A Look into Christ's Orchards.

BY REV. T. L. CUYLER, D. D.

The orchards of our country have just been "paying their dividends" into the farmer's apple bins. The wormy and the worthless fruit was left to the swine; only the sound apples were carted home for the market. Every church is a spiritual orchard; here also *the tree is known by its fruits*. Some people try to pass for Christians without any Christ in their hearts; but from them the genuine "fruits of the Spirit" can no more be expected, than a farmer might expect a grove of New Jersey pines to yield a crop of Pippins and Spitzenbergs. Bible religion is a growth, but it requires a root; that root is the union of the inner soul with Christ Jesus. From that root flows up the vital sap into the believer's life. The root is as invisible as that of an apple-tree; but the inward life of the tree reports itself by beautiful blossoms in May, and bountiful barrels of apples in October. The good tree presents to its owner its good fruit, as the proof that it deserves a place in his orchard.

"What is it to be a Christian?" is a question that has been lately discussed in a prominent religious journal, and several replies were contributed by eminent ministers and authors. Jesus himself gave a touchstone of character, when He said, "by their *fruits* ye shall know them." A Christian is a person who has been born anew by the Holy Spirit; he has been created anew in Christ Jesus *unto good works*. If you and I are born of Christ's Spirit, we shall bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. This is the test. Our Master holds us to it, and the world holds us to it also. Never was there a time when membership with a church counted for less, or when membership with Christ counted for more, than in these present days. What sort of fruit does your religion yield? is the sharp challenge to every one of us.

The Bible catalogues the fruits that are expected from the good trees in the church orchard. "The fruits of the Holy Spirit are these—love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." *Love* comes first; for the very essence of religion is to love our God with all the heart and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. Faith only works by love. The only service that Christ values is love-service. The main power that we can exert over our fellow-men is love-power. The disgust and best bough on the Christian tree is that which yields the luscious apples of unselfish love. The world is apt to try this apple first, and if it proves to be sour or worm-eaten, the whole profession of Christ-likeness is condemned as a fraud.

Joy is another fruit of the Spirit. A very different thing is this from mere jollity or overflow of animal spirits. Sensual joy is as different from spiritual joy, as lurid lightning is from clear, steady sunshine. A genuine Christian's joy comes from having Christ in the soul; "it is MY joy." It is not the mere prey of circumstances. Can you be contented and happy when the tempest of trial blows, and when the purse runs low, and when the bones ache with pain? If your heart is filled with Jesus you can "rejoice in tribulation and crosses"; can a hollow professor do that?

Gentleness and long-suffering are twin fruits growing on the same bough. They are the graces that keep the temper sweet, and the tongue quiet under sharp provocations. I fear that they are among the scarcest fruits to be found; and that more "teeth are set on edge" against Christianity by the sour and irritable and ugly tempers of professing Christians, than by any other cause. Drummond truly says than an ugly temper is not an accident or a mere infirmity; "it is one of the blackest of all the sins." It reveals a lack of the very cardinal grace of love, and it is better not to live than not to love. The tree that bears this sort of sour and acrid apples is a disgrace to Christ's orchard.

Temperance is another fruit of the Spirit that is much talked about in these days—more discussed, we fear, than practiced. It means control of appetite for our own sakes, and self-denial for the good of others. If the glass has a "viper" in it, and damns my fellow-mortal's soul, why should I have anything to do with it? When all the Church of Christ yields this fruit abundantly, the whole land will taste the blessings of a solid and enduring temperance reform.

We have no time to enumerate in detail all the fruits of the Spirit that prove the genuine Christian, and give beauty and power to the Christian character. A fruit-bearing religion is the crying want of the day. A religion that suns itself on the warm side of a fashionable church, that "enjoys" fine preaching, fine music, and a ride to heaven in a parlor-car, is common enough, and as worthless too. But the religion that would rather be poor than touch a dishonest dollar, that would rather go through a Sunday's storm to its mission-school than to lie on its easy lounge, that would sooner have a rag carpet on the floor than to cheat heathen souls out of a gospel of salvation, a religion that serves Christ for the sheer love of serving Him—this is the kind of tree whose fruit tastes of the *divine life within it*. And now after this glance through the church orchard, let each one of us ask himself and herself the question, Do I bear the genuine fruits of the Holy Spirit?—*Evangelist.*

A Lesson From the Olive-Tree.

This faithful tree seems to bear the mark of suffering. I have called it a lignaous agony, a death-throe in wood; some of them are twisted and gnarled in such anguish that one would think that they had heard the groans of Gethsemane. Well does the olive embody the great agony. The pangs that rent the Saviour's heart in the garden have often been brought before me when resting among these trees. If you will observe them, not so much the younger ones as those of venerable age, you will compare them to serpents in their strange twistings and coilings. Some of them are split to the very heart and broken from the root upward as with an axe. One wonders how they live, but, indeed, they are full of life. I am told that even the old roots which are brought to us in baskets for the fire, would grow if they were buried in the ground. If that be so, it would be very hard work to extirpate that olive tree. It has so much life in it that if it is buried in the soil it will send out shoots. Even when it is in the fire it burns with a clear flame, far more bright than any other wood, for it is full of the oil of life; and even in perishing it does its best to enlighten those who cast it on the fire.

I suspect that if we dare to do great things for God, we shall have to become gnarled and twisted by suffering. I suppose that a few good people may possibly escape from trial and suffering, but I do not know them. Those whose lives are very easy are usually of small account in the matter of usefulness. Many who are doing very little would be all the better for the fertilizing processes of pain and anguish. Even a week or two of gout might cure them of fancies, and put them upon real work. Sympathy with others is not learned without personal suffering. The power to comfort grows out of our own afflictions. Depend upon it, those useful workers whom you so much envy have their private griefs, which minister to their usefulness or keep them humble under their success. Those whom the Lord honors in public, he chastens in private. These sicknesses and sorrows of ours have a fertilizing effect or at least they ought to have. Every cold wind, as well as every sunbeam, helps to put oil into the olives and grace into believers.—*C. H. Spurgeon, in Evangelist.*

Dr. Talmage's This and That.

Give your minister a good worldly support, if you would have him give you good sermons. Many ministers are by their congregations half starved. Perhaps, if your pastor had better food he would have more fire. Next to the divine unction, the minister needs good blood; and he cannot make that out of tough leather. One reason why the apostles preached so powerfully was that they had healthy food. Fish was cheap along Lake Galilee, and this, with unbolted bread, gave them phosphorus for the brain, nitrates for the muscle, and carbonates for the whole frame. When the water is low the mill-wheel goes slowly, but a full race, and how fast the grists are ground! In a man the arteries are the mill-race, and the brain the wheel, and the practical work of life is the grist-ground. Soldiers have failed in battle because their stomachs for several days were innocent of everything but "hard-tack." See that your minister has a full haversack. Feed him on gruel during the week, and on Sunday he will give you gruel. What is called the "parson's nose" in a turkey or fowl is an allegory setting forth that in many communities the minister comes out behind. Often the damage begins in the college or theological seminary boarding-house. Insufficient food and unsuitable apparel have done their fatal work on the young man before he reaches the pulpit. He comes into life cowed down, with a patch on both knees and a hat that has been done over four or five times, and so weak that the first sharp wind that whistles round the corner blows him into glory. The inertness you complain of in the ministry starts early. Do you suppose that if Paul spent seven years in a cheap boarding-house, and the years after in a poorly-supplied parsonage, he would have made Felix tremble? You cannot keep a hot fire in the furnace with poor fuel and the damper turned.

Daniel Webster's Dominant Thought.

At a dinner at the Astor House, when Daniel Webster was Secretary of State under President Fillmore, after a period of silence which fell upon the company of some twenty gentlemen who were present, one of the guests said:

"Mr. Webster, will you tell me what was the most important thought that ever occupied your mind?"

Mr. Webster slowly passed his hand over his forehead, and in a low tone inquired of one near him:

"Is there any one here who does not know me?"

"No; all are your friends."

"The most important thought that ever occupied my mind," said Mr. Webster, "was that of *my individual responsibility to God.*" And after speaking on this subject in the most solemn strain for some twenty minutes, he silently rose from the table and retired to his room.

This incident, related by Harvey in his Reminiscences, serves to illustrate the attitude of great minds towards eternal things. Great men are not scoffers. The men of flippant sneers and godless jests are men of small calibre and shallow intellect. It is *not* the wise man who has "said in his heart there is no God." It is not the great man who casts off fear and restrains prayer before Him.—*Christian Herald.*

— Communion with the Sinless One is the only sure method of excommunicating sin. Gazing into the face of Christ, and beholding the light of the knowledge of the glory of God which shines there, will surely disenchant our hearts from worldly objects. "Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him." Dannecker, the German sculptor, spent eight years in producing a face of Christ; and at last wrought out one in which the emotions of love and sorrow were so perfectly blended that beholders wept as they looked upon it. Subsequently being solicited to employ his great talent on a statue of Venus, he replied: "After gazing so long into the face of Christ, think you that I can now turn my attention to a heathen goddess?" Here is the true secret of weanedness from worldly idols, "the expulsive power of a new affection."

"I have heard the voice of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have seen the face of Jesus,
All my soul is satisfied."

—*A. J. Gordon.*

— SORROW TURNED INTO JOY.—A poor blind girl, residing in one of the provinces of France, had for many years, as her greatest comfort, perused an embossed Bible with her fingers. Getting out of health, and becoming partially paralyzed, the hand also was affected, and gradually all power of touch was lost. Her agony of mind at the deprivation was great, and in a moment of despair she took up her Bible, bent down her head, and kissed the open leaf, by way, as she supposed, of a last farewell. In the act of doing so, to her great surprise and sudden joy, she felt the letters distinctly with her lips, and from that day the poor child was able to read the Word of God.—*Sel.*

An Old Photograph.

BY FLORENCE B. HALLOWELL.

"How long's Miss Baker goin' to stay?" asked John Pelton, coming out of the pantry with an empty milk pail in each hand, and pausing by the stove, over which his wife was bending, stirring something in a black skillet.

"I guess she'll get through by to-morrow noon," answered Sarah Pelton with a faint sigh. "I wouldn't a' had her now bein' it's so near Christmas an' all, but she couldn't come no other time, folks are so set to get her, 'n' you really needed that suit. I didn't see how you was to get along no longer 'thout it."

"I don't know as it matters much 'bout it's bein' Christmas time," said John Pelton. "One time's same as another to me; but Miss Baker's too fond o' hearing herself talk. She's never satisfied 'less she's puttin' in her oar, 'n' does seems of—"

"Hush, there she comes now," interrupted his wife, as footsteps were heard on the brick walk outside the kitchen door. "She's a master hand to get to work early. She never wastes no time."

John Pelton muttered something under his breath which his wife did not catch, and disappeared through one door as Miss Baker came in at the other.

She was a thin, wahpish-looking little woman with short gray curls, thin lips, and keen black eyes that could snap fire on occasion. As John Pelton said, she loved to talk, and while she sewed her tongue flew faster than her needle. And as she frequently remarked, nothing went on around her that she didn't see.

"'Pears like I ought to finish that coat by night," she said, as, after a nod of greeting to Mrs. Pelton, she walked to the stove to warm her chill hands. "But if I don't I s'pose I'll hev ter stay termorrer; though I don't just like sewin' on Christmas day. Seems sorter heathenish, 'n' like as not you ain't perticler about hevin' me roun'."

"I don't know; it won't make no difference, I guess," rejoined Mrs. Pelton, hesitatingly. "Christmas don't count for much with John 'n' me now-a-days," and she sighed heavily, her face turned away from the gaze of the little seamstress' keen black eyes.

Miss Baker pursed up her lips, and was about to say something, but refrained. She felt sincerely sorry for the timid, sad-eyed woman before her, for she knew well the nature of the sorrow that had turned Sarah Pelton's hair grey and made her heart bankrupt.

For a few moments there was silence in the kitchen save for the singing of the kettle on the fire, and the clicking of the big eight-day clock, and then the seamstress said with something like a sigh:

"My Christmases ain't any too lively either. There's a good deal o' talk 'mong some folks 'bout the pleasure o' bein' independent, but the dear knows there ain't no fun in bein' an old maid."

Before Mrs. Pelton had time to reply, the door opened, and her husband came in, and she hastened to put the breakfast on the table at once. "I was jest sayin' to Mrs. Pelton as you come in," said Miss Baker, as, at a sign from the mistress of the house, she took a seat at the table, "that it's right hard bein' an old maid Christmas times when folks is so took up with makin' other folks happy. I met Lulie Spray when I was down to Barber's store t'other day, 'n' she was tellin' me 'bout the s'prise her father's planning for Mrs. Spray. It seems she's got a brother way out West, 'n' she h'aint seen him these two years back. He's poor 'n' h'aint been able to come East. Well, 'stead of buyin' her a new chamber set as he'd laid out to do, the deacon he thought he'd send for the feller to come 'n' make 'em a visit. He'll get here to-night, Lulie said, 'n' they're calculatin' on what Mrs. Spray goin' ter say. It'll be worth more'n a chamber set ter her ter see her brother, she sets so much by him. I'm real glad for her. There's a power o' talk 'bout peace 'n' good will Christmas times, but it's all talk with some folks. There's men as pretends ter set great store by their wives, 'n' will let 'em eat their hearts out for somethin' they could give 'em by just liftin' a finger. I don't hav no patience with that kind of a Christian, 'n' I guess the Lord don't hev none either," and Miss Baker cut up the liberal slice of ham on her plate with even more than her customary energy and decision.

John Pelton frowned darkly. He didn't believe that shaft to have been "at random sent." He knew Miss Baker was perfectly aware of the fact that he had not spoken to his only daughter since the day she had left her comfortable home to marry wild Tom Hammersley. He had vowed then that no matter what came to pass he would never speak to her again. The marriage had proved a great mistake, and Elizabeth had repented it in sack-cloth and ashes—figuratively speaking—but her father had not forgiven her, despite the prayers of his wife, and had peremptorily forbidden all communication with her.

It was nearly three years now since Mrs. Pelton had ventured to speak on the subject, but he knew when he allowed himself to think of it, that she had not ceased to think of Elizabeth, nor to love her, and that his implacable obstinacy was a source of great grief toher. Yet he had no thought of pardon.

He tried to forget Miss Baker's sharp words, when, having finished his breakfast, he went out to the barn again; but he found it impossible. Try as he might to think of other things, his mind persisted in reverting to that surprise Deacon Spray had planned for his wife.

He concluded to go to town on a matter of business, and hitching the old sorrel to the sleigh, went into the house to ask Sarah if there was "anything she wanted."

"I don't know as there is," she answered. "We ain't goin' to have any company to-morrow, you know, so I shan't need to make any fuss 'bout dinner."

"Now, Miss Pelton," cried Miss Baker, "You know there's a sight of things you want, only you won't say so. Why not get 'em now while he's in the humor. Dear knows he can afford to give ye 'most anything. Everybody 'll tell he's got a mint 'o money."

"Everybody knows more about my business than I do myself," said John Pelton grimly, "but that's only natural of course."

"Rich or poor you'd oughter get your wife a new sewin' machine; this one's all wore out," said Miss Baker, nothing daunted by the farmer's dark look. "It takes all the backbone a body's got to run it. I don't wonder Miss Pelton's gray afore her time an' thin as a shadder. This machine's enough to do it, let alone anything else. I mind the time she was as plump 'n' rosy a woman as I'd care ter see, ye ain't noticed the change, perhaps, you've been so busy makin' money, but other folks has noticed it; I kin tell ye that."

John Pelton did not deign to give any reply to this second well-directed shaft, but taking his heavy coat from a peg behind the door, went out, slamming the door to behind him.

"That woman does beat all," he muttered, as he sprang into the sleigh, and touched the whip to the sorrel's back. "She shan't never make another suit for me if I have to go in rags. It's the last time I put her in the way of lecturin' me She'd better look after her own sins and leave other folks alone."

What the seamstress had said about the change in Sarah's appearance stuck in his mind like a burr. Perhaps Sarah *had* worked pretty hard. She was always busy, and she walked miles every day from the pantry and the dairy to the stove and the kitchen table.

She had never had a servant, and they had been married twenty-three years. In all that time, no matter what the circumstances, Sarah had done all the housework. Sometimes in harvest-time there were ten men to cook for. But she never complained, and she had appeared contented so long as she had had Elizabeth with her. She had failed a good deal since Elizabeth's unfortunate marriage.

"And I certainly wasn't to blame for that," thought John Pelton, savagely.

But suddenly he flushed hotly, remembering how often Elizabeth had rebelled against the monotony and drudgery of her life, and how often she had reproached him, unmindful of his anger.

"I wouldn't care if I were really poor—I'd expect to work hard, and be glad to help," she had said, "but there's no need for mother and me to slave from dawn to dark. Why not let us enjoy some of the money you make as we go along, not keep it till we're too old to want to spend it."

Perhaps, after all, he had been a little to blame for that hasty marriage. He felt very uncomfortable as he thought of this, and anathematized little Miss Baker for suggesting such a train of reflections.

The town wore a decidedly holiday aspect, and the farmer could not but observe as he drove through the streets how happy every one he met seemed to be, and he did not see an acquaintance who was not loaded down with bundles of all shapes and sizes.

As he stopped the sleigh before a little grocery store, a man came forward to meet him with both hands outstretched.

"John Pelton! Well, it seems good to see you again. How's your wife and little Elizabeth?—though she can't be very little now, seein' it's ten years since I was here last," and John recognized Solomon Appleton, an old friend who had formerly been a tenant on the farm adjoining his own.

He shook hands with him cordially, and answered a little stiffly that "Miss Pelton was as well as common."

"This is a good time to visit one's old home," said Appleton. "Everybody's in a good humor, plenty of peace 'n' good-will goin' round, you know. I want to see Mrs. Pelton 'n' Elizabeth, 'n' have a good talk 'fore I go back 'n' I'll try to get out to your place to-morrow afternoon,—guess I can manage it somehow," and with a cheerful nod he walked away, leaving John Pelton in a very uncomfortable state of mind. He valued very highly the good opinion of Solomon Appleton, and it stung him to think how surprised and shocked his old friend would be when he learned that Elizabeth, a widow with two little children, was denied a home under her father's roof.

"I wish there was no such thing as Christmas," thought the vexed and irritated man. "Peace and good will! Fudge!"

He attended to the business about which he had come to town, and then drove to the house of a widow, who owned a piece of woodland he had wanted to buy for a long time. He had just heard that she was in need of money, and judged that a better time to drive a close bargain could not be found.

He was told by the widow's little daughter to wait in the parlor for a few minutes while she ran to a neighbor's to find her mother, and while he waited he stood by a centre-table and mechanically turned over the leaves of a photographic album.

Suddenly he started, and his face changed. There before him was a photograph of his wife as she had looked ten years before. Yes; there was no mistake; it was Sarah, but Sarah with a bright, happy look, glad eyes, and a figure almost youthful in its well-rounded proportions. It was a Sarah of the past in every way. A vision of the Sarah of the present rose before him—stooped, thin and gray, with sad eyes and hollow cheeks. John Pelton could not remember when he had last heard her laugh—it was so long ago. He did not believe she had laughed since Eliz—

He had closed the album with a bang, and stood staring at it a moment, lost in thought. Was *he* to blame for that terrible change in Sarah? And was it in his power to call back the glad light to her eyes, the smiles to her lips?

"I ought to have seen it—long ago," he muttered. "But it isn't too late now—I'll make it up to her. God knows I'll try to make it up to her."

That old photograph had done a wonderful work. It had made John Pelton see clearly the sin of which he had been guilty for five long years.

When the widow, hurried along by her little daughter, entered the parlor a few minutes later she found it empty. John Pelton had gone.

* * * * * * *

Miss Baker succeeded in finishing the coat, and left the farm-house by five o'clock, to Sarah's great relief, for she dreaded the effect upon John of any more of the little seamstress's sharp home-thrusts.

John was unusually late. He was seldom away after dark, and when the clock struck six, and he had not come, his wife began to feel a little anxious.

Supper was all ready, and there was nothing for her to do; so she sat down before the stove, and leaning her chin on her hand, suffered herself to fall into a reverie which was in the nature of things, far from pleasant. Her eyes filled with tears as she thought of Elizabeth struggling on alone, poor and friendless, and with two little children dependent on her. Just at this season it seemed particularly hard.

"I must try to get up courage enough to say something about it to John," thought the poor mother.

"I *must* do it, no matter how angry he is;" and just then she heard the sound of the horse and sleigh stopping on the road that led to the barn. The next moment the door opened, and John Pelton came in.

To Sarah's unbounded surprise he walked straight across the room, took her in his arms, and kissed her heartily. He was not a demonstrative man, nor given to much expression of affection, and she could not remember when he had last shown her such a tender little attention. The tears rushed to her eyes.

"Why John!" she exclaimed.

And then she looked at him wondering. Seldom had she seen such a glow of happiness on his face as it now wore.

"You're tryin' to guess what's the matter with me, Sarah," and John laughed. "I can see it in your face. Well, it's only that I don't mean to let Deacon Spray get ahead of me about surprises—I've got a Christmas surprise for you," and then, just as he said the last word, the kitchen door was thrown open, some one rushed in, there was a simultaneous cry of

"Mother!"

"Elizabeth!"

And Sarah Pelton and her daughter were sobbing in each other's arms.

* * *

Solomon Appleton met Miss Baker on the street the other day after Christmas, and he was hurrying to the station to take a train for the West. But despite his hurry he stopped to shake hands with her.

"I hope you've been spending a merry Christmas," she said.

"Yes, indeed, never had a better time in my life," he answered heartily. "I was out at Pelton's all yesterday afternoon. Sarah and Elizabeth have changed some, of course, as well they might in ten years, but otherwise they're the same as ever. I couldn't help envying John Pelton—he seemed so happy," and then he hastened away leaving Miss Baker staring after him, utterly at a loss to understand what he had said. But a little later she knew what good cause for happiness John Pelton had, though she never learned the part played in the little domestic drama by that old photograph.—*Standard.*

Somebody's Prayers.

Annie Edwards never heard a prayer in her own home. Her father and mother did not go to church, and although they had a large Bible on a stand in the parlor it was never opened. Mr. and Mrs. Edwards did not believe in training their children in Bible doctrines; they said when they were able to understand them, they could be left to make their own choice of denominations and beliefs.

When Annie was twelve years old she had a strong desire to be a Christian. She did not like the way her father and mother kept Sunday, and their irreligious views made her very unhappy. She thought it must be a great comfort to children to have praying fathers and mothers. She had talked with some of her companions at school whose mothers had taught them to kneel at her knee and pray to their Father in heaven. Annie thought a great deal about it, and one night she went to a meeting near her house. She said she felt as if she were in heaven, she enjoyed it so very much, and she asked her father and mother if she might attend the meetings. At first they did not seem willing to have her but the Lord softened their hearts, and they gave Annie permission to go two evenings in the week. After Annie had been a number of times, her father, who had had a Christian mother, was coming home from the store, and he thought he would step into the meeting a moment, for he was very fond of Annie, and he had noticed how loving and thoughtful his little girl was getting to be. The meeting was half out when he went in and took a seat back by the door. The minister was giving the invitation for any one who would like the prayers of God's people to rise in their seats. What was Annie's father's surprise to see her standing up alone in one part of the room. When the meeting was over, he waited at the door for his little girl. It was a bright, pleasant night, and when his daughter came out of the door he said, "We will take a short walk, Annie, before we go home."

Annie thought her father had never been so gentle and kind as he was that night. He talked about his own dear mother, and how she used to pray for him, and then he said, "Annie, what made you rise to night in the meeting?"

"O papa, dear," she replied, "I hope you won't be displeased, but I did want somebody's prayers so very much! I want to be a Christian and work for Jesus as long as I live."

Then the father told his little girl that he had not done right to take the course he had regarding religious teachings.

He talked the matter over with his wife, and the result was that they both went with Annie to the meetings. When the father and mother rose for prayers a few weeks later, little Annie could pray for them, for she had found the Saviour, and could help them to find him. Not long afterwards Annie and her father and mother united with the church. The younger children of that family are being taught the Scriptures, and are learning infant prayers at their mother's knee, and you may be sure Annie is trying to do all she can to have them know the loving Lord who took little children in his arms and blessed them, thereby showing that none are too young to come to him and learn of him.—*The Evangelist.*

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