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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

Praise and Blame.

What an easy thing it is to find fault. Some critics, for instance, are only professional fault-finders, and the more closely they wire the end of their whip, the more keenly they can cut the flesh of feeling, the more the on-lookers approve it. Talk about Nero liking to see the hungry lions tearing to pieces human-kind, there are a mass of persons who like to sit around the arena and mark the flaying of some adventurer in the lists of fame! Ninety-nine arguments are good, and the hundredth bad; then blame him for that. He has done very well; then seeing his manifest ability, blame him that he did not do better. Now I may be wrong, but in all aspects of life it seems to me that blame is an article we can do with just as little as possible. The way to make a person do worse to-morrow is to blame him for having done badly to-day. There is no one who has not some good points, and it is better to help him on by laying hold of these than by determinately driving him forward and awakening his worse self. You say he is slow. Very well; but he is honest.—You say he is hasty; never mind he is kind at heart, and sulky never. We blame sometimes in the parlour for some carelessness and neglect; we forget the multitude of hard duties done. They chatter, chatter downstairs sometimes, and blame the mistress with unabated warmth the evening long; and they, alas! forget that on that one delicate brain rests all the care, and counsel, and comfort of the home. Blame is, for the most part, a sort of densely-stupid thing. If you want the animal that will not always go never to go, whack him; and if you want to go a step further, and add to the sin of his going backwards, just hit him over the head. The moral of this is plain enough. Blame is, on the whole, bad; but when it is frequent and irritating, it weakens the worse feelings, and the human clock that was a little out of sorts, and wouldn't strike, now refuses to go at all.—Blame a servant for upsetting the dish, and he will most likely be a little tempery, and finish by upsetting the entire service, and so complete the wreck. Blame people, and they will be sure to take it out of you somehow; and all you will get is the pleasure, if so it may be termed, of giving somebody or other a good blowing up.

What then are we to do? Here I admit that is a serious question, but I suppose we are Christians. That question once decided, we shall seek to have "the gentleness of Christ," and in all our relationships we shall try to correct by kindness rather than to punish by the rod of justice. If, by-the-by, that same rod come down upon us all, then let me for one, get out of the way as swiftly as may be, and you too, my reader.

Blame a schoolboy when he brings up his sums, but remember, it's the worst thing you can do. Poor little chap! he has tried hard, and smudged the slate with tears. Tell him you did so once, and that it's not so easy to find out what two and two are as the world thinks it to be; tell him you've tried it several times over and over, and found it hot, hard work,—and the little heart will go to the work again cheery and strong; but pray don't let him hear you say, That boy is an awful little dunce.

But what is to be the substitute for blame? says my critical reader; are we to be dishonest and to hide faults, and to cover up mistakes, and to be silent concerning sins? Who would improve under such a régime as that? Now, do not work yourself up into indignation.—Letting alone the fact that few of us are likely to err very materially in this way, yet let me remind you that we may show a fault without blaming the faulty one. We may convince of an error quietly and kindly without correcting for it, and we may win the heart by our consideration which we might have lost for ever by our condemnation. We may speak gently even to the erring, for we know little of their temptations and their griefs.

Here is little "Toddles" has lost his way, and is coming home all tears and trouble.—Now, pray don't shake and cuff him. His little minute of utter loneliness nearly broke his heart: and, when the child of a larger

growth has lost his way, take a lesson from the Great Father, who speaks not one word of reproach, but says, "Let us make merry and be glad; this, my son, was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found." Praise is a very healthy thing rightly, wisely, and justly administered. I am not arguing for any general soapiness of speech, or for indiscriminate laudation, nor for fulsome flattery. These are nauseous indeed, but for that general recognition of service performed, which kindles in the heart a genial glow of feeling. "Mary how tidy the nursery is. Robert, how quietly you have been getting on with your lessons. Charles, you are much more punctual at prayers." Oh! here is the poor woman with the washing. Tell her how well-starched the things are. She does not look in her pinched up face as if she had many kindly speeches continually falling like dew upon her heart. Here is the fact with us all. We blame for neglect, we seldom praise for the faithful service rendered. "Oh!" we say somewhat philosophically, "it's only her duty." Well bow about our duty, if we are supposed to do that well always, then it follows that blame will be a market commodity very often, and praise obtainable never, because when we do well we only, according to some people's theories, do what we are paid for, and what we ought.

Your pew was dusty on Sunday, and you soiled your glove, and blamed the pew-opener. You said nothing whatever of the fact that it is generally clean, or that your hymn-books have been kept safe for some six or seven years.

On the whole, too, let us remember that it is well to seek opportunities for words of kindness—they are like apples of gold in pictures of silver. If you want others to sing at their work, remember what makes you sing at yours. I hate to hear a lecturer say, after the lecture is over: "Oh! no, thank you—never mind—excuse me. I don't care about a vote of thanks." He must be a strange man at heart if he does not, for services kindly given, deserve kind recognition in return. Give praise then, whenever and wherever it is due, whether it is your pupil, your servant, your child, or your dog; yea, give hearty and ungrudging praise, and the music will linger among the strings of the human heart, and help the worker on his way.

We all remember what the bells said to Toby Veck:—"Keep a good heart Toby, keep a good heart." Let us ring such bells in every heart. We can. To scold is as unchristian as it is unlovely. Many people think it is wrong to swear, who do not see it to be harmful to scold.

We cannot help thinking that in the Church of Christ it is better to praise the early comers than to blame the late ones, better to cheer the hearts who are doing pretty well than to blame them for not doing better.—There is a kind of preaching justly called scolding preaching. It is certainly not beautiful, and I question if it is even powerful; it may produce noise, but thunder is not a very effective weapon of war, and I am certain that it stirs up the very worst feelings of the human heart. How beautifully Christ praises. His words make no sound, they are not spoken aloud so as to make us blush in the presence of our brethren. No! they are heard in the quiet temple of the heart—heard! yes clearly heard, and often heard—heard above the condemnation of man, of the faithful and true—heard! yes; sweet and sonorous as the church chimes at evening—heard! yes; in bell-like voices, clear and strong; it seems as though angel feet trod the belfry, and angel hands rang the chimes in the human heart.—Well done! well done! But it may be said to me, there is a blaming power in the same heart. I know it, oh! I know it; but it is as beautiful in its working as the praise—that voice, too, is soft and clear, but it, too, is very kind. Oh! Israel, why will ye die? Though your sins be scarlet I will make them whiter than snow. It has always a strain of love—unutterable love it—and the worst grief of our sins is that we have sinned against such a God as that. Next time you feel inclined to blame, consider yourself, remember your own frailty and forgetfulness, and always temper justice with mercy. Concerning the praise, I hope you will often get it, and often deserve it. I remember standing on a railway siding waiting for a train and a little lad

passed by me dressed in the cheap livery of the company. "My lad," I said, "what do you do; a dapper little chap like you? What can they find for your honourable self to do?" An intelligent smile lit up his stoker-like face. "I grease the wheels, sir," he said. Thinks I, grease the wheels, do you? I wish there were more of you in the world, for what we want in all aspects of life, civil, social, political, and religious, is something to make life's daily pilgrimage as smooth as may be, and by words in season to grease the wheels.—*English Independent.*

Mr. Spurgeon at the Agricultural Hall.

On Sunday March 24th, in consequence of the Metropolitan Tabernacle being closed for repairs, Mr. Spurgeon preached in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, a building capable of holding, according to the varying descriptive powers of reporters of Reform demonstrations, from 10,000 to 25,000 persons. Since the year in which he used to address his thousands at the Surrey Music Hall, Mr. Spurgeon has probably preached to no larger audience in London at least than on Sunday last. The vast arena was densely packed from one end to the other; so also were the galleries at either end. Having said thus much, numbers must be left to the imagination of the reader. Although the crowd was so great, there was no noisy rush to gain admittance to the building. Nearly half of those present were admitted by ticket ten minutes before the time, but chairs and forms were provided for all who came. As the clock struck eleven, the vast crowd simultaneously uncovered, and the buzz of whispering and talking ceased. The reverential bearing of the whole assembly was remarkable, and formed a pleasant contrast to the behaviour of many, who, in years gone by, used to "go and hear Spurgeon" as a piece of amusement.

Presently Mr. Spurgeon entered, looking graver than usual, and immediately a deeper hush crept over the mighty throng. He advanced to the front of the platform, erected at one end of the building, and grasping the rail, engaged for a minute or two in silent prayer, the silence growing deeper. As soon as he opened his lips in the introductory prayer all doubts and fears as to his being heard were dispelled. His magnificent voice went rolling through the vasty deep, as he cried, "Give ear O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that dwellest between the Cherubim shine forth." The prayer ended, he said, smilingly, to some who were standing, "Now that you can have no doubt about my being heard, will it not be more comfortable for you who are standing to go and take those few vacant seats in the end yonder; you will hear well enough." Instant obedience, and then another announcement, "In singing, it will be well for you all to turn to the orchestra, and take the time of the tune from the choir yonder." (By the way my dear Mr. Leader-of-the-choir, next Sunday will you be so good as to be a little more decisive in your mode of beating time? Don't attempt to beat four to the bar, but just give a good knock-down beat on every note of the time; never mind the look of the thing; you will find the singing go a great deal better.) The grand Old Hundredth psalm was sung by the whole assembly with a heartiness and depth of feeling indescribable. It those who stand aloof from religious institutions could have been present to have taken part in that burst of sacred song, I think their hearts, unless past feeling, would have immediately framed a mighty argument why they should not neglect the assembling of themselves together as their manner is. Mr. Spurgeon conducted the service as he usually does in his own chapel. He briefly commented upon the Scripture lesson and then offered prayer; he earnestly asked that in that place in which feats of bodily skill had often been witnessed, the Spirit of God would display His marvellous power in the conversion of sinners; that in that hall where thousands met to gain their political rights there might that day be seen numbers anxious concerning a heavenly citizenship, and that the place might thus become a dear, never-to-be-forgotten spot to many. Before

giving out his text, the preacher said that he should not attempt the edification of believers; during the five Sundays in which he was to preach at the hall he desired to be a fisher of men, and to all believers present he trusted it would prove just as profitable an exercise to sit and pray as to sit and listen. He then announced his text—the parable of the two sons, one of whom answered his father's bidding to "go, work to-day in my vineyard," with "I go," but went not, and the other with "I will not," but afterwards repented and went. Mr. Spurgeon said the sight of that vast arena and of that vast assembly reminded him of a scene belonging to other and less happier times than our own—the amphitheatre of Rome. He said there would have been no difficulty in separating the precious from the vile in that vast crowd of cruel eyes and hearts, that gazed upon the spectacle of an unarmed man in the centre of the arena waiting for the opening of the doors of the lion's den. It was another sight to-day, but it was also a far more difficult task to separate the chaff from the wheat. In the surrounding tiers, and in the vast arena of that hall, how many enemies of Christ might there not be, alike regardless of His claims and of His wounds? The preacher could not attempt to make the separation, but he asked each one to make it for himself. He then addressed two classes; those who were plainly disobedient to God, and those who were deceptively submissive to Him. In regard to the first, he believed there were such present—those "who made no bones about it," but said, even to God Himself, "I will not; I will not attend a place of worship; I will not sing; I will not repeat morning and nightly prayer; I don't believe in its efficacy; I don't give consent to the doctrines of the Gospel." Here the preacher made a passing allusion to the conference of clergy and working men, and said that, if this blunt-speaking objector had been at the conference, he would have said, "I don't like the doctrines you preach," and so forth. "Let me say," said Mr. Spurgeon, "it is a very small question with me whether you do or not, because it is very probable the less you liked a doctrine the more I should preach it. I don't hold that I should come to you to ask you what I am to preach. Shall the physician ask the patient what kind of medicine he shall give? What is the use of a minister, if he is only to preach to you what you like? What you like would probably destroy you, if you got it." In the conclusion of his sermon he returned to the same subject. He earnestly hoped the time would never come when the Gospel would be preached to classes of the community, whether to the poor, the industrial, or the rich. In preaching he recognised no difference between men; the same Gospel was to be preached to one class as to the other. The poorest were the same to him when he preached as would be kings and queens; to the peer of the realm and to the City arab he had but one Gospel to proclaim. It is impossible to describe the earnestness of Mr. Spurgeon's final appeal to the unconverted. With uplifted hands, with voice beginning to show some signs of the strain which three-quarters of an hour's speaking in such a place had put upon it, and no longer husbanding his strength as he approached the end, he besought the unconverted to obtain life by a look at the crucified One.—The service was concluded by the first verse of "There is a fountain" being sung. Mr. Spurgeon announced that his Thursday evening lecture would be delivered in Surrey Chapel, Mr. Newman Hall having kindly, and without solicitation, placed it at the disposal of the Tabernacle friends while their own chapel is closed. The claims of the "Pastors College" were not forgotten by his congregation in their new circumstances. Boxes were held at the doors as the assembly dispersed, and strangers were modestly asked to give one penny each to the support of this undertaking. In the evening I saw many assemble round the principal entrance of the Agricultural Hall, expecting a service, but it is needless to say they were doomed to disappointment.—*Christian World.*

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.—The young men who left the Dublin shops were not Fenians, but Ribandmen. They appear, indeed, more fitted for the counter than the encounter, and their feats turn out all counterfeits.—*The Owl.*