

Our Methods—Are They Right?

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I speak of our methods for converting men and women. It is fashionable to depend upon protracted or revival meetings for our increase in membership. Is this right? Should churches that have regular preaching during all the year, hold protracted meetings? I am not at all satisfied that this is the best thing to do. I very seriously doubt that the Apostles and preachers in primitive times would go to well established churches and hold protracted meetings during two, six or eight weeks, as we do now. It seems to me that there is too much of the spasmodic in work like this.

But some one is ready to say, "We get nearly all our additions when we hold protracted meetings, and during the remainder of the year months will pass without any being added."

Now this is just the thing I am coming at. Our present methods encourage just such a state of affairs. We have resorted to protracted meetings so long for our increase that the people, naturally enough, expect it, and if some are favorably inclined, they put off their obedience until the Revival meeting. Like the Dutchman, they want to join the big meeting, and too many, like him, neglect the regular meetings. Whereas, if we did not depend on revivals they would obey the Lord at the regular Lord's day meetings, and this would keep the church revived all the time. Thus the Lord would add unto the church daily, not yearly, such as are saved. To enjoy a spiritual feast a few weeks and witness souls confessing Christ, and then have this followed by a death the remainder of the year, as is often the case,—this is rather spasmodical. It is a religion of fits and starts, with far more fits than either religion or starts. This is a faithful picture of many of our congregations. Is it right?

Thus far I have been speaking of our methods in churches that have regular preaching. A still worse method obtains among those congregations that have stated preaching, but depend upon revivals altogether. There are many such. Only one advantage belongs to this method. It saves money. It is cheap. It is much cheaper to pay a preacher once a year to hold a meeting for fifty or sixty dollars, than to pay a regular preacher from three to five hundred dollars a year. No matter if the wolf does come and devour half the revival converts, the converts did not cost much and the church don't realize much loss. This method is cheap and tickles the fancy of covetous, stingy members.

While there is this apparent advantage, there are many disadvantages belonging to this method. It leads to the necessity of converting the church once a year, and every preacher who has held meetings for these peacemaker-churches knows full well that this is his most formidable task.

It encourages covetousness, which is idolatry, and produces littleness of spirit instead of magnanimity of soul.

It leaves the new convert without the care which the babe in Christ so much needs. Many of these left to the mercies of a merciless world, and too often a merciless church, perish for the want of spiritual food, and their last end is worse than the first.

This method implies that only the unsaved need preaching, while the scriptures plainly teach that preaching is for the saved as well. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."—1 Cor. i. 18.

"But unto them which are called, both Jew and Greek, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God."—1 Cor. i. 24.

Thus the Apostle clearly teaches that preaching is for the "saved" and "called."

In the light of these facts can this method be right? How much does such a church support the truth? It supports it three or four weeks and removes the pillars the year. How much does such a church hold forth of life, when they call a preacher once a year to infuse a little into the church?

If we must have protracted meetings—if they are right, I still push my question, Are our methods right? Ought we to put our meetings off until the winter months? This is fashionable, but is it right? To-day I baptized two young ladies. Old Boreas was sending his fierce blasts down from the regions of the ice king. The thermometer told us that mercury was fourteen degrees below zero. The "sun-dogs" chased the sun all day, and water no sooner touched our clothes than it was frozen. Now if this was a necessity we would have not a word of complaint; but—"there's the rub." Is it right? Is it necessary? Why can't we have our revivals in the spring? or summer? or autumn? Me thinks I hear some one say, "We are too busy during those seasons; but in the winter we can't do anything else but go to meetings."

Well, this is an honest confession, and I have heard it often.

I want to let the bottom fall out of such reasoning; or, rather, I want to show that it is bottomless. My brother, you propose to worship God when you can do nothing else. Think you that such service will be acceptable? Should we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto us; or, should we seek "all these things" first, and then if we have any time left in which we have nothing else to do, seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Is this latter method right? Is it? Or, when we do have meetings in the church in the winter should we be so entangled in our business affairs that we can only have night meetings? These persons would impress us with the idea that they would not take time to die. No, no! Not they!

It is my opinion, expressed publicly (like Bro. Lamar's private opinion on the resurrection, and Bro. Lard's on *Aionism*), that such brethren are mistaken. They will have to take time to die, and that they may be prepared to die, that they had better prepare to live by giving to the Lord some of their valuable time. Are our methods right?—*Evangelist*.

The Intemperate Father.

Follow him if you have the heart to do it, as he staggers along, now and then licking the ground, till he reaches his once peaceful home. "He's coming," cry the little innocents, as they look through the window, but it is not the cry of joy that welcomes the parent as he approaches his tender family; ah, no! it is the cry of fear—of horror. See them flee from him as from a monster; look at the broken-hearted mother, as she takes up her affrighted boy and bathes him with her tears. "Ah," she says to her children, "your father once loved you—once he loved me—he was a kind husband, and a provident parent; but now we are forsaken; your little, tender feet feel the nipping frost; your bodies shiver with cold; your tattered clothes are falling from you, and I have no new ones to give; you are hungry but I have no bread for you; the necessities of life your father was once wont to bring home to cheer your hearts, are now changed for the bottle, which some demon had furnished him with, perhaps as the reward of his day's labor. Oh, cruel employer! come and behold the fruits of your iniquity; see the miseries entailed upon the wretched mother, and worse than fatherless children, by your thirst of gain?" Let the imagination supply the remaining part of the picture.—*Ex.*

—Lives that are always sweet conceal the bitterness of the heart.—*Turkish Proverb*.

That Mission Class.

BY EMMA L. PARRY.

Miss May had at last made up her mind to it. She was not altogether pleased with the conclusion, but it was not her fault; she had been driven to it despite her own inclination. Indeed, it had taken a great amount of coaxing of her own will and desire. She had heaped up argument after argument in the vain attempt to excuse herself from it. There was no way of escape, for it would seem reasonable and right, and so she felt driven to invite that mission class to spend the afternoon at her home. But fifteen boys! And such boys! It cannot be denied that it was a little appalling, and we cannot seriously blame so young and inexperienced a person as Miss May Bunker for shrinking and trying to fortify herself against the trying conclusion behind an array of excuses. Nevertheless, all the arguments which her quick mind and keen logic could deduce, could not drown the little voice that ever, as a buoy, came to the surface, revealing the heavy anchor,—conscience,—in the depths. It were vain to strive against it.

It had always seemed a perfectly natural thing to invite her morning class; there was some comfort and pleasure in that. But they were girls, and only six of them; besides, they belonged to good families, connected with the church. They knew how to conduct themselves, and could even help her entertain them, so it was altogether reasonable to have them frequently. And then—let it be whispered—it seemed a nice thing to be an attentive and model teacher in the church school. Although the latter reason was not acknowledged; still, doubtless, it had an unconscious power with Miss May.

But the mission class! Who ever takes the same care and trouble with a mission class? You never meet their friends or relations in society. You move in a sphere far apart, and it is pure and praiseworthy charity that leads you to them once a week. Is that not enough and well? Why trouble about them farther? Then, it is true, they have little manners. They do not know much about society. It might, perhaps, be a kindness to them not to ask them where they would be out of place. And, it is terrible to risk a possible rude return for intended kindness. It is astonishing how many serious minor points will arise when a chance and apparently trivial thought is admitted into consideration; and it is sometimes marvelous how the shifting buoy turns a trifling question into a grave duty, and how, as the contrary waves of thought toss it to and fro, the settled calm of self-satisfaction is turned into a troubled sea. Thus it was with Miss May. Accidentally—so it seemed, but behind many accidents we can detect the moving of the Spirit—the thought occurred to her that it would be well to take a little extra notice of her class at the mission school. Hitherto she had not only been satisfied with her weekly visit to the school, but had even prided herself upon this extra work. With her morning class she strove to be near the ideal teacher, but with the mission class she considered the teaching quite enough, and, indeed, commendable. That here was the very place for the most careful work had never occurred to her, until by a natural train of reasoning the chance thought brought the plain truth before her. Once seen as a duty, she dared not strive against its difficulties.

"Only a mission class?" Oh! but who needs help and attention more than these neglected waifs, for whom a little kindness might brighten a life too often filled with misery? Do not know how to act, have no manners? So much the more should they be taught by, perhaps, the only ones

whom they ever see having such a power. Do not care for such pleasure? Let them taste and see; it may lead from grosser to refined enjoyments. You have gained an influence over your other pupils and their parents by this means. Oh, how vital to gain the same power here! So much trouble? True, it is trouble; there is no eluding that point. Did Christ take no trouble for you? Listen to the sad condemnation and reproach: "Inasmuch as ye did it not—" "I must, I ought, I will!"

And so it was settled. The following Sunday, Miss May told the fifteen boys that as next Thursday was Washington's birthday, and as they would then have a holiday, she would be pleased to have them visit her. The proposition was met with scorn. They laughed loudly at the idea, and the general response was "Catch me comin'." Nevertheless, at the close of school, Miss May said with a smile, "I shall expect you at half-past two!"

In the meantime she wondered whether they would accept the invitation or follow out their own words. She had misgivings, cherishing a feeble, uncheerful hope, and a doubtful wish that would arise whenever the thought in all its reality presented itself of fifteen terrible boys to manage! What could she do with them?

Thursday came—the darkest and dreariest of February days, with a steady doleful rain. "Well, it will be a wonder if they do come!" she thought, half glad of the rain.

"May, May!" cried her mother from the front window, "come here. Isn't this one of your boys?"

May darts to the window, but no one is to be seen. But presently, from around the edge of the corner store, appears an umbrella, then a foot, then a pair of roguish eyes, and then all vanishes. The old house-clock chimes one. It did seem very funny, but before May could join in the laugh, in the same mysterious manner there appeared two or three umbrellas, feet, and pairs of eyes, and then all as quickly disappeared. It was ridiculous! and the family joined in hearty laughter, whilst May hastened to the door, and at the proper moment of the appearing, beckoned to them to come, but the performance was repeated.

What could be done? To be sure, it was only one o'clock, and perhaps they intended to loiter around until the appointed hour,—but the rain was drenching! She seats herself by the window, and soon they pass by in a procession, the whole fifteen, none missing! She goes to the door, and calls them; but they have whisked around the corner! Then ensued a skirmishing that continued for an hour—a coaxing, calling, beseeching, from Miss May, and a tantalizing advance and retreat from the audacious fifteen! At last, when Miss May had retired from the window (to a corner behind the curtain), they walked up, in a body, rang the bell, and were shown into the parlor. Shortly after Miss May entered, and—was this that bold, confident, noisy crew? There they sat, on the very edge of the chairs, twirling their hats, subdued, quiet, not a word to say! Oh! this was worse than if they had overwhelmed her with noise; that she had expected, and had prepared a master-stroke to meet it, but this was so unexpected that she herself was non-plused, and more out of place than they were. At last, "that John" ventured to remark, "Goin' to read the Bible? We're waitin'!"

That was enough, and Miss May recovered herself. "Oh no," she answered, "there are many things that Christian people enjoy besides reading; a good game is something I like. And talking thus, and at the same time helping, Miss May soon contrived to drive away the reserve, and all were deep in the game she had begun. It became very exciting. Minds alert, feet and hands employed,

all restraints were forgotten; and yet it was surprising how much of the dreaded rudeness was absent, how much consideration they had for each other, and how that rude superiority and boasting so disagreeably felt in the class-work, was totally lacking. What was the secret—why? Oh! there is magic power in noticing a neglected boy, in considering him worthy a place in your parlor, in letting him know that you care to entertain him. The boys were fascinated with the game, but at length Miss May turned from the piano through sheer weariness.

"Here, see these pictures!" and leading from the gay, simple pictures in the scrap-book of sister Martha, she finally showed them the Goethe Gallery, and Dore, and even the fine illustrations in the great Bible, and their interest did not abate, whilst their quick questions showed minds aroused and quickened. And then the lunch! Miss May's sweet and gentle mother knew somewhat about boys, and how to set them at ease; still there was some difficulty to induce them to partake freely at first; and it was a little disheartening that two could not resist the temptation, but would squeeze orange-juice in each other's eyes until a fight ensued; and that some did so far forget themselves as to eat their raisins by throwing them in the air and catching them in their mouths; but some allowance must be made for overflowing spirits in active boys. It was remarkable that it passed off so well. But their spirits were ripe for more amusement. Returning to the parlor they begged for games, and got them. During the progress of them a little "marble boy" lost his arm, but was it not sacrificed in a good cause? But here is a dilemma. Night is advancing, but the boys show no disposition to leave. They have so taken possession of affairs that Miss May is alarmed and helpless. There seems to be before her as hard a task to get them to leave as it was to bring them in! At length she confided her trouble to John, making him a confidant and adviser; and he managed it so skillfully that they finally departed in fine spirits. True, no thanks were spoken, but bright looks spoke, and "that will come in time."

"It was a trouble! It was hard! Yet I am sure I have a new influence with them. I understand them better—they know me better. It was worth the trial!"

"Indeed it was," came softly from the gently moving waves about the buoy; and the strong anchor beneath held its own true place, whilst the calm of satisfaction that ever follows duty performed, spread a sweet peace over the troubled waters.—*S. S. Times*.

The Lord's Money.

A noted sinner, in Illinois, made the good confession and was baptized. When standing on the water's edge, ready to be buried with the Lord by baptism into death, a dear friend approached him and said: "Brother—, give me your pocket-book or your money will get wet." "Never mind," remarked the candidate, "I desire all my money to be baptized and concentrated to my Lord and Master."

That's according to the Word. That's sound. That's preparing to live—yes, to live forever.

Brother was your money baptized? Is it now the Lord's money? or, is it your own? You say you belong to the Lord, and the money belonging to you, is your own? Well then, it also belongs to the Lord most truly. How are you disbursing this money put into your hands by the Lord? Well, you will not answer me. But you will be reckoned with by and by, and then you will answer—then you must answer. May the Lord help you to do good as you have the ability and the opportunity.—*Ex.*