

"Yes, there's a little more," answered the donkey, and he began again—"My master is a heartless fiend, Who"

And here he stopped. "That's all," he said; "I cannot think of a rhyme for 'fiend.'"

"Couldn't you make a new line altogether there?" suggested Mrs. Goose. "Yes, I might do that, certainly," replied the donkey; "but," he added, regretfully, "it's a very nice line."

"Beamed" might do," put in the gander, "Beamed, you know—what you say of a person who has eaten too many beans; it's not a common word, but that's an advantage, and it rhymes particularly well."

"It might do, perhaps," said the donkey, rather gloomily, "but, you see, I never was beamed."

"Who composed the music?" asked Miss Molly.

The donkey bowed so low that there was no mistaking the authorship.

"I suppose these very long ears are particularly good for music?" said Miss Molly.

"Well," answered the donkey, "as you have mentioned it, I think I may say, without being accused of vanity, I believe they are."

By this time the gander was becoming rather impatient of so many fine compliments.

"Well," he said, "you seem to have rather a turn for this sort of thing; it's a pity you have to spend so much time drawing up water and fetching wood. If you had been able to take lessons in thoroughbass, and study the standard poets, you really might have turned out something rather good. As it is, I wouldn't advise you to spend much time on it. Come along, my dear ladies."

He marched off with his train, Miss Molly followed reluctantly. Once she turned back, and threw a sympathizing glance at the poet, who was rolling on the grass, with sad eyes, and murmuring softly, "Fiend! 'Fiend! if I could only think of a good rhyme for fiend."

Beta Francis, in Golden Hours.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. The Violated Law.

Matt. xviii. 15-18.

By Rev. T. H. PORTER.

But I think it can be proved beyond a doubt that this law never was intended to be confined to what are called private offences. For, in the first place, it will not always fully apply in such cases. For instance, slight delinquencies, the result it may be of natural imperfections, which, though persisted in, should not exclude; and personal wrongs, not proved by the "two or three witnesses," can be dealt with no further than the first step, even though that may be utterly fruitless.

And, secondly, offences are so various, and the different classes frequently so blended that it would be next to impossible to apply it or any law to one class only. For instance, a personal or private offence may be committed very publicly, while a general, or, as some would call it, public offence may be committed privately and be also personal. Such for example would be the railing and extortion of 1 Cor. v, or a pecuniary difficulty, and even the grossest immoralities and crimes might be of that character. And yet those thus guilty are in all cases to be put away from the Church and not even to be kept company with, "no, not to eat." If then this law of Christ is not to govern in all cases, we are placed in this position that we are compelled to treat the same sin differently entirely, simply because committed in different circumstances or against others than ourselves.

That is to say, if the wrong is done to us, we have a specific law to guide us, but if against another, even God himself is indifferent as to how we treat it, and has left us solely to the guidance of varied and defective human judgement of mere caprice. And further if the sin is committed against us, it matters not how gross it may be. According to such teaching, we cannot expose it and have the offender brought to justice if he "hear" us; while according to other requirements of Scripture such offences always demand separation from the church even though followed by repentance. But the objection to the view I am advancing turns chiefly upon the force of the expression "against thee."

Now to this there are two answers, either of which, it seems to me, is sufficient. In the first place there is nothing in the text or context to indicate that the "thee" is at all emphatic, and that mere personal offences are intended. Instead, the general scope of the passage

would indicate the contrary. It is the good of the individual that is to be sought rather than the personal satisfaction for wrong done to us. But waiving this there is a sense in which every church offence is a wrong committed against each individual member. This is true of all immoralities, departures from the truth and withdrawals from fellowship. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." How is it that we to such a degree fail to realize this? But in the second place the words "against thee" are put in brackets in Dean Alford's version, and he tells us that they are altogether wanting in the two oldest manuscripts of the original, this being the case, instead of these words being emphatic that the interpretation of the whole passage must turn upon them, we may correctly read:—"But if thy brother shall trespass, go and show him his fault," &c. As to the passage similar in Luke xvii. 3, I find there is no authority whatever for "against thee," the correct reading being, "If thy brother trespass rebuke him." But two or three additional objections have weight with many against all application of the passage to any but personal and private offences. It is said, if the offence is public it cannot be settled privately, and therefore this law has no force in such cases. I reply, your work is not done until the offender is gained, and he must prove that he has been by willingness to do all that is requisite. Public offences require acknowledgements just as public, and some sins, as we have already intimated, are of such a character, that even confession and repentance do not absolve the church from the necessity, for the good of the cause, and the honor of religion, of separating the offender, at least for a time, from membership. But the duty of the person going is to explain this, and not rest until the offender is perfectly willing to do and submit to everything necessary. But it is further objected that in some cases this law cannot be carried out. The transgressor may, for instance, be beyond your reach, but God never requires impossibilities. The dying thief was absolved from the baptismal obligation, binding upon all believers. The Christian in compulsory solitude, or away from the church and its privileges, is not bound by the requirement, "This do in remembrance of Me." And so, if distance or any circumstance renders literal obedience to any part of this requirement impossible, why, all that is left is the nearest approach that is possible. If we cannot go we can write. And where neither is possible, and the church has a duty to perform, it must not be neglected because the individual duty cannot be done. Beside, as we have already shewn, this is chiefly the laying down of a principle, which we adopt by conforming to the letter of the law as closely as the circumstances render possible, remembering that the exceptions may even go to prove the rule. As to any objections based upon personal or worldly interests, they are unworthy of notice.

And now, observe! There is no law given in the New Testament with more explicitness and fullness, not even the commands relating to the ordinances. Does it not seem most unlikely that there should be such a law for personal offences only, when in the case of others just as numerous, just as injurious, and just as difficult to manage, we should have no rule whatever? To suppose this seems to me such a reflection upon the Divine wisdom as none should accept unless compelled to.

son, to explain this law, we now proceed to point out some reasons for its universal adoption. And first, I remark that such compliance is obedience to Christ. The chief beauty of this requirement lies in the fact that it is divine, and was given by the Church's Great Law-giver. And this can be said of no other rule substituted for it, nor is it pretended to be. As we have just shown, it is not only expressly enjoined here, but elsewhere, that those who know of wrong-doing go to the offender, and seek to save him. And even though you cannot see that this is here positively required, one thing you may be sure of, you violate no other law by conforming to that view, and such a course can, at least, do no injury. On the contrary, it is in perfect keeping with all Gospel principles, those who object usually satisfying themselves that some other course will do as well.

In the second place, that which is thus Scriptural is perfectly reasonable. For a moment again look at it. How simple and natural. Has your brother trespassed, or do you fear that he has or is likely to? Go to him, and go at once, go to no one else. "Discover not the secret to another." Go from love only. Let it beam in your eye and tremble on your tongue. Go with earnest prayer for the divine blessing, and sincere confession of your own sin—"considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." And what more likely to restore

him than such action "in the spirit of meekness?" Has he committed a public offence known to many? Then his case is that much worse. And what better calculated to win and save him than for many, of their own accord, and impelled by one spirit, to go—thus proving that it is not the will of their common "Father," nor of them His children that "one," even the most unworthy "of these little ones, should perish"! How much better every way, and how much more likely to win and save, than for a long-faced, strait-laced committee to break upon his startled ear the intelligence that while not one of his brethren, themselves included, thought enough of him to go voluntarily even to ascertain the facts, the Church thought enough of themselves to violate their solemn covenant by discussing the case behind his back, and, with no authority from their Lord, appoint those to go who should have gone without appointment, and thereby relieve others from an obligation resting with equal weight upon all.

But I remark further, that this method is really unobjectionable. Take any other that you choose—that ever has been, or can be devised—and strong prejudices at once meet you, if upon no other, upon the ground that it is unscriptural and unauthorised. And so long as we fail to find a Divine plan, and resort to any of human devising, just so long must the action of our churches be variable, just so long will circumstances and policy, rather than law and principle, govern, and just so long will this objection obtain. But let this method be adopted because commended, and the more it is tried the more will its wisdom become manifest. Those who heartily accept it will soon, and growingly, perceive its beauty and blessedness; those thus dealt with will at least, be compelled to admit that they have been proceeded with regularly, while the great majority of them will be led to bless the Saviour anew for his interest in them thus manifested. And those who look on and perhaps oppose will at last admire, and the world again exclaim "Behold how these Christians love one another." Indeed, no sufficient and real objection can be made to it. It stands forth boldly, challenging and defying criticism, while wherever another is substituted some will persist in maintaining that the Divine law has been violated, even though Church and Minister unite in declaring and arguing the contrary.

Again, it is economical. It is a labor-saving plan, although it may at first sight be thought the reverse. It accomplishes two things at the same time. It reclaims or "gains" the offender, and it precludes the necessity of Church action. Indeed, it does the work of the individual, the committee and the Church, all at the same time. Admit that it is the Church's duty to deal with public offences. Is not the Church made up of individuals, and must not those individuals act in every case, and

always be responsible? The only question then is, how can they most easily, most safely, and most effectively? I affirm that this law of Christ combines in itself that method, and long and repeated trial but confirms the conviction. And thus the wisdom of its Framers becomes increasingly apparent, the more perfectly we understand and conform to it. And it economizes not only in work, but in results. Other plans may develop one side of Christianity, but the beauty of this is it develops the whole, and at one and the same time. It does so, in the first place, with the individual labored with. Nothing so effectually prevents his wandering further, with all its terrible results of discipline, exclusion, his own ruin, and reproach upon the Saviour's cause. And while it is more likely than anything else to bring him to repentance, it at the same time convinces him of the value of religion and its privileges, as nothing else can. It develops also the Christianity of those who perform this service. We have hinted at the grace requisite to have in exercise to do this duty and do it rightly. But let us not forget its influence in forming such a character and disposition. And here I appeal to those who may have tried it whether there is one virtue which its right performance does not greatly tend to strengthen. You who have in weakness and trembling, and with earnest prayer for strength and wisdom, gone to an erring one, beloved, tell me, as you spoke those words of tenderness and Christian faithfulness, and perhaps witnessed the blessed result, were not your confidence and joy increased, was no cloud lifted, no strength imparted, was Jesus less precious, your hope of heaven less bright and joyous, your love for souls and willingness to labor for all men, diminished?

And what is true of the individual is no less true of the body. In this way you promote at once its purity, activity and strength. You do so, because nothing so effectually tends to sift out the unworthy from our churches. You do so in the blessed influence thereby directly exerted upon the individuals labored with, and those who labor. You do so by providing work, for the want of which so many churches are languishing and dying. You do so by thus uniting brethren in service, affection and belief. You do so by promoting individuality in the Church, the great and felt want of the age, and thereby doing more than is possible in any and every other way to secure a return to primitive Christianity, promote genuine and permanent revivals, and bring about the latter day glory. Give me the power to secure the performance of this neglected duty, and I will pledge all that is necessary to make the Church what she should be, and to speedily convert the world and bring about the latter-day glory. And if the accomplishment of all this in the performance of our duty is not true economy, where, I ask, shall we look for it?

But that which is thus Scriptural, reasonable, unobjectionable and economical is also essential. I have spoken of the tendency of obedience to this great command of our blessed Lord. It is my purpose, in conclusion, to show that what is so desirable can be secured in no other way. It is essential in the first place to the complete reform and salvation of those who have unhappily wandered. I admit that occasionally a case may occur of one returning to God without the intervention of human instrumentality, and especially through no private or personal labor. The earnest sermon may have arrested his attention, or God may have spoken to him directly through His Word and Spirit. But the real question is, Is this His ordinary mode of working? That all reclaimed have not thus been brought requires no proof which the testimony of those present cannot furnish. On the contrary, I think it will be admitted that more of this has been done by private effort than in all other ways. Why then, I ask, are so many now "darkness" who were once "light in the Lord"? Christian brother or sister, have you been faithful in the performance of your duty to the erring? The Church and the world to-day are full of backsliders, and God intends to bring them back through the instrumentality of His children. And this is the only way in which we can clear ourselves from complicity with their sin.

The true rendering of the passage in Leviticus, already more than once referred to, it is said is, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor that thou bear not sin for him"; that is, that thou be not a partaker of his sin, "and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." And there really is no way of escaping the danger of contamination and guilt from others' sins without doing all we can, first, to prevent, and then to correct. I remark further that obedience to this requirement is essential to the true manifestation of the Christian life. When a right spirit is in exercise either toward the sin or the sinner, this course will be pursued. And here, I think, is the secret of much of the opposition to this plan. It is difficult, and requires too much of imperfect human nature. Nothing else demands such humility, wisdom, love and every virtue, which is only another proof that it is Divine. It needs more grace than Christians always—may I not say, often—have in exercise. And this being so, much of the objection made is really strong presumptive argument in its favor. And so will it be while Churches and Christians remain imperfect. And while conformity to it is thus among the best evidences of the possession of true Christianity, it is equally necessary to the growth of that Christianity. It is required to provide the work needful for it, as well as promote the grace necessary for the successful performance of that work. Many are making no progress in the Divine life, simply because they are doing nothing. But do what we may, no Christian life can be symmetrical, that is, not to some extent occupied with efforts to aid other Christians in right living. And the advantage of this system is, it impels to that so, much, needed acquaintance requisite to the "watching over one another" of our covenant, and from the neglect of which our churches are so suffering. It is required to promote the union necessary to true progress among us. We must have unity of heart and action before we can look for unity of sentiment. And nothing so tends to promote this as work for each other. But there can be no united action in this matter which is not the result of obedience to a common law. Obedience to it is required to promote true revivals. Let the churches rise to the performance of this duty, and they will not neglect such labor for the salvation of men as must prove successful. But while this is neglected how can we hope to see the work of God revived, and the grace, strength and membership of our churches increase? In a word, it is essential to a return to the individualism that so early characterized true Christianity, and does all subsequent approaches thereto, and which many of our modern schemes so plainly show the desire for, and are so zealously laboring to bring about. It throws the responsibility of the Church's growth, purity and all her members' good, where it properly belongs, upon each individual member as nothing else can. And its hearty adoption by the professed Christian world would instrumentally do more than any, and almost, everything else to cause the Church to look "forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Finally, this plan is essential to prevent and correct the evils which its neglect, coupled with unwise and unscriptural methods of discipline have introduced and fostered, in offenders and offended, the Church and the world, as well as to allay the prejudice that now exists against discipline itself. We have tried to show that conformity to this rule in all cases is lawful. Is it not also expedient? Is there no danger in not adopting it? Danger of displeasing Him who gave it, whose we are, and whom we are required to obey and serve? Danger of mistakes and injury if we adopt any other? Have not serious evils resulted from other causes of action? Are not needless committees often appointed, and do not cases frequently come before the Church that need not, and that do injury instead of good to all concerned? And may not all this be traced, and must it not be attributed directly to neglect of this positive and explicit requirement of our Lord Jesus Christ? "If thy brother trespass go and tell him his fault," &c. The consequences of strict conformity to this law need not be dreaded. While