

Africo-American Presbyterian

"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii., 32.

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THE POOR MAN'S SHEAF.

BY EDEN H. REXFORD.

He saw the wheat-fields waiting
All golden in the sun,
And strong and stalwart reapers
Went by him, one by one,
"Oh, could I reap in harvest!"
His heart made bitter cry,
"I can do nothing! nothing!"
So weak, alas! am I."

At eve a fainting traveller
Sank down beside the door;
A cup of crystal water
To quench his thirst he bore,
And when, refreshed and strengthened,
The traveller went his way,
Upon the poor man's threshold
A golden wheat-sheaf lay.

When came the Lord of harvest,
He cried, "Oh! Master kind,
One sheaf I have to offer,
But that I did not find.
I gave a cup of water
To one athirst, and he
Left at my door, in going,
This sheaf I offer thee."

Then said the Master softly,
"Well pleased with this am I;
One of my angels left it
With thee, as he passed by.
Thou mayst not join the reapers
Upon the harvest plain,
But he who helps a brother
Reaps sheaves of richest grain."

DEBT.

On this subject Mr. Spurgeon says:

Living beyond their incomes is the rule of many of my neighbors; they can hardly afford to keep a rabbit, and must needs drive a pony and chaise. I am afraid extravagance is the common disease of the times, and many professing Christians have caught it to their shame and sorrow. Good cotton or stuff gowns are not good enough now-a-days; girls must have silks and satins, and then there's a bill at the dressmaker's as long as a winter's night, and quite as dismal. Show and style and smartness run away with a man's means, keep the family poor, and the father's nose on the grindstone. Frogs try to look as big as bulls, and burst themselves. A pound a week apes five hundred a year, and comes to the country court. Men burn the candle at both ends, and then say that they are very unfortunate—why don't they put the saddle on the right horse, and say they are extravagant? Economy is half the battle in life; it is not so hard to earn money as to spend it well. Hundreds would have never known want if they had not first known waste. If all poor men's wives knew how to cook, how far a little might go! Our minister says the French and the Germans bet us all hollow in nice cheap cookery; I wish they would send missionaries over to convert our gossiping women into good managers; this is a French fashion which would be a great deal more useful than those fine pictures in Mrs. Frisby's window, with ladies rigged out in a new style every month. Dear me! some people are much too fine now-a-days to eat what their fathers were thankful to see on the table, and so they please their palates with costly feeding, come to the work-house and expect everybody to pity them. They turn up their noses at bread and butter, and come to eat raw turnips stolen out of fields. They who live like fighting-cocks at other men's costs will get their combs out, or perhaps get roasted for it one of these days. If you have a great store of peas, you may put the more in the soup; but everybody should fare according to his earnings. He is both a fool and a knave who has a shilling coming in, and on the strength of it spends a pound which does not belong to him. Cut your coat according to your cloth is sound advice; but cutting other people's cloth by running into debt is as like thieving as fourpence is like a goat. If I meant to be a rogue I would deal in marine stores, or be a pettifogging lawyer, or a priest, or open a loan office, or go out picking pockets, but I would scorn the dirty art of getting into debt without a prospect of being able to pay.

Debtors can hardly help being liars, for they promise to pay when they know they cannot, and when they have made up a lot of false excuses they promise again, and so they lie as fast as a horse can trot.

You have debts, and make debts still. If you've not led life, you will.

Now, if owing leads to lying, you shall say that it is not a most evil thing? Of course, there are exceptions, and I do not want to be hard upon an honest man who is brought

down by sickness or heavy losses; but take the rule as a rule, and you will find debt to be a great dismal swamp, a huge mud-hole, a dirty ditch; happy is the man who gets out of it after once tumbling in, but happiest of all is he who has been by God's goodness kept out of the mire altogether. If you once ask the devil to dinner it will be hard to get him out of the house again. When a hen has laid one egg, she is very likely to lay another; when a man is once in debt, he is likely to get into it again; better keep clear of it from the first. He who gets in for a penny will soon be in for a pound, and when a man is over shoes he is very liable to be over boots.

Never owe a farthing and you will never owe a guinea.

My motto is, pay as you go, and keep from small scores. Short reckonings are soon cleared. Pay what you owe, and what you're worth you'll know. Let the clock tick, but no "tick" for me. Better go to bed without your supper than get up in debt. Sins and debt are always more than we think them to be. Little by little a man gets over his head and ears. It is the petty expenses that empty the purse. Money is round, and rolls away easily. Tom Thistlethwaite says what he does not want because it is a great bargain, and so is soon brought to sell what he does want, and finds it a very little bargain; he cannot say "No" to his friend who wants him to be security; he who gives grand dinners, makes many holidays, keeps a fat table, lets his wife dress fine, never looks after his servants, and by-and-by he is quite surprised to find the quarter-days come round so very fast, and that his creditors bark so loud. He has sowed his money in the field of thoughtlessness, and now he wonders that he has to reap the harvest of poverty. Still he hopes something to turn up to help him out of difficulty, and to muddle himself into more trouble, forgetting that hope and expectations are fool's incomes. Being hard up he goes to market with empty pockets, and buys at whatever prices tradesmen like to charge him, and so he pays them double, and gets deeper and deeper into the mire. This leads him to scheming, and trying little tricks and mean dodges, for it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright. This is sure not to answer, for schemes are like spiders' webs, which never catch anything better than flies, and are soon swept away. As well attempt to mend your shoes with brown paper, or stop a broken window with a sheet of ice, as to try to patch up a falling business with manœuvring and scheming. When the schemer is found out, he is like a dog in church, whom everybody kicks at, and like a barrel of powder, which nobody wants for a neighbor.

They say poverty is a sixth sense, and it had need be, for many debtors seem to have lost the other five, or were born without common sense, for they appear to fancy that you not only make debts, but pay them by borrowing. A man pays Peter with what he has borrowed of Paul, and thinks he is getting out of his difficulties, when he is putting one foot into the mud to pull his other foot out. It is hard to shave an egg or pull hairs out of a ball pate, but they are both easier than paying debts out of an empty pocket. Sampson was a strong man, but he could not pay debts without money, and he is a fool who thinks he can do it by scheming. As to borrowing money of loan societies, it's like a drowning man catching at straws; Jews and Gentiles, when they lend money, generally pluck the goose as long as they have any feathers. A man must cut down his outgoings and save his incomings if he wants to clear himself; you can't spend your penny and pay debts with it too. Stint the kitchen if the purse is out. Don't believe in any way of wiping out debts except by paying hard cash. Promises makes debts, and debts makes promises, but promises never pays debts; promising is one thing, and performing is quite another. A good man's word should be as binding as an oath, and he should never promise to pay unless he has clear prospect of doing so in due time; those who stave off payment by false promises deserve no mercy. It is all very well to say, "I'm very sorry," but

A hundred years of regret
Pay not a farthing of debt.

THE PROMPT CLERK.

A young man was commencing life as a clerk. One day his employer said to him:

"Now to-morrow that cargo of cotton must be got out and weighed, and we must have a regular account of it."

He was a young man of energy. This was the first time he had been entrusted to superintend the execution of this work; he made his arrangements over night, spoke to the men

about their carts and horses, and resolved to begin very early in the morning, half-past four o'clock. So they set to work and the thing was done; and about ten or eleven o'clock his master came in, and seeing him sitting in the counting-house, looked very black, supposing that his commands had not been executed.

"I thought," said the master, "you were requested to get out that cargo this morning."

"It is all done," said the young man, "and here is the account of it."

He never looked behind him from that moment—never! His character was fixed, confidence was established. He was found to be the man to do the thing with promptness. He very soon came to be one that could not be spared; he was as necessary to the firm as any one of the partners. He was a religious man, and at his death was able to leave his children an ample fortune.

ONE OF STANLEY'S ADVENTURES.

While Stanley, the African explorer, was working his way down the great river whose union with the sea he was first to discover, he had thirty-two adventures with the hostile natives, in some of which he lost a number of men. One of these adventures is thus described by a correspondent of the Boston Journal:

"The inhabitants had assembled on the bank, seeing this curious boat filled with strangers approaching, and Stanley's men said they thought the cries, which were almost deafening, of a friendly nature. But Stanley thought not. To him the cries seemed warlike. However, visions of eggs, chickens, fresh milk, and perhaps goat's flesh, for his exhausted men flashed before his eyes, and he gave the signal to put into the cove. No sooner had the boat reached the shore than it was hailed fifty yards up on the shore by a hundred hands, and before Stanley and his astonished men could realize where they were they found themselves in the centre of a circle of savages, each of whom was aiming an arrow at the unlucky whites. There were several hundred of these people, called the Bumbriah, after the name of their island on the shore; and Stanley says that he expected to be instantly massacred. His gun and those of his men lay in the bottom of the boat, and to stoop to pick them up would have brought shower of arrows and instant death. So he endeavored to reason with the savages, and showed them some cloths and beads, which they accepted. They crowded around the boat, however, and one man took hold of Stanley's hair and gave it a violent wrench, thinking it was a cap and would come off, disclosing wool. This was hard to bear, and meanwhile one of Stanley's men received a stunning blow from a spear-handle. Then the explorer made another little speech, asking for food and to be allowed to continue his journey, promising more cloth and beads. The savages then made several ferocious demonstrations, rushing down upon him, gnashing their teeth and shaking their spears in his very face, but they did not kill him and finally retired to consult. This mortal agony of suspense lasted from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon, during which time Stanley did not get out of his boat, nor did he take his eyes off the islanders. At last, seeing no chance of anything but death, he gave the signal to his men to be ready at a certain cry to drag the boat into the water. Presently the islanders began to return, and something told Stanley not to wait. So he shouted the word of command, and the boat flew down the slope into the water, his men diving all around it like so many muskrats, in their eagerness to escape the javelins and arrows which they knew would come. Stanley picked up his elephant gun and, as an islander bounding on the beach was preparing to fire an arrow after the boat, he shot him, and the immense bullet, passing through the savage's body, killed another behind him. Meantime it was discovered that the oars were lost, and Stanley's men were paddling with their hands as fast as they could to get out of arrow range, when they were horrified to see thirty-six savages put off from Bumbriah in three large canoes. The men in Stanley's boat were anxious to fire at once, but he ordered them to allow the canoes to approach, and succeeded in sinking two of them by firing into their sides at the water line. In two minutes two dozen savages were struggling in the water and beating away for the shore with vigorous strokes; the third canoe renounced pursuit, and Stanley and his men found themselves safe, but still half-dead from hunger when they joined the main body of the expedition."

HOW TO FILL A CHURCH.

The evening service on Sunday in a certain congregation was poorly attended. People thought they could not come out twice a Sunday to church.

The council talked the matter over. Their talk resulted in a pledge to each other that they would never absent themselves willingly from the evening service, and that they would urge every one they saw to plan for a second attendance.

The parents talked it over. They found that their children were not in the habit of spending the evening religiously or profitably, and they determined to set them an example of an earnest devotion to spiritual concerns. They began going twice a day the Sunday after.

The young men talked it over. They concluded that it was their duty to attend both services, and to bring at least one young man apiece with them.

The young ladies talked it over. They thought that if they could go to a concert or party at night it could not do them any harm to be at church after sunset. They decided that they would all go regularly, and take each a young woman with them.

The minister did not know what to make of it. He began to flatter himself that he was a latent Spurgeon. The attendance was increasing every week. Strangers, seeing the direction of the crowd, followed. It became the most popular church in the city.

CROSS BEARING.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

I have known many persons who could say, "I want to be a true Christian. I have given my heart to the Savior, but I do not experience the joy and peace which I believe it is possible for me to have."

Such a one lingered at the close of a meeting of deep interest, where there were many who testified to the love of Christ.

I was among the "Christian workers," and as I approached her I asked God's help and guidance. I will briefly record our conversation. In reply to my questions, she said, "I gave my heart to the Savior a few months ago. I want to be a faithful disciple, but I feel sad and downcast sometimes, because I know so little of Christian joy."

I said, "do you like to tell others that you have found Jesus?"

"That is what I have felt I ought to do sometimes; but I confess that I have remained silent."

"Is your husband a Christian?"

"He was once a professed Christian, but he seems to have lost all interest in religion."

"Does he know of the change in your heart?"

"Yes he knows something of it. I told him of my purpose to live a Christian life when I first started."

"Does he seem inclined to join with you in your morning or evening devotion?"

"I do not think he would, but I have not asked him. I have not the courage to read my Bible and kneel in his presence. I go away by myself every night to pray."

"Have you ever felt called to bow in his presence, even though you pray silently?"

"Sometimes I have, but I cannot tell you how hard it would be."

"Do all your family know that you are a Christian?"

"No, I fear not. I have been almost on the point of telling them but I could not make the confession, for they are not Christians."

Words of mine seemed weak. Only God could help such a one, and we knelt in prayer.

She followed me in an earnest prayer—the first, I believe, that any human ear had heard from her lips—in which she sought divine strength and asked to know his will.

She promised to take some decided step before she closed her eyes in sleep that night—to speak to her husband and other members of the household of Jesus and his love.

We met as strangers and we parted, not knowing that we should ever meet again. A few weeks later I met her, and she said with a smiling face, "I want to tell you that I had strength given to me to tell my husband of my hope in Christ and of my anxiety for his soul's safety, and I knelt in prayer before him. As my brothers came to the house, I told each of my Savior's love. After I had done these things which I long shrank from doing Jesus seemed dear to me. One day, as I sat alone I had sweet communion with him, and the room seemed filled with light. The cross

bearing revealed to me a precious Savior, and I can say to-day, 'Jesus is mine, and I am his!'

Did any of my readers ever bear the cross for Jesus, and find the result a failure? Did any ever undertake to bear the cross when he failed to stand by them and help them?

I have never yet heard of a Christian who could say, "I lifted the cross, and carried it for the Master, but the promised help and strength he withheld. In my need he forsook me, and I bore the burden alone." I do not believe any such confession was ever made, or even can be made.

Jesus said, "I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world," and his promise never fails. Sarah Goddard, in *American Messenger*.

INDEPENDENCE OF THE BIBLE.

How comes it that this little volume, composed by humble men in a rude age, when art and science were but in their childhood, has exerted more influence on the human mind and on the social system than all other books put together? Whence comes it that this book has achieved such marvellous changes in the opinions of mankind—has banished idol-worship—exalted the condition of women—raised the standard of public morality—created for families that blessed thing, a Christian home—and caused his other triumphs by causing benevolent institutions, open and expansive, to spring up as with a wand of enchantment? What sort of a book is this, that even the wind and the waves of human passion obey it? What other engine of social improvement has operated so long, and lost none of its virtue? Since it appeared, many boasted plans of amelioration have been tried, and failed, many codes of jurisprudence have arisen and run their course and expired. But this book is still going about doing good, leavening society with its holy principles, cheering the sorrowful with consolation, strengthening the tempted, encouraging the penitent, calming the troubled spirit, and smoothing the pillow of death. Can such a book be the offspring of human genius? Does not the vastness of its effects demonstrate the pre-eminence of the power to be of God?—Dr. McCulloch.

A SERMON IN RHYM.

If you have a friend worth loving,
Love him, Yes, and let him know
That you love him, ere life's evening
Tinge his brow with sunset glow—
Why should good words ne'er be said in vain,
Of a friend—till he is dead?

If you hear a song that thrills you,
Sing by any child of song,
Praise it, Do not let the singer's meek soul
Wait deserved praise long, if he doth sing
Why should one who thrills your heart
Lack the joy you may impart?

If your work is made more easy
By a friendly, helping hand,
Say so. Speak out bravely, truly,
Ere the darkness veils the land,
Should a brother workman dear
Falter for a word of cheer?
Scatter thus your seeds of kindness,
All enriching as you go—
Leave them, Trust the Harvest-giver,
He will make each seed to grow.
So, until the happy end,
Life shall never lack a friend.

HUMOROUS CORNER.

They dress expensively who go to the lawyer for their suits.

A negro being asked what he was in jail for, said it was for borrowing money. "But they don't put people in jail for borrowing money," said the questioner. "Yes," said the darkey, "but I had to knock the man down first or to times before he would lend it to me."

"Wife," said a Fourth street husband to his wife as he awakened her from deep slumber, "I have just seen a spirit, a shadowy form on the wall that resembled an ass."

"Oh, let me sleep," angrily replied his dearer part, "and don't be frightened at your own shadow."

"Ish dere some ledder here?" for maff! inquired a German at the general delivery window of the postoffice, the other day. "No, none here," was the reply. "Vell, dot is queer," he continued, getting his head into the window; "my neighbor gets sometimes dreed ledders in one day, und Ight now I have more tares as he does, and I have never got one ledder yet. How come does ting?"

"Well, Father Brown, how did you like the sermon yesterday?" asked a young preacher. "Ye see, parson, was the reply, "I haven't a fair chance at them sermons of yours. I'm an old man now and I have to set pretty well back by the stove, and I have old Miss Smithie, Widder Taffin, Byles' Sisters in Nabby Birt, all the rest setting in front of me with their mouths wide open, a swallering down all the best of the sermon, 'till I get down to me it's pater noster, and I have to put up with the scraps."