

Sunday Reading.

A Child's Prayer.

BY THE REV. J. CLARK, NICTAUX.

Saviour! hear me when I pray;
Bless me, keep me every day;
Let me love Thee as I should,
Make me patient, wise, and good.

Let me be a child of Thine,
Let me feel that Thou art mine;
Give me all the grace I need,
Make me pure in thought and deed.

Put Thy laws within my mind,
Make me dutiful and kind;
All my evil ways forgive,
Teach me daily how to live.

'Tis to Thee I owe my breath,
Be my Friend in life and death;
Let me here Thy glory see,
And hereafter dwell with Thee.
—Children's Friend.

Associational Sermon.

The Ultimate Triumph of Gospel Truth.

SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE CENTRAL BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, AT CANARD, BY REV. E. J. GRANT.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."—MATT. xiii. 33.

The renewing, transforming power of the Gospel of Christ the pledge of its ultimate universal acceptance.

I believe in practical preaching as well as in practical Christian living. Standing in our own pulpits from week to week, our preaching must impress the hearers with a deep sense of personal responsibility, and incite to individual personal effort, or else the grand end of preaching is not realized. Many able sermons have been fruitless because lacking the practical element. But on such an occasion as the present the absence of this moving essential feature may be pardonable.

Here for the time being we may cease the war cry, ascend to some eminence, from which we can take in the whole field at one view, note how the tide of battle runs along the entire line, and ask, What are the prospects for ultimate victory? It seems scarcely necessary even to notice the opinions of those who have understood this parable in an evil sense, for if such an interpretation be admitted, it must follow that the kingdom of heaven itself is evil. The kingdom is not compared to meal into which leaven has unhappily found its way, but rather to the leaven itself which was purposely hid in the meal. The only thing that can be said in mitigation of such an absurdity is that in other places in the New Testament the leaven is used in an evil sense. But here, as everywhere in the Bible, the context makes it clear enough in what sense the figure is to be taken. There can be no doubt, I think, that the leaven is to be understood as illustrating the secret, powerful influence of the gospel of Christ in renewing individual character and transforming human society.

In this parable the Saviour doubtless means to teach the mutual adaptation of the human heart and the doctrine of the cross. Not that such a doctrine is congenial to the carnal mind, but in the sense that the gospel of Christ alone has power to meet and satisfy the deepest yearning and eternal needs of our fallen human nature. Let the carnal mind hate the doctrine as it may, it is, after all, that which commends itself to our best judgment, and verifies itself to the deepest consciousness of the troubled soul.

It is in this perfect adaptation to human needs that the religion of Christ differs from every other religious system. In many of the merely humanly devised systems of morality and religion there is much that is truly beautiful and commendable. But with all their apparent strength and actual beauty they wear out. Wear out because they lack that adaptation to human need, which alone can secure to any form of religious faith permanence and perpetuity. No system of religious belief can ever become universal unless it has the inherent power of adapting itself to every variety of disposition, to every form of civilization, every grade of intellectual strength, and every degree of social culture. And as no merely human

system of moral and religious philosophy possesses such inherent power of adaptation, it follows that they must all ultimately sink and disappear beneath the rising tide of human thought and human need. No philosophy, however beautiful, can continue to satisfy the yearnings of the human heart so long as it remains powerless to renew and transform the spiritual nature.

It cannot be denied that some of these human systems are the offspring of master minds. Originated by men possessing not only the highest order of human intellect, but also the highest conceptions of moral purity, men who from a purely rational standpoint had reached the conclusion that man's happiness in this life as well as in the life to come could only be equal to his moral purity.

But with all its beauty and ideal purity the highest human philosophy lacks the principle of life. It does not, on the one hand, give a sufficiently strong motive to do the good which it commands, nor, on the other hand, sufficient power to resist the evil which it forbids. Or, in other words, it is not possible to make men holy by any process of reasoning, as it is manifestly not the intellect but the heart that needs to be changed.

Here, then, is where the Christian religion is so manifestly Divine. Not only adapted to every variety of taste and disposition, to every grade of intelligence and culture, but puts into the human heart the germ of a new life, the leaven of spiritual power. And as the absence of this life principle in human philosophy is the pledge that all merely human systems must finally wane and die, so on the other hand the presence of this life, principle and power in the Christian religion is the pledge that it will survive and spread and triumph, until the whole world shall be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of God."

Sugar seems to us an indispensable luxury, but it can never take the place of leaven. So human philosophy is confessedly a great luxury, but when it assumes to take the place of spiritual religion, or when it denies its own inferiority to spiritual religion, it so far becomes becomes an absurdity.

Whenever honest inquirers after truth have quarrelled with Christianity—and no doubt there have been such—it has always been because they had not learned by experience its true nature, and hence they have regarded the gospel as a negative, prohibitory thing, as a mere code of moral laws forbidding them to do certain things which are morally wrong, and commanding them to do certain things which are morally good and right. But I need not say to those who have experienced its renewing power that it is more than a prohibition, more than a command, for all such know it to be a living, moving, energetic principle, first filling the heart with pure motives and holy aspirations, and thus gradually destroying the evil disposition of the carnal heart.

Nothing in this world is so beautiful as a true and noble character, and whatever may be said in praise of many who make no profession of faith in Christ, it must be admitted, and is admitted, that the most sublime and heroic characters known in history, the characters which have made the most profound impression, and wielded the most powerful influence for good in the world, are those which have been moulded by Christianity. However amiable the natural disposition it is rendered more sweet and beautiful by embracing the gospel of Christ. However strong and admirable the character of the natural man it is rendered more unselfish, more sublime, more perfect, when brought under the influence of Divine grace.

Saul of Tarsus was a noble, honorable, conscientious man, but he was after all a very different man from Paul the apostle. How clearly do we see in his case the powerful working of this Divine leaven, purging out of his character everything that was unlovely, pride, selfishness, unholiness, ambition, at the same time strengthening, elevating, and ennobling all that was strong and true. Before he believed he was great, after he believed he was both good and great. Faith never lessens human greatness, but enriches and beautifies it with Divine beneficence.

Coming down now to the fourth century I see in North Africa a young

man naturally very different from young Saul of Tarsus, possessing indeed much intellectual strength, but dritting helplessly to ruin on the strong tide of sinful desires and unholy passions, but being at last, brought under the influence of the gospel he embraced the Saviour, and then began the leavening process in his character, which went on adding to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, so that his works and the influence of his character have survived fourteen centuries, and to day Augustine is remembered as the greatest and most saintly of the "Latin Fathers."

To mention only one more of the many thousands who might be mentioned, we come down to the seventeenth century, and again we see this gospel leaven entering the heart of a dissolute young tinker in England, beginning of course a moral revolution in his character, which went on year after year, elevating the thoughts, purifying the affections and enlarging the powers of the mind, until finally he was capable of writing that inimitable, immortal volume the Pilgrim's Progress. These are specimens of the Holy Spirit's workmanship, than which, perhaps no more beautiful are to be found in the pages of history. But we need not go to past ages in order to discover the strong working of this Divine leaven on individual life and character.

Where is the pastor of a Baptist Church whose heart has not been cheered, whose faith has not been strengthened, as he has witnessed the steady unfolding of new beauties, and the constant development of the Christian graces in the lives of those to whom he has been called to minister in holy things?

Let us not conclude because there are a few members in our churches, who do not cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye, that therefore true and genuine Christian character was peculiar to the days of the Apostles and Puritans. There never was a time in the history of the church, when there were so many earnest, self-denying consecrated lives, as at the present day. Never a time I believe, when, within the limits of this Association, or the Convention of which it forms a part, did we possess such wealth of character, of moral and spiritual power as to-day.

Complain as we may, of the weaknesses and imperfections of church members, it is after all in the churches that we find the most fully developed and noble manhood, it is here we find the characters which most resemble that of the God-man, characters which form the very buttress and bulwark of society.

The gospel develops the noblest manhood, not only because it sets before the believing heart a perfect pattern after which to copy, not only because it allies itself with all that is true and noble in man, but especially because it brings into harmonious action all the faculties and powers of the soul. The judgment must discriminate, the will must decide, and all the affections come into full play, as faith views the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and above all because of the presence and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, who in some mysterious way is always influencing and purifying the hearts of believers. Let us not ignore but rather hail with delight the presence of the Divine Spirit as manifested in the lives of those with whom we are personally associated.

But then there is a wider sphere in which we may now view the strong working of this gospel leaven, not only renewing and sanctifying individual hearts and building up strong, beautiful individual character, but in this way transforming society in general. The leaven works silently and gradually, passing from particle to particle of the meal, and thus finally permeating and leavening the whole mass. So by a similar method does Christianity propagate itself among men. It does not work the less powerfully because it works silently. Silent forces are the most potent that operate even in the realm of matter.

It is said that in great stone quarries, when all other means have failed to rend the heavy block of granite, a crevice is cut along one side of the block, into which dry wood is placed,

and water applied to the wood, then begins the silent, irresistible force which in a little while accomplishes that which muscle, drill, and sledge-hammer had failed to do.

The earth itself is always moving at a speed inconceivably rapid, and yet we are not conscious of the motion only as we observe a change in its position in reference to other bodies past which it is moving. The machinery of a skate factory, or a flour mill, creates a noise that renders the hearing of other sounds than their own next to impossible, and a jarring that discovers every nerve in the body. But the mighty machinery of the material universe moves on forever, yet no one ever saw that almost infinite force we call gravitation, no one ever heard the rumbling of its ponderous wheels, no one ever had his nerves injured by the jarring of this stupendous machinery.

The little forces constructed and controlled by men are generally attended with a good deal of noise and show, but the mighty forces originated and controlled by the hand of Omnipotence move on noiselessly and unobserved as the falling dew. And that which is true of the operations of man and the operations of God in the material universe is also true of their respective operations in the moral and spiritual realm. In every age of the church's history unbelief and infidelity have been making a great noise, and seeking to exasperate the world against the gospel of Christ. And at times they seem to succeed so well that they have loudly congratulated themselves on what they regarded as complete victory.

Says one writer in the seventeenth century: "It is now taken for granted that the Christian religion is dying out." But if he is cognizant of what is going on in the world to-day he will see that it was a fruitful death, the death of the kernel of wheat falling into the ground only to multiply itself a hundred fold.

In the same century Samuel Butler, who seems to have taken a gloomy view of things, wrote: "It is now quite certain that Christianity has been discovered to be fictitious." And Bolingbroke, whose low ambition had been disappointed, and whose sinful life had left him without hope or happiness, spent his last days in railing at the followers of Christ, and foolishly asserted that he had succeeded in corrupting the very sources of the Christian religion. But it is not easy to corrupt a running stream. A little later on we find Hume in the field at the head of the infidel army, levelling his heavy guns, as he supposed, at the very roots of religion. He felt quite sure that he would live to see the universal triumph of his own philosophy and the extermination of Christianity. But all this clamor of unbelief amounts to very little when viewed in the light of the facts before our eyes to-day. It prevents the spread of Christianity about as much as the weathercock prevents the blowing of the south wind, as much as the fine dust prevents the turning of the huge balance wheel, as much as a dead fish prevents the onward flow of the Mississippi. The most profound sceptical philosophy ever written is now seen to obscure the light of Divine truth about as much as the light of the glow-worm obscures that of the sun at noonday.

All these brilliant writers have long since disappeared amid the thick darkness of their own unbelief, and their writings are almost forgotten. But still the leaven of Divine truth continues to operate more and more powerfully as the ages roll on, overleaping all geographical barriers, subduing kingdoms, and casting out prejudices. See how it has overcome the legal opposition which at the beginning even of the present century prohibited the preaching of the gospel outside of the British Empire, the United States, and a few of the European nations. But to-day the missionaries of the cross are welcomed on every continent of the globe. The gateway of the nations now stands wide open, men are running to and fro, and the knowledge of Christ is rapidly increasing in the earth.

We are aware that the world is yet very far from being completely evangelized; we know that millions of our fellowmen have not even heard of the Father's love and the Saviour's pity. But still the fact remains that the gospel is the power of God, and therefore cannot fail to accomplish the purpose of

God, which is nothing less than the salvation of the human race. If it were possible for us to go back and trace the history of this kingdom down through all the stages of its development we could not but exclaim with one voice, "It is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes."

If we think of the men to whom the interests of the kingdom of heaven were entrusted, and then think of the powerful opposition they had to encounter, nothing seemed more certain than that failure must be the inevitable result. Think of it. At the beginning of this kingdom nineteen centuries ago, its only officials and leaders—humanly speaking—consisted of twelve men, without learning, without wealth, without rank or worldly influence. One of the above proved a traitor, the remainder began their mission on foot, going from place to place, and the only things they had to say were concerning One who had been condemned and crucified, One who was almost universally despised. One by one these men shared the fate of their Master, until at last only one of the twelve remained, and he an exile on a lonely isle of the sea. Still the storm of persecution raged, sometimes seeming to abate, but only to be renewed with greater fury than ever, and thus it continued until the middle of the third or beginning of the fourth century. Then followed a long period of comparative peace, and hence of inactivity, and consequent decline in spiritual power, so that, at the beginning of the eighth century it seemed as if the gospel leaven had ceased to operate, and thus it continued through all that dark period down to the beginning of the sixteenth century, when its strong working was again felt in the hearts of a few men whom God had chosen and qualified for the work of reform. It would be impossible in one short discourse to give even an outline of the marvellous growth of this heavenly kingdom during the last three centuries. You can compare it only to the onward flow of the majestic river whose course had been for a time obstructed, only that it might gather greater volume and strength, for a grander, broader, and more irresistible sweep.

If we think of what the world was four centuries ago and then think of what it is now the contrast is simply overwhelming. Previous to the Reformation not only the church but the world itself had been standing still for centuries. Commerce was almost completely paralysed, learning was a thing no longer to be desired. But at last the true light began to dawn. Men began to think and consequently to invent and discover. The invention of the printing press brought the Bible within the reach of the people.

There is land beyond the seas, reasons Columbus, or else the world is lop-sided. In three small ships the light crossed the Atlantic, and discovered this great Western world. "Never," says one, "was an effect more easily traceable to its cause than is the discovery of this continent traceable to the revival of religion and learning in the fifteenth century." When this gospel leaven began to manifest itself in Europe in the latter part of the fifteenth century this vast continent was nothing but a wilderness, unknown to any creature on earth save the wild beasts and the few wilder Indians who roamed through its forests. To-day it is the home of millions of free and happy people, possessing almost boundless wealth, not only material but moral and spiritual as well.

Thus the Divine leaven continues to work with ever increasing sweep and power, not only on this continent where perhaps six or eight new houses are set apart to the worship of God for every return of the morning light, but on every continent of the globe its power is being felt to a greater or less extent. It is true that great social evils have followed in the wake of Christian civilization. Not indeed that Christianity has been the cause of these evils in any other sense, than that men have abused the light which she brought them, turning light into darkness, and good into evil. But still we rejoice that no evils exist, whatever be their nature or dimensions, which Christianity has not the power to remedy. The greatest evils that afflict the civilized world are beginning already to tremble in her presence. Successful warfare was once considered the glory of a nation, and war has not yet ceased, but the civilized world is fast coming to view it in its true light, as a shame and a crime.

Only a few years ago the degrading and inhuman slave traffic was carried on to a fearful extent even in America the land of freedom. But the leaven of Christian principle has at last succeeded in bursting these cruel fetters and delivering millions of human beings from wretchedness and bondage, many of whom are now doing grand service in the kingdom of Christ. And not only so, but thousands of those who twenty years ago shouldered their muskets and marched South to engage in bloody, but necessary warfare, are to day, either in person or by their contributions carrying the gospel of peace to

the South, the old sore is being rapidly healed, and the two divisions of that great country are coming together on a sound Christian basis.

And now with this great national evil forever crushed social evils are beginning to receive more attention. Mormonism which once threatened to be a widespread deep rooted canker is now feeling to its great discomfort the working of the gospel leaven which will one day certainly root it out of existence. Already we see Christianity in the brook picking up pebbles with which she will at no distant day step forth to deal a death blow to that Philistine giant Intemperance. God will not suffer this monster to curse the nations forever.

The Christian world seems at last to be waking up to the fact that the millennium can never be contemporaneous with the liquor traffic. In fact the outlook was never so bright and hopeful as at the present time. True, there are still commotions and disorders even in so-called Christian countries. But I think we may see even in the Irish troubles, the opening of a brighter future for that down-trodden, priest-ridden people. The Nihilism of Russia is but the dawning of that light which will one day cast out despotism, and bathe that unhappy country in the light of a glorious Christian freedom.

But I must close without even glancing at the marvellous success now attending Christian missions in the East. The number of conversions reported during the past year in connection with American Baptist Missions on the foreign field is ten thousand, and the number of accessions to Baptist churches on the home field during the past year has also been very remarkable. Thus the leaven of Divine grace continues to work. The handful of corn on the top of the mountain begins to shake like Lebanon.

As to whether Christianity is to become the sole religion of mankind is no longer an open question. The history of the past four centuries forbids any other opinion, but even though nothing had yet been accomplished, still the text would shut us up to this opinion. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened."

Other religions have been popular, holding powerful sway over the hearts of millions of people. They are now, however, losing their grip of the human heart, they are doomed to ultimate oblivion. But the Christian religion, which has made its way not by allying itself with man's depraved desires and tastes, but in spite of the fact that it has opposed every corrupt desire and ambition of his nature, will still survive and spread, to use the beautiful figure of Carlyle, "Like the melody of music which floats far beyond the discords, this, which is so sweet to every conscientious soul—however wrong-headed he may be—will float ever widening down the ages, until the world is full of its sweetness."

MISSIONARY INTELLIGENCE.

From *The Helping Hand* (June) we learn that from Miss Sands at Yokohama are coming tidings of spiritual blessings, which are a note of joy and inspiration to us at home, and a pledge of God's blessing on our seed-sowing. A new church of thirty-five members has been organized near Chogo, and a pretty chapel built, to which the natives have contributed one-third of the needful funds. The town schools number one hundred and fifty pupils, where Mrs. Poate and a native girl teach the Bible daily; and five Bible-women with a native evangelist are employed in city, country, and town. A noteworthy feature of this spiritual refreshing has been the unwonted spirit of prayer and confession of the native Christians, and their waiting before the Lord "for the promise of the Father."

Miss Payne is doing a more general work, looking after preachers, tract-room, and village work, since Mr. Hascall's absence.

Mrs. Jennie B. Kelley, (formerly Miss Jennie Blackadar, of Halifax), widow of Rev. E. D. Kelley, formerly of the Shan Mission, has her home with Mrs. Haswell, and itinerates among the Shans of this district. Her letters glow with interest, and tell of truth making its way to heathen minds and hearts through the patient, hand-to-hand labors of herself and her faithful Christian helpers. She made a long trip, by invitation and at the expense of the Chief Commissioner, to Paphone on the border of Shan land, and found the people, in spite of their wickedness, interested in the good news. Said they, "This is a good law: we shall enter it." The first Shan Christian woman in this district has this year been baptized, and doors of usefulness open on every hand.

At Thongzai, Miss Elwin has charge of a school numbering forty-five, where study of the Bible, the Sunday School lesson, and the weekly prayer meeting are among the religious influences. She makes grateful mention of her good health and helpful surroundings and of the donation of basted patchwork received from a mission band at home. Her sewing class are making a spread for Mah Po, the old Christian woman who gave rice and eggs to Mrs. Judson, when Mr. Judson was a prisoner in Oung-pen-la.

Miss Barkley, at Zeegong, has been associated with Mrs. Hancock, and greatly enjoys more direct missionary labor. Mrs. George, since her return last autumn, has resumed and enlarged her school work at Zeegong, Gyoubingouk, and other villages; and, from this field, we shall hope for much in the future.

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