

# The Religious Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

REV. E. McLEOD,

"THAT GOD

IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."

Peter.

(Editor and Proprietor.

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## The Intelligencer.

### GREAT EFFECTS FROM LITTLE CAUSES.

BY REV. BENJAMIN PORTER, D. D.

(Concluded.)

Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.—Jas. III. 5.

Great effects may result from little causes.

I have drawn out the illustration of this truth in so many particulars, because I wish to impress it on every individual, with reference to the practical instruction which results from it. This instruction may be included under two general remarks.

First. It is a solemn thing to live in this world.

We are a part of a complex system. Connected

as we are with our fellow-beings and with eternity,

every action, every circumstance pertaining to our

character, however apparently indifferent, becomes

absolutely important. If the history of our race,

in past ages, proves this, no loss does the course

of events within our own observation. We have

but lately witnessed the winding up of a drama,

in which all the world have been actors. Little

did its first actors anticipate the awful lesson

of instruction to mankind, which its progress has

exhibited. A few licentious men, having organized

the principles of anarchy in the heart of Europe,

blew the fire in secret for half a century when it

burst into a tremendous explosion. Like Etna's

boiling furnaces, it poured out its rivers of flame,

to mar all that was fair, and consume all that

was flourishing around it. Every monarchy in

Europe was shaken. Political and religious sys-

tems, reared by the labour of ages, felt the con-

fusion, and fell among the mighty ruins at this

sweeping desolation.

I grant that efforts to do mischief are wont to be

attended with fatal success, because they cooperate

with the strong downward course of human deprav-

ity. The river flows a broader and deeper current

as it runs. The rock that is started from the moun-

tain's summit by a single hand, rushes downward

by its own weight, but a thousand hands cannot

roll it back. The mischief which Jeroboam did in

Israel lasted through twenty generations.

On the contrary, it is easy to name those who

have been illustrious benefactors of the world.

Who can estimate the amount of good accom-

plished by Moses, by Nehemiah, by Paul, by

Luther? Who can pretend to determine, till it

is revealed in eternity, the extent of good produced

by the preaching of Whitefield; or the number

of immortal souls that will be found at last to

have been saved from eternal death by the in-

strumentality of Baxter's *Saints' Rest*? In this

view every preacher of the Gospel may well tremble

at the consequences which must result from his

labors; nay, at the consequences which may result

from a single word or action. With awful em-

phasis, then, it may be said of the preacher,

whose doctrine or life is habitually corrupt, "God

had it been for that man, if he had not been

born."

But admitting that it is a solemn thing to live

as the ruler of a nation, or the pastor of a church,

does the subject apply to persons in common life?

It does. What though you occupy a humble

station: only remember that you are immortal,

and that others around you are immortal, and

what importance does this single thought attach

to every thing you say or do? You take a walk;

you read a book; you spend an hour in a social

circle. The thing is done and forgotten. But,

unperceivable, perhaps, you have received im-

pressions on your own mind, or have given

impressions to some other mind, that will last

ever. Every man and every woman is connected

with God's world by a thousand ties, and cannot

live, not for a single day, without doing good

or evil.

You are a *professed Christian*. Perhaps you

sometimes forget the vows of God which are upon

you, and give such license to your tongue, or to

your actions, as to wound the cause of the Re-

deemer. Did you ever soberly look at consequences

in this case? Did you ever reflect that what

you have done in one half hour, may have in-

fluenced a thousand miles distant, or a thousand

years to come? A mortal pestilence spread

over a city; that pestilence was introduced by a

ship's crew, among whom it was generated by a

small defect in their ship; and that defect was

occasioned by the gnawing of a worm in an oak,

that grew on another continent, a century

before.

You are a *father*. Do you say, how can I,

an obscure man, who have no influence on the

great world, do mischief by my example? What

was that unguarded word which you spoke this

morning in your family? You have forgotten;

but your child will remember it, perhaps, to his

giving day. Say not, then, I who am obscure,

may act without restraint, especially when secl-

ed from the world, in the retirement of my

family. *Observe! You are immortal.* You must

go to the judgment; and every whisper of your

life will be exhibited before an assembled universe.

*Selfish!* What if the eye of the world does not

follow you into the domestic circle? Is it not

restraint enough that your *child* is there? That

child has a *soul*, worth more than a million

globes of gold. That child, too, may become a

legislator, a judge, or a pastor in the church. Take

care, parent! You act under a dreadful respon-

sibility. You cannot stir without touching some

string that will vibrate after your head is laid

in the dust. One word of pious counsel, or one word

of sinful levity or passion, uttered in the hearing

of your child, may produce an effect on your

child's character. Nay, its influence may be

felt on the other side of the globe, and may ex-

tead into eternity.

You are a *mother*. Excluded from any share

in the splendid achievements of the world; is

your influence, therefore, to be deemed unimpor-

tant? By no means. The wife of a humble

tradesman in London had a son, who at his birth,

was apparently destitute of life, and was laid aside

as dead. By the assiduous of a faithful nurse,

the expiring flame of life in the infant was happily

preserved. His Christian mother dedicated him

grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice. Where-

over the writings of the late venerable John

Newton shall be read, it will be known that the in-

structions which his pious mother gave him before he was

four years old, fastened an impression on his

conscience, which cleaved to him through all his

subsequent licentiousness, till he became an en-

tireless believer and preacher of that Gospel which

he had despised. In connection with this, take

another fact, which spreads out our subject before

us in all its interest. Claudius Buchanan, a poor

youth, wandering in the streets of London, inci-

dentally heard a sermon from Mr. Newton, which

excited his first religious impressions. How much

good has been done by the indefatigable efforts

and enterprise of Buchanan! How little did he

know, when he took his pen to write on that

text, "We have seen his star in the east, and are

come to worship him," that he was kindling a fire

to burn with unabated fervor in millions of bosoms

where the hand of death should have extinguished

it in his own! How many thousands are every

day instructed and comforted by reading the

Family Bible of Scott, another man to whom

Newton was a spiritual father! Look now at this

immense sum of good, and remember that, so far

as human agency deserves to be mentioned in any

case, all this is to be ascribed, under God, to the

instructions which a little child received from his

Christian mother.

My second general remark is, that we should

never yield to discouragement in our efforts to do

good.

Though the results of these efforts in, any

case, should not be so immediate as we could wish,

we are called to the exercise of faith, and patience,

and courage, not of despondency. The first ques-

tion is, in every such case, *Is this a good object?*

The second is, *By what means shall it be accom-*

*plished?* Settle these, and there is no third ques-

tion. To deliberate whether such an object shall

not be given over, is beneath the dignity and

enfranchise of Christian principles. I know the cause

of piety and good morals has stubborn obstacles

to encounter. The majority of the world is against

it. Still, the friend of this cause may say, with

faithful confidence, like the encircled prophet,

"They that be with us, are more than they that

be with them." Here again let facts speak for

our instruction.

The disciples of Christ were once a feeble,

despised, sect at Jerusalem. The Jewish senate

deliberated whether to crush this sect at a stroke,

or to let it die of itself. But behold, "the weak-

ness of God is stronger than men." Twelve

fishermen of Galilee, without learning, without

power, without friends, erected the standard of the

cross. Hosts of opposition gave way before the

triumphs of truth; and all the wealth and wisdom,

the pride and prejudice, the power and policy of

the world, could not resist its progress. But we

need not survey past centuries. The astonishing

events which we have recently witnessed, rebuke

despondence in doing good.

Look at the Concert of Prayer. A few British

Christians, in a private chamber, resolved to set

apart an hour, on the first Monday evening of

every month, to pray for the revival of religion.

The flame spread from minister to minister, and

from church to church, till it reached the exten-

sities of the empire in which it began. From

Britain the same spirit has been kindled in various

parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America.

It is no enthusiasm to hope that all Christians

will soon unite in this concert; and that the spirits

of Luther, and Baxter, and Edwards, will look

down from their abodes of light, to witness the

church, resting from her long conflict and agony,

and her prayers, from every part of the globe,

ascending in one great cloud of incense to heaven.

Look at the little band of men who formed the

first Missionary Society in modern times. With

means utterly incompetent to the magnitude of

the undertaking, they assumed a motto worthy

of the apostolic age: "EXPECT GREAT THINGS,

ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS." The history of their

labors and successes demonstrates, that no ob-

stacles are too great to be surmounted, no enter-

prise of Christian benevolence too arduous to be

undertaken in the strength of the Lord.

Look at the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In twenty years from its establishment, it dis-

tributed more than four millions of Bibles and

Testaments, filled the world with kindred spir-

its and the fruits of its beneficence, and its annual ex-

penses for this sacred subject amounted to little

less than five hundred thousand dollars.

Look at the British Tract Society. At its four-

teenth anniversary, one of its founders said, "I

have followed this Society from its birth; at first,

we could not number more friends than would

surround this table. But this infant has become

a *Samson in strength*." Twenty-six years from

its establishment it had an annual income of forty

thousand dollars; and had distributed more than

seventy millions of religious Tracts, in various

languages, which have gone as winged messengers

of salvation to the ends of the earth. They have

preached the Gospel in the splendid mansion and

in the humble cottage. They have carried in-

struction "to the child in the school, to the trav-

eller on the road, to the soldier in the camp, to

the seaman on the mighty waters, to the victim

of disease in the hospital, and to the debtor, the

prisoner, and the criminal, within the walls of the

prison."

Look at the wonderful efforts to do good, which

our own country exhibits. Time would fail to

mention the Society for promoting Domestic and

Foreign Missions,\* Bible Societies, Tract, Educa-

tional, and other charitable Associations, which

have recently sprung up without number, and some

of which are among the noblest institutions of the

age.

I ask you now, brethren, to review this subject.

Survey the world in motion: the wonderful char-

acteristics of this age of action. Then look at the

schools, then look forward into future generations,

and into eternity, and say, have you not a great

work to do? Can you do it? Every man, woman,

and child, can do something—can do much. Who

cannot spare one cent, to buy a small Tract? That

struments of ushering in the glory of the church,

and the salvation of the world. It is not improb-

able that eternity will disclose to us, how the as-

tonishing events of this age sprung at first from

the old closet of some obscure saint, like Simon

and Anna of old, "praying to God always, and

waiting for the consolation of Israel."

Contrast, then, brethren! Stand up to your

work, and go forward! God is with you. The

struggle between sin and righteousness is drawing

to a close. The storm which has agitated the

church is ceasing to rage. "The long night of

discord and calamity which has enveloped the

world, is passing into a glorious day. With hum-

ble hope and joy, we hail the approaching con-

summation of the prophetic word, when the sev-

enth angel shall sound, and great voices be heard

in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of the world are

become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his

Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Amen!"

The invention of the telescope, it has been