

# The Christian Messenger.

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WHOLE SERIES.  
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## POETRY.

### Autumn.

Put on your beautiful garments,  
O toiling earth, and rest!  
The goal is won and the toil is done,  
And now you may don your best—  
Your robe of purple and scarlet,  
Your tassels and plumes of gold,  
The misty sheen of your veil of green,  
And your mantle's crimson fold.

O earth, so glad and so fruitful!  
O nature, so brave and true!  
I would that we were as wise as ye  
In the work we have to do!  
We loiter and waste—we sow not,  
Or scatter our seed in vain—  
For the stony field must be wrought to  
yield  
Its treasure of golden grain.

"Put on your beautiful garments,  
O toiling soil, and rest!"  
Faint heart of mine! to that call Divine  
Be all thy powers addressed;  
Sowing beside all waters,  
Faithful in that which is least,  
Constant and still, do the Master's will  
Till the time of toil has ceased.

Then the peace that shall come and the  
gladness!  
The service that shall be rest!  
And the plaudit won of that word, "Well  
done!"  
And the Master's "Come, ye blest!"  
O earth! in your sweet fruition  
Rejoice and be glad—but this,  
The joy of a soul that has reached its goal,  
Is a deeper, holier bliss.

C. A. MASON.

## RELIGIOUS.

The Great Pot and the Twenty Loaves.

A SHORT SERMON BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"Set on the great pot."—2 KINGS IV. 38.  
"Then bring meal."—2 KINGS IV. 41.  
"Give unto the people that they may eat."—2 KINGS IV. 42.

We scarcely need go over the story. There was a dearth in the land; Elisha came to the college of the prophets, which consisted of about one hundred brethren, and found that they were in want, as the result of the famine. While he was teaching the young men, he observed that they looked as if they needed food, and he found that there was none in the house. Elisha, therefore, ordered his servant to take the great pot, which generally stood upon long legs over the fire, and make a nourishing soup in it. True, there was nothing to put in the pot, but he believed that God would provide. It was his to set the pot over the fire, and it was the Lord's to fill it. Certain of the young men were not so sure as Elisha that God could fill it without their help, and one with great eagerness went out to gather something from the fields; his help turned out to be of small service, for he brought home poisonous cucumbers, and cut them up and threw them into the broth; and, lo, when they began to pour it out, it was acrid to the taste, gave them a terrible colic, and made them cry out, "There is death in the pot!"

Then the prophet said "Bring meal." This was put into the steaming cauldron, the poison was neutralized, the food made wholesome, and the students were satisfied. This miracle was in due time followed up by another. A day or two afterwards the young prophets were still needing food, and the larder was again empty. Just at that time a devout man comes from a little distance, bringing a present for the prophet, which consisted of a score of loaves similar to our penny rolls. The prophet bids his servant set this slender quantity before the college. He is astonished at the command to feed a hundred hungry men with so little, but he is obedient to it; and while he is obeying, the little food is multiplied, so that the hundred men eat and are perfectly satisfied, and there is something left. I believe there are lessons to be learned from these two miracles, and I shall try to bring out these lessons in three forms. First, as they shall relate to the present condition of religion in our land; secondly, as they may be made to relate

to the condition of backsliders; and thirdly, as they may afford comfortable direction to seeking sinners.

I. First, then, our text as in a parable sets forth in a figure our course of action in connection with RELIGION IN THIS LAND.

And first, there is a great need of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have not a hundred men famishing now-a-days, but hundreds of thousands, and even hundreds of millions in this great world who are perishing for want of heavenly food. *The church must feed the people.* It is not for us to say, we hope they will be saved, and leave it there: or set it down as a work that cannot be done till the millennium, and therefore we have nothing to do with it. Our business is in the strength of God to grapple with the present condition of things. Here are the millions famishing; shall we let them perish? I remember seeing a similar sentence under the likeness of the late Richard Knill. "The heathen are perishing! Shall we let them perish?" "But," says one, "how can we possibly supply them with food?" See what Elisha did: the people were hungry, and there was no food in hand, except a little meal, yet he said, "Set on the great pot." Faith always does as much as she can: if she cannot fill the pot, she can put it on the fire, at any rate. If she cannot find meat for the pottage, she pours in the water, lights the fire, and prays and waits. Some have not this faith now-a-days, and until we have it, we cannot expect the blessing. "Thus saith the Lord, cut for the curtains of thy habitation." Why? Because "thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left." Few will regard such a summons as this. The feeble faith of our time finds it difficult to enlarge the tent even after the increase has come, and the people are there to fill it. Great faith would enlarge the tent, and expect the Lord to keep his promise, and multiply us with men as with a flock. The church of God greatly needs, not foolish confidence in herself, which would lead her to be Quixotic, but simple confidence in God, which would enable her to be apostolic, for she would go forth believing that God would be with her, and great things would be accomplished by her. She would open her mouth wide, expecting that God would fill it, and fill it he would. Faith does what she can, and waits for the Lord to do what he can. Brother, what is your faith doing? Are you putting the great pot on the fire in expectation of a blessing?

"Set on the great pot," said the prophet, "and seethe pottage." He was not in jest, he meant what he said. Often when we get as far as setting on the pot, it is not for seething pottage. We feel the desire to carry out spiritual work, but we do not come to practical action as those who work for immediate results. Oh for practical common sense in connection with Christianity! Oh for reality in connection with the idea of faith! When a man goes to his business to make money, he goes there with all his wits about him, but frequently when men come to prayer and Christian service, they leave their minds behind, and do not act as if they were transacting real business with God. Elisha, when he said, "Set on the great pot," expected God to fill it; he was sure it would be so, and he waited in all patience till dinner was ready. O church of God, set on the pot, and the great pot, too. Say, "The Lord will bless us." Get your granary cleaned out, that the Lord may fill it with his good corn. Put the grist into the hopper, and look for the wind to turn the sails of the mill. O ye doubters, throw up the windows, that the fresh breeze of the divine Spirit may blow in on your sickly faces. Expect that God is about to send the manna, and have your omelets ready. We shall see greater things than these if we awake to our duty and our privilege. It is the church's business to feed the world with spiritual bread; she can only do so by

faith, and she ought to set in faith reference to it.

The faith of Elisha was not shared in by all the brethren. There were some who must needs go and fill the pot, as we have said, but they gathered the gourds of the colocynth vine and poisoned the whole mess, and it became needful to find an antidote for the poison. We here see our second city—the church must provide an antidote for the heresies and poisonous doctrines of the time. There has entered into the public ministry of this county a deadly poison. We may say of the church in general, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot!" Zealous persons whose zeal for God is not according to knowledge, have gone about and gathered the gourds of the wild vine. I think I could tell you what kind of gourds they are; some of them are very pretty to look at, and they grow best on the seven hills of Rome—they are called "ritualistic performances;" these they shred into the pot. There are gourds of another kind, very delicate and dainty in appearance, which are known as "liberal views," or "modern thought." As a philosopher once talked of extracting sunbeams from cucumbers, so these wild gourds are said to consist of "sweetness and light," but the light is darkness and the sweetness is deadly. They have shred these into the pot, and nobody can taste the doctrinal mixture which is served out from some pulpits without serious risk of soul-poisoning, for "there is death in the pot." What Scriptural antidote is there which our fathers used, which is endorsed by those who think themselves the leaders of advanced thought? Have they not polluted the entire sanctuary of truth, and lifted up their axes against all the carved work of the temple? On the other hand, have we not everywhere Christ put aside for the crucifix, and the blessed Spirit thrust into a corner by the so-called sacraments? Is not the outward made to drown the inward, and is not the precious truth of the gospel overlaid by the falsehoods of Rome? There is death in the pot; how is the church to meet it? I believe it is to imitate Elisha. We need not attempt to get the wild gourds out of the pot; they are cut too small and are too cunningly mixed up, they have entered too closely into the whole mass of teaching to be removed. Who shall extract the leaven from the leavened loaf? What then? We must look to God for help, and use the means indicated here. "Bring meal." Good wholesome food was cast into the poisonous stuff, and by God's gracious working it killed the poison: the church must cast the blessed gospel of the grace of God into the poisoned pottage, and false doctrine will not be able to destroy men's souls as it now does. We shall not do much good by disputing, and denouncing, and refusing to associate with people. I call such things *barking*, not *preaching* the gospel is *biting*. The sure remedy for false doctrine is preaching the truth. Christianity is here for Popery. Preach up Christ and down go the priests, preach grace and there is an end of masses. I am more and more persuaded that the good old Calvinistic truths, which are now kept in the background, are the great Krupp guns with which we shall blow to pieces the heresies of the day, if once more they are plainly and persistently preached in harmony with the best of revealed truth. Like ships of war in time of peace, the glorious doctrines of grace have been laid up in ordinary, but now is the time to bring them out to the fight, and if well managed they will pour red-hot shot in the enemy! The people need good teaching. "Bring meal," employ more and more the plain preaching of the gospel, and evils of all sorts will overcome. Is the remedy very simple? Do not, therefore, despise it. We be thanked that it is simple; for we shall not be tempted to give theory to man's wit and wisdom when a good result

is achieved. In this work you can all help, for if only meal is needed a child may bring his little handful. One man may contribute more than another, but the humblest may put in his pinch of meal, and even the commonest servitor in the house may assist in this work. Spread the gospel. Spread the gospel. Spread the gospel. A society for prosecuting Puseyites—will that do the work? Appeals to Parliament—will they be effectual? Let those who choose to do so cry to lawyers and Parliaments, but as for us we will preach the gospel. If I could speak with a voice of thunder, I would say to those friends who are for adopting other means to stop the spread of error, "You waste your time and strength: give all your efforts to the preaching of the gospel. Lift up Christ, and lay the sinner low. Proclaim justification by faith, the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and the grand old doctrines of the Reformation, and your work will be done; but by no other means." "Bring meal," said the prophet, and our word at this time is, "Preach the truth as it is in Jesus."

Some of the grossest errors of our own day may yet be overruled by God for the promotion of his truth. There are men who believe in sacramentarianism, who love the Lord Jesus very ardently. When I read some of the poetry of this school, I cannot but rejoice to see that the writers love my Lord and Master, and it strikes me that if the whole gospel could be put before them, we might expect to see some of them become noble preachers of the truth, and perhaps save the orthodox from dead dry doctrinalism the Saviour. Perhaps they will not, with us, talk often of justification by faith, but if they extol the merit of the precious blood and wounds of Jesus, it will come to much the same thing. For my part I care little for the phraseology, if essential truth be really taught, and the Lord Jesus be exalted. Some of the doubters, too—"thinkers," as they prefer to be called—if the Lord renewed them by his Spirit, might bring out the old truths with greater freshness than our more conservative minds are able to do. I love to hear those who have known the vanity of error speak out the truth. They are more sympathetic towards the tempted, and are generally more conversant with the grounds of our faith.

Who knows? Who knows? I have a hope which may not prove a dream. I hope that thousands are feeling their way into light, and will come forth soon. Let us not despair, but keep to our work, which is gospel preaching, telling about Jesus and his dear love, the power of his blood, the prevalence of his plea, and the glory of his throne, and who knows but a multitude of the priests may believe, and the philosophers also may become babes in Christ's school. "Bring meal," and thus meet the poison with the antidote.

Another lesson comes from the second miracle; let us look at it. The loaves brought to Elisha were not quartered loaves like ours, but either mere wafers of meal which had been laid flat on a hot stone, and so baked, or else small rolls of bread. The store was but little, yet Elisha said "Feed the people," and they were fed. That is the third lesson: *the church is to use all she has, and trust in God to multiply her strength.* Now-a-days individuals are apt to think they may leave matters to societies, but this is highly injurious; we should every one go forth to work for God, and use our own talents, be they few or many. Societies are not meant to enable us to shirk our personal duty, under the idea that our strength is small. Little churches are apt to think that they cannot do much, and therefore they do not expect a great blessing. What can these few cakes do towards feeding a hundred men? They forget that God can multiply them. Ye limit the Holy One of Israel. Do you think he needs our numbers? Do you think he is dependent upon human strength? I tell

you our weakness is a better weapon for God than our strength. The church in the apostolic times was poor, and mostly made up of unlearned and ignorant men, but she was filled with power. What name that would have been famous in ordinary history do you find among her first members? Yet that humble church of fishermen and common people shook the world. The church is for the most part too strong, too wise, too self-dependent, to do much. O that she were more God-reliant. Even those whom you call great preachers will be great evils if you trust to them. This I know, we ought never to complain of weakness, or poverty, or lack of prestige, but should consecrate to God what we have. "Oh, but I can scarcely read a chapter." Well, read that chapter to God's glory. You who cannot say more than half-a-dozen words to others, say that little in the power of the Spirit. If you cannot do more than write a letter to a friend about his soul, or give away a tract to a stranger in the streets, do it in God's name. Brother, sister, do what you can, and in doing this God will strangely multiply your power to do good, and cause great results to flow from small beginnings. Active faith is needed, and, if this be richly present, the Lord in whom we trust will do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or even think. Thus much concerning the passage in reference to the church of God.

(Conclusion next week.)

THEY AND HE.

At the annual meeting of the Stockwell Orphanage, Master Thomas Spurgeon, who was loudly applauded, and spoke with that clear, distinct, and manly utterance characteristic of his father, said he thought it was very unscriptural for him to speak first, for he read in the Bible that Thuz was first born, then Buz his brother. Instead of that, however, Buz was now stuck first. (Laughter.) Speaking of Mr. Spurgeon, he said they all looked at him as their pastor, but he looked at him as his pastor and his father, and all the interest they felt in him was therefore doubled in his heart; and in thinking of the surrounding Orphanage for the fatherless, it made him full of gratitude to God for sparing his father to him. Referring to his father's repeated retirement from active service through illness, he likened him to the recent collision between the ships Iron Duke and Vanguard. His father was an ironclad—(laughter)—for considering what he had gone through some men's constitutions could scarcely be called wooden when compared with his (Hear, hear.) He was active one day in his college, and disease came and ran into him—(laughter)—and the iron entered his soul. The ship accident was in a fog, and so was this, for they could not explain it, yet, although they attributed one incident to mismanagement, let them never do so with the other, for the hand which held the rudder guided the vessel aright; and if, on ordinary steamboats, the prohibition against speaking to the man at the wheel, how much more should they refrain from interference and complaining when God was at the wheel and laid aside their pastor? The next time he was ill, which he was afraid would not be long if he continued to work so hard, he would tell them what to do—a little bit of practical advice. (Laughter.) There were many ways of telling a man's popularity, and one of the extraordinary ways was to look at his medicine chest. (Laughter.) If they went to Nightingale lane, they would see what was sent to Mr. Spurgeon to cure his gout, and it would certainly prove his popularity. (Laughter.) It was very kind of the friends to send it, but it would not have been for his father to take it, as if he had he would not have been present with them then. (Laughter.) Well, they had at home a cat which was ill, and being unable to get her to take medicine in