

Our Contributors.

THE EFFECTIVE PRAYER.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

Does every prayer have power with God? By no means; for we are told that we shall receive nothing, if we ask amiss. But there is an "effectual prayer that availeth much." In the Revised Version the passage is rendered "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." True prayer is an infinitely deeper and stronger thing than the mere repetition of devout words; it is a believing soul's direct converse with God. Phillips Brooks condensed it into four words, "a true wish sent Godward." By it, adoration, thanksgiving, confession of sin, and petition for mercies and favors ascend to the throne, and by means of it, precious blessings are brought down from heaven. The pull of our prayers may not move the everlasting throne, but—like the pull on a line from the bow of a boat—it may draw us into closer fellowship with God, and into fuller harmony with his holy will.

I. This is the first characteristic of successful prayer. "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." Too many prayers are born of selfishness and are too much like dictation or command. The indispensable quality of all right asking is a right spirit towards our heavenly Father. When a soul feels such an entire submissiveness towards God that it delights in seeing him reign, and his glory advanced, it may confidently pour out its desire; for then the desires of God and the desires of that humble and submissive soul will agree. God loves to give to them who love to let him have his way. They find their happiness in the chime of their own desires with the will of God.

Two of Christ's disciples, James and John, once came to him and made the astonishing request that he would place one of them on his right hand and the other on his left hand, when he set up his royal government at Jerusalem! As long as these self-seeking disciples sought only their own glory, Christ could not give them the askings of their ambitious hearts. Afterwards when their hearts had been baptized by the Holy Spirit, and they had become so consecrated to Christ that they were in complete chime with him, they were not afraid to pour out their deepest desires.

James was the man to tell us that "the effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much;" and John declared that "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." As soon as those two Christians found their supreme joy in serving Christ, they received the desires of their hearts. If a minister prays for a revival, in order that he may glorify himself by counting converts, the Lord does not commonly give him many converts to count.

II. The second trait of effectual prayer is that it aims at a mark, and knows what it is after. When we enter a

store or shop, we ask the salesman to hand us the particular article we want. There is an immense amount of pointless praying done in our devotional meetings; it begins with nothing, and ends nowhere. The model prayers mentioned in the Bible were short and right to the mark. "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord, save me!" cries sinking Peter. "Come down ere my child die," exclaims the heart-stricken nobleman. Those men knew what they wanted. Old Rowland Hill used to say, "I like short, ejaculatory prayer; it reaches heaven before the devil can get a shot at it."

III. In the next place the prayer that has influence with God must be a pre-paid prayer. If we expect a letter to reach its destination, we put a stamp on it; otherwise it goes to the Dead Letter Office. There is what may be called a Dead-Prayer Office, and thousands of well-worded petitions get buried up there. All of God's promises have their conditions; we must comply with these conditions, or we cannot expect the blessings coupled with the promises. We must be sure that we are doing our part, if we expect God to do his part. There is a legitimate sense in which every Christian should do his utmost for the answering of his own prayers. When a certain venerable minister was called on to pray at a missionary convention, he first fumbled in his pocket, and when he had tossed a bank-note into the plate he said, "I cannot pray until I have given something." He prepaid his own prayer.

When I hear requests for prayer for the conversion of a son or a daughter, I say to myself—how much is that parent doing to win that child to Christ? The godly wife who makes her daily life attractive to a husband has a right to ask God for the conversion of that husband. She is co-operating with the Holy Spirit and prepaying her heart's request. God never defaults; but he requires that we prove our faith by our works, and that we never ask for a blessing that we are not willing to labor for, and to make any sacrifice to secure that longed-for blessing.

IV. Another essential of prevailing prayer is that it be the prayer of faith, and be offered in the name of Jesus Christ. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The chief "wrestling" that we have to do is not with any reluctance on God's part, but with the obstacles which sin and unbelief put in our pathway. What Providence orders, we must submit to, uncomplainingly, but we must never submit to what God can better. Never submit to be blocked in any pious purpose or benevolent undertaking, if, with the divine help, you can roll the blocks out of your path. The faith that works while it prays commonly conquers;—for such faith creates such a condition of things that our heavenly Father can wisely hear us and help us.

The firmament of Bible history blazes with answers to effectual prayer, from the days when Elijah unlocked

the heavens, on to the days when petitions in the house of John Mark unlocked the dungeon and brought the liberated Peter into their presence! The early church was born in prayer-meeting held in that "upper room" at Jerusalem. During my own pastoral experience, the most powerful revivals in my church showed the first indications of the Holy Spirit's presence when we were "gathered with one accord" in our devotional meeting. The prayer-room is the place to hang the church thermometer. That thermometer "below zero" indicates both the cause and the effect of a terrible spiritual declension. When a pastor and even a few dead-earnest members of his church begin to feel a tremendous responsibility for souls and an insatiate hunger for a descent of the Spirit, then there will be effectual praying, and the church will be under the baptism of fire from on high.

Brooklyn, N. Y.



New Brunswick S. S. Association.

A new endeavor in Sunday-school work in this province is announced—a "Provincial Tour." Every county is to be visited and a convention held at some central point. The prime purpose is educative, while being made to conserve all the vital features of Sunday-school interests. The tour is to extend from May 9th next to June 8th. All counties have been consulted, and practically all have endorsed the plan. The "tour party" will consist of Mr. Alfred Day, of Michigan, and Mr. I. H. Meredith, of New York, musical evangelist, with Rev. A. Lucas as conductor. Probably a primary worker will be one of the party. It is hoped and expected that Sunday-school interests will receive an impetus to greater efficiency.



TEMPERANCE SUNDAY.—The date of the temperance lesson for the present quarter is March 13th. The title of the lesson, "Death of John the Baptist," and in it we study from effect to cause; it shows the necessity of starting right, of good beginnings. "Temperance in its broadest, truest sense means the intelligent care and control of the body, with all of its powers and appetites and passions, that it may be made to serve in the highest degree the purposes of the soul of which it is the seat. The present lesson warns against those bodily passions and indulgences which war against the soul." We again advise any who have not adopted the Temperance department into the Sunday-schools to make arrangements to do so on the 13th of March. Any information and supplies can be obtained by applying to Mrs. Laura J. Potter, Provincial Superintendent Temperance in S. S., Canning, N. S.



THE DEAF AND DUMB.—The Halifax school for the deaf and dumb has just issued its forty-sixth annual report. The year has, evidently, been a successful one. The directors speak highly of the principal and his staff of teachers. The attendance of pupils was 117, of whom 96 were from Nova Scotia, 9 from Newfoundland, 7 from P. E. Island, and 6 from New Brunswick. The cost of the year's work was \$20,922.48.

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