

Patriotism and Piety.

PATRIOTISM and Piety are frequent companions. When they work together hand in glove their might is irresistible. Recently the earthly remains of the late lamented Field-Marshal Earl Roberts were laid to rest in St. Paul's Cathedral, close to those of Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington. These three national heroes have shown how akin is the spirit of dutiful surrender to the Divine Will to that of self-denial for a country's well-being, and how the power of victory is obtained by sacrifice.

The courage of Nelson was admirably displayed in the Battle of Copenhagen. When a shot injured his own vessel and endangered his life, he remarked, to another officer: "This is warm work; and this day may be the last to any of us in a moment; but, mark me, I would not be elsewhere for thousands." The secret of this boldness must be sought in that prayerfulness which he had learned as a boy in a rectory home, which he never forgot throughout life, and which shone most brightly in his latter days. Five weeks before Trafalgar he wrote in his diary: "I drive from dear, dear Merton, where I left all I hold dear in this world to go to serve my King and country. May the great God whom I adore enable me to fulfil the expectations of my country; and if it is His good pleasure that I should return, my thanks will never cease being offered up to the throne of His mercy. If it is His good Providence to cut short my days on earth, I bow with the greatest submission, relying that He will protect those so dear to me whom I leave behind. His will be done." A few hours before the great engagement, so triumphant for the British Navy, but purchased at the cost of the gallant Admiral's life, he wrote in his cabin: "May the great God Whom I worship grant to my country and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory; and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet! for myself individually I commit my

life to Him that made me, and may His blessing alight on my endeavours for serving my country faithfully. To Him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted me to defend." The life was not without blemish ; but the real man was a giant in strategy and courage, and withal a humble believer in God.

Wellington's arduous campaigns in India, during the Peninsular War, and at Waterloo, are full of incidents of rare courage and skill. But his succour in defeat, his patience in misfortune, his strength in victory, were due to the inspiration which he found in that Bible which, however much as a good soldier he reduced his personal baggage, he never failed to take with him. The abilities of Earl Roberts entitle him to the distinction, alone with our own first Duke of Marlborough and the Russian Suwaroff, of all the world's great commanders, of never having experienced defeat. But the man is best made known to us in a letter written but a fortnight before his decease, and quoted in the House of Lords by Earl Curzon in a well-merited eulogium, in which he advocated the use of family prayers in every English home, as a result of fifty-five years' experience of their value in his own.

The struggles of the nations afford many illustrations of the superintendence and control of all mundane affairs by the Lord of Hosts, the God of Battles. In 1870 the French decision to make war on Prussia was reached on July 15. Two days later the declaration was signed, and on the 19th delivered at Berlin. Immediately Prussia prepared with prayer and humiliation. At a week's notice the whole country observed July 27 as a day of special supplication before the throne of Heaven. Then Bismarck could keep the plighted word to respect and guarantee the neutrality of Belgium. Lust and rapine were not prominent in the German forces. Within little more than a month, after victories at Weisemberg and Geisburg, and after the bombardment of Strasburg, came the capitulation of Sedan, the march on Paris, and the siege of the French capital. The sympathies of the civilized world were inclined to a country needlessly attacked. Prayer was answered in the complete, and

almost immediate, subjugation of her foe. But the merciless severity in the offered terms of peace, the enormous indemnity demanded, and the blatant arrogance of the conquering forces, soon commenced an alienation of friendship with other peoples. What little thanksgiving ensued was drowned in the multitudinous voices of pride, conceit, and boastfulness. Ingratitude to God, the Giver of victory, opened the way for a dissemination of the preposterous teaching of Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardi. After four-and-forty years, with an immeasurable self-confidence, Germany is prepared to open war with many nations at once, to shamelessly violate the honour of her word to Belgium, to wage her conflict with an unblushing lack of veracity, and to permit in her ranks acts of cruelty and loathsomeness which have horrified the world. Forgetfulness of God is accompanied by a decay of character which must meet with a just retribution.

Several chapters of our own national history enforce similar conclusions. On the day of the great victory off the mouth of the Nile—August 2, 1798—Nelson gave to his fleet this Order :

Almighty God having blessed His Majesty's arms with victory, the Admiral intends returning public thanksgiving for the same at two o'clock this day, and he recommends every ship doing the same as soon as convenient.

Sir James de Saumarez was the first to respond, giving the signal for his ship's company to assemble at prayer. It was observed that the vessel under command of this remarkable officer was almost the only one in the whole fleet which had not been disturbed by the serious mutiny of the preceding year ; and that his French prisoners, accustomed to the infidelity of the Revolution, were unmistakably impressed by the sight of a crew returning thanks to God before the decks had been cleansed after the sanguinary encounter, or the dead had been interred.

The example spread. Much time was needed in those days before detailed accounts could reach this country. But on November 29 the whole land diligently observed the day of thanksgiving which had been officially appointed. From the "Notes of the Eclectic Society" it appears that the Evangelical clergy—probably others as well—were most careful in their sermons on the occasion to give glory to God, and to avoid the temptations to indulge in a panegyric of national pride or the sophisms of a vindictive triumph. The heart of the people was stirred, and such was the spiritual emotion engendered that the opportunity was afforded for the inauguration of large movements of lasting importance.

To the indifferent it will appear as a curious coincidence, to the faithful as the wise ordering of a Heavenly Father, that practical advantage could now be taken of a religious revival to secure the first accomplishment of designs which had been frequently discussed in the inner councils of the more earnest. The era of foreign missions commenced. The C.M.S. was founded in 1799, the R.T.S. in the same year, the Bible Society in 1804, the London Jews Society in 1809. The movements thus set on foot have steadily augmented in value to this day, and the old principle has been reasserted that "unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." The recognition of the hand of the Almighty in mercies received prepares the way for still greater mercies to follow. A thankful nation is a privileged one.

But in order that the accusations of Satan against the patriarch Job may be constantly refuted, a receptive faith is ever exposed to most searching tests. The time of trial was not long delayed. The dawn of the nineteenth century found England under heavy clouds. Pitt's resignation at that time was a political convulsion of the greatest moment. The country was then dependent for its food upon home-grown supplies, but a small harvest in 1799, and a total failure in 1800, had caused a sharp rise in prices, with a consequent reduction of the populace to severe poverty and destitution. The King's

health was critical in the first appearance of that mental affliction which obscured the later years of his reign. The foreign outlook threatened immediate calamity. Italy and Spain had been subdued by the armies of Napoleon ; Austria had retired defeated from the great European struggle ; Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland, had sought their own interests by entering into alliances with France ; England stood alone. The ambitions of the French Emperor began to prepare an invasion of our shores. Early in the year a day of national humiliation and prayer was appointed. The answers to the petitions of a united people were both abundant and indubitable. By the summer the King had recovered ; a plentiful harvest removed the distress and fears of all ; a series of victories by land and by sea broke the armed forces of France. Preliminaries of peace were signed in October, and a treaty concluded at Amiens on March 27, 1802.

The absence of reference in several of our usual sources of information leads to the conclusion that no proportionate thanksgiving arose to the praise and glory of God. Again the national troubles fell thickly, and were prolonged for several years. Days of special intercession were appointed in 1803, and annually from 1806 to 1812. The chastisement of ingratitude had to be borne. At length Napoleon was utterly beaten. He fled to Elba. Peace was restored. On July 7, 1814, a day of thanksgiving was reverently and heartily observed throughout the country. As though He would show His gracious acceptance of this sacrifice of praise, God permitted the old difficulties to return awhile in 1815 ; but He limited the outbreak to a period of but little more than three months from Napoleon's return, to the crowning victory of Waterloo, and the lifelong restriction of the liberty of that crafty tyrant and warrior. The long history of the Napoleonic wars should convince the most sceptical both of the value of prayer and of the duty of responsive thanksgiving. These spiritual weapons overthrew a vast world-power which had been erected upon the

offensive infidelity of Voltaire and the blasphemous atheism and immorality of the French Revolution.

In truth, the combination of prayer with patriotism often imperilled the forces of Napoleon. By the Peace of Vienna in 1809 Austria ceded the Tyrol, but the peasantry determined to resist. After some days occupied in prayer, their undisciplined and inexperienced bands encountered the French at the bridge of Laditch. At a critical moment in the conflict a crushing avalanche of enormous stones came rattling down the mountain-side, and wrought such devastation that the battle ceased. The bridge which separated the combatants caught fire, and the French retired. Encouraged by this success, the Tyrolese, with further prayer, five times defeated the armies of a country which in all Europe appeared irresistible. Yielding at length to vastly superior numbers, they accepted the terms of a generous accommodation. Their restoration to Austria was later among the firstfruits of the decline of Napoleon's power. Similarly, during the terrible Russian campaign of 1812, the night before the Battle of Borodino the prayers of the Russian troops were audible to, and greeted with derision by, the French soldiers. But when on the following day the Russians held firm, and afterwards only withdrew in accordance with the strategy of their commander, the French were allured to their destruction in the emptiness of devastated Moscow and the indescribable horrors of their own precipitate retreat.

Reflections upon such incidents obtain confirmation from more recent episodes. For many years after 1820 Christian missions in the Turkish Empire were subjected by the Government to various privations and persecutions. The revolt of the Greeks, the Battle of Navarino, and their final independence, produced no softening effects upon the heart of the Sultan. The Russian occupation of Adrianople, the defeat of the army by the Egyptians, and the surrender of the fleet to Mohammed Ali, only hardened him the more. The position became well-nigh intolerable, so that the American Board arranged the observance of New Year's Day, 1840, as an epoch of united

prayer throughout their stations for the removal of their disabilities. Shortly afterwards a new Sultan conceded the liberty and guaranteed the property of every person without restriction of creed. In 1843 the English, French, and Russian Ambassadors obtained a decree for the cessation of all religious intolerance, and similar pledges have since been given from time to time. Turkish perfidy has frequently violated the plighted word and covered the nation with dishonour, but, nevertheless, since 1840 the conditions of Christian work have vastly improved.

The Crimean War broke out in March, 1854. April 24 was appointed in this country as a day of humiliation and prayer. Before our army could reach the sphere of military operations the Russians had been heavily repulsed by the Turks, and the object of the war secured. But pride and militarism induced our statesmen to refuse discussions of peace, and to continue the campaign. The horrors of Sebastopol and Balaclava ensued, but when in the following year the discomfiture of Russia had been so far completed that the prospect of permanent gains, to the satisfaction of Eastern Europe, was imminent, peace was signed on no better terms than could have been earlier obtained. Prayer was answered; but the benefit was lost by haughty and arrogant demands, and punishment came in the temporary withdrawal of spiritual privileges, so that the attitude of Russia was permitted to close for twenty years the mission to the Jews in Warsaw and the district around.

Another day of humiliation and prayer was appointed in this land on October 9, 1857, in consequence of the Indian Mutiny. The speed with which the most gracious answer was vouchsafed may be realized by the eloquent comment contained in the first words of the Recent Intelligence, published in the *C. M. Intelligencer* for the month of November: "It is with devout acknowledgment to the mercy of Almighty God that we issue our Indian Intelligence this month. It will be found to contain the particulars of losses already recorded in general terms; but there is no more of massacre; there are no fresh instances of the destruction of property."

We turn to quite a different source for a last illustration. Since the Reformation English Churchmen have been taught to pray in the Litany that God would "bless and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them." The obligation of gratitude is recognized by the use of Psalm lxvii. as a Canticle at Evening Prayer. "Let the people praise Thee, O God: yea, let all the people praise Thee. THEN shall the earth bring forth her increase: and God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing." But of definite thanksgiving for ingathered harvests the Prayer-Book contains no trace. The religious and civil wars of the seventeenth century, the inertia of the eighteenth, and the distaste of spiritual fervour in the first decades of the nineteenth, produced many separations from the National Church which are now regretted, but cannot be remedied. The historic Church could provide no home for the best and deepest spiritual movements. But her rapid extension the wide world over, and the returning affection of the people at home since the Harvest Festival spontaneously sprang up to replace the orgies of the old harvest-home, and particularly since Convocation in 1870 approved a form of service for use on the occasion of these thanksgivings, give further demonstration of the inseparable bond of prayer and thanksgiving for all who would receive and maintain the blessings of God.

Patriotic ardour is never diminished by piety, but in all directions it is seen to be still true that "righteousness exalteth a nation."

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