

## The Christian.

## EDITORIAL.

## MAMMON.

And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations. Luke xvi. 9.

When urging upon His disciples the duty and privilege of Christian benevolence, Jesus spoke the parable of the unjust steward who had wasted his lord's goods and was about to lose his place and his living. This man was in trouble, grim wants stared him in the face, and he resolved on a course of action, which, though most unjust to his master, had in it admirable wisdom and forethought for himself. Before passing from office, he called unto him his lord's debtors, and took from each his note of hand for a sum far below what he owed. By this means he made to himself friends who would give him shelter, and help him to obtain a place and a living when his lord took from him the stewardship, so that even his lord, whom he defrauded commended his wisdom.

We will notice three questions that often arise to the mind in reading this passage.

I. Why should Jesus select an unjust steward as an example for His disciples in anything instead of one more worthy of general imitation?

II. How can we make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness?

III. How can these friends receive us into everlasting habitations when this is the prerogative of Jesus Christ?

1. Light shines in proportion to the darkness which surround it, and when the Saviour sought to impress on the mind a particular virtue, He often pointed to a person in whom this virtue and this alone was found as a light shining in a dark place. In the 18th chapter of Luke He spoke a parable to this end that men ought always to pray and not to faint, that is, men should continue to pray for what is right and not to be discouraged and cease because they do not see their prayer answered. There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. A poor and injured widow came to him for justice. He did not care for her nor her oppressors and sent her away. She came again and was sent off. But her case was urgent and she came again and again until he could stand it no longer, and he said: Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because the widow troubleth me I will avenge her, least by her continual coming she weary me. Jesus shows us that unjust judge doing right in this one thing, though wrong in everything else. Even his motives for relieving this widow were selfish. She would continue to come, and he did her justice to save himself trouble. "And will not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night to Him? though He bear long with them I say unto you He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?" To encourage His people in confident and continued prayer, and to warn them against that cruel distrust of God which He intimates will largely prevail at His second coming, He holds up to all ages this one righteous act of the unjust judge, blazing as a beacon light in the midst of all his unrighteous doings.

So with the unjust steward. A man wrong in everything else is right in thinking of, and providing for the future, and Jesus holds him up as an example to those who have an eternal future, that they may so use what is now passing through their hands as to make friends who will receive them into everlasting habitations. If even the steward who was wrong in all other matters would provide for a temporal future, what excuse can we have for neglecting to provide for an eternal future?

II. How can we make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness? The mammon of unrighteousness here means the money and property which we now possess. There may be various reasons for calling it the unrighteous mammon. First, it is unjustly worshipped instead of God. It and God are both called masters, and no man can serve them both. Second, it is often unjustly acquired, and oftener unjustly spent. Third, it is unjust in its promises, inspiring hopes of happiness never to be realized. It stands in antithesis to the true riches. Jesus says: If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? It is only passing through our hands as another's property. But the true riches is given us as our own, to have and to hold forever. It is true and has no unrighteousness in it, because it is given us of God through Jesus Christ.

The mammon of unrighteousness is not the friend we are to make, as some might read the passage, but it is of it or with it we are to make these friends. The unjust steward made friends with the unjust use of money; we are commanded to make friends with its just and proper use; to do good to all men, especially to the household of faith. As if Jesus had said, "You are now stewards of God's property, and you must soon pass out of office or fail. Use this property in relieving the needy, that when you fail they may befriend you."

Doing good is characteristic of Christ's disciples, because they resemble Him. He was so poor as to have not where to lay His head, but He healed the sick and fed the hungry by miracle. Peter and John had neither silver nor gold to give the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple, but in the name of Jesus they healed him; and Jesus commands His disciples who have not miraculous powers, to do good with mammon. James speaks of vain religion, and adds: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James i. 26-27). To do good and to communicate is a sacrifice with which God is well pleased. He loves cheerful givers and it is not surprising that they should make themselves friends.

III. But as it is the prerogative of Jesus Christ to receive persons into everlasting habitations, how can such friends receive us? Jesus assures us that He will be the only Judge—that even the Father judgeth no man, but had committed all judgment unto the Son, and what part friends will have in the judgment Jesus plainly shows in another place. He is such a perfect teacher that we can learn from Him in advance our final doom.

There is nothing we sooner forget than our responses to the appeals of the needy. A hardened selfishness which closes the heart and hand against those appeals will easily remove the matter from the memory, while the benevolence that feeds the hungry and clothes the naked is so natural and congenial to the Christian heart, and appears so small in comparison to the gifts of God's goodness, as to be soon forgotten, and the giver and the withholder pass along together through life. But those things which are so soon forgotten by men are recorded in God's Book of remembrance, which will be opened when the judgment is set, and will prove the very hinge on which shall turn the eternal destiny of those who are judged. This is made clear to us in the latter part of the 25th chapter of Matthew, "Then shall the King say to those on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave Me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave Me drink, I was a stranger and ye took Me in, naked and ye clothed Me, I was in prison and ye came unto Me." When

the righteous shall ask when they saw the King in such circumstances and ministered to Him, He will point them to those of His brethren whom they had made friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, assuring them that what they had done to the least of these they had done unto Him. Thus Jesus shows how the righteous shall be received into everlasting habitations by the friends whom they shall have made on earth. These friends are not their judges, nor are they the jury in the case. They simply tell how the righteous had treated them in their need, and the King passes a righteous sentence, according to truthful testimony. These acts did not save them from their sins or make them righteous. Their righteousness is of the Lord and of Him alone. But these generous acts of obedience to Him were the fruits of their righteousness and the tree is both known and judged by its fruits. It appears that the righteous will be astonished to hear that they had ministered to the wants of the King, and will have forgotten that they had done it to His brethren, but He is too faithful to forget even the smallest favors His brethren have received for His sake. Those on the left hand will also be surprised to hear that they had refused to minister to the wants of the King, and will ask when they saw Him in need and refused sympathy and support. They even forgot their treatment of His needy brethren. But it will be brought then to their remembrance in a way which they will never forget.

In this 16th of Luke the Saviour illustrates the criminal neglect of His needy ones, by the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man in torments cries to Abraham to send Lazarus to minister unto him who had in his lifetime refused Lazarus the crumbs which fell from his table. Abraham's withering reply was to REMEMBER the past as it bore on the gloomy present and on the hopeless future.

While endeavoring to obey the Great Teacher in the matter before us, we should studiously avoid the two following extremes. The first is a desire to do great things and overlook smaller matters. We may wish to have our names appear as large supporters of popular enterprises or of great men who are thought to sustain sacrifices and endure great hardship for the Master, while we despise the poor and even reproach them for being poor, saying if they were as industrious and economical as we are, they would not be in need of help. While this may be partly true, we should be very careful how we treat the poor. It may be that God has not endowed them with the ability He has given us to work and economize, and we should not forget that the poor lie very near His heart and that it is the least of Christ's brethren He will emphasize in the final day.

The opposite extreme we should guard against is that of planning small things for God when His cause and the eternal wants of a dying world are calling us to self-sacrificing liberality. We may conclude that it will not do to disregard these calls altogether, and resolve that we will do something; and when we call up the many claims on us and think the times hard, we determine to do "a little" notwithstanding all. We think of the poor widow who threw her two mites into the offerings of God, and we call our humble (?) offering the widow's mite and profess to stand with her whom the Lord applauds. But ah! the mistake is this: she gave her mite that she might give her all to God. We give our mite that we may withhold our ALL from Him, and let all but the mite go somewhere else. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

D. C.

It is vanity to desire to live long, and not care to live well.

A Christian's school has no vacations; his campaign has no truces; his service no furloughs. He must battle his way up to the conqueror's crown.—T. L. Cuyler.