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The Value of Systematic Effort.

Every practical man recognizes the great value of steady, systematic effort in bringing things to pass. People who work spasmodically accomplish something no doubt, their special efforts are not altogether to be despised. It is better to work irregularly than not to work at all. But he who works by fits and starts is nowhere in the competition with the man who advances to the achievement of his purpose with regular, systematic steps, according to the measure of his daily strength. It's the steady thing that does it. Little of great value is achieved without painstaking and sustained effort. Often the plodding tortoise wins the race.

System and sustained effort are not of less value in church work than in other matters. A church whose activities take the form of a series of spasms, more or less frequent and more or less related, as circumstances may determine, may do some astonishing things, but will certainly not accomplish in any large and satisfactory measure, the purpose for which a church of Jesus Christ should exist. But system is not everything, machinery will not run itself, says someone. Quite true, but that is no argument against suitable machinery. The purpose of machinery is not to make force unnecessary but to make it effective. And it is a general principle that the simpler machinery is the better, so long as it is of a character to make the force to which it is harnessed effective for the purpose intended. It is a wonderful thing to see force and machinery brought into contact as you may see it in the factory, the railway, the steamship, when at the touch of a lever, machinery that was idle and unproductive is thrilled by the force that was great but inoperative in the engine, and is moved to wonderful service at the behest of the human will. There are churches and individual human lives that seem almost as unproductive as the machinery of a factory when the power is turned off, but which if brought by systematic endeavor into vital connection with the Spirit of God, would be filled with activities which would bless the world.

A church never knows what it can accomplish through systematic effort until it tries, and it is a sad thing that there are so many churches which seem to have but very little ambition to make the experiment. In the matter of raising funds for missions and other denominational work, there are, we believe, many of our churches which by systematic and persistent effort might, with great blessing to themselves, double or treble their contributions for these purposes. If all our churches were doing their duty in this matter as faithfully as a few are, a very different answer might be given to many an urgent appeal for help in promoting the work with which the Lord has entrusted us. As an instance of what faithful systematic work will accomplish, we may be permitted to allude to a note from a pastor, which appeared among our news from the churches last week. This church reports only 80 resident members. It is not at all a wealthy church even in proportion to its membership, yet the church last year, besides paying the pastor's salary and providing for other necessary local expenses, raised $2.65 per member for the support of denominational interests and the pastor expects that the church's contributions for the present year will not be less than $2.50 per member. If the (say) 40,000 resident Baptist church members in these provinces were all doing as well, it would mean $100,000 a year put into the denominational treasury for missions, education, and other interests. How does the church alluded to manage to contribute so much? Systematic effort, evidently is a part of the answer. The pastor says that the church has already taken its third quarterly collection for the Convention Fund. That indicates system. Will all our churches who have done likewise please hold up their hands. Some have, doubtless. A few also take monthly, perhaps a few take weekly, collections for denominational work. But how many churches, just as able to contribute as the one referred to, have done next to nothing as yet this year for denominational work, and will content themselves with a spasmodic and ineffective effort to gather up some funds when the end of the year approaches? Then, it is evident that a great deal depends on the pastor. If he discourages effort for denominational work, if he tells the church that he thinks they have about as much as they can do to support your own minister, and that while there are arrears of salary unpaid he shall not encourage their raising money for outside interests, then it is quite certain that little will be done in that church for denominational work. It is quite clear, however, that the pastor of the Guysboro church—and he is one of a great number of like spirit—encourages his church to take in a broad horizon in their outlook and their sympathies. We are very sure that he gets no large salary. If he received every dollar that the church is now raising both for local and outside work, it would be no princely stipend. And besides his people need a house of worship which they wisely will not begin to build until they see their way clear to finish it free from debt. But a pastor loses nothing, he may be sure, by cultivating in his people the spirit of benevolence toward the great Christian enterprises in which the denomination is engaged. If there ever was a case of a pastor being starved out because he had encouraged his people to give so much to missions that they could no longer support their own pastor, we have not heard of it. On the other hand, the people who falsely persuade themselves that they are not able to do more than to care for themselves, may be expected soon to have so overwhelming a sense of their poverty that they will no longer be able to give their pastor even the meagre support that he is willing to accept at their hands. "There is that giveth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." When the pastor leads and the church co-operates in systematic endeavor on behalf of denominational work, the results will be good, not only for the denominational interests but also for the church and the pastor.

Forgiveness and Love.

There is much in the teaching of Jesus and in his attitude toward the people of his time, as set forth in the gospel narratives, which goes to show that the religion or the morality which was a mere matter of respectability had very little value in his eyes. He saw many men fasting, praying, and giving alms, whose grand purpose in what they did was that they might be seen of men. He saw men scrupulously paying tithes of their garden herbs, whose lives bore evidence that they had no real regard for the principles of justice and righteousness. He saw the most careful avoidance of any occasion of ceremonial defilement on the part of men whose hearts were full of uncleanness.—And these things profoundly disturbed and offended him. One sincere cry for mercy from the heart of a publican counted in his eyes for more than all the Pharisee's parade of self-righteousness. One sob from the heart of a penitent sinner was more to him than all the respectable religiousness of those who had no sense of sins to be forgiven.

The way in which our Lord regarded these two classes of persons, and the reason for the estimation which he placed upon their conduct, is made to appear very clearly in the passage from Luke's gospel which forms our Bible lesson for the current week. The Pharisee, Simon, whose invitation to dine with him Jesus had accepted, was evidently one of the best of his class. He was not so filled with spiritual pride and bigotry that he could see no good in the prophet of Nazareth. He felt a certain respect and appreciation for the young teacher, he had felt himself bound to show some interest in his work, and accordingly he had invited Jesus to share his hospitality. But evidently Simon had not opened his heart generously to Jesus. The Pharisee in him was still alive and strong, and when, in answer to his invitation, Jesus comes to Simon's house it is with but scant courtesy that he is received. Then, something occurs that rudely shocks Simon's sense of propriety, and makes him regret even the poor measure of courtesy which he had extended to his guest. A woman whom Simon recognized as a sinful woman of the city, steals into the room, and passing behind the couch on which Jesus reclines, she bows at his feet and weeps over them, wetting them with her tears, wiping them with her hair and anointing them with costly ointment. If the spirit of penitential love had been filling Simon's heart, he would have showed more discernment in reference to the character and motives of the woman, he would have understood that the passion which was finding expression in her sobbing caresses and her costly gift was no sinful or unworthy one. But the Pharisee's heart was blind, and, like all loveless hearts, it stumbled in judgment. This woman is a notorious sinner, said Simon to himself, and it is evident that my guest is no prophet, else he would know her true character and resent her touch.

Then the Lord had somewhat to say to Simon. It is to be hoped that that eminently respectable Pharisee was not so dull of apprehension as not to profit by the words to which he listened, and it is equally to be hoped that there may not be in our own hearts so much of the pharisee that we shall be unable to receive the lessons which these words contain.—First then here is the lesson already hinted at, that the loveless eye is blind to the best that is in men and women, and a loveless judgment is likely to be unjust. Jesus could see much more and better things in the sinful woman than could Simon. Secondly,—Love is the fruit of forgiveness. The woman felt that she had been forgiven much, therefore she loved much. Simon had little or no sense of forgiveness, therefore he had felt for the Saviour of men no stronger affection than a cold respect, not unmixed with doubt or suspicion. Thirdly, It is love that Jesus seeks and approves. It is unspeakably more to him than the most scrupulous correctness of conduct, the utmost respectability, and the carefulest observance of religious rites. It is to him the evidence of faith and the fruit of forgiveness. Less Phariseeism and more love,—that is the need of the world today. A love that, moved by an assured sense of forgiveness through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, breaks through all barriers to cast itself and its treasures at the feet of its Lord—that is more precious in his eyes than all else that the world can give.

The War.

General Roberts has succeeded, after much unavoidable delay, in getting matters into shape for an aggressive northward movement, and the past week has accordingly witnessed a more important advance by the British troops than had occurred since the occupation of Bloemfontein, two months ago. A force under General Pole-Carew, which left Bloemfontein on Wednesday, occupied Brandfort on Friday morning. The Boer force defending the place is said to have been from 4,000 to 6,000 strong. Lord Roberts was present in person directing operations, and his skillful strategy resulted in forcing the Boers to evacuate their positions with comparatively small loss to the British. The two mounted battalions of the Canadian mounted infantry, with other Colonial troops, under General Hutton, were engaged in this operation and rendered good service. Brandfort is on the railroad 35 miles north of Bloemfontein. On Saturday Lord Roberts sent a despatch from Vet River, about 20 miles farther north on the railway, at which point the bridge had been destroyed, making the crossing of the river difficult. Lord Roberts states that he had marched to that point with General Pole-Carew's brigade, his headquarters and Wavell's brigade of the seventh division being two miles in the rear, and Maxwell's brigade the same distance to the right. Lord Roberts says: "The enemy are in considerable strength on the opposite bank of the river. Our guns engaged theirs for some three hours without our being able to force a passage of the river, but shortly before dusk, the mounted infantry, under General Hutton, turned the enemy's right and, in a very dashing manner, pushed across the river under heavy shell and musketry fire." The Commander-in-Chief also reports a successful action by General Hamilton who, by a well executed movement, prevented a junction of two Boer forces, inflicting serious loss upon the enemy who fled, leaving their dead and wounded on the field.

Lord Roberts also reports Hamilton to be advancing to a difficult drift of the Little Vet river in the direction of Winburg. A later dispatch, not official, states that the crossing of the Vet by General Hutton, after a short but terribly hot engagement, was