

## Pastor and People.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN

### LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

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[During a foggy journey, Kingsley once compared the road to the highway of life, wherein the traveller feels his way from pillar to post, doubling, stumbling, sometimes missing the track, but reaching home at last. "Thank God," said Kingsley "There's always light enough for that"]

Oh! wandering pilgrim through the mist,  
All dimly going!  
The night winds drive thee as they list,  
No stars are showing,  
The bleak storm blows athwart thy way,  
Long wait the chariots of the day.  
Yet faint thou never,  
Full soon the thickest clouds may open,  
The shadows sever,  
There's light enough for deathless hope,  
Now and for ever.

Thine outstretched hands seem spread in vain,  
Still undiscerning,  
Some clasp to meet thine own again,  
So helpless yearning,  
For sense knows naught of power or care,  
To guide thee through the bitter air,  
And save from turning,  
Yet trust, for at thy trembling breath,  
Down stoops the love more strong than death,  
Yea, trust, thou only.  
There's light enough for power and faith,  
In path most lonely.

Deep shrouded are the happy flowers,  
That shone to cheer thee,  
No voice amid the shadowy hours,  
Kings out to steer thee,  
Half blinded in the rifling rain  
Each onward step seems quite in vain:  
Yet ever near thee  
Abides the tenderness unpriced;  
To pilgrim weary,  
There's light enough to touch the Christ,  
In days most dreary.

Look up beyond life's gathering mist,  
To glory's portal;  
Fair rise the towers of amethyst,  
Oh soul immortal!  
A rest remaineth, deep and sweet,  
To patient hearts, and steadfast feet,  
In mercy given.  
So weary, heavy-laden come,  
Lost and heart-riven!  
There's light enough to bring thee home,  
Through Christ to heaven

### METHODS OF CHURCH WORK

To begin with, it may be affirmed, I think, that our methods are little likely to be good unless there is a definite and true conception of the aim to be achieved. Some enter upon Christian work before they have ever set themselves to think about what it really is they are undertaking. They are going to be teachers in a Sunday school; but their ideas of what is involved in putting their hands to such a task as this are mere mist and chaos. Possibly their chief motive is to satisfy a certain vague sentiment that they should do something religious, or that it is not altogether justifiable to be quite outside of those who are called "The Workers." Perhaps their sense of the obligation they are accepting covers nothing more than a kind of a pledge to attend the school with some fair show of regularity, to talk to the children about the lesson or something else for some thirty minutes a week, to put them through their questions with as near an approach as possible to the manners of a dominie, and to see that they keep their eyes shut during the prayers. Now, where the conception of the work itself is thus hollow and erroneous, what can the method be, if there is method at all, but utterly ineffective? It makes all the difference in the world in the matter of method whether a preacher's idea is that his opportunities are to be used for the purpose of gratifying the intellectual tastes of his hearers, or exciting their winks and nods of admiration, or confirming them in their dogmatic prejudices, or helping them and stimulating them towards a diviner life. If a missionary association adopts the belief that it exists, before and above all else, to get money for evangelistic purposes; that it is its chief task to make people give, willingly if possible, and unwillingly rather than not at all; then, as a matter of course, its methods of operation will be very different from those adopted by another association which believes that its *raison d'être* is above all else to foster an interest in and sympathy with the great cause of the world's evangelization. Therefore, if you want good methods of church work, you must take care that you have true, clear conceptions of its aims. Make sure, first of all, that your object is such as will stand the test of being brought face to face with the spirit of the Gospel. Don't let mere conventional ideas of congregational and denominational prosperity determine your aim. Repudiate the materialism that measures everything by P. S. D., and leaves nothing in its Bible but a Book of Numbers. Beware of the modern idolatry of statistics. Abjure the spirit of ecclesiastical self-glorification. Do not rest content until, by dint of much thought and prayer, your work stands out before you strongly defined as a mountain ridge against a clear northern sky, and clothed in a spiritual beauty and truth that makes all unworthiness of method unpardonable as sacrilege.

Our methods, then, should be distinguished by a wise economy of means. I am not going to champion the cause of

niggardliness in any sense of the word. That, unhappily, does not need to be done. Over-generosity is not the cardinal vice of our modern Christianity. The facts of the case point decidedly in the opposite direction. We believe with John, "Worthy is the Lamb to receive riches;" but we believe, too, a great many of us, that that particular article of our creed is a mere *caput mortuum*, designed to be turned to no more practical account than consists of its being enshrined in a hymn and sung *fortissimo*, once or twice a year, when there is no collection to be taken. The economy that should distinguish our methods belongs to another sphere than that of finance. There is comparatively small danger of our being allowed to grow very extravagant in that respect. With lynx-eyed censors to the right and left of us whose noble faces grow pale with rage, and whose loud voices are prompt to utter Cassandra-like forebodings, when so much as one "brown bawbee" too many is expended in connection with the work of the Church; with kindly newspapers eager to admit the captious grumbings of any Adullamite that can wield a goosequill, it is a difficult matter to go far astray in the way of being unduly lavish of silver and gold. But there are other forms of waste we need to guard against, and there are methods of work that involve a quite unnecessary loss of power. No one who is familiar, for example, with the Home Mission agencies in operation among us can doubt that there is room for the manifestation of a wise economy. A little exercise of mutual forbearance on the part of neighbouring congregations and denominations would result, in many cases, in a large saving of energy. The question of overlapping needs hardly to be referred to, because it has been of late so frequently discussed, but it is an evil which should be carefully guarded against, even though it can be averted only by the exercise of some congregational self-limitation and self-sacrifice. Sometimes it would appear as if there were being developed among us a kind of subtle superstition that some forms of work are so absolutely necessary to a Church's salvation that they must be engaged in, even though that is possible only by a course of action that is nothing better than sowing the same field twice; and occasionally a tone is adopted which seems to indicate that a Church has some right to complain against God for not having created a special lump of heathenism and stuck that down on its threshold. Now, there can be no doubt, I think, that there is scope for all the pent-up energy of the Christian community apart from all such mistaken methods, and did we but set ourselves resolutely to the task of discovery and invention, we would speedily light upon and devise new channels that would meet the necessity. Then methods of work are radically extravagant which react injuriously upon the workers. The "go-to-meeting" element, I am convinced, bulks too largely in the life of many of our Christian people. A large amount of energy is spent in hurrying from place to place, and taking part in all kinds of gatherings with a more or less religious character. Properly speaking, this can hardly be called work, though it passes current as such with large numbers of Christian people. In many cases it is neither more nor less than self-indulgent dissipation, and it operates as mischievously as dissipation always does. It breeds, often, an habitual feverishness of spirit, quite incompatible with that restfulness of spirit without which there can be no healthy growth of Christian character. It results, not seldom, in the development of a superficiality and smallness of spiritual understanding that are none the more beautiful that they are linked with a calm self-confidence and self-importance that irritate and repel. It disinclines to the cultivation of those holy graces that flourish best in an atmosphere of steady loyalty to nearest duty. Evidence of this tendency surrounds us everywhere, and, in presence of it, it is not unnecessary to insist that our methods should never be such as to lower the tone of Christian character among our church members. They should do nothing to foster that craving for publicity and excitement that unfits for the quiet work of self-culture, which is of such vast importance. I cannot stay to apply this principle to such matters as the irrepressible bazaar and interminable soiree. I will only say that my firm conviction is, that neither in the one case nor the other is the game worth the candle; and that, further, I can conceive, without any stretch of imagination, what a saving and a profit it would be, both to pastor and people, were it laid down as a law, that no member shall be expected to attend all night long at a tea meeting, where sermons are resented, and speeches laughed at, and sacred songs are hailed with rounds of indecent applause.—*Joseph Corbett, D.D.*

### HINDERING THE GOSPEL.

The Gospel is hindered in many ways. It is hindered by open and secret enemies, by false friends, by ignorant and misguided professors of religion, and, strange as it may seem, by good Christians who have too little of the spirit of their divine Master, and who are unwilling to suffer for His sake. They desire the success of the Gospel and the peace of the Church, but are not disposed to make any great sacrifices to promote these ends. They insist upon their rights when it would be greatly to their credit to waive them, and suffer loss rather than permit the Gospel to be hindered.

Paul was persuaded that he and His fellow-apostles and preachers were entitled to the support of their brethren, for whose spiritual welfare they laboured, yet he would not exact anything at their hands; he would rather suffer poverty, and labour with his own hands to supply his wants, than give the slightest occasion to any to say that he coveted the gold and silver of those for whom he laboured. He would not only not do anything wrong in itself by which the Gospel might

be hindered, but he would not even do that which he might lawfully do, if thereby any one should possibly be prevented from receiving the Gospel.

If the spirit of the apostle was universal in the Church, there are many hindrances to the reception and spread of the Gospel which would have no existence. For very often the most serious hindrances to the Gospel do not come from its avowed enemies, but from its professed, and even from its true, friends.

They too often hinder it by disagreements and disputes which ought never to arise between brethren, and would not, if they were as ready to make sacrifices for the Gospel's sake as Paul was.

But how few are willing to suffer wrong, to submit patiently to worldly loss, to let pass without notice a slanderous report, lest the Gospel should be hindered?

A Christian, with less patience and weakness than Paul, is sure that he is right in a controversy which has arisen between a brother and himself, and without particular reference to the effect which keeping up the controversy will have upon the interests of the Church, he is not disposed to yield anything for the sake of the Gospel. He is very sure that his brother is wrong, and therefore he should yield. But cannot every one see that this is not in line with the course of Paul? He could have taken the position that the Lord had ordained that "they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." But instead of doing so he declares, "We have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ."

If a Christian can avoid a dispute or settle a difficulty with a brother by making a great sacrifice, the spirit of Christ and His Gospel, and the example of the apostle clearly require him to do so and avoid all possible hindrance to the Gospel.

Most persons, perhaps, think that they are doing well if they avoid that which is unjust, immoral and wrong, and ask for nothing more than is their own. They do not harm the cause of Christ by unworthy conduct, by improper speech, or by any unjust exactions whatever. They meet their obligations as honourable and Christian men should do, and this is all they ask their brethren to do. They do not "take up an ill report against a neighbour;" they are careful to avoid so much as uttering a word which would unjustly injure a brother; and, therefore, they propose to insist that, if brethren are not equally upright and careful in their course with them, they must expose them, or punish them, or do something severe to bring them to a proper sense of duty; and this, too, without considering or asking, How will this affect the cause of Christ?

Many disputes between brethren would end very suddenly if the parties concerned would seriously think of the injury that may result to the interests of religion by the contention. Many a sacrifice would be made by Christians to avoid hindering the Gospel, if they would always consider how noble, how Christlike it is to make sacrifices for the sake of the Gospel. Many a grievance would be overlooked, many a fault condoned, many a wrong forgiven, many a rupture avoided, if Christians would always well consider what may be the result of hindering the Gospel of Christ.—*United Presbyterian.*

### ONE EFFORT MORE.

The old astronomer with his trusty glass is searching the heavens for a star, "a lost star," he says.

"It ought to be there," he murmurs, looking along the jewelled lines of some constellation. Not finding his diamond, he shakes his head, and is about to give up the search.

"Just one trial more!" he murmurs.

He directs his glass towards the sky, and lo, there it is! Out of the dark depths of space flashes the pure, bright face of the lost star.

"Found!" he cries. "It was one effort more that did it."

Yes, it is true in nature and in the world of grace that that it is the one effort more that often restores to its orbit the lost star.

It was the one more reaching out of the world of Christian sympathy that by a friendly tap and a kindly word arrested a drunkard and gave to temperance a star-orator, Gough.

A Sunday-school teacher touches on the shoulder and kindly asks a young man about his soul, and this one effort more of the Church of God brought Dwight L. Moody to the Saviour. Let the blessing awaiting the maker of one more effort beckon us forward to special activity in our classes. If the finding of a perishable world keeps the astronomer up all night we can afford to spend as much time, if need be, wrestling with God for a blessing on an imperishable soul. Out of an atmosphere where we have felt and breathed the presence of God may we go to our classes. Surely this one more effort, now, this day, we are encouraged to make. Supplicating Jacobs will certainly make prevailing Israels. And oh, the joy of knowing that a new world, a new soul, a new life, has been set to revolving in obedience and love around that divine centre, God!

### DO NOT PUNISH UNJUSTLY.

After all, it is perhaps better that the child should be a little spoiled rather than that it be unjustly punished. The latter sometimes makes a very unhappy memory to carry about with one. A gentleman said a short time ago, "I shall never forget, though I have wished a thousand times that I could, how I punished little Mamie for continually pronouncing a word wrong—as I thought wilfully—after I tried hard to make her say it correctly. She was quiet for a few minutes after I had punished her, and then she looked up and said: 'Papa, you will have to whip me again; I can't say it.' You can imagine just how I felt, and how I kept on remembering the look on her face, and the tone of the sad little voice."