

DEACON LEE'S OPINIONS.

Deacon Lee, who was a kindly, silent, faithful, gracious man, was one day waited upon by a restless, ambitious, worldly church-member who was laboring to create uneasiness in the church, and especially to drive away the preacher.

The deacon came in to meet his visitor, who, after the usual greetings, began to lament the low state of religion, and inquire as to the reason why there had been no revival for two or three years past.

"Now, what do you think is the cause of things being dull here? Do you know?" he persisted in asking.

The deacon was not ready to give his opinion; and, after a little thought, frankly answered, "No, I don't."

"Do you think the church are alive to the work before them?"

"No, I don't."

"Do you think the minister fully realizes the solemnity of his work?"

"No, I don't."

A twinkle was seen in the eye of this trouble-maker, and taking courage, he asked:

"Do you think Mr. B. a very extraordinary man?"

"No, I don't."

"Do you think his sermon on 'Their eyes were holden' anything wonderfully great?"

"No, I don't."

Making bold, after all this encouragement in monosyllable, he asked, "Then don't you think we had better dismiss this man and 'hire' another?"

The old deacon started as if shot with an arrow, and, in a tone louder than his wont, shouted, "No, I don't."

"Why," cried the amazed visitor, "you agree with me in all I have said, don't you?"

"No, I don't."

"You talk so little, sir," replied the questioner, not a little abashed, "that no one can find out what you do mean."

"I talked enough once," replied the old man, rising to his feet, "for six praying Christians. Thirty years ago I got my heart humbled and my tongue bridled, and ever since that I've walked softly before God. I then made vows solemn as eternity; and don't you tempt me to break them!"

The trouble-maker started at the earnestness of the hitherto silent, immovable man, and asked, "What happened to you thirty years ago?"

"Well, sir, I'll tell you. I was drawn into a scheme just like this of yours, to uproot one of God's servants from the field in which He had planted him. In my blindness, I fancied it a little thing to remove one of the 'stars' which Jesus holds in His right hand, if thereby my ear could be tickled by more flowery words, and the pews filled with those who turned away from the simplicity of the gospel. I and the men that led me—for I admit that I was a dupe and a fool—flattered ourselves that we were conscientious. We thought we were doing God service when we drove that holy man from the pulpit and his work, and said we considered his work ended in B—, where I then lived. We groaned because there was no revival, while we were gossiping about and criticising, and crushing instead of upholding by our efforts and our prayers, the instrument at whose hand we harshly demanded the blessings. Well, sir, he could not drag on the chariot of salvation with a half a dozen of us taunting him for his weakness, while we hung as a dead weight to the wheels; he had not the power of the Spirit, and could not convert men; so we hunted him like a deer, till, worn and bleeding, he fled into a covert to die. Scarcely had he gone, when God came among us by His Spirit to show that he had blessed the labors of his dear rejected servant. Our own hearts were broken, and our wayward children converted, and I resolved at a convenient season to visit my former pastor and confess my sin, and thank him for his faithfulness to my wayward sons, which, like long buried seed, had now sprung up. But God denied me that relief, that he might teach me a lesson every child of his ought to learn, that he who toucheth one of His servants touches the apple of His eye. I heard my pastor was ill, and taking my oldest son with me, set out on a twenty-five miles' ride to see him. It was evening when I arrived, and his wife, with the spirit which any woman ought to exhibit toward one who had so wronged her husband, denied me admittance to his chamber. She said, and her words were arrows to my soul, 'He may be dying, and the sight of your face might add to his anguish!'

"Had it come to this, I said to myself, that the man whose labors had, through Christ, brought me into his fold, who had consoled my spirit in a terrible bereavement, and who had, till designing men had alienated us, been to me as a brother—that this man could not die in peace with my face before him? 'God pity me!' I cried, 'what have I done!' I confessed my sin to that meek woman, and implored her for Christ's sake to let me kneel before his dying servant, and receive his forgiveness. What did I care then whether the pews by the door were rented or not? I would gladly have taken his whole family to my home forever as my flesh and blood, but no such happiness was in store for me.

"As I entered the room of the blessed warrior, whose armor was falling from his limbs, he opened his languid eyes, and said, 'Brother Lee! Brother Lee!' I bent over him and sobbed out, 'My pastor! my pastor!' Then raising his white hand, he said in a deep, impressive voice, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm!' I spoke tenderly to him, and told him I had come to confess my sin, and bring some of his fruit to him, calling my son to tell him how he had found Christ. But he was unconscious of all around; the sight of my face had brought the last pang of earth to his troubled spirit.

"I kissed his brow, and told him how dear he had been to me; I craved his pardon for my unfaithfulness, and promised to care for his widow and fatherless little ones; but his only reply, murmured as it in a troubled dream, was, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.'

"I stayed by him all night, and at day-break I closed his eyes. I offered his widow a house to live in the remainder of her days; but like a heroine she said, 'I freely forgive you. But my children, who entered deeply into their father's anguish shall never see me so regardless of his memory as to take anything from those who caused it. He has left us all with his covenant God, and he will care for us.'

"Well, sir, those dying words sounded in my ears from that coffin and from that grave. When I slept, Christ stood before my dream, saying, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.' These words followed me till I fully realized the esteem in which Christ holds those men who had given up all for his sake, and I vowed to love them evermore for his sake, even if they are not perfect. And since that day, sir, I have talked less than before, and have supported my pastor, even if he is not a 'very extraordinary man.' My tongue shall cleave to the roof of my mouth, and my right hand forget her cunning, before I dare to put asunder what God has joined together. When a minister's work is done in a place, I believe God will show it to him. I will not join you, sir, in the scheme that brought you here; and, moreover, if I hear another word of this from your lips, I shall ask my brethren to deal with you as with those who cause divisions. I would give all I own to recall what I did thirty years ago. Stop where you are, and pray God, if perchance the thought of your heart may be forgiven you."

This decided reply put an end to the newcomer's efforts to get a minister who could make more stir, and left him free to lay out roads and build hotels.

There is often great power in the little word "no," but sometimes it requires not a little courage to speak it so resolutely as did the silent deacon.

IN ROME, ITALY.

Mr. R. G. Hatfield, of New York, writes as follows of Mr. Van Meter's work;

ROME, Dec. 4, 1874.

"Dear Bro:—Ten days ago I wrote you a short note, merely to inform you of my arrival here. Since then I have had an opportunity of looking about me, and now propose to give you some of my observations. When we arrived here on the 24th of November, the weather was disagreeably cold, quite as cold as we usually have it in New York at this season. On the way here from Venice, we saw snow on the fields around us, and suffered with the cold in the cars, notwithstanding the chauffeur or hot water foot-warmer placed in the bottom of the car. We had a continuance of cold weather until three or four days since, when the warm air from Africa reached us. Since then it has been delightful to be in the open air—pleasanter than within the house. Yesterday and today we were and are without fire, and need none.

Mr. Van Meter's premises.—We arrived here in time to spend Thanksgiving day

with Brother Van Meter. In the evening we had a good time; about ninety people were present in the parlor, a fine room of 26 by 39 feet, beneath which is a school-room of the same size, but the clear space of which is interrupted by columns for the support of the parlor floor. Another large room, 23 by 39 feet, is the reception and reading room. Here American and English travellers are in the habit of meeting for consultation. Here are held the meetings of the Archaeological Society, British and American, and of occasional committees of religious associations, and of church choirs to practice music; in short it is a sort of religious headquarters for all the good people who are interested in evangelical work in Rome. On the table in this reading room are files of a large number of religious and secular papers in the English, French and Italian languages. Beneath this reading-room there is a fine school-room of like size. The two schoolrooms are on the ground floor; the parlor and reading-room are over them, in what we would term the second story, but here is known as the first. The floors of the parlor and reading-room, in fact of all the rooms and halls, are of glazed tiles. Wooden floors are here almost unknown. In all the houses the floors are either of tiles or brick. This kind of floor is pleasant as well as durable, for houses in a warm climate. When the weather is cold however, the people suffer with cold feet and consequent ill health. Carpets and rugs covering a portion of the tile floors, are used in the better dwellings in winter. The building occupied by Mr. Van Meter was once the palace of a rich man—Prince Torlonia—but is by no means a grand building. Besides the four large rooms spoken of, there is nothing to mark the building beyond any ordinary dwelling, and these large rooms have little to mark their excellence except their size. The doors and windows are very plain and common. What there is of cheerfulness and pleasantness—and they are truly cheerful and inviting—is due to the good taste and industry of Mrs. Van Meter and her family, who have been unsparing in their ingenuity and toil in setting off their scanty furniture to the best advantage. Beyond their grand piano, which is a conspicuous article in the parlor, there is very little furniture of any value about the house; and yet there is an air of comfort and homelikeness, which is very inviting.

In my visits to the various Sunday Schools of Rome I found that there were 171 children in all the schools; of these 71 were in Mr. Van Meter's schools, and 100 in all the others; at Frascati, 12 miles from Rome, I learn there were in Mr. Van Meter's school last Sunday 55 scholars.

Proclamation from the Vatican.—On Thanksgiving day an ecclesiastical proclamation was distributed in the houses of all that district of the city lying round about the Vatican. This paper was from the curé of the people and set forth at great length the wickedness of a "foreigner" who had planted himself just beneath the window of his holiness the Pope, and who was there disseminating error calculated to draw the people away from the church and expose them to error and the loss of their souls. In glowing colors their great danger of ruin was pointed out, and they were exhorted by all that was holy—all the holy saints and apostles—to forsake the "foreigner" and come to mother church and to the Sunday-schools, which were to be opened in St. Peter's Cathedral, for the care of their souls and the souls of their children. He urged them at very great length, in consideration of the age and tears of his holiness the Pope, to come and be obedient to their spiritual directors, etc., etc. This document was among the people on Thursday, which is their holiday here. No schools are in session, and many of the libraries and other public places are closed on that day.

In the building in which the schools are held, the Pope has taken apartments in the story next above the schools, and from these apartments there goes a telegraph wire to the Vatican, for what purpose I do not know, but possibly for a ready communication of what is transpiring in the school.—National Baptist.

Mr. Van Meter subsequently writes of his schools:

Table with 2 columns: Category and Value. Categories include Total Registered in all my day schools, Average attendance in day schools, Registered in my Night Schools for Men, etc.

The rooms are well fitted up, the machinery is in good running order, and we owe nothing.

MOODY AND SANKEY IN BIRMINGHAM.

Messrs. Moody and Sankey, who had just completed their series of successful services in Sheffield, commenced their labors in Birmingham on Sunday last. The first gathering was held in the Town Hall, "for Christian workers only." This meeting was announced to commence at eight o'clock, but long before the hour large crowds assembled outside the spacious building waiting for admission. When the doors were opened, the hall, which is capable of accommodating about 5000 persons, was quickly filled, every available space being occupied. The two evangelists accompanied by several ministers, appeared upon the platform at eight o'clock, and commenced the service by singing the hymn, "Ho, my comrades! see the signal!"—Prayer followed, after which Mr. Sankey sang his first hymn before a Birmingham audience, "Hark, the voice of Jesus crying," followed by "Nothing but leaves." Mr. Moody then addressed the congregation upon "Christian Work," and showed how great a work might be done in Birmingham if Christian people would only work unitedly and earnestly with an undivided aim for the conversion of sinners. This meeting was concluded by singing the 63rd hymn. The second gathering took place in the same place at two o'clock, the building being crowded to excess. After singing a hymn, Mr. Moody addressed the vast assembly from the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle of Corinthians. He exhorted his hearers to fight against the great enemy, sin. He expressed a wish that he could say something that day which would make every man, woman, and child believe in the Gospel. In order to be saved, they must be in Christ. Paul placed his whole trust in the Saviour when he said: "He loved me, and gave Himself for me!" speaking as if there was no other man in the world, and then he got all the benefit. He concluded by giving an illustration of the way in which Christ blots out the sins of the unbeliever. He said, "A father placed his son, who was very wild and reckless, in the Russian army. Soon after joining he got heavily into debt, one day, being greatly depressed, he wrote down all his liabilities on a piece of paper, and, having cast them up, fell asleep. Soon afterwards the Emperor passing, saw the young man, and, glancing at his paper, learnt the state of affairs, and wrote underneath: "I will pay—Nicholas." Now, continued Mr. Moody, you who are so heavily indebted to God, do the same, take all to Christ, and have His name at the bottom of the black list. His name will be enough, and you will be free. The meeting was concluded by singing and prayer.

The evening meeting was held in Bingley Hall, the largest building that could be obtained. It is capable of accommodating nearly 15,000 people standing, and seats were provided for 12,000. A large platform was erected near the centre of the building, upon which was placed the organ used by Mr. Sankey. The meeting was announced for eight o'clock, but long before that hour the building was filled in every part, and great numbers could not obtain admission. So large a meeting of this kind has not been held in Birmingham before. As soon as Mr. Moody came upon the platform he gave out the hymn, which was sung with great spirit by the audience. After prayer, Mr. Sankey sang the hymn, "What means this eager, anxious throng?" Then Mr. Moody read the 4th chapter of St. Luke, 14th and following verses. He said the principal part of the service that night would be the reading of the Word. The Spirit of the Lord had been his text, because He had sent him to preach the Word to the poor. Christ came to heal the broken-hearted. Were there not many such in Birmingham? He came to preach deliverance to them, to preach sight to the blind, and liberty to those that were bruised." Mr. Moody (after the singing of a hymn) announced that all-day meetings would be held on Tuesday, the 28th, when gentlemen from London, Manchester, etc., are to be present. He then went on to say that the subject of the address would be, "How to reach the masses." He had been told that there were not two out of every twenty men in our large towns that attended either church or chapel. If this were true, it was surely time they sought to find out some remedy. The Gospel had not lost its power, and it must really be proclaimed to all. He wanted to call their attention to it this afternoon. They needed anointing by the Spirit, in order that they might have strength given them, as Sampson, Moses, and Elijah had. The Son of man came to

give life to those that were lost, and to give them liberty. He could imagine Peter, when he was told to go and preach the Gospel, saying, "Lord, you don't want me to preach to every man." "Yes, Peter, I do; I want you to go and offer this to the Jerusalem sinners first." He could understand Christ saying, "Hunt up the man who drove the nails into my hands, and tell him that these wounds were made for him, and that I forgive him freely." Very few of the masses seemed to know what the Gospel was. There were hundreds there that night who might be saved at once, if they would only take Christ at his word. Those who did not read the Bible were ignorant and enslaved, and prevented from being happy. He would have them all happy, that they might breathe the atmosphere of Heaven. In the Bible was written, "Whoever will, let him take." Would not they take? If Christ were to see a poor sinner's hand put out, did they think he would push it back, and say, "You are not one of the elect"? No, a thousand times, No! Election they need not stop to puzzle about; the only thing they had to lay hold on was "Whoever," and he hoped that many of them would lay hold that night. The meeting concluded by singing the hymn, "Just as I am, without one plea."

On Monday the fourth gathering was held in the Town Hall, which was again crowded, notwithstanding the hour at which the meeting was held (twelve o'clock). Moody and Sankey, were again supported by a large number of the ministers and laymen of the town. Mr. Moody delivered a very stirring address from Luke v. 12, urgently impressing upon the audience the necessity of coming to a decision, and asking that much more should be done by Christians for the purpose of reaching the poorer classes. In the evening another great meeting was held in Bingley Hall. The service was commenced by singing the fifteenth hymn, followed by prayer. Mr. Sankey then sang the hymn, "I love to tell the story," and Mr. Moody took for his text the passage, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10). During his earnest address he drew a picture of the healing of the blind man by Christ, as if he were relating some actual experience which he himself had seen. After giving several other illustrations, he concluded his address by giving an earnest appeal to young men to lay hold of the Gospel, to prodigals to return, some of whom perhaps were trampling under foot a mother's prayer.—He also entreated all Christians present to pray for those in the hall who might be unconverted. After a few moments of silent prayer, Mr. Sankey sang, and then Mr. Moody asked all to stand up who were anxious about their souls, when between two and three hundred responded, and Mr. Moody ejaculated, "Praise the Lord! so many I cannot count them, but Jesus knows all." They were then invited by Mr. R. W. Dale to go to the Presbyterian church close by, where they would find missionaries ready to speak with them.—About five hundred left the hall at once for this purpose, and the service was concluded with a prayer-meeting, presided over by Mr. Dale. It is believed that the people of Birmingham will be roused to earnest action by the services, and that very many souls will be won for Christ. The meeting will be continued each day until the end of this month.—The Baptist.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

NEW YEAR'S THOUGHTS.

How strange and solemn the thought that 1874 has forever gone,—how easily and familiarly we already write 1875, hardly thinking that it means to us a new leaf in our book of life, where perhaps only a few more blank pages remain to be filled—how carelessly we write, how little we think of the great day of account, when the book shall be opened and we shall be judged righteously. We who perhaps have been living a careless godless life, basking and idling in the sunshine of goodness and long-suffering, entirely disregarding the author and giver of all mercies.

And forgetting that our shadow is cast and fixed and will one day rise up as a counterpart of ourselves in judgement to condemn us; for when we shall thus behold the picture of our past life, with all its windings—inconsistencies, and open neglect, if not rebellion, against the warnings of conscience, and the proclamation of God's word. Entreaties of God's own Son,