



CITY OF GUELPH, DIOCESE OF NIAGARA.

"IN EARTHEN VESSELS."

II. Cor., vi. 7. "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, not of us." Judges vii. 16. See also II. 5.

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THE MS is old and torn, yellowed with age, and barely decipherable, but its teaching may not be without its meaning for us although its defaced title page does not reveal whether it treats of dream or vision, parable or allegory—nor does it concern us much to know in what language the writer originally recorded his lessons, or whether he rested in palace or tent as he penned his recollections. Half way down the second page and evidently in response to some humbly worded expostulation on the part of him who is addressed by the heavenly visitant, we find the following words: "Fashion me, O potter, earthen vessels to mine honor. Had I needed vessels of silver or vessels of gold, vessels with bejeweled symbols, or vessels of dazzling lustre, should I have come to thee, O potter? Shall I not do as I will with mine own? They to whom I shall entrust thy handiwork are to be my servants, to be the bearers of the water of life and to carry it in the pitchers which thou shalt prepare for them. Light bearers must they likewise be. So, where nought but the hand of wilful disobedience can quench it, devise thou a hiding place for the lamp which they must not only see to it shall cast its rays in the dark places of the earth, but which also must be found alight at my coming. Of every shape, size and kind, fashion these vessels, O potter! Some for the hands of tender infants, and some for the careworn and old; for some who will tread only on soft places, and for others (and they will be legion), who will have to fight their way through briars and thorns, and blister their feet over stony paths. Many will bear their precious treasure hardly knowing that they do so at all, or but lightly esteeming it; whilst others may feel it as a burden too heavy to be borne, not knowing that 'my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Some may flout and scorn it because it is of form so homely and hue so sad, whilst others may lay it aside for a more convenient season, not understanding that 'Now is

the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' One will say, had I but my brother's pitcher and he mine, then, indeed, could I serve my Lord, but as it is, this is too heavy a load for so weak an arm as mine, whilst his is so light of weight that he has hidden it under the fine linen

and purple in which he is clothed and forgets that he bears it at all. But, O potter, I will suffer none to remain long ignorant that they are my treasure carriers, and until they, forgetting the banner under which they enlisted, wilfully cast away that which I have entrusted to them, be it thy care to re-make and mend, to renovate and restore again into its original lineaments each vessel as it is tremblingly returned for thy remoulding, well knowing that the timid hand which carries it to thee, has been first raised in supplication to Me, and that it is at My bidding that thou art to make it whole. Now, to thy work, O potter, and learn thou thyself, and teach thou to others the lesson that this Treasure is entrusted to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be known to be of God, and not of man."

Upon the frayed fragments of the time worn pages can be faintly traced here a line and there a word, showing the after dealings between the potter and the owners of the vessels his obedient hand has wrought. "Take it back, my daughter," he says in one place, "thy mistake was not having first emptied thy vessel; so full was it of self that thou didst not leave room for thy Lord. Happily, before thy lamp went wholly out, thou wert enabled to cry 'Lord! Show me what Thou wouldst have me to do.'" To another who had evidently pleaded the uselessness of having a vessel at all, he says, "So cumbered and troubled with thy many cares that thou canst carry neither water nor light for thy Lord! Daughter! So much more need of both hast thou thyself, and as thou drinkest and art refreshed, so much more certainly wilt thou desire to offer the cooling draught to others! Thy Lord knows thy burdens and He will expect of thee no more than thou canst perform." To another, who had but a fragment of the pitcher and but one unquenched spark of the lamp, he cried out: "Oh! turbulent and fretful of heart! Why couldst thou not in patience and peace possess thy soul? Thou didst not do well to be angry. Does the Holy One need thee to fight His battles? Stand thou aside awhile, and whilst I cast thy vessel anew pray for renewed grace wherewith to temper thy zeal as thou again steppeth forth into thine allotted work. For the diffident and humble-minded vessel bearers, who feared to dishonor their Lord by their insignifi-

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