

TEMPERANCE JOURNAL.

OUR MOTTO—NATIONAL PROHIBITION.

Herman H. Pitts,
Editor and Proprietor.

FREDERICTON, N. B., THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1886.

Vol. II., No. 3.
\$1.00 per Annum.

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FIRST THINGS FIRST.

MR. SPURGEON'S SERMON TO THE BANKERS OF LONDON.

A philosopher has remarked that, if a man knew that he had thirty years of life before him, it would not be an unwise thing to spend twenty of those years in mapping out a plan of living, and putting himself under rule; for he would do more with the ten well arranged years than with the whole thirty if he spent them at random. There is much truth in that saying. A man will do little by firing off his gun, if he has not learned to take aim.

Possibly I address myself to some who have hitherto lived at haphazard; and if so, I invite them to a more hopeful method of living. To have a great many aims and objects is much the same thing as having no aims at all; for, if a man shoots at many things, he will hit none, or none worth the hitting. It is a grand thing to know what we are living for, and to live for a worthy object, with the undivided energy of our being. Shall we, when the end comes, have made a success of life? Has our object been a right one, and has it been wisely pursued? Are the results of our conduct such as we shall wish them to have been when the conflict of this mortal life is over? These questions deserve consideration at once.

What position should religion occupy in your life and mind? The answer must depend very much upon another question: What is religion, and what does religion itself demand? What are the requirements of the great God, and of the soul, and of eternity? This question has suggested to me the text upon which I shall speak this afternoon:

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—Matthew vi, 33.

Here is an account of

WHAT TRUE RELIGION IS.

According to the words of Christ Jesus our Lord, it is 'the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' Just now I read to you a portion of Scripture, Matthew vi, 24-34; and I read it to you that you might note that our text occurs in the midst of a warning against undue anxiety. Undue anxiety is very common among city men; and it is not rare anywhere. Certain of us are nervous, timid, doubtful, and prone to fear. There are plenty of pessimists about, although they will hardly recognize themselves by that title. To them evil is always impending; we are about to take a leap in the dark. All their birds are owls or ravens. All their swans are black. If it rains to-day, it will rain to-morrow and the next day, and the next, and in all probability there will be a deluge; or if it be fine to-day, it will be dry to-morrow, and so on for months;

and the earth and all the meadows that are therein will perish with drought. As to the sun, they observe with pleasing despondency that he has spots. His light they hardly notice; but they dote upon his spots with amiable horror. Minds of this sort

"Find poisons in trees, death in running brooks, Dives in stones, and ill in everything."

LEAVE THE REINS IN GOD'S HANDS.

According to our Saviour, anxiety about carnal things is *heathenish*: 'After all these things do the Gentiles seek.' They have no God and no providence; and, therefore they try to be a providence to themselves. As for the man of God who can say, 'God's providence is mine inheritance,' why should he pine away with trouble? Let the heir of heaven act a nobler part than the mere man of the world, who has his portion in this life, and lives without God and without hope. Our distrust of our God is childish and dishonoring. I was going through these streets one day, driven by a friend in a four wheeled chaise; and he, being a good driver, must needs drive into narrow places, where it seemed to me that we should be crushed by the vans and omnibuses. I shrank back, in my timidity, and expressed my unwise alarm so freely, that, with a smile, he laid the reins in my hands, and said: 'If you cannot trust me, would you like to drive yourself?' From that ambition I was wholly free; and I assured him that he might drive as he liked, rather than make me the charioteer. Surely, the Great God might well put the same proposal to those who are complaining of his providence. If we cannot trust *him*, could we manage better ourselves? If we are men in Christ, let us believe in our God, and leave the governance of the great world outdoors, and of the little world within our own gates, to the Lord God, our heavenly Father, who will surely cause all things to work together for good to them that love him.

It is plain that within us there is a propensity to be anxious. Can we not utilize it? Can we not turn it to account? I think so. Some are naturally thoughtful and careful; can they not transform his tendency into a benefit? We have a tendency to be anxious. Very well, let us be anxious; but let our anxiety run in; the right direction. Here is a mental heat; let us apply it to some useful purpose. Our text sets before us the true sphere of *Christian carefulness*. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Seek that with all your care; seek that with all your energy. Be anxious about that. Let your whole mind run in that direction with eagerness and thought. You cannot be too careful or too energetic when God and righteousness are concerned.

DAILY MISSIONARY WORK.

Our next business should be to spread that kingdom—to try to bring others to Christ. It should be the lifework of each man to bring others to win the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. What opportunities most of you possess! Your station, your education, your wealth, all give you advantages for serving the Lord. Are you using them? It is a great joy to the Christian minister to have about him a people who are missionaries in their daily lives. With great joy have I listened to some poor girl who has confessed her faith in Christ, and then has added very timidly: 'There is another girl waiting outside who would like to speak to you. She works with me in the warehouse in the city, and I spoke to her, and she sought Jesus, and I believe she is converted.' I fear that many men of position are less diligent in winning souls than the poor workers they employ. Should it be so? He lives most and lives best who is the means of imparting spiritual life to others. May not some of you at the last come to a lonely end from lack of usefulness? We heard, not long ago, of a shipwreck from which a mother was washed on shore, but found all her children drowned. She telegraphed to her husband two words. 'Saved.' The next was full of misery: 'Saved alone.' Ah me! would you or I like to have it so—'Saved alone'? God forbid. When we reach heaven-gate may we be able to say, 'Here am I and the children thou hast given me.' This is the meaning of that first word—'Seek the kingdom of God.' The reign of our Lord is to be our main object if we would lead a well-ordered, useful, happy and honored life.

Our text has a second word: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.'

By the phrase 'his righteousness,' I understand that power in the world which is always working, in some form or other, for that which is good, and

true, and pure. Everything in this world which is holy, and honest, and of good repute, may count upon the Christian as its friend; for it is part of God's righteousness. Does drunkenness eat out the very life of our nation? Do you want men of temperance to battle with this evil? The Christian man cries: 'Write down my name.' When the slave had to be freed, the subjects of God's kingdom were to the front in that deed of righteousness; and to-day, if oppression is to be put down, we dare not refuse our aid. If the people are to be educated, and better housed, we hail the proposal with delight. If the horrible sin of the period is to be denounced and punished, we may not shrink from the loathsome conflict. Let each man in his own position labor after purity; and, as God shall help us, we may yet sweep these streets of their infamies, and deliver our youth from pollution. Every Christian man should say of every struggle for better things: 'I am in it, cost what it may.' Hosts of your professors of religion forget to seek God's righteousness, and seem to suppose that their principal business is to save their own souls—poor little souls that they are! Their religion is barely sufficient to fill up the vacuum within their own ribs, where their hearts should be. This selfishness is not the religion of Jesus. The religion of Jesus is unselfish; it enlists a man as a crusader against everything that is unrighteous. We are knights of the red cross, and our bloodless battles are against all things that degrade our fellowmen, whether they be causes social, political or religious. We fight for everything that is good, true and just.

Undeveloped religion is a vital matter; it is in the life of the man. I am afraid that the religion of some people is like

THE SHELL OF THE HERMIT CRAB.

At sea the dredge brings up creeping things innumerable, and among them creatures which have their own natural shells to live in; but here comes a fellow who has annexed the shell of a whelk, and bears it about as if it were his own. He lives in it while it suits him, and he gives up the tenancy when it becomes inconvenient; the shell is not part of himself. Avoid such a religion. Beware of a Sunday shell, and week day without the shell. That religion which you can part with, you had better part with. If it is not part and parcel of yourself, it is good for nothing. If it does not run right through you like a silver thread through a piece of embroidery, it will not avail for your eternal salvation.

I said just now that true godliness must be diffusive, and I return to the statement. I remember a remark of John Newton, once rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, across the road. He was a thoroughly Calvinistic preacher; but when one asked him whether he believed in Calvinism, he replied, 'I am a Calvinist, but I do not take it as children eat lumps of sugar; I use it to flavor all my preaching, as men use sugar in tea or food.' Hypocrites swallow religion in lumps, inviting all to admire the quantity; but sincere seekers after righteousness quietly dissolve their godliness in their lives and sweeten all their common relationships therewith. The real saint flavors his ordinary life with grace, so that his wife and his children, his servants and his neighbors, are the better for it. Mr. Rowland Hill used to say that a man was not a true Christian if his dog and his cat were not the better off for it. That witness is true. A man's religion ought to be to him what perfume is to a rose, or light to the sun. It should be the necessary outcome of his existence. If his life is not fragrant with truth, and bright with love, the question arises whether he knows the religion of our Lord Jesus.

The division between sacred and secular is most unhappy to both divisions of life: we want them united again. In the days of Queen Mary, a foolish spite dug up the bones of the wife of Bucer. Poor woman! she had done no ill, except that she had married a teacher of the Gospel; but she must needs be dragged from her grave to be buried in a dung-hill for that grave offense. When Elizabeth came to the throne, her bones were buried again; but to make the body secure from any future malice of bigots our prudent forefathers took the relics of a certain Popish saint, who was enshrined at Oxford, and mixed the remains of the two deceased persons past all chance of separation. Thus Mistress Bucer was secured from further disrespect by her unity with the body of one of the canonized; I want the secular to be thus secured by union with the sacred.

If we could only feel that our common acts are parts of a saintly life, they would not so often be done carelessly; if we lay our poor daily life by itself, it will be disregarded; but, if we combine it with our holiest aspirations and exercises, it will be preserved. Our religion must be part and parcel of our daily life, and then the whole of our life will be preserved from the destroyer. Doth not the Scripture say, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.'

RELIGION THE FIRST MATTER.

It is time that I changed the subject, and dwelt upon a further theme. Here is an account of the proper position of true religion. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.'

Let the word 'first' indicate to you the order of *time*. You know those venerable city gentlemen. I hope you reverence them as I do, since they are the embodiment of wisdom. One of these said to his son, 'William, I am pleased to see you incline toward religion. But take my advice, and be reasonable. I have been in business now for forty years and my advice is, stick to trade and make money, and then attend to religion. Now, the young man, as young men are apt to do, had begun to think for himself; and, for a wonder, his thoughts ran in the right groove; and therefore he replied: 'Father, I am always grateful to you for your good advice, but this time you must excuse me if I differ from you; for the Scripture says, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and therefore I cannot go in for making money first, but I must at once serve God; and yet I hope I may be none the less attentive to business. It is a good rule to begin as you means to go on. That son was wiser than his counsellor. My Lord Mayor will not say that he was wrong, I am quite sure; nor will anybody here, who has tried what it is to seek first the kingdom of God while engaged in business. True godliness is as good for this life as for the next. If I had to die like a dog, I would still wish to be a Christian.

Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness first, by giving to true religion a *sovereignty over your lives*. The helm by which life is steered should be in the hand of God. To glorify God and promoted righteousness should be our master passion. This Aaron's rod should swallow up all other rods. Be first a man of God; after that a banker, or a merchant, or working-man. I like to see our public men first Christians, then Englishmen, then Conservatives, or Liberals, or Radicals, as their convictions sway them; but in any case let a man be first a man, of God. I would to God that our politics, our merchandise, our literature, our art, were all saturated with this idea—'First a Christian.' Then the secondary character would rise in excellence and nobility. Science, social laws, trade usages, domestic life, would all be the better for coming under the supremacy of living religion. The fear of God should be the foundation and the cornerstone of the social edifice. 'Christ first,' and other things in their due order. Over and above all, let consecration to God shine forth even as the pillar of fire in the wilderness covered and illuminated the entire camp of Israel.

I may honestly claim five minutes more to complete the hour allotted to this service; and I will spend it by taking account of the promise here made to those who 'seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.' Does any one demand, 'What will become of our business if we place godliness first?' The answer is in the text: 'All these things shall be added unto you.' A young man beginning life, resolving that he will do everything in the fear of God, and that as God helps him he will do nothing that is contrary to the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ—shall he prosper? He shall get on so far as this: he shall have bread to eat, and raiment to put on—all that is needed for this life shall be added to him.

MONEY MANIA.

The wording of the text, 'All these things shall be added unto you,' reminds me that the acquisition of property often decreases a man rather than adds to him. Have you not seen a man become visibly smaller as his riches grew greater? It is a wretched sight, which has often pained me. I have distinctly seen a man become 'the architect of his own fortune,' and the destroyer of himself? He has built up

(Concluded on fourth page.)

Place of Meeting, Divisions, Numbers, Night of Meeting, and name of Deputies.

St. Stephen; Howard, 1; Friday; S. Webber
Milltown; St. Stephen; Wilberforce, 3; Monday;
H. McAllister.
Market Building, St. John; Gurney, 5; Thurs-
day; John P. Bell.
Orange Hall, Portland; Portland, 7; Monday;
A. Y. Paterson.
Market Building, St. John; Albion, 14; Wed-
nesday; J. S. B. DeVeber.
Gagetown; Queens, 21; Saturday; H. J.
DeVeber.
Chatham; Northumberland, 37; Friday; G.
Stohart.
St. John; Mariners and Mechanics, 38; Thurs-
day; Robt. Wills.
Hillsboro, Albert Co.; Albert, 39; Wednesday;
J. J. Steeves.
Sackville, West. Co.; Sackville, 40; Tuesday;
J. C. Harper.
Richibucto, Kent Co.; Richibucto, 42; Wednes-
day; A. Haines.
Kingston, Kent Co.; Kingston, 44; Tuesday;
B. S. Bailey.
Newcastle; Newcastle, 45; Thursday; D. Mc-
Grath.
Point de Bute, Westmorland, 50
Thursday; J. Amos Trueman.
Hopewell Hill, Albert Co.; Golden Rule, 51;
Tuesday; L. R. Moore.
Penfield, Charlotte Co.; Safeguard, 58; Satur-
day; W. N. Bucknam.
Cambridge, Queen's Co.; Johnston, 62; Satur-
day; George S. Wilson.
Dalhousie; Dalhousie, 64; Monday; G. Haddow.
Baie Verte; Baie Verte, 65; Wednesday; R.
Goodwin.
Dover, West. Co.; Dover, 70; Saturday; W.
Steeves.
Carleton, St. John; Granite Rock, 77; Tuesday;
Henry Finch.
Derby, North. Co.; Nelson, 99; Monday; J. Betts.
Douglasstown, North. Co.; Caledonia, 126; Tues-
day; J. Henderson.
Collina Corner, Kings Co.; Collina, 129; Thurs-
day; Jacob I. Keirstead.
Upper Gagetown, Queens Co.; Oxford, 134;
Saturday; James E. Coy.
Benton, Carleton Co.; Garibaldi, 151; A. Teed.
St. Martins, St. John Co.; St. Martins, 164
Tuesday; Cudlip Miller.
Moncton; Moncton, 183; Monday; E. McCarthy.
Salisbury, West. Co.; Crystal Stream, 191;
Saturday; Wm. McNaughton.
South Bay, St. John Co.; Lime Rock, 207;
Monday; Wm. Roxborough.
Milford, St. John Co.; Everett, 238; Wednesday;
John Waring.
Moncton; Intercolonial, 249; Friday; Wallace
Armour.
Victoria Mills, West. Co.; Victoria, 245; Thurs-
day; A. J. Main.
Baillie, St. James, Char. Co.; Baillie, 248; Wed-
nesday; J. W. Mann.
Weldford, Kent. Co.; Harcourt, 249; Saturday;
H. Wather.
Portland; Valley, 250; Tuesday; J. Fowler.
Butternut Ridge, King's Co.; Havelock, 251;
Friday; E. Keith.
Petitcodiac, West. Co.; Petitcodiac, 252; Tues-
day; D. Jonah.
Lewis Mountain, West. Co.; Sunnyside, 253;
Saturday; R. Lewis.
Deer Island, Char. Co.; Moss Rose 254; Satur-
day; A. T. Lloyd.
Millstream, Kings Co.; Britannia, 255; Friday;
C. W. Weyman.
Little Ridge, Char. Co.; Spreading Oak, 256;
Tuesday; A. F. Matheson.
Fredericton; Lansdowne, 257; Thursday; H. H.
Pitts.
Koumibouguac, Kent Co.; Union, 258; D. W.
Gibson.
River Charlo, Rest. Co.; Charlo, 259; Thursday;
J. H. Galbraith.
Steeves' Mountain, West. Co.; Mountain Rose
260; Saturday; R. Lutz, Sr.
Lawrence Station, Char. Co.; Lawrenceville,
261; Saturday; F. S. Richardson.
Hampton, King's Co.; Spring, 262; Monday;
G. Barnes.
Pomroy Ridge, Char. Co.; Mayflower, 263;
Thursday; W. Moulton.
Scotch Ridge, Char. Co.; Iona, 264; Wednes-
day; Alex. M. McKenzie.
Oak Hill, Char. Co.; Oak, 265; Friday; Dr. J.
G. Ackison.
Tower Hill, Char. Co.; Wills, 266; Saturday;
S. S. Smith.
Graves' Settlement, West. Co.; Rockland, 267;
Friday; G. Johnston.
McAdam Junction, York Co.; Star Branch, 268;
E. W. Brownell.
2d Falls, St. George Char. Co.; Stewart, 269;
Saturday; A. Sherwood.
St. George, Char. Co.; Red Granite, 270; Satur-
day; T. McGowan.
Penobscus, King's Co.; Cardwell, 271; Thurs-
day; J. W. Floyd.
St. Nicholas River, Kent Co.; Milltown, 272;
Friday; J. Murray.
Hampton Village, King's Co.; Hampton, 273;
Tuesday; G. Flewelling.
Blomfield, King's Co.; Leading Star, 274;
Thursday; O. A. Wetmore.
Good Templar Hall, St. John; Gordon, 275;
Friday; H. P. Sandall.
Eagle Settlement West'd Co.; Twilight, 276;
Wednesday; G. A. Taylor.
Salisbury, Westmoreland Co.; Middleton, 277
Friday; J. B. Henry.
Healthland, Charlotte Co.; Rising Sun, 278
Tuesday; L. Hall.
Goshen Corner, Albert Co.; Star of Hope, 279
Thursday; D. W. Goodall.
St. Mary's Kent Co.; Rosefield, 280; Saturday;
W. Vincent.
Elgin, Albert Co.; Elgin, 281; Saturday; G.
Smith, A. B.
Springfield, King's Co.; Springfield, 282; Fri-
day; G. M. Wetmore.
Whites Cove, Grand Lake; Grand Lake; 283;
H. E. White.
Clifton, Gloucester Co.; Gloucester Division
284; Wednesday; N. R. Ritchie.
Lewisville, Moncton; Lewisville, 285; Tuesday;
Chas. J. Harris.
Port Elgin, West. Co.; Fort Moncton, 286; Fri-
day; W. M. Spence.
Centreville, Kings Co.; Centreville, 287; Satur-
day; H. W. Falkins.
Waterford, K. C.; Essex Division 288; Mon-
day; John W. DeForest.
Dubec, Carleton Co.; Centenary, 289; Wm. V.
Benn.
Forest Glen, West. Co.; Forest Glen 290; Thurs-
day; Miss A. Hubley.
Bristol, Carleton Co.; Bristol Union, 291;
Tuesday; Rev. John Gravinor.
East Florenceville, Carleton Co.; East Florence-
ville, 292; Saturday; Wm. Tompkins.
Waterville, Carleton Co.; Waterville, 293;
Saturday; J. P. Fletcher.
Bath, Carleton Co.; Ray of Hope, 294; Friday;
Herbert Gray.
Lower Coverdale, West. Co.; Coverdale 295;
Jas. F. Steeves.