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"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

The Closing Year.

Now the year's last hours are waning,
All its moments well-nigh flown;
Weeks and months elapsed and vanish'd,
Gone—irrevocably gone!

Soon life's day will fill their number,
Soon its final sun must set!
Oh! my spirit, canst thou slumber?
Loiter, linger, trifle yet?

Dar'st thou still misuse the golden
Swift-winged minutes which remain?
Now, in health and peace upholden,
Lavish latest days in vain?

Soon thy torch of life must tremble,
Soon be quench'd in cold decay;
Soon will mourning friends assemble,
Following slow the coffin'd clay.

Oh! my soul, God's love adoring,
Grateful own his mercies past;
Then, his richest grace imploring,
Seek to have thy best at last!

JOHN SHEPPARD.

Select Sermon.

The Chaff driven away.

BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."—Psalm i. 4.

(Concluded.)

It is said of the righteous man, that he "bringeth forth his fruit in his season." "Not so the ungodly, not so,"—they bring forth no fruit; or if there be here and there a shrivelled grape upon the vine, it is brought forth in the wrong season, when the genial heat of the sun cannot ripen it, and therefore it is sear and worthless. Many people imagine that if they do not commit positive sin they are all right. Now let me give you a little sermon in the midst of my sermon. Here is the text: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty." First, what has Meroz done? Nothing. Secondly, is Meroz cursed? Yes; cursed bitterly. What for?—for doing nothing? Yes, for doing nothing. "Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof," for what they did not do, "because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Did Meroz fight against God? No. Did Meroz put on a buckler and lay hold of shield and spear, and go forth against the Most High? What did Meroz do? Nothing. And is it cursed? Yes, cursed bitterly with the inhabitants thereof, "because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Preach that sermon to yourselves when you get home. Draw it out at length, and perhaps while you are sitting down you will say, "Meroz! why that is myself. I don't fight against God, I am no enemy of Christ, I do not persecute his people, in fact I even love his ministers, I love to go up and hear the Word preached. I should not be happy if I spent my Sunday anywhere but in God's house. But still that must mean me, for I do not go up to the help of the Lord against the mighty." I do nothing. I am an idle do nothing. I am a fruitless tree." Ah, then remember you are cursed, and cursed bitterly too. Not for what you do, but for what you don't do. So here it is one of the sad curses of the ungodly—that they bring forth fruit in their season. Why look at many of you.

Pass on to the description. His leaf also shall not wither. "Not so the ungodly, not so." The ungodly man's leaf shall wither. I see before me this day many proofs that God's promise is verified to his people. Look round, and behold what a large number of grey-headed men assemble every Lord's day to hear the Word. There are many of them who loved Christ in their youth. Then they had a "joy unspeakable and full of glory" in making a profession of his dear name; and now they have come into what men call the sear and yellow leaf of life, but they do not find it so, for they still

bring forth fruit in old age, they are still fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright. Their leaf has not withered, they are just as active in the cause of Christ as ever they were, and perhaps ten times more happy. Instead of bringing forth no fruit, they bring forth richer and more luscious clusters than ever they did before. Walking in the midst of the younger ones they shine as lights in the midst of the world; or to return to the simile, they are like trees whose branches hang down by reason of the abundance of their fruits, even as their heads bow down by reason of the abundance of their years. What a mercy it is, dear brethren, to have Christ for your portion in youth, and such a Christ too as will last us all our life long. To see old Rowland Hill preaching when he was tottering on the borders of the grave and talking of the faithfulness of Christ—what a glorious sight! There was a proof! That leaf did not wither. Was there ever a tree like this that would maintain its greenness eighty years and yet not wither? Was there ever a religion like this that would make the old men youthful and their tottering feet leap for joy? And yet this is the religion of Christ. Our leaf withers not.

But oh, "Not so the ungodly, not so." Your leaf shall wither; at least when they that look out of the windows are darkened, when the grinders fail because they are few, when your days of old age shall come upon you, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, if not before, shall your leaf wither.

The man that has no God, hath no prosperity. Is he fat—he fattens for the slaughter! Is he in adversity—behold the first drops of the fated storm have begun to fall on him. To the ungodly man there is nothing good in this life. The sweet that he tasteth is the sweetness of poison. That which looketh fair is but as paint upon the harlot's face, beneath there is loathsomeness and disease. There may be a greenness and a verdure upon the mound, but within there lies the rotting carcass, the loathsomeness of corruption. Whatsoever the believer doth, it shall prosper. "Not so the ungodly, not so." Surely this first part of my text is quite bad enough—to have the gate of blessedness shut against you, to be without the blessing which is given to the godly—this punishment of the lost surely were enough to make us start in dismay.

2. Now very briefly upon the second point. Listen awhile to the TERRIBLE COMPARISON. "The ungodly are like the chaff." They are not like the wild tree, for that hath life, and they are dead in sin. They are not compared here even to the dead tree plucked up by the roots, for that may be of some service. Floating down the stream, the hand of poverty may recall it from the water, and kindle its fire and relieve its cold. They are not even like the heath in the desert, for it hath some uses, and tends to cheer the arid waste. They are like nothing that hath life, nothing that is of any value. They are here said to be like chaff which the wind driveth away. Now you will at once see how terrible is this figure, if you look at it a moment. They are like chaff. Chaff envelops good corn, but when the wheat is cut down and carried into the barn, the corn alone is useful, the grain alone is looked at, and that chaff which has grown side by side with the good living wheat, is now become utterly useless, and is to be separated and driven away.

3. THE AWFUL PROPHECY contained in the verse—"They are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." How near the chaff is to the grain! It is, in fact, its envelope; they grow together. My hearers, I wish to speak now very pointedly and personally. How nearly related are the ungodly to the righteous! One of you, it may be, now present, an ungodly man, is the father of a godly child. You have been to that child what the chaff is to the wheat; you have nourished the child—cherished it in your bosom; you have been wrapt about it like the chaff about the grain. Is it not an awful thing for you to think that you should have been in such

close relationship to a child of God, but that in the great day of division you must be separated from it? The chaff cannot be taken into heaven with the wheat. I point to another. You are the son of a godly mother! you have grown up at her knee. She taught you, when you were but a little one, to say your little prayer, and to sing the little hymn.

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child." That mother looked upon you as her joy and her comfort. She is gone now. But you were once to her what the chaff is to the wheat. You grew as it were, upon the same stock, you were of the same family, and her heart was wholly wrapt up in you. You were her joy and comfort here below. Does it not cause you one pang to regret that, dying as you are, you must everlastingly be separated from her? Where she is you can never come. Mayhap, too, I have here a mother who has lost several infants; she has been to those infants what the chaff is to the wheat—wrapt up in her bosom for a little while she fondled them; and they, God's good wheat, have been gathered into the garner, and there they are now in Jesus' floor. There are their little spirits rejoicing before the throne of the Most High. The mother who is left thinks not of it, but she is the mother of angels, and, perhaps, herself a child of hell. Ah, mother! what think you of this? Is this separation from your child eternal? Will you be content to be found at God's great winnowing-day, the chaff, and you will be driven from your children? Shall you see them in heaven, and yourselves then cast out for ever? Can you bear the thought? Hath your heart become brutish? Is your soul harder than a nether mill-stone? Surely, if it be not, the thought of your present intimate connexion with God's people, and of your sure separation, will make you tremble. And oh! my hearers, here are some of you sitting side by side, with the godly. You sing as they sing, you hear as they hear. Perhaps you assist the outward wants of the church. You are to the church just what the chaff is to the wheat. You are the outward husk, the congregation which surrounds the inner living nucleus of the church. And must it be—must you be separated from us? Will you go from the convocation of the righteous to the last general assembly of the destroyed and cursed in hell? The thought checks my voice. I must speak slowly on this matter for awhile. My mother said to me once, after she had long prayed for me, and had come to the conviction that I was hopeless, "Ah," said she, "my son, if at the last great day you are condemned, remember your mother will say Amen to your condemnation." That stung me to the quick. Must the mother that brought me forth and that loved me say "Amen" to my being condemned at last? Yet such things must be. Deth not the wheat say Amen to the chaff being blown away? Is it not in fact the very prayer of the wheat that it may be separated from the chaff? and surely when that prayer is heard, and awfully answered, the wheat must say Amen to the chaff being blown away into fire unquenchable. Think my dear hearers, think again. And must it be—must I bid farewell to her I love, who served the Lord in spirit. Must I see her body committed to the grave, and as I stand there must I bid her a last, a final farewell? Must I be for ever separated from her, because I fear not God, neither regard him, and therefore cannot have a portion amongst the Lord's chosen ones? What, have you lost relatives for ever? Are your pious fathers and mothers buried in a "sure and certain hope" to which you are strangers? Will you never sing the song of rejoicing with them in heaven? Is there never to be another salutation? Is death a gulf that cannot be bridged to you? Oh, I hope it is the joy of some of us to know we shall meet many of our kindred above; and as we have lost one after another this has been our sweet consolation, they are gone and we shall soon follow them; they are not lost but gone before; they are buried as to their flesh, but their souls are in Paradise, and we shall be there also; and, when we have

seen our Saviour's face and have rejoiced in that glorious vision, then shall we see them also, and have deeper and purer fellowship with them than we ever had before in all the days of our lives. Well here is a sad prophecy! The wicked are "like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Oh, I pray God the Holy Spirit to touch some ungodly hearts now, and make you think. And remember my dear hearers, if there be in your bosoms this morning one desire towards Christ, cherish it, blow the little spark till it comes a flame. If your heart melts ever so little this morning, I beseech you resist not, quench not the heavenly influence. Oh, that ye knew what a fearful thing it will be to be cast away for ever! Is there anything pleasing in destruction? Is sin so luscious to you that you will burn in hell for ever for it? What, is Christ so hard a master that you will not love him? Is his cross so ugly that ye will not look towards it? Oh, I beseech you by him whose heart is love, the crucified Redeemer, who now speaks through me this morning, and in me weeps over you, I beseech you look to him and be saved.

Confession of a Drunkard.

Some years since there was a pamphlet published in England, entitled the "Confessions of a Drunkard." The statements made in it are asserted on good authority to be authentic, and what does the writer say? "Of my condition there is no hope that it should ever change; the waters have gone over me; but out of the black depths could I be heard, I would cry out

feverish with last night's debauch, and feverish looking for this night's repetition of the folly; could he feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feeble outcry to be delivered, it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation."—*London Quarterly Review*.

Loved and Gone.

What little things serve to remind us of the loved and lost! A vacant chair; a pair of little shoes; a single stocking, or a child's plaything, have stories, all of them, and make the heart grow soft with sorrow. A mother, whose little boy is dead, says, "Out of doors the children are being happy with their sleds, and how they rejoice that winter is here! In the woodshed hangs my boy's sled; though he will not need it any more. I thought, as I looked at it, how he was wishing for the snow; and now it has come he has gone." Sacred is the little sled now. Every time she looks at it she thinks of her boy. It is a mute reminder of the little one that died, hanging up by a string, just as he left it; it is something left behind to keep his memory green. A strange pleasure, that she was blessed with his presence once, and sorrow that he is gone, mingle together while she looks at it; the past is a dream, and the present a sad reality; but the future is bright with hope.

THE TRUE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT.—As the sunlight tints the flower and colors the rock—as it alternately sparkles in the dew-drops and shines in broad ocean—so the true religious spirit is present in the humblest bargain, the lowliest word of kindness, as much as in the grand songs of Hebrew bards and the profound teachings of St. Paul, the apostle, those ancient headlands of Christian thought.