blue of the eternal heavens and he prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And on the cross he died.

Could he have won them by coming down from the cross? Never. Could he have won them by force? Never, never. No more than Caesar won them by force. Caesar made them pay tribute, but he could not make them Romans. Christ might have ruled the world with a rod of iron, but even he could not have made us Christians by force.

But, you say, did he win them at all? Yes, and I have no doubt that many of them afterward preached his gospel and told with streaming eyes the story of his crucifixion. I doubt not that some of them became martyrs for his sake, and it is quite possible that some of them were crucified for love of him as he was crucified for love of them.

Where do I find this? It is written very plainly in the second chapter of Acts. It was not many days after that the disciples were endowed with the Holy Spirit, and this same Jerusalem mob came to mock and say, "these men are full of wine." Then Peter said, "these men are not drunken as ye suppose," and he proceeded to preach to them concerning the Christ, whom he told them they

had taken, and by wicked hands had crucified and slain. Before that sermon was finished, three thousand of them were convinced that the same Jesus whom they had crucified was both Lord and Christ, and they were pricked in their hearts and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And they gladly received the word and the same day they were baptized and added to the church.

Three thousand of Christ's murderers! Three thousand of those who shouted, "Away with him! Crucify him!" now proclaiming him both Lord and Christ! That was a wonderful sight. Three thousand of those who had wagged their heads and mocked him with the challenge, "If thou be the son of God, save thyself, come down from the cross!" And now they believe him to be the son of God because he did not come down from the cross, but because he remained on it, and prayed for them and died for them.

The power of gentleness, the power of love is greater than the power of force.

Even the character without much force may be gentle, and through its gentleness may become a power.

I am told that there are along the banks of the Rhine ruined castles, centuries old, whose tottering walls would have crumbled away hundreds of years ago but for ivy and climbing vines. So I have seen characters with no great force that yet were strong as well as beautiful because they were graced with gentleness.

Such characters are often, I am not sure-but always, more influential for good than those who have force without gentleness.

Those beautiful ivy clad castles on the Rhine, draw to themselves hundreds of thousands of travellers from all the world over. I am not sure that, by their silent influence, they do more good today than when they were stern and grim and had no ivy on them.

Ivan the Terrible, William the Conqueror, Attila the Hun,—The Scourge of God, Napoleon the Great, were men of force without gentleness, and they swept across the countries of their dominion as sometimes forest fires sweep across Northern Wisconsin, leaving behind them no flower, no green leaf, no singing bird, no human habitation, but smoking heaps, and blackened stumps, grey ashes and white bones. If they accomplished any good it was because Almighty God caused the wrath of man to serve him. It was the gentle forces of the sunshine and the rain that built the forest before the fire destroyed it, and only the gentle sunshine and the gentle rain can bring back again the fern, the flower, the green leafed bush, the singing bird, the forest tree.

In a poem which few read, one of the great poets tells the story of what happened in an English home when force attempted to do what only gentleness could accomplish, but what gentleness would not attempt.

Here is the picture of the desolation which resulted.

Then was the great Hall wholly broken down,
And the broad woodland parceled into farms,
And there (on the scene of the tragedy)
Lies the hawk's cast, the mole has made his run,
The hedgehog underneath the plaitain bores,
The rabbit fondles his own harmless face,
The slow worm creeps; and the thin weasel there
Follows the mouse, and all is open field.

In Hawthorne's story of "The Gentle Boy," we have a beautiful illustration of the power of a gentle character, even where force is lacking utterly.

But you will remind me that the greatest characters in the world have been possessed of force. True, the ideal character has both force and gentleness. The world's greatest men have been gentle as well as strong. And it was their gentle qualities which distinguished them from merely strong men and made them great. Put it to popular vote and Abraham Lincoln was the greatest American. Gentle, kindly, Abe! Would his force of character alone have made him the power he was? By it alone he never would have been elected President of the United States.

When all Englishmen are dead one name will be remembered—William Shakespeare. And he was nicknamed, "Gentle Will." The greatest living Russian is Tolstoi, the gentle peasant count. The Roman citizen who is the greatest power for good, today is Paul, who wrote the 13th chapter of Corinthians, Love's greatest enigma. The greatest Greek was Plato, who understood Love so well that the purest love as its adjective still bears his name. The greatest son of Israel was Moses who is called the "meek." The greatest man of all nations and of all time was he who looked away over the wagging heads of the mocking mob, into the blue of the eternal heavens and prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Christian, you would become a power for good. You think you lack in force. What you lack is gentleness, which springs from kindness, which springs from love, the love of Christ.

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child,
Pity my simplicity
Suffer me to come to thee."

Emerson, Manitoba.

Emerson is somewhat of a Baptist headquarters for a large district in Southern Manitoba. Besides the English speaking people in and about the town, there is a great

Mennonite district west of us and the Germans and Galicians or Austrians are in settlements east of us, so this becomes a kind of coaling station for the missionaries passing back and forth, and we are brought into touch with all these peoples. We have also a large field of English speaking people from ten to twenty miles out, where we have a student during the summers.

Emerson church is also the church home of the loyal Baptists in the north east corner of Dakota, including the town of Pembina, U. S. A., and for those in the north west corner of Minnesota including the town of St. Vincent. This large field requires much work and thought in planning for the establishment and development of New Testament churches within its bounds. Our evangelists have given me great assistance. For two summers Bro D. G. McDonald came to my help and a great work was done, the largest part of the harvest being reaped on the outlying parts of the field. The first summer about 70 professed conversion.

This winter Evangelist Will Pugsley came to my help and we have had a glorious time. He is a real "son of thunder," with a remarkable power of arousing people and bringing them to a decision. It is an excellent quality in a business man to have the faculty of closing a bargain with a customer. Bro. Pugsley was in business for many years and carries this power into his evangelistic work.

In these services the town of Emerson has had the largest part of the blessing, but the whole field has been stimulated by the revival here.

Sunday morning March 11th, I baptized twenty-five happy converts, ages ranging from 8 to 50. The scene was impressive beyond description. The house was crowded and the solemnity that prevailed the audience was remarkable. I had never seen the like before. Many faces were bathed in tears as the procession of rejoicing believers moved in single file down into the baptismal waters. Our own little niece, whose dear mother (Mrs. Captain J. V. Robblee) went to heaven a few weeks ago, was amongst the number. A son and daughter of the first pastor of this church, who passed to his reward twelve years ago, and two of superintendent Whitman's children, Fannie and Harold were amongst the converts. Nearly all the grown-up children in the Sunday School and several of the primary class profess to be saved.

This church has seen many good days, but it is said by older members that this was the greatest day the Baptists of Emerson ever saw and many present never saw such a day before anywhere. In the East where the Baptist adherents and sympathizers are numerous such a scene might be common. But the candidates are different here. Last Sunday I baptized two more, and others are received and several are coming later. During my visit East last summer the Church bought us a comfortable residence, so we are very happily situated, and this great blessing upon the work crowns the joy of our service. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things and blessed be His glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory."
H. G. MELLIICK.

Hamilton Theological Seminary.

It fell to my lot recently to have a peep into College and Seminary life at Colgate in Hamilton, N. Y. As to situation one is much reminded of Wolfville. The commanding eminence of the College situation and the quiet, well-ordered little town nestling under the abundance of trees in the picturesque Shenango Valley need only the addition of some rolling Minas Basin to make the resemblance striking. Would that Acadia had as large endowment, (now in the vicinity of two millions) and such durable buildings as are here found. The new stone gymnasium is said to be second to none on the continent in being wisely planned and thoroughly adapted for its purpose. The library building, the gift of a few years ago by Mr. James Colgate, cost \$150,000, and contains over twenty-seven thousand volumes, catalogued and arranged according to modern methods. The largest and most imposing structure, Eaton Hall, the Theological Seminary, stands on the right of the Academy and College buildings. It is as convenient and comfortable within as pleasing to the eye without. The brief intercourse with the Seminary faculty gave the impression of fine blending of scholarship and Christian character. Dr. M. S. Read (Acadia '91) of the arts faculty looks as hale and vigorous as ever. Among the students of the Seminary I met Rev. J. B. Ganong, (Acadia '92) who is taking a year of post-graduate course; Rev. O. E. Steeves, another Acadia man, and Rev. E. C. Jenkins of N. B., both of whom graduate this year; and H. B. Dixon, also of Wolfville training who is in the middle year. As might be expected, "Province" men are in favor in this seat of learning. Rev. W. B. Wallace, pastor at Utica, lectured very acceptably not long ago to the students. Rev. E. B. McLatchy is also winning fame as a pastor. The First Baptist church of Albany has lately, for the second time, raised his salary three hundred dollars. While Canada is indebted to the United States for the further training of some of her best sons, Uncle Sam pays himself pretty well in those he keeps. A pity it is that our churches let him keep so many.
J. B. C.

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