

"There is no Danger of our Doing Too Much."

An Essay read at the Ladies' Missionary Meeting, Saturday, March 5, 1881.

While as yet the Ladies' Missionary Society was in its infancy I was one day conversing with a sister in reference to Home and Foreign Missions. I, as usual, urging the necessity of prompt and immediate action in our own neighborhood and vicinity before engaging in the noble and self-sacrificing work of sending the Gospel of peace to foreign lands. She responded, "There is no danger of our doing too much." Though it may have been thoughtlessly uttered and soon forgotten by the speaker, it stirred up a train of thoughts and reflections that has ever since been present with me. Whenever I have faltered and become weary in well-doing this thought would force itself upon my mind, "There is no danger of our doing too much." No, the danger lies in a far different direction. There is *danger* that we shall not do enough.

What have we been doing during the last year towards the salvation of the world or any part thereof? Have we denied ourselves of any pleasure to the end that the poor might have the Gospel preached to them?

The query was propounded to me some time ago by a missionary brother, "Why don't you ladies organize a State Missionary Society, concentrate your work at some available point, and keep an evangelist in the field long enough to accomplish the object you have in view?"

What we need is more of the missionary spirit at home; a spirit that shall overcome every obstacle that may be thrown in our way. We are too easily discouraged. We need to be educated to a higher standard of duty. We ought to have the same committee that did such efficient labor last spring kept constantly at work urging the present members—a few of them—to be more zealous and inducing others to join with us in the pleasant work of missionary labor. The Christian life is, or should be one of activity. To be an idler is to take an unworthy place in this busy economy which God has instituted. The soul was made for action and demands it. We are living for eternity. We are sowing here and the harvest will not be ripe until the sun of the last day has shone upon it. Then the trumpet will sound, the reapers will be called, and each one's work will be manifest. How important that there be something to show a fidelity to the work and a claim to the reward promised to the faithful.

H. A. A.

Monmouth, Or.

Last Things.

The last words of the Old Testament are a fearful threatening: "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

The last words of the New Testament are a benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

The last words of Christ before his ascension are a glorious promise: "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Often the wicked despise the last offer of mercy made them, more than any preaching they ever heard. When I have seen friends wiping away the clammy sweat from the brow of a dying man who had long rejected salvation, or moistening his lips with a little water, I have often trembled lest it should be the last mercy he should ever receive.

When the soul of a redeemed man is released from the body, we know that his last pang is over forever.

It seldom happens that the last thing done by one who has led a wicked life is to repent and turn to God!

The last words of sinners often teach the very lessons which they have ever refused to learn.—*Banner and Advocate.*

A Voice in the Wilderness.

BY CHARLES S. ROBINSON, D. D.

"When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses;" this is an apothegm familiar among the Jews even to the present day, and rehearsed in their stories of the past. But Moses came twice; and, the first time, he was abruptly rejected. The "Prophet like unto Moses," promised at the last announced to our sin-enraptured race as the Redeemer, was introduced by a forerunner, who was not accepted any more than his Master. John the Baptist was ultimately beheaded for his reward of fidelity; and the Lord Jesus was crucified.

Thus it comes about that Christ's sad history strikes back on John's, and gives it an unexpected interpretation. Very true have proved those words of Heinrich Heine: "Where-soever a great soul in this world has uttered its thoughts, there always has been Golgotha."

Affairs had now reached the last crisis. Pontius Pilate was misgoverning Judea, filling history with extortions and infamies of crime. A new Herod, worthy of the name, was shaming the people with villainous lusts and defections in faith, his desperate morals fitly keeping pace with his downward career of apostasy.

Suddenly was heard a voice in the wilderness. There was singular pathos in it, as there is in all human tones that have power. But it had, besides that, a sort of vibrating ring in it which intimated a challenge. Experts say that idiots, even in the midst of a gibbering frolic, will pause abruptly to listen to the sound of a musical instrument; perhaps some vague recollection of primal harmonies in a healthy nature before it was shattered may be awakened at the stir near by; the soul seems seeking to render answer, but only succeeds in giving wistful attention. That was not a loud voice in those days down by the Dead Sea, but all Judea heard it; and up the Jordan it rushed with more than the usual celerity; it certainly in due time reached the villagers in the land of Gennesareth, for some of them journeyed at once towards it—notably, Simon son of Jonas, and John and James and Andrew, who were destined to figure in the train of Jesus Christ.

The great wicked world of that time checked its ribaldry for some solemn moments to hear what such a preacher had to say. What he did say, was surely worth hearing: "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That call aroused consciences which indulged no false alarms. Men began to go down to the Jordan river from all directions in vast crowds, on a mission of inquiry which they called curious, but which was really anxious. They found an individual of singular appearance and habit. He wore a camel tunic, a loose garment of coarse sackcloth, bound close to his person with a thong of untanned hide. His skin was bronzed with seasons of exposure in the strange defiles near what is now called Mar-Saba, the lower Kidron Kidron Valley between Bethlehem and the emaciated hills by the Dead Sea. His unkempt hair hung down wildly over his shoulders, for it was vowed for him that no razor should come upon his head as a Nazirite; this had been covenanted even from his earliest infancy. Stories were told about his living altogether upon locusts dipped in salt water and dried so that they looked somewhat like shrimps—just such poor food as the lowest people now eat in the same dreary district; these, it was said, John rendered palatable or endurable by wild honey which he might happen to find in the rocks.

Perhaps among the companies that visited this man in the desert there were some few old neighbors who remembered those remarkable circumstances of Elizabeth's history thirty years before up in the hill country near Hebron. It is likely they would recognize in this preacher the mysterious child, who as he grew had "waxed strong in spirit," and had then disappeared into "the deserts," and possibly would exclaim, the moment they set eyes upon him, "Why, this is the son of Zacharias, whose birth was foretold by the angel Gabriel! He has doubtless been dwelling in these lonely solitudes ever since he was a lad; not a word has been heard of him for a generation."

It would seem that John himself perfectly understood his mission with the announcements of early prophecy as the people kept quoting them to him. "Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." That is to say, he would not arrogate to himself any authority beyond that to which he was entitled, and yet he would not deign to accept any less. They must take him precisely as he stood. His office was that of a simple forerunner; he was "*vox et proterae nihil*,"—a voice and nothing more; but the voice was that of one who meant everything he said, with a desperate veracity.

For John the Baptist was a reality. This poor world of ours has been so often trifled with that it has learned to be satisfied thoroughly only with what is honest and true. There could be no ordinary possibility of mistaking such a man; he was genuine. And he shook that miserable generation of hypocrites as might be expected. Virgil tells us, that when Aeneas descended into Hades to visit his father, he came to Charon's ferry across the dark river; as he stepped into the light boat, accustomed to carry only spirits, so heavy a burden of a real and living man made the craft tremble and creak dismally through all the length of its sewed seams:

"The ghosts forsake their seats at his command: He clears the deck, receives the mighty freight; The leaky vessels groan beneath the weight; Slowly she sails and scarcely stems the tides; The pressing water pours within her sides."

We can presume that the hollow forms of social life in those wretched days were writhed and strained, if not shattered, by an uncompromising reality of manhood like that of John the Baptist at the Jordan. He was a man among the shadows of men. He had an actual "idea." He shook off the shame of religion, and told souls a great deal more about religion itself than they ever knew before.

This being, with the uncouth hair and the scant garment, with the bronzed face and the piercing eye, disdained all the adventitious shows of authority, and drove his arguments straight towards the consciences of men. He put himself within the reach of living people, and down on their planes of existence. Only he shred away the veils and tinsels and mockeries of an outward show, and with an unsparing hand tore up the traditions and mere commandments of Pharisees. Read Luke iii. 10-14. Notice what common-sense answers he made to inquiries. And this—this—in the midst of a community which was wont to peril the vast interests of the soul's eternal future upon the length of a piece of parchment on the forehead!

The success which this desert preacher secured was wonderful. The language of the Evangelist intimates that the entire country gathered into assemblages about him: "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan." We must recollect that this was the great sabbatical year of the Israelitish nation; the people were less busy than usual; the whole

land was at rest; a religious atmosphere was breathing around them; and so the awakened multitudes swept forth from their homes on every hand. Bethabara, the little fording-place north of Jericho, was thronged with excited listeners out of all classes and social conditions, eagerly jostling each other in defense of truth or tradition.

At first, the feeling must have been full of insatiate curiosity. Who was this strange being? And some said he was the Messiah. But John kept his record clear; he was only a voice. But ere long that voice began to make a stir. To rustic men, whose imagination was picturesque, John said once what was full of force and terror: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the tree." That utterance was literally radical, and went deeper than Pharisees of that day liked. What did it mean? That God's mercy was waiting to let sinful men mend their ways, and was willing to give them chance for just a little longer. As a husbandman would drop his axe tranquilly beside a tree-trunk, from whose branches came no fruit, deciding not to cut down the useless thing, but to grant a warning for a single season more, and would there leave his axe lying at the very root for a sign; just so God was now signaling his patience in the person of this forerunner of Christ, forbearing with the race.

Of course this sort of thing awakened opposition, and confirmed wicked men in their sins. And now, if there had been such an instrument as a spiritual barometer in the land of Israel, it would have awakened in the heart of a thoughtful man the liveliest alarm. For the sinking of the index at this period was unprecedented. The sunshine of self-satisfaction was bright and pleasant around those old Pharisees, but the thunder was muttering ominously down by the Jordan. One morning, while the Baptist was at his ordinary work administering that rite by which his converts entered into the promise and engagement of the new life, some of the chief people of the aristocratic class presented themselves. It is evident, from John's manner as well as from his language, that he was astonished beyond measure at their visit. He met them with an abrupt challenge, calling them by their true names: "O generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

It is easy to conjecture how that sharp conversation thus begun passed on between them. Here was a man, trained to solitudes where for a score of intelligent years he had had his own way with words, now with no fear of contradiction before his eyes, no special tremor in the presence of supercilious hypocrites, of whom he had not asked odds. He told them to bring forth fruits of repentance, when all they came for was to show they patronized him in his popularity. Then it seems as if they, being angrily excited at his classifying them with poor peasants, must have said something about their belonging to a race of sanctified people. For he inferred every one of them that God could make better Abrahamites out of stones. And perhaps he pointed to the bleak rocks lying around, with one of his quick gestures of inexpressible contempt of insincerity.

So these formalists went their way with consciences sorer possibly, but with wills subdued; they came to be endorsed by John, not to be lectured or even counseled by him.—*S. S. Times.*

The home of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps at Gloucester, Mass., is a brown two-story cottage. It is filled with remembrances of her friends, and with books and pictures. Here the author of the "Gates Ajar," spends her quiet, invalid days with all the calmness of a summer sea.

J. S. R. Seovill, Morris, Ill., says:—When your "Only Lang Pad," come to hand my son could not raise his head. He is now up and gaining every day.—*See Adv.*

The Rich Man and the Poor Man.

A rich man walked abroad one day
And a poor man walked that self-same way,
When a pale and starving face came by
With a pallid cheeks and a hopeless eye,
And the pallid face presumed to stand
And ask for bread from the rich man's hand.
The rich man sullenly turned askance,
With a gathering frown and a doubtful glance,
I've nothing, said he, to give to you,
Or to any such rogue of a catering crew,
Get work! get work! I know too well
The whining lies you beggars can tell.

So he fastened his pocket and on he went,
His heart untouched and his wisdom content,

Now, this great owner of golden store
Had built a church (a meeting house) not long before,

As lordly a fane as man could raise
And the world had given him thanks and praise,

And all who beheld it lavished fame,
On his godly gift and his Christian name.

The poor man passed and the white lips dared

To ask of him, if a mite could be spared.
He stood a moment, but not to pause,
On the truth of the tale, or the charity laws,

He was seeking to give though it was small,

For a penny, a single penny, was all,
Yet he gave it with a kindly word,
And the warmest pulse in his heart was stirred.

'Twas a tiny seed his charity shed,
But the white lips got a taste of bread,
And the beggar's blessing hallowed the crust

That came like a spring in the desert dust.

The rich man and the poor man died,
(As all of us must) and were tried,
Before the eternal judgment seat above,
For their thoughts of evil and their deeds of love.

The balance of justice there was true,
Rightly bestowing what rightly was due,
And the two new comers through heaven's gate

Stood there to learn their eternal fate.

The recording angel told of things
That fitted them both with kindred wings,
But as they stood in that crystal light
The plumes of the rich man grew less bright.

The angels knew, by that shadowy sign,
That the poor man's work had been more divine

So they brought the unerring scales to see

Where the rich man's falling off might be

Full many a deed did the angels weigh,
But the balance kept an even sway;

At length the church endowment fund was laid,

With its thousands promised, and its thousands paid,

With the thanks of prelates by its side,
In the swelling words of pomp and pride

And it weighed so much that the angel stood,

To see how the poor man could balance such good.

When lo! a cherub came and took his place,

By the empty scale with a radiant grace,
And he dropped that penny that had fed,
Poor starving lips with a crust of bread,
The church endowment went up with a beam,

And the whisper of the Great Supreme
As he beckoned the poor man to his throne.

Was heard in this immortal tone,
Blessed and holy is he, who from great gain,

May give his thousands with a reasoning brain,

But holier far shall be his part
Who gives one penny with a pitying heart.

ELIZA COOK.

Boiling Fish.

After washing thoroughly in salted cold water, sprinkle the fish with salt and pepper, and tie in a clean cloth with a sprig of parsley. Cover with cold water, except in case of salmon, when lukewarm water must be used to preserve the color. Cod requires fifteen minutes for each pound. A fish weighing one pound will be done in ten minutes after the water commences. Drawn butter sauce, with a hard boiled egg chopped fine and stirred in at the last, is very nice for bass. Oyster sauce is the best for cod.

—Bury old enmities and quarrels by all means, but do not trouble yourself to mark the grave of each one with a costly tombstone.