

but the boundless prairie, a neat white school-house and twenty-six strangely-garbed, little children who stand near the porch, waving their adieus to the teacher who returns to Ontario and "comes to us no more again." Then, as the picture fades, a strange, sweet music

fills the air, and in my fancy, I hear my dear little pupils singing their farewell song—

"Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet, till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again."

Life More Than Things

The Parable of the Rich Fool

Read Luke 12: 13-21; and Compare Prov. 8; 1 Tim. 11:19.

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THE little of our parable for this month does not have a pleasant sound, but truth compels us to make use of it and speak about it. The occasion of speaking this parable was at the time of a very impressive lesson on the ministry of the Holy Ghost. One of the listeners whose mind was entirely preoccupied with his own affairs and who seemed to be insensible to the truth Jesus was proclaiming, interrupted him with the request that Jesus go speak to his brother about dividing an inheritance. "Masters," such as they held Jesus to be, were often called to do work of this sort. But Jesus disclaimed having any responsibility for the kind of work mentioned, and perceiving the utter callousness of the man proceeded to speak a parable on the danger of covetousness. The parable is a faithful reflex of the type before him. The more you study it the clearer this will appear.

Jesus brought new standards of religion and ethics into the world. He held up new ideals. In this parable he contrasts the types, diametrically opposed to each other; those rich in worldly goods, to those rich toward God; the philanthropist, and the miser; the life that is grasping and getting, and the life that loses itself for the good of others, and is all the time giving. The man who thought and used this parable was an artist. Here is a type. It may fit an individual or a nation. How would it do to ask if Canada were the "rich fool"? She has plenty. Her grounds bring forth in abundance. Has she the spirit of a philanthropist? How does she spend her money? Compare the liquor bill, the tobacco bill, the vanity bill, with what she gives for the causes of humanity at large. Are we "getting" or "giving"? Or is the type American? America spends annually \$40,000,000 for "precious stones" in the European markets. (Concerning this the editor of a large paper asks, "Where does America get the money?" and, "Where does Europe get the stones?")

Let it not be thought that this is a fang at wealth. There is no end of cheap talk going on all the time about the "rich people." Jesus had nothing against them as a class. All talents bring a temptation with them, and we are told that if riches increase, to set not the heart on them. The parable is a warning against self-worship and mammon worship, as against the glory of God. The man who is not on the future state of the rich man, but lies rather in the statement of the 21st verse. A life that is not rich toward God is a fool life and will be a miserable failure. The man who puts his affection and thought on the visible, the trappings of position, dress, or wealth, waste his life. "We start for soul is waiting there."

One finds it hard to believe that such a man as this lives at all. Where was he trained? What kind of home did he have that he missed the pathway of life so absolutely. We are glad to mark that so many of our men of great wealth are philanthropists. We have a Strathcona, a Cecil Rhodes, a Massey, a Carnegie in

these days. Men who put their money in circulation, who build up industries, build ships, railways, canals, and so forth, do not belong under this type. This is public spirit. The man in the parable had nothing of that. He just lived for himself. He found when it was too late, that he was making a covenant with hell and with death. Yet, the man's apparent success and prosperity were a temptation to people. They would say:—"There now, look at that. Mr. Prosperous never prays. He has no use for churches (except as they raise the price of land where he lives and speculates). He gives nothing for missions. What is the use of living righteously?" As if all these goods were life. The man was an idolater, and broke the commandments right and left. We ought to be ashamed of calling that success. But there it is: "Some people call their children before them like this—"John, spell success." "M-o-n-e-y," John replies. "Right!" says father. Now Mary, you spell success. "S-o-c-i-e-t-y," Mary spells with alacrity. "Right you are, my children, good for you," and vain parents applaud this kind of thing. It all ends in tears, the dark to write chaos, with undrinking ink. This is the kind of thing that breeds class distinction and makes men hate their fellows and lose faith in human nature.

The fund of illustration for this kind of character is large. I remember seeing a cartoon some years ago in the beginning of the Klondike gold chase. It was a good one. In the foreground of the picture there was a skeleton with a pick axe and one cold hand stretched in death grip over a big gold nugget. Look up in this connection Lowell's, "Vision of Sir Launfal," where it begins, "Earth gets its price for what earth gives us."

There, too, is the story of King Midas. Some young member of the League who never spoke before might be detailed to tell about the man who would not be satisfied till he had acquired the magic power of turning everything into gold that he touched. He realized soon enough that he was a fool, and wanted to get back to life where he could share with others.

One of the best illustrations of the covetous spirit comes from Tolstoy. See "Tales by Tolstoy," (World's Classics, cost about thirty-five cents). The story referred to is told under the heading, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" W. J. Bryan makes good use of this story in his lecture on "The Price of a Soul." A certain village peasant who had sufficient and lived in peace with his family, had his spirit of covetousness stirred up by a visit from a "town cousin," who sneered at his plain and simple manners. He secretly resolved to get more land. He thought if he had land enough "he wouldn't be afraid of the devil himself." Time passed on. He bought more land, but was less satisfied with life. In his anxiety to get more he quarrelled with his neighbors over trifles. In the end things became unpleasant for him, and he hearing from a traveller of a place in the distance where land was plenty and cheap,

he went that way. The people there were called Bashkirs. They appeared to be contented and reckless. He gave them rich presents and admired their land. He wanted to buy some of it. They laughed at that. Then they told him he could have all he could walk around in a day at the nominal price of 1,000 roubles. Pahom, the villager, could hardly believe this possible and he made sure that there was no fraud. He was to take a spade and make marks along the bounds of his land. He must, however, be back at the starting place on the same day or lose his money. He was delighted. There was no real sleep the night before; only a terrible dream, which he heeded not. He started at sunrise to go around the land that would be his. It was of the best. He hurried on in high hopes. The land got better. He must have this and this. On he went; the noonday was passed. He could get back all right he thought. Some clothing was discarded that he might work the faster. At last he started back. How quickly the sun was falling. His strength was giving out. His breast was heaving like a bellows. The sun grew large and red. He heard the men cheering him. Could he but reach the goal the land would be his, then he would have enough. Just as the sun set he fell forward on the spot from which he had started. "That's a fine fellow," the on-lookers exclaimed, "he has gained much land." He had fallen dead. His servant dug a grave the size of his body and buried him in it. "and that," says Tolstoy, "was all the land he needed." How quickly would the name of Pahom fade away. How soon the name of any selfish accumulator fades away. But "the memory of the just is blessed."

Now, in contrast to all this what does it mean to be rich toward God? The Bible is not a book of science or philosophy. Jesus taught by doing. Christianity is best sought by example. In a recent issue of the *Christian Guardian* (July 17th) there appeared a tribute to the late Rev. Arthur Hocking, Jr., one of our missionaries in China, who died at his post, having contracted fever while superintending famine relief work. I knew this man when he was a small boy, and knew him later when he was entering the ministry. I wish we had more of the devotion to Christ and his work that he had. He gave himself for Christ and for humanity. He had no treasure here, but he had great wealth in the Kingdom of Heaven. He was rich toward God. I have been looking across at my library while writing this. I see there among my books the biography of Wendell Phillips, who gave himself for the freedom of the black race. I see the life of Henry Drummond, whose pure and sincere life, whose learning and eloquence were such a benediction to millions. Passing along there is Fitchett's, "Wesley and his Century"—the man who influenced for good more lives than any other in British history. Then I see the life of Sir Geo. Williams, founder of the Y. M. C. A. and Hugh Price Hughes, Booker Washington, Thomas Arnold, of Rugby, Gladstone, and many others. Now, what does it mean to be "rich toward God"? Isn't the answer plain? Take wisdom for your wealth, take Christ for your fellow worker. Build up a home, a church, a school, a college, a righteous country; give the gospel to the world. How forcibly and aptly Browning writes:—

"Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive.
A spark disturbs our God,
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of his tribes that take,
I must believe."