

WORK ON.

A whispered word may touch the heart,
And call it back to life;
A look of love bid sin depart,
And still unholy strife.

Work on, despair not, bring thy mite,
Nor care how small it be;
God is with all that serve the right,
The holy, true and free.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL.

Lord, hear Thy servants' prayer,
Who wrestling seek Thy face;
O come, and let us quickly share
Thy rich reviving grace.

Draw all our hearts to Thee
In penitence and love,
And while in asking we agree
Give answer from above.

Thou sayst, "Return to me
And I'll to you return,
And pour my blessings large and free
To comfort all that mourn."

Thy promise, Lord, we plead,
O rain a gracious shower;
Send now our church her greatest need—
Thy Spirit's quickening power.

Wherein we've gone astray—
(Alas we'er should roam),
O now restore, make no delay,
"Stir up thy strength and come."

Then penitents will sing,
And Christians tune their lays,
While joyful angel-anthems ring
Where saints exalted praise.

—Selected.

THE FRUIT OF THE LIPS.

God says: "I create the fruit of the lips." Isa. lvii. 19. True and loving words are like the ripe fruit that falls from a good tree. All such trees God creates now, as he made the first trees that grew in Eden. How much more beautiful is this inspired figure than the fable of the fairy whose words were like pearls falling from her lips. Pearls are beautiful, but fruit is more beautiful and nutritious. We need something to feed upon as well as something to admire. The starving traveller in the desert who found a bag of diamonds was disappointed. "Oh, that it were a bag of beans!" he cried. And so when we hear eloquent speeches that are cold as icebergs, we turn away with a gnawing hunger at the heart. We say, Oh, that these were like those which God made to grow in his garden, not only "pleasant to the sight," but "good for food."

We thought of this divine figure one Sabbath morning. We were in the great congregation. We hung, with thousands of other hearers, upon the lips of a man of God. He spoke as if those lips had been touched with a live coal from the altar. His prayers lifted our souls up into the presence chamber of God's mercy, and we stood by the side of Jesus interceding for us. And then the sermon. It was so thoughtful, so scriptural, so rich in its exposition of the truth, so mellow in its manifest experiences of the truth, so sweet in its spirit of charity and brotherly love! We felt as if we were in some noble orchard, sitting under the shade of a tree loaded with fruit, whose branches bent down until we could reach and pluck all that we needed. As we feasted on these "words of life," we thought, Such trees God only can create. A true minister, who feeds his people "with true knowledge and understanding," is the gift of God as really as the trees of paradise. And such ministers are like trees, also, because they require growth and culture. A scion just set out in the orchard does not furnish fruit for many years. It will have a few leaves the first season. But it must be dug about, and fertilized, and pruned, and watered, and kissed by the sun, again and again, season after season, ere the full fruitage appears. And so the man whom God calls to teach and to comfort his people must not only be converted, and thus become a plant of righteousness, but he must study and pray. He must be tempted and disciplined until he learns that there is no wisdom but that which comes from God, and no strength but in him. It is in this way that God creates the fruit of the lips, by raising up and training men to speak for him. Let, then, all who have faithful and wise and loving pastors give God the glory and the praise.

We do not wonder that some of our churches are crowded by people who are not drawn there by novelties and clap-trap, but have healthy appetites. They come to be fed, and know that they will not come in vain. They find in the pulpit, from Sabbath to Sabbath, not a beautiful fruit piece to admire, but a living tree full of real fruit, such fruit as the tree of life bears in the New Jerusalem. They almost forget how pleasant that fruit is to the eye, because they find it so good for food. They go away refreshed and strengthened. Is it strange that they come again and bring others with them? A tree which bears good fruit and a preacher whose lips utter the truth in love need not fear neglect. Men will go where they find that which they need.

We thought again of this beautiful figure as we watched an earnest teacher in the Sabbath-school. She was talking to her little group of scholars with flushed cheeks and moistened eyes. They listened as if the words she spoke were sweet.

She was telling them about the Saviour who is the bread of life. The Holy Spirit has waked up the slumbering hunger of their souls, and prepared them to receive the gospel. If she had brought a basket of the most luscious fruit, she would not have fed those scholars as her words fed them. But why was that teacher so interesting and so useful, while others in the same school were listless and dull? God created the fruit of her lips, because she gave to him a loving grateful heart, and sought the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. The words she uttered that day were the result of much study of the Scriptures, of a deep Christian experience, and of many, many hours spent in seeking the divine blessing upon her work in the Sabbath-school. God made her eloquent in telling the story of the cross, because she had been "planted in the house of the Lord," had tried faithfully to grow in grace, and had prayed fervently that she might glorify God by bringing forth much fruit. Such eloquence is not a natural gift. It comes from the development of piety in the heart. Even those who are ignorant and slow of speech, God can make fruitful in his vineyard, if they yield to the culture of his spirit.

But we felt the full force of the figure only when we entered a chamber over which death hovered. There lay a pale and timid sufferer. They tried to tempt her appetite with nourishing food. The ripest and rarest fruits were brought. Every expedient that medical skill and love could devise was employed to comfort and to cheer. But the soul was sick as well as the body! The soul in that hour, when its clay house was crumbling, hungered for something that neither doctors, nurses, nor worldly friends could give. And then there came into that chamber a Christian who lived near to God. He sat beside the invalid and told her of the love of Christ. He knelt and prayed for her, he sang with a low and plaintive melody the songs of Zion. He repeated again and again the invitations and promises of God. Oh, how sweet these words when all else had failed to feed and nourish her! With her dying lips she said them after him, and dwelt upon them as one lingers over a luscious peach that while he eats, it seems almost too good to eat. God created that fruit for the starving sufferer by making him, who brought it in his heart and gave it from his lips a holy and loving minister, many trials to be a son of consolation. But what a blessed ministry! Who would not gladly serve God "with many tears and temptations," to have the privilege of bringing to a dying sinner fruit from the tree of life!

Every Christian should long and strive to be useful. And to him who longs and strives, God will give this fruit of the lips. Of Christ, David sang, in the 45th Psalm, "Grace is poured into thy lips," and when he was on earth, we are told, "they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth." In this the disciples may, if they will, be like their Lord. We may learn to speak such words that God himself will bend from heaven to listen. Malachi writes, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord harkened and heard it." It was like an orchardist rejoicing in fruit from the trees he planted. There is a wonderful power in words. Let us see to it that we speak such as shall instruct and comfort, guide and save our fellow men.—Interior.

THE WEEKLY OFFERING SYSTEM.

In the benevolent offerings of the church, any system, be it ever so poor, is better than no system. But of all the systems proposed the system of weekly offerings has many and great advantages. It is, as the name suggests, simply a method of making a contribution in money each Sunday toward Christian work. The amount contributed is usually pledged in advance, on cards printed and furnished for the purpose. The special manner of giving, whether through the passing of the plate or the use of the box at the door, and the proportional distribution among the different forms of Christian labor, are questions easily answered according to the peculiar preferences of each church. Each pastor, also, may think it wise to present the system to his people, on its introduction, not in prayer-meeting talks, but in sermons addressed to the whole congregation.

The advantages of this system are, we repeat, many and great.

1. It is an education in benevolence. It is an education in the feelings of benevolence, but is more an education in the principle. It tends to make giving constant and systematic. It emphasizes the duty. Unless one is trained he seldom gives according to his ability. The largest givers, proportionally to their means, are found among those who have been thus educated in and from

youth. This system teaches children as well as men. It attracts and retains the pennies and five-cent pieces. The constant regularity develops the generous impulses and motives.

2. Akin to this advantage of education is a second which the system offers. It tends to remove benevolent offerings from being regarded as acts of grace, to being regarded as acts of regular church administration. It lessens the inclination to judge benevolence as a work of supererogation. This inclination is strong. Many nominal Christians look on the field of Foreign and Home Missions, as a land to which they bear no relation. If they aid in maintaining Missions, the assistance is considered as a favour bestowed, and not as a duty done. They do not look on the American Board as a society doing their work in China and Africa. They do not regard the Home Missionary as their representative in the churches of outlying districts. They do not consider the American Missionary Society as their teacher and preacher to the American black man and red man. This, however, is precisely the fact. These and all other societies are simply the churches organized and working for certain ends. If this work is at all a duty, the support of it is not an act of grace, but of duty. The regular giving tends to foster this just estimate of it.

3. The system of weekly offerings furthermore, encourages us all to benevolence. It encourages especially those whose gifts must be small. One easily gives twenty-five cents a week who would not feel able to pledge twelve dollars a year. It is easier to give a small sum regularly than a large sum, in the aggregate no greater, irregularly. Those who are accustomed to give nothing, through this system are usually moved to give something. Those who are accustomed to give largely are thus accustomed to give more largely. The man who is accustomed to give twenty-five dollars a quarter discovers that he can and ought to give more than two dollars a Sunday. Subdivision, by diminishing the amount of each gift, at once convinces those not wealthy that they are able to give more generously.

4. Following from this advantage is a fourth, which is that the amount of offerings is thus greatly increased. The statistics show that the introduction of the system usually results in a gain of from 20 to 200 per cent. Of three churches a gain of 300 per cent., one of between 400 and 500, and one not less than 500. Of this increase is indeed abundant need, when, in a rich and generous commonwealth like Massachusetts, each Congregational church member gives less than five cents a day for the maintenance and extension of the church at home and abroad.

The disadvantages of the system are few and slight. The uncertainty of income, the uncertainties due to sickness and other disabilities, render, it is said, it expedient to pledge for a year in advance a specified weekly gift. But each person can usually be assured of a certain income. He can make his calculations upon this basis; and if the 31st December shows he has been prospered more than he had dared to hope, his blessings may fitly be recognized and bestowed as a thank-offering. The pledge is, indeed, not one to be kept, except as one is financially able to keep it.

In use of pledges, the apparent publicity of the system would seem objectionable. But this publicity is only apparent; at the furthest the treasurer alone knows the amount of each offering, and usually he is ignorant, for his accounts are kept, not of the names of the givers, but of certain numbers which represent the givers.

This system of weekly offering, though so excellent, does not succeed of itself. It needs, without exception, to be worked. A poor system well applied may prove more effective than a good system ill applied. This method requires constant instruction and appeal on the part of the pastor. It demands greater care and watchfulness from him than the method of the bi-monthly offering. The increased remuneration, however, more than compensates for the increased labour.—Christian Union.

DYING WORDS.

I see Jesus.—Stephen.

I am not disappointed.—Bishop Jans.

O my God, thou hast never failed me.—W. Day.

In thy hands I commend my spirit.—Martin Luther.

Now let thy servant depart in peace.—Bishop Jewell.

Glory! glory! glory! hallelujah! Jesus reigns.—Jesse Lee.

I want nothing. I am looking for nothing but heaven.—Melancthon.

Welcome this chain for Christ's sake.—John Huss.

My soul desires to see Christ, my King, in his beauty.—Bede.

I am going up, up, up.—R. V. Lawrence.

The best of all is, God is with us.—John Wesley.

I have done with darkness forever.—Thomas Scott.

Jesus, Jesus, I die, but thou livest!—Otterbein.

Such singing! Do you not hear it?—John Carey.

God is love! Shout, shout aloud, God is love!—John Fletcher.

Preach Christ, preach Christ, preach Christ!—H. H. Ward.

Oh wonderful, wonderful, wonderful glory!—Jeremiah Everts.

See in what peace a Christian can die.—Joseph Addison.

The plain promises of the gospel are my support.—Isaac Watts.

Live in Christ, live in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death.—John Knox.

Heaven is as near me here in Russia as in my own native land.—Howard.

I would not change my joy for the empire of the world.—Sir Philip Sidney.

I have great peace, not a ruffled breeze, night nor day.—Richard Cecil.

The celestial city rises full in sight—the sun goes down without a cloud.—Toplady.

Glory to thee, O God!—Gordon Hall.

The celestial city is now full in my view.—Payson.

The greatest conflict is over; all is done. To live is Christ; but to die is gain.—J. Harvey.

I have got the victory, and Christ is holding out both hands to embrace me.—Rutherford.

I shall see strange sights to-day; but it is God I want to see. He is all in all.—Richard Watson.

I have pain, there is no arguing against sense; but I have peace, I have peace.—Richard Baxter.

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suppose, with the articles of faith by most of them. In it are found such pledges as these:—"We engage to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Saviour." How many of us would know ourselves if we looked into this church covenant looking glass? What monstrous travesty of truth these words are on the lips of a large number of our church members.

But in pursuit of our present purpose we refer only incidentally to this class of church members. It is a blessed fact that they are only a class and not the whole body. We have in our churches a goodly number of noble, faithful, devoted men and women, who esteem it a joy to do service and make sacrifices in the cause of Christ. Contrary to what some might suppose, those who bear the burdens in the service of Christ, and not those who shirk Christian work, are the joyful and happy ones in our churches. Leanness of soul is inevitable apart from fellowship with Christ. Fellowship with Christ is impossible apart from loving service and sacrifice. How can we have fellowship with him who gave himself for us, and went about doing good, unless the same spirit dwells in us? That life that does not know loving service and cheerful sacrifice in the cause of Christ has cut off from itself one of the richest sources of blessedness from which the human soul can draw its pure delights. Blessed are they that do his commandments! And miserable are they who shirk Christian duty, and shrink from the sacrifices prompted by a living heart! Who are the cranks, the lugubrious croakers, the gloomy night-owls of our churches? Not they who are devoting their lives to earnest work. Not they who are cheerfully giving their money to carry forward the enterprises of the church. They are these who do nothing, and dole out grudgingly their small pittance when a call is made upon them. They are those who in their selfishness and niggardliness have robbed their souls of the joy that loving Christian service affords. Such service enriches the experience with the blessedness of God. It enlarges the sympathies; it expands the soul with its generous warmth and makes life a delight. Let there be no mistake, if we would have joyful lives as Christians, we must drink in the Spirit of Christ, which is a spirit of loyal and loving consecration to that great and divine work, in the achievement of which he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. They who render unto Christ faithful, earnest, and loving service, not only do him service, but therein nourish their own souls with the richest of delights. Try it, and see if it is not so.—Canadian Baptist.

MARK TWAIN'S TRIBUTE TO HIS WIFE.

The mother of my children adores them—there is no milder term for it; and they worship her; they even worship anything which the touch of her hand has made sacred. They know her for the best and truest friend they ever had or ever shall have; they know her for one who never did them a wrong, and can not do them a wrong; who never told them a lie, nor the shadow of one; who never deceived them, by even an ambiguous gesture; who never gave them an unreasonable command, nor even contented herself with anything short of a perfect obedience; who has always treated them as politely and considerately as she would the best and oldest in the land, and has always required of them gentle speech and courteous conduct toward all, of what soever degree, with whom they chanced to come in contact. They know her for one whose promise, whether of reward or punishment, is gold, and always worth its face to the uttermost farthing. In a word, they know her, and I know her, for the best and dearest mother that lives—and by a long, long way the wisest. In all my life I have never made a single reference to my wife in print before, as far as I can remember, except once in the dedication of a book; and so, after these fifteen years of silence, perhaps I may unseal my lips this one time without impropriety or indelicacy. I will institute one other novelty. I will send this manuscript to the press without her knowledge and without asking her to edit it. This will save it from getting edited in the stove.—Babyhood.

That which mellow and ripens, that without which there could be no golden fruitage, that which gives the rich bloom of a divine manhood to the spirit, is the frost, the frost of care. Thank God for the sunshine of life, thank him also none the less for the ripening frost.—Moravian.

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