

THE DANGER OF RICHES.

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came on one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my yough. Then Jesus behilding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; gothy way, sell whatsoever thou has, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

"And he was sad at that saying, and wwent away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that ha have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished our of measure, saying among themselves, Who then, can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them, saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible/ " Mark 10: 17-27.

"Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Mr. Wesley says, "Many that were poor had come, at last one rich man came." Sad as it is to relate, it is truth, very few of those who are rich in this world's goods ever seriously enquire the way to save their own souls. How much time they spend adorning and beautifying the place of their earthly habitation, which is of such short duration; yet hardly giving a serious thought to the place or manner in which they will spend eternity.

But it is exceedingly encouraging to the serious rich to see how graciously Jesus received this honest enquirer. Though a very poor man himself, Jesus certainly had no sympathy with that prejudice against the rich, so often found among the ignorant poor. There is no effort to make the way harder for him because he was a rich man. No galling burden is cut out for his back or impossible task assigned to him. Every effort is made to make the way plain and easy to him. In every word the Master spoke to him there shines out a sympathy so broad, a love so genuine, and a manner so gracious that it thrills us.

"Master, all these have I observed from my youth up." If he had truly done this he was certainly not a bad man. We have no reason to doubt his words, for Jesus did not seem to. It will be small comfort to those who miss eternal life to know how near they came to having the great pearl at some time in life. Faithful obedience to the commands he professed to know so well would have marked him as a man of distinction even in our day.

"Jesus loved him." Jesus loved all men. But in this case the expression seems to men that he was drawn to this man by some dawnings of good in the man himself. This He could not have felt if the man's enquiry had not been genuine.

"One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." How much wrangling we have had over this command. Some would have it mean that every rich man in the world is to sell all his possessions and give them away, The command, as it is recorded certainly does not say that all men who have great possessions must dispose of them. It is doubtful if it was meant as an inflexible law, even to this one rich man. Had there been any other remedy that would have saved the man from his besetting sin, the love of money, no doubt Jesus would have gladly allowed it. He certainly did not give the command to any other rich man as far as we know. He loved this man, and seeing that the fangs of a mighty evil had fastened on his heart, he proposed the only remedy that would free him. It was a drastic remedy, but it was a drastic evil. Had it been carried out it would have been a good one.

"And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions." Why are men so grieved at the thought of parting with their wealth? What have they promised themselves from its mere possession that makes it such a grievous thing to part with it? In the present case

it is doubtful if the young man would have suffered any want or inconvenience from giving up his possessions. On the other hand he would have released himself from a great load of worry he would have had far more time left for works of mercy and love, and in the distribution of his wealth to the poor he would have found a happiness that surpassed any joy his wealth had ever brought him. Why should this be a grievous thing for a man to do.

But grievous it is, We can hardly strike a more unpopular subject than to talk with a man about parting with his wealth. O, for a preacher who can make men fall in love with the meek and lowly ways of life. Such a man would begin a revival that would not end till it reached the darkest corners of the earth.

What do men promise themselves from riches? If we are to judge by the sober careworn faces and leaden spirits of the rich, we know that every pleasure that men ever promised themselves from the mere possession of wealth has been a bitter disappointment.

With some truth it might be said there is one exception to this rule. The good that men are able to do with their wealth has no doubt given some rich men real pleasure. Of all those who ever sought pleasure in wealth it is certain that these are the only ones that ever found it. A rich man once told me, with tears running down his cheeks, that the only pleasure money ever gave him was the good he could do his fellow man. Some have found such a pleasure in this use of wealth that, without any command, they have liter-

ally done what Jesus commanded this young man to do, given away all they had.

But riches are as often a hindrance as a help in doing good. In the first place, great wealth is a hard master. It is like a great genius of unlimited power, which promises to be man's servant; but once it gets him in its power it becomes the master. This master drives his slaves without mercy, leaving them no time to cultivate the friendship of their neighbors, let alone to distribute their wealth to those in need. How many men who have great surplus wealth to distribute find they have no time to look into the causes presented to see that the money is properly applied after it is given.

Once a rich man has given ear to the cause of other men's grief he finds the cry for help so clamorous that he could not supply but a small fraction of the claims on his benevolence even if he had the wealth of Croesus. To decide which of these causes really have merit requires a great deal more time than any rich man has to spare from his business. If he tries to decide this important matter himself, to his sorrow, he nearly always makes the exceeding human mistake of taking the loudest and most clamorous claims for the worthiest.

It is true that rich men can always find others to look after these minor details for them. But if he trusts the matter to others, which he surely must do in the end, he too often finds that they have used his money for their own selfish benefit instead of the public good. How many times a rich man finds, after he has contributed to some

worthy cause, that the money is being used to defeat the very cause for which it was given. If some of the rich men of the past could come back today and see the use that is being made of the money they gave to benevolent causes, it would make them wonder if it had not been better to throw their money into the sea.

Not only does great wealth forge hard fetters for the feet and hands of its victims, but it builds a prison of iron bars around him, through which he must look on the rest of the world like some caged animal. For every rich man finds himself surrounded by an army of salesmen, good and bad, a noisy horde of sharp tricksters of trade, and a loud and clamorous mob of supplicants, many of whom are absolutely unworthy of his help or attention. No matter how benevolent his heart he is compelled to put up locks and bars and stone walls to keep them out. But make these as strong as he may, they find their way in; while he finds, to his surprise, that his locks and bars and stone walls have kept back the only people who are worthy of his help and attention. Causes that are worthiest are always easiest turned away. The importunate beggar who is too lazy to work for a living will clamor till doomsday or be heard; while the honest poor man, having no design on his neighbor's wealth, is turned away with the least discouragement. Strong able-bodied men, tramps, and vagabonds will stand in line for days, or have their hard-luck story told, but the poor and honest widow taps very gently at our door, and goes away at once if she is not received.

But some will say, Surely riches aid a man in the enjoyment of the good things of this life. Ask those who have had riches if this be so. All enjoyment of present good is directly in proportion to the good that is satisfied. This is a law that refuses absolutely to bend to man's condition. This is the law that gives the poor laborer the same enjoyment from his crust that the rich man gets from a sumptuous banquet. This is the law that gives the blind child a relish so keen for the few impressions that reach his darkened soul by sound and touch, that he gets as great pleasure from these as any child with sight can gain from a world of light. This is the law that gives the poor child a greater joy from a striped stick of candy or a battered toy than the sons of the rich get from all their carts and ponies and costly machines. This is the law that made Lazarus' crumbs a greater comfort to him than all the rich man's sumptuous fare. Let him who is so foolish as to think he can, try to set it aside.

Another requisite to the enjoyment of present good is gratitude for the good received. If there be any other sauce that adds more to the taste of food than hunger it is a thankful heart. Lazarus had a thankful heart and it made his crumbs taste good. This, like the other, is too often found wanting in those who have great worldly possessions.

Another hope of those who desire to be rich is that they will escape the toil and drudgery of life. Toil is

hard old school master. His face is rugged and hard, his speech is harsh, and his manner gruff and unsympathetic. But his hand is always hardest on the backs of those who try to run away from him. And go where they will, he is sure to find them. In every walk of life you are bound to meet him. At every job he is the foreman. Like the youth in Hawthorne's story you find that he is at the head of the hay-makers in the meadow, foreman of the carpenter's that are erecting the beautiful building, the gruff commander of the army, and the chief fiddler at the dance. Those who try to hide from him find that he has been keeping pace with them all the way they ran, and when they are forced to surrender to him, find that his harshest speech and severest manner is saved up for those who try to run away. But when you learn to put your hand in his and walk with him in trusted confidence, you find all his gruff manner and hard speech gone. Those who know him best count their best and truest friend.

But ask any rich man if his money has kept him from toil. Ask him if he has had any more hours for leisure, or play than he did when he was a poor man.

Most of all men depend on riches as a shelter from the "arrows and slings of outrageous fortune." Fear, either of poverty or some other evil, more than any other thing, drives men on in the mad pursuit of wealth.

Why is it that men are so anxious to escape from all the ill winds of fortune? Every man who has succeeded in

the larger sense points to some hard experience that served as a stepping-stone to his present place. Dramatist and poets know there is no theme so beautiful as a suffering hero. No man who knows the laws of drama would try to write a story of a rich man, "Who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." If he did no one would ever read it. Such a man might play a minor part in the life of a hero who was poor or friendless. But the poor actor would always have the spot-light thrown on him. When Oliver Twist, ~~stunt~~ and hungry, holds out his little empty bowl and says, "Please, Sir, I want some more," his cry grips the heart of the world. When little Jean comes hobbling in out of the snow, after he had given one of his wooden shoes to a bare-foot child in the street, how anxiously we watch as he places the other little shoe in the fire-place. Then we hold our breath till we know what Santa Claus brought him. When little Nello returns the purse of the rich old burgher, Baas Coge, who wants to know anything about Baas Coge? The heart of the whole world is turned to the little boy who wonders away in the snow. In God's great garden the most beautiful flowers are those watered with tears.

When God wants to make a strong tree he doesn't plant it in a hot house. Where is there a man with soul so dead that he can look on a great tree and not have his heart thrilled? But did it become great by being sheltered from the heat of the sun, the cold winds of winter, and the fury of the storm? Ah no! The sun of many a long summer

day has poured its heat on its crown, the icy winds of winter have lashed its bare branches, and the stormy winds have rocked it back and forth till its roots sank deep into the soil. This is the way it became a great tree.

If suffering is so good for us why are we so afraid of it? God cannot build strong character in the heart and, at the same time, shelter it from all the ill winds that blow. "Into each heart some sorrow must come and into each life some rain must fall." If it did not the sunny days themselves would grow too long, and our hearts would pine under the very smiles of prosperity.

But are riches a shelter from the ills of this life? If there ever was a house built on the sand it is the rich man's hope that his money will shelter him from the ill winds of fortune. Here is a rope of sand that snaps at the first surge of the breakers. In my short life time I have seen the storms of adversity beat upon the bare heads of the poor. I have been in the poor man's cottage when gaunt hunger stalked very near the door. I have seen the sight that is said to have thrilled the gods, "A good man struggling against adversity and rising superior to it." But, except in the case of the wicked, I have never seen a poor man's sorrow that did not have some healing balm in in it. In every measure of tears there is sweetness at the bottom of the cup. I can say with thankfulness I have drunk of the

cup myself. In early childhood I was robbed of a father's tender love and care by one of the sorest afflictions that ever fell on a strong man's body. I was thus confronted with the moral leadership, and to some extent, the financial support, of several younger brothers and sisters before I was old enough to put away my childhood toys. Since coming to manhood's estate my lot has been more pleasant, but even here I have had none of the advantages of wealth. I have had the hard struggle of keeping the wold from the door with a family of eight children. All the storms of life have caught me bareheaded. The only protection I have had from the winds of ill fortune are the wings of the Almighty. But I have known sorrows come upon the houses of the rich in my own city that made all the troubles of my life seem like an April shower!

"He that is down, needs fear no fall,
 He that is low, no pride,
 He that is humble, ever shall
 Have God to be his guide."

There is only one harbor that will shelter your frail bark from the fury of the storm. When the waves run high and the tempests beat upon you, there is only safe have to which you can steer your little ship. On the high seas of time, so common for their tempests, there is but one land-locked harbor. That is the FAVOR OF GOD. It was this that carried Moses safely across the desert and preserved his life in Midian. It was this that kept David when he fled like a partridge from angry Saul. It was this that preserved Lazarus when he ate the

cold hard crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.
It will preserve your soul in the deepest adversity,
it will shelter your head in the most violent storm,
it will comfort your heart in sunshine and shadow, and
it will follow your children's children to the fourth
generation.