Systematic Beneficence.

BY [illegible]

A good deal has been said and written on this subject, but still without exhausting it. As the Church becomes alive to the duty and privilege of giving will it feel new interest in the discussion of plans and methods by which to make its contributions more regular and adequate. It is gratifying to know that the number of the churches that employ *some* method of collecting moneys for benevolent objects is on the increase. Of the different methods adopted some are better than others. It is not, however, our purpose to discuss their relative merits, but rather to indicate the features of the scheme recommended by the Apostle to the Corinthians and to which as far as possible our own schemes should conform. This scheme is thus set forth: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." (1 Cor. xvi. 2.)

The three characteristics of the plan which the Apostle had established among the Galatian churches, and which, in this passage, he urges the Corinthians to adopt, are these: *first*, the collection was to be made every Lord's day; *secondly*, every one was to contribute; *thirdly*, the contributions were to be in proportion to the means of the giver.

Among the reasons which may have led the Apostle to name the first day of the week as the *time* for these collections, may be mentioned, (*a*) *That on that day the christians were accustomed to meet.* It was therefore a fitting time for each one to put what he had laid aside from his weekly gains into the common treasury of the Church. Acting on the well ground assumption that not one of the Corinthian christians would absent himself from the house of God on the Lord's day, because on that day a collection was to be taken up, but rather assured that all would be present, and largly for the purpose of sharing in the luxury of giving, he felt no delicacy in propounding the scheme before us. (*b*) Again, by consecrating a portion of their substance to God every Lord's day their benevolence would become *habitual*. We are not sure that the Apostle was influenced by this motive when he penned the words before us. He may have been, however. He may have contemplated the the working of the scheme here sketched in respects which escape our minds altogether. We cannot suppose that he would have commended and authorized a plan immature in itself, and, as a consequence, frustrative of the very end which it was intended to accomplish. But whether the Apostle's design or not, if it is important that our benevolence in order to be effective should be habitual, in no way could this end be better secured than by the consecration to God of a portion of our substance on the first day of every week. In fact, to defer the work of benevolence to a future time is to expose ourselves to the danger of losing the benevolent disposition. For the increase of wealth, as it renders its love more intense, must ever be inversely proportionate to the desire of laying it upon the altar of God. If the motives of those who will give now, alleging as their reason that they will have more to give hereafter, were examined, it would probably be found that their withholding has been not so much from a desire of having more to give as of more to possess, and that their postponement of duty to the future has been only a selfish device to quiet their consciences under the neglect of duty in the present. (*c*) If we were asked to state yet another reason for having these collections made on the first day of the week, we should name the *peculiar appropriateness of the day to the act*. From the teachings of Christ, who declared that the Sabbath was made for man, and that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, we gather that on that day it is lawful and peculiarly fitting to do good in the sense of devoting our possessions to his cause. Some professing Christians are disposed to regard a collection as out of keeping with the sanctity of the Lord's day. They affirm that it is an intrusion upon their devotions, a thing discreditable in itself, and prejudicial to the interests of religion. Why then, the question arises, did the Apostle require it to be made on that day? If it is discreditable to further the cause of Christian Missions by contributing to their support on the Lords day, why is it not discreditable on that day to pray "Thy kingdom come?" It is quite possible that those who object to the contribution box being placed before them on the Lord's day, on the the ground that their devotions are hereby disturbed, have not an extraordinary amount of devotion to disturb. We have known this kind of devotion completely to collapse when an appeal has been made for a contribution to some benevolent object. Let professing Christians but deal honestly with themselves and they will probably find that their disinclination to consecrate their substance to the Lord on his day arises after all, not so much from a high regard for the days from the fact that their love to their possessions is stronger than their love to Christ and his cause.

We are not unaware that some commentators understand the Apostle to direct that every one should on the first day of week lay aside at home whatever he was able to give, thus *treasuring* up his contribution. But the whole expression is thus obscured. The words do do not mean, *to lay by at home*, but *to lay by himself*. The direction is nothing less definite than *let him place by himself*, that is, let him take to himself what he means to give. What he would do with it or where he was to deposit it is not expressed. The word rendered here *lay by in store* means properly putting into the treasury or hoarding up, and is perfectly consistent with the assumption that the place of deposit was some common treasury and not every man's house. Besides, if Paul directed this money to be *laid by at home*, why was the first day of the week selected? It is evident that the first day must have offered some special facility for doing what is here enjoined. But we know of none other than has been named. And the end, moreover, which the Apostle desired to accomplish could not otherwise have been affected. He wished that there might be no collections when he came. But if every man had his money laid by at home, the collection would still have to be made.

But the words of the Apostle specify not only the *time when*, but the *persons by whom* these collections were to be made: "*Let every one of you lay by him in store.*" The same amount might possibly have been contributed by the rich few; yet there were strong reasons why the effort should not be restricted to them. (*a*) In the first place, the rich few could not by their giving cancel the obligation of their poorer brethren to give also. The poor of the church would be spiritually harmed by being thus relieved of their obligation. Besides, whatever the rich might be able to do alone, the largest amount would be contributed by the rich and poor together. For God to commit the sending of the gospel to the destitute to the wealthy alone, would be to deviate from the usual method of his procedure. He has not given to fertile lands a monopoly of the sunbeams and showers, nor to rich Christians a monopoly of the spirit and deeds of charity. He has not arranged that the fairest flowers only shall exhale their dewdrops to be returned again in refreshing rain, nor that only the rich in this world's goods shall share in those benevolent exertions which, sending up their fragrance to heaven, bring down on the world copious showers of grace. He would have the duty and privilege shared by all. But the relief of the temporal necessities of the poor saints was not the only or principal thing aimed at by the apostle. He mainly contemplated, (*c*) *The religious effect which these gifts would produce*, which effect would have been impossible had not the poor contributed as well as the rich. Referring in the next epistle to this he says: "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ and for your liberal distribution unto them and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you." From which words it appears that the religious effect produced by these contributions was threefold: they called forth gratitude and praise to God; they evinced the power and truth of the gospel; and they were promotive of mutual Christian fellowship. The Corinthian Christians relived the necessities of the poor saints at Jerusalem, and thus declared the genuineness of their attachment to them; while the Jerusalem Christians, besides feeling grateful for the gifts, invoked the divine blessing on the givers, thus reciprocating that attachment. A warm and living interest in the person or object for whose benefit our money is given, is of great importance. That religious institution must live, that religious work must prosper, whose pecuniary support is prompted by the love of its friends rather than drawn by persuasion from the reluctant hands of those hostile or indifferent to its welfare. Widows' mites accompanied by widows prayers may be richer gifts in the sight of God, and contribute more largely to the furtherance of his cause than the renowned benefactions of the millionaire. What is needed for our religious enterprises is to have them live in the affections of the many. The importance of training the young in the work of Christian benevolence can hardly be exaggerated. Parents are not forgetful to instil into their children a love of riches and to show them how they may be acquired. But it is surely equally important to instruct them to love the heathen and give their money to send them the gospel. It would be deemed "a horrible cruelty for any father to brand with a red-hot dollar the forehead of his boy. But may he not scorch his child's spirit with the mark of a more fearful and lasting disfigurement, whenever by his conversation, his passionate eargerness for gain, or has daily practice of estimating men and things by their money value, he fixes slowly but deeply in his mind the avaricious lust that is never satisfied with getting."

The third and last feature of the scheme according to which the apostle would have these collections made is, *that every one should give in proportion to his means, or as God has prospered him.* It will not be denied that there is a vast amount of undeveloped, latent pecuniary resource in the Church of Christ. Some may, indeed, give up to their means or beyond them, but their number is smaller than those who scarcely contribute at all. That Christians do not as a general thing devote their possessions to Christ as God has prospered them is evident from various considerations. (*a*) Look for example at the value of the health and strength by means of which the ocean is navigated, the harvest gathered, and the various duties of life discharged; look at the regular alternation of the seasons, the seasonable sunshine and showers by which the products of the earth are made fit for being gathered and used; contemplate the value of these blessings as the undeserved gifts of God, and see how amazingly disproportionate to their value is that of those offerings which are placed by his people upon his altar. The value in dollars of each warm growing day between seed-time and harvest to this continent alone, if it could be computed, would exceed by a great deal the sum contributed annually by the whole christian world for all benevolent objects combined, and if God's goodness in the bestowment of temporal blessings calls for a larger consecration of our substance to his cause, much more does the bestowment of his grace. (*b*) The disproportion between what Christians contribute to the cause of God and what they are able to contribute is evident from the fact that they seldom give up to the point sacrifice and self-denial. (*c*) It is not unfrequently the case that professing christians spend more for luxuries, for superfluous articles of dress and food, for what in many cases does more hurt than good, than they do for religious purposes. What help would come to the Lord's treasury if it could only receive what professing christians spend for tobacco!

The general merit of the scheme before us is variously commended.

(*a*) It is eminently suited to produce this threefold end: the noblest and most symmetric development of the benevolent principle, the raising of the largest possible amount of money, and, as a consequence, the most effectual furtherance of the cause of God. (*b*) It commends itself by its simplicity—by the ease with which it may be worked. We would not so under-rate the intelligence and executive ability of the feeblest of our churches as to suppose it incapable of comprehending and working the plan here sketched by the Apostle. We see no reason why this plan which proved so successful among the Baptist churches of Macedonia and Galatia eighteen hundred years ago, might not prove equally effective if adopted by the Baptist churches of these Maritime Provinces at the present time. (*c*) As the scheme before *is a plan*—a matured plan, by adopting it as a denomination, we should reap the benefits which come of *systematic* effort. And systematic effort is greatly to be preferred to spasmodic. It is said that the dead frogs under the influence of magnetism will leap further and faster than live ones. But living frogs, continually leaping, will after all perform longer journeys than dead ones that move only under a stimulus. So of a church or denomination; instead of taking one desperate leap annually under the influence of excitement operating for the moment, it would be far better, impelled by the love of Jesus, to be found living and leaping, praying and doing continually. (*d*) As commendatory once more of this scheme, it addresses itself wholly to the voluntary principle in Christians, and urges no motives but those which are supplied by the gospel. The New Testament requires that the contributions which the disciples of the Saviour make to His cause shall be free-will offerings, and prompted wholly by their love to Him.

"A Soft Word Breaketh the Bone."

I was talking one evening at the house of a friend, when I made the remark, "Ah! depend upon it, a soft answer is a mighty cure-all."

A boy who sat behind at a table studying his Latin grammar now began to listen, and repeated, as he thought, quite to himself; "A soft answer is a mighty cure-all." "Yes, that is it!" cried I, starting and turning around to see where the voice came from; "yes, that is it; do you not think so, lad?" The boy blushed a little at finding himself so addressed, but answered: "I do not know that I understand you, sir."

"Well, I will explain, then," said I, wheeling round in my chair, "for it is a principle that you ought to understand and act upon; besides, it is the principle which is going to conquer the world." The boy looked more puzzled than ever, and thought he should like to know something that was equal to Alexander himself.

"I might as well explain," said I, "by telling you about the first time it conquered me. My father was an officer, and his notion was to settle everything by fighting; if a boy gave me a saucy word, it was, "Fight him, Charley—fight him!"

"By and by I was sent to a famous school, and it happened that my seat was next to a lad named Thomas Tucker. When I found he lived in a small house behind the academy, I began to strut a little and talk about what my father was; but, as he was a capital scholar and very much thought of by the boys, being excellent in bat and ball, we were soon on pretty good terms, and so it went on for some time. After awhile some lads of my own stamp, and I with the rest, got into trouble with one of the ushers; and somehow or other we got the notion that Thomas Tucker was at the bottom of it.

"Thomas Tucker? Who is he?" I cried, angrily. 'I will let him know who I am;' and we talked on until we fairly talked ourselves into the temper of wolves. The boys then set me on to go to Tucker and let him know what he had to expect. Swelling with rage, I ran into the playground where he was. 'I will teach you to talk about me in this way!' I called out, marching up to him. He never seemed the least afraid, but stood still, looking at me as mute as a lamb. 'Tell me,' I cried, 'tell me or I will'—kill you, I was going to say, for murder was in my heart. He stepped to one side, but spoke firmly, yet mildly; 'Charlie, you may strike me as much as you please; I tell you I will not strike back again; fighting is a poor way to settle our differences. I am thinking, when you are Charles Everett, I will talk with you.'

"Oh, what an answer was that! how it calmed me down! So firm, and yet so mild. I felt there was no credit in having the fight all on one side. I was ashamed of myself, my temper and everything about me. I longed to get out of his sight. I saw what a poor foolish way my way of doing things was. I felt that Thomas had completely got the better of me; that there was power in his principles superior to anything I had ever seen before; and from that hour Tucker had an influence over me which nobody ever had before or since; it has been for good, too. First, you see, is the power—the mighty power—of a soft answer.

"I have been about the world a great deal since then, and I believe," said I, "that nearly all—if not all—the quarrels which arise among men, women, or children—in families, neighborhoods, or even nations—can be cured by the mighty power of a soft answer, for the Scripture says: 'A soft answer turneth away wrath.'"

Boys, study this principle. Try it. The fighting principle has been tried these many thousand years in the world, and everybody admits that the remedy is worse than the disease—in fact, that it increases the disorder. Anger begets anger, fighting makes fighting, and so on. Difficulties are neither healed nor cured by it. Let us try the cure-all principle. The principle is as applicable to nations and to governments as to individuals.

How Lead Pencils Are Made.

It is the belief of many persons who have not been informed to the contrary, that lead pencils are made of lead. But they are not made of lead, and graphite, the material from which they are manufactured, doesn't resemble lead much more than chalk.

Graphite is the softest mineral drug from the earth; it will not melt, but gradually wastes away if placed in a great heat for some time. In preparing it for pencils, the material is sent from the mine to the reducing or grinding mill, where it is pulverized under water, and the particles float off through a series of tanks. This process is continued until the powder is finer than flour, indeed, it is so very fine that it eludes the grasp like so much water.

The first step in converting the dust into pencil leads is to separate the fine equalities from the coarser. This is accomplished by the floating process, in which the dust is mixed with sufficient water to run freely, and is then poured into a hopper, from which it courses into a number of tubs connected with each other by tubes. The coarsest particles are the heaviest, and consequently settle to the bottom of the first tub; the next coarsest in the next, and so on. The movement of the water is very gentle, and when the last tub is reached, it runs nearly clear, as it contains only the finest particles. After sufficient time has elapsed for complete settling, the water is carefully drawn off so as not to agitate the sediment at the bottom. The deposit in the last tub is used for making fine pencils; but that from the two before will answer for the cheaper grades.

The graphite is now ready to be mixed with the clay, which is a peculiar kind and comes from Germany. The clay is also subjected to the floating process, and the finest mixed with the graphite in proportion to the hardness required.

The clay and graphite are then mixed with water to the consistency of thick cream, and fed to the grinding mill (two flat stones placed horizontally to each other, with only the upper one running). Between these the mixture is ground and re-ground, often twenty or more times, which gives strength and freeness from grit. After grinding, it is placed in canvas bags, and hydraulic pressure applied, until the clear water is forced out and the mass becomes like dough. It now goes to the forming press. This a vertical cylinder having a plate with an opening the size and shape of the desired lead at the bottom, through which the mixture is slowly forced. At intervals this coil is separated into lengths sufficient for three leads, which are finally placed in a crucible and hardened by baking in a kiln.

The leads are now ready to be covered with wood. For the cheaper pencils pine is used, for the common grades ordinary cedar; but the finest qualities require the Florida Keys cedar, which is soft and close-grained, and is so superior for the purpose, that even European manufacturers are obliged to use it for casing their pencils. The wood is sawed into strips that will hold six pencils, are sent to the shaping machines when they are passed under a cutter which makes six little grooves for the leads.

Now comes filling in the leads, which is done by girls sitting at a table. The first takes a strip of wood in her left hand, a bunch of leads in her right, and quickly places them in the grooves. She then passes the slip to a girl at her left, who puts over it another slip of wood freshly glued by a third girl. After being passed together with an iron screw, the ends and projecting leads are ground smooth by holding them against a wheel covered with sandpaper.

Now comes the most interesting process of all, that of shaping and separating. The slip of six pencils are placed under a revolving cutter, which separates and rounds them on one side; as they come from the machine they are turned and passed under another cutter, which accomplishes the same work on the other side, and the pencils fall into a basket in a continuous stream ready for use.

The standard grades of pencils are nearly always colored, and the process is very unique. After being dyed, the pencils are put into varnishing machines. They settle sideways from a hopper and are seized by two wheels which thrust them endwise, one at a time, through a tube wet with varnish; each pencil emerges from the tube, and dropping on a horizontal belt, moves slowly with it about thirty feet, drying as it goes, and drops into a basket. They are thee packed and sent all over the world to market. Nearly all the work described is done by girls.—*Julian Pierce, in Treasure-Trove.*

The Stranger Within Thy Gate.

BY MRS. BELL V. CHISHOLM.

Do not permit the wayside pilgrim who tarries for a week, or perhaps but for a day, in your midst, to depart without a warm grasp of the hand, or a fervent God bless you!

A young married couple went to make their home in a strange city. Selecting a church of their own denomination, the first Sunday found them, unnoticed by the ushers, timidly making their way down the long aisle. Uninvited, they entered a pew, and were beginning to feel somewhat comfortable, when a haughty, middle-aged lady and her daughter came bustling in. By their looks and whispered conversation, the strangers felt that they were unwelcome guests; and the soothing hymns and eloquent sermon brought them no restful comfort. Instead of being strengthened and helped, they carried to their home wounded, disaffected spirits; and the next Sunday they turned aside to worship in a more humble temple, where they found more of the spirit of Christ.

A young mechanic came into a Christian community, and, for several Sundays, took a back seat in the village church. He was a splendid type of physical manhood, strong, handsome, and intelligent.

"I must speak to that young man, if he comes again," thought the Sunday-school superintendent, as he walked home, after service, one afternoon. "I wish I had invited him into a class this morning,—he looked so lonely." "That young man has been at church several times. He is a stranger, and if he comes again, I must speak to him," said the pastor, as he bowed gravely to thr eager youth.

Willy Gray was robust and ambitious, and threw his whole strength into the work of the day; but one night he retired in his usual health, and before the morning's dawn, he had gone to render up his account at the bar of God.

"You are dying, Willy," said a friend who had been hastily summoned to his bedside.

"I know it; and oh! I have never prepared for death," he cried. Bring the minister—he commenced, but the flow of blood checked further utterance, and in ten minutes he was dead. He had overtaxed his strength during the day, and a slow but fatal hemorrhage had been the result. The minister came but it was too late. The superintendent was shocked, but that could not do what had been left undone. The "next time" that they both intended to do him kindness, never came.

Speak to the stranger within your gates, for you know not what good a kind word may accomplish.—*S. S. Times.*

Is it Right, Father.

In a pleasant suburb on the sunny side of London, there lived a married couple whose early life had been passed in a very busy district of the borough of Southwark. They were fruiterers, and had from year to year carried on their business without ever thinking of the Sabbath. One great trouble had clouded their lives. Out of a large family only one child had survived beyond the first two years, and little Annie would most probably have lain beside her little brothers and sisters in Norwood Cemetery, but that she had been sent down to the coast of Sussex, to an aunt who lived there, and who not only had to rejoice in seeing the little sickly blossom consigned to her care grow into a blooming, active child, but was successful in teaching her little charge some divine truths, that, when received into the mind, fill it with heavenly light. Annie was, both in body and soul, a healthy child. The parents naturally pined after their darling, who was likely now to be their only treasure. Mr. Richards the father, took a house a few miles from London and having established his wife there, brought his little girl, now seven years old, home to be the joy as well as the treasure of the dwelling. On the very first Sunday after the child's return she came down stairs, thinking that her father was going to take her to church, as her aunt had done. He kissed her kindly, and to her surprise was going away.

"Where are you going father?" she said.

"Oh, I'm going to business, child."

"But it's Sabbath, father."

"Yes—yes—I know that my dear; but I'm obliged to go. I'm very sorry, but I must—now do not cry. I will be home early, my child."

"But is it right, father?" sobbed little Annie. "Is it right, father?"

"Is what right?"

"Why, going to work on Sabbath, father."

"Right—I do not know. It is very hard, that I know; but I must go—I must go."

He kissed the little girl's wet cheek, fondly, and with an uncomfortable feeling that he never felt before, he set off toward the city.

"Is it right, father?"—the words kept ringing in his ears. He could not silence them. He felt that if he had told his child yes, he would have uttered a lie—taught his innocent child a wicked lesson. No, it was not right. Was he, then, to keep on doing wrong when his little child had, by her question, convicted him.

For hours that day these thoughts troubled him. The words, "Is it right, father?" vibrated through him until he was brought to say, "No, it is not right; and God helping me, I will give up Sabbath trading—I will."

He got home in time to hear Annie say her evening prayers; "Make me a good girl.' "Ah, child," said Mr. Richards, interrupting her, "say also, 'Make father a good man.'" The simple words were uttered, the loving kiss given. It was the father's turn now to wipe the tears from his eyes. From that day he closed his shop on the Sabbath.

"We shall have to leave our new little country dwelling," said his timid wife. But they had not to leave. They prospered more than ever from that time forth.

"I like to deal with tradesmen that keep the Sabbath," said one of the most respectable people of the district where his shop was, "for if he will not cheat his own conscience, he will not cheat me."

And still he lives to testify, as he has often done, "My little girl turned me from Sabbath-breaking when she said, "But is it right, father?"

Be Uncompromising.

Many Christians are like the Leaning Tower of Pisa,—as far gone from uprightness as it possible to go without toppling over. They exhibit a leaning towards the world, sometimes for lack of a firm foundation, at other times for a false sympathy with the world, for fear it will think them puritanical. The world is much more likely to pull over the Campanile at Pisa, than the Campanile to lift the world. The original intention of the Leaning Tower was to serve a belfry, and it now swings a chime in which the heaviest bell is rated at twelve thousand pounds. The builders endeavored to compensate for the crookedness of the lower stories by a better adjustment of the upper stories. This not least of the tower's characteristics reminds us of the attempt which some make to atone for crooked conduct by a mystic spirituality. The week-days, all wrong, cannot be set straight by topping them off with a little devotion on Sunday. The upper stories will always be imperiled where the foundations are crumbling. After all, the true purpose of the Campanile was not to excite the world's wonder by its leaning, but to call the people with its bells; and for that work uncompromising uprightness is best. The world will be better saved by uncompromising consistency, which rings out clearly, than by any attitude of false sympathy. The more one is lifted up to exact agreement of life with God's will, the greater lifting power will one have to draw others heavenward. Be strict to self, then, however lenient to others. He who breaks the least commandment, and teaches men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.—*Christian Union.*

The Quiet Prayer-Circle.

Have you one? You may have one wherever there are two or three meet in the name of Jesus. You may have a quiet little gathering of women who love the Master and find refreshment when sitting low at his feet and talking to each other of his love. Such blessing comes from these modest almost hidden meetings, that if you had ever experienced their tender, chastening, elevating influence, you would be reluctant now to do without them. "Church work" is wearing a good many women out, the kind of church work which is often of doubtful value in the end—fairs, festivals, and entertainments of every kind. Many give themselves willingly to that style of Christian effort, but sometimes have no time to spare for the woman's prayer-meeting. Prayer and meditation are too often abridged, if not almost crowded out in these busy lives of ours. But a plant does not thrive without moisture, and he who has promised to be "as the dew unto Israel," comes with especial closeness and kindest revelation of himself, where two or three are assembled to call upon his name.—*Christian Intelligencer.*

—To-day the want of this dying world is *Christ*. The one gift that includes all spiritual gifts, the blessing that enwraps all blessings for us, is Jesus. A personal Jesus accepted is salvation; a personal Jesus obeyed is sanctification; a personal Jesus trusted is perpetual joy; a personal Jesus possessed is our only power. Without Him all preaching is empty clamour; without Him all church machineries but idle clatter. If we covet a genuine revival of spiritual life and power, let us all open our lips, our purses, our hands, and our hearts to this deepest, grandest, most heaven-born of petitions: "*Come, Lord Jesus.*" —*Rev. T. L. Cuyler.*

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