

herself, "How dare I tell my mother, she hates this so!" Perhaps so, but she hates concealment more, so that one's advice in any such case would be, "My daughter, go to the best confessor for you—go to your mother and tell her."

It seems to be by the Mothers' Union that the "Elijah Mission" may best be fulfilled, if I have given you the right interpretation of the text. Melancthon tells a touching story in one of his letters. A little child of his, "*Infantula mea*," he calls her, came in unnoticed when her father was silently weeping, and wiped off his tears with her bib. This, says Melancthon, pierced my very soul. Is not this one way in which the hearts of the children are turned to their fathers?

WILLIAM ARMAGH.

THE FAITHLESSNESS OF THE AVERAGE MAN.

(MATTHEW XXV. 18, AND XXIV. 30.)

THE trend of this parable is surely not in the way of our familiar and customary thought. The popular indictment is hurled against the culpability of the rich, the lazy and criminal indifference of the much-endowed. We are prone to shake our heads over the failings and the failures of the children of advantage, the luxurious waste of the well-to-do. It is the wilfulness and degeneracy of the man with the five talents which is usually depicted by our novelists, and the man with the one talent is made to climb the shining gradient of honour and renown. But this parable of the Lord enshrines the impeachment of the average man. The outstandingly gifted man, the five-talented man, does his work and wins his crown. It is the average man, the mediocre man, the man without brilliance and prominent parts, the one talent man, who shirks his responsibility, and buries his powers in a self-made grave. Our Lord indicts the

common man, not leaders and captains and commanders, but the men of the rank and file. In this parable it is mediocrity that runs away from its appointed task. The popular emphasis must be changed, and we must clearly recognize that one of the great weaknesses of the world lies in the faithlessness of the less-endowed man. It is easy to recognize the responsibility which attaches to five talents; it requires a far finer moral perception to see the responsibility which attaches to one. Anybody can see the obligation which attends upon eloquence: how few recognize the obligation which belongs to ordinary speech! A man goes to be minister at some conspicuous Church, and many of his friends write to him emphasizing the vast responsibility he has assumed. How few of them would have used the same emphasis had he been going to minister to a handful of shepherds in some secluded Bethel on some far-stretching moor! We can all see the responsibility that waits upon prominence, but who can see her austere form when she is the attendant of obscurity? It is to correct that negligence, that lack of fine discernment, that this parable was spoken. It proclaims the responsibilities, and therefore the perils, of the commonplace, and it points out the far-reaching destiny which awaits the actions of those who are not gifted with the five-fold crown.

Now let us look at this tragic story, the history of a man who began life with a fair, if slender, endowment, and who ended his days in spiritual darkness and bankruptcy. Where did he begin to go wrong? Where did he take the first turning to his ill-starred destiny? He first went wrong in his perverse and unworthy thinking about himself. It is freely admitted by the Master that his endowments were not conspicuous and obtrusive. His equipment was not so brilliant as the man who had obtained the five talents. And it is just here that his reasoning went astray. He

began to make comparisons between himself and others. He marked the versatility of their gifts, the high positions into which they stepped with natural ease, and the popular acclaim which attended their goings. And because he lacked their brilliance, he despised his own gift. Now comparisons are commonly odious, but in this sphere they are more than odious, they are fraught with dire and speedy peril. We cannot safely make disparaging comparisons between showy gifts and gifts of a quieter hue. How can we compare candles and stars? One moves in a firmament, the other dwells in a scullery: but each has its own peculiar and distinctive ministry, and if I want to find my way in obscure and winding cellarings I prefer the flicker of the friendly candle to the exalted radiance of the star. We cannot all be stars, but it is essential to remember that if we are only common candles a ministry has been committed to us of which the star itself has been deprived. There are services committed to the man with the one talent in which the five-talent man would be altogether incompetent. Why, then, sit down and indulge in self-disparaging comparisons, the hen envying the eagle, and the useful vegetable coveting the glory of the resplendent rose? But this, indeed, is where our man's mistake began. He became fascinated with the glamour of the more obtrusive gift, and so he disparaged and despised his own.

But he not only ignored the unique ministry of the individual gift, he absolutely ignored the law of mental and spiritual increase in obedience to which a slender gift becomes enlarged. He wanted a harvest without husbandry, he wanted multiplication without work. He overlooked the great law that gift is increased by faithfulness, and that expert power is acquired in the ways of obedience. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." That is not an arbitrary addition,

a kind of capricious appendix which may or may not be reached. It is a natural and inevitable harvest, as sure as the life and love of God. One talent faithfully used becomes two ; two talents become four ; and so on in never-ending multiplication through all the evolving glory of the endless years. That is the vast and alluring prospect of the immortal hope. Through ever-added obedience we shall attain to ever-intensified gift, and in the ever-enlarging perception heaven will be to us a ceaseless surprise ! Such is the law of increase, and it operates here and now. This man ignored it. Because he had not a great capital he would not work with the little he had. Because he could not open shop in the Metropolis he would have nothing to do with his native village. And so he let his capital lie idle. He allowed his gift to rust. His life was uninvested, unused in the general currency of the world's affairs. " He went away, and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." He went through his days regarding himself as poor, and shrinking from every call to service on the plea of humility, and ever affirming that he had nothing wherewith to serve the race. And all the time there was that grave he had dug, and in it his Master's buried money, which, if it had been brought out and used, would have been enriching his kind all along the way. " But no ! " he said, " it is only one ! " If it had been five, he would have opened a banking account ! But he said, " It is only one, what is the use of it ? " And that is the colossal misreckoning which renders countless multitudes of mediocre lives ineffective and fruitless. " It is only one ! " Nay, it is " only one " plus the Giver of it, the Lord of power and glory ! This is the line of high and inspiring reasoning : it speaks in this wise :—" Here is my one talent, my little-endowed and commonplace life ; but what cannot my Lord do with it if I wholly dedicate it to His service ? "

We are not to limit our possibilities to the measure of the five loaves ; we have the five loaves plus the Lord of the Harvest, and it is in this Divine combination that we attain the possibility of feeding the multitude. The man of the parable fixed his eyes upon the five loaves and ignored the possibility of an immediate harvest. He gazed at his little talent and he left out God.

Now our thoughts never travel alone. Every thought is attended by its own retinue of thoughts which follow in its train. This man's personal thought of his own useless mediocrity was creative of moral neglect. That is to say, his thought fashioned his habit. But habit itself is reactive and is the minister and creative of thought. His customary indolence, born of unwise self-disparagement, will itself become a fashioner of thought and so help the creation of further habit. What kind of mental influence will be engendered by his moral indolence ? How will he think of God ? Neglect of duty will always operate in shaping and colouring our thoughts of the Divine. Let us trace this man's reasoning. He said to himself, " I have but little capital ; with so small an endowment I can achieve nothing ! " And so with that conception he attempted nothing. But it was whispered to him that God will expect a return. " A return ? Then He is a hard man ! He expects a harvest where He gave no seed ! He reaps where He has not sown, and He gathers where He has not strawed ! He looks for interest, and He gave no capital ! He expects much, and He gave nothing ! " Such is the heated and peevish indictment which arises from a life that is moving in the ways of moral negligence. " Lay the blame on God ! " " Thou art a hard man ! " How perverse is the reasoning ! But whenever there is dirt in the heart there will be dust in the eyes. There is a vast amount of perverse thinking about God which arises from the

degeneracy of an uninvested life. There is nothing so strengthens and clarifies our thought of the Almighty like the faithful and scrupulous discharge of duty. "If any man will do the will, he shall know . . ." Every talent, wisely invested, increases the depth and range of our spiritual perceptions. But if our talents are laid aside in indolence, we are burying the very lenses through which we are to perceive and interpret the things of God. "Eyes have they, but they see not."

Let us follow on with the dark succession. We cannot keep our thoughts in one compartment and our emotions in another. We are not built in isolated sections, one section existing in utter aloofness from the other. Man's primary thoughts inevitably influence his basal emotions, and in the experience of this particular man they roused the ministry of fear. "I was afraid." Not that he was terrified, but that he was possessed by a shrinking unwillingness to think of God at all. If any of his friends guided the conversation in the direction of the Highest, this man would adroitly turn the subject. It was with the utmost difficulty that the thought of the Almighty was obtruded into any intercourse with him. Anything but that! He became like unto those of whom the Apostle Paul speaks in the Epistle to the Romans. "They refused to have God in their thoughts." The element was uncongenial, and in its presence he became the child of anxiety and unrest. And that is how it is with multitudes of people whose Divine endowment is rusting, and who have not enlisted their strength in the common service. Their alienation from the Lord is reflected in their unwillingness to think about Him and to welcome any thoughts of His appearing. If we were morally and spiritually healthy, we should recall the thoughts of God as fervently and joyfully as a faithful husband recalls the thought of his loving and devoted wife. And yet mark the issue of the fear. It

accomplished nothing of moral amendment. It may have occasionally moved him to pray, or even led him to some place of public worship, although I rather think that it more commonly led him to bury himself in deeper alienation from his Lord. Fear is no minister of consecration. The neglect was continued. Nay, he dug the grave a little deeper, and hid his Lord's money in a more selfish and corrupting indolence.

But now, where is all this to end ? What of the Nemesis of destiny ? We cannot bury our talents and keep them. In God's universe there is a law of degeneracy and decay as well as a law of renewal and progress, and buried wealth always becomes the victim of corruption. "Take from him the talent !" That is no arbitrary decree. Nor is it a judgement proclaimed in some solemn and ultimate hour when we appear in the immediate presence of God. That supreme season is always present. "Now is the judgement." The forces of corruption are at work upon the talent from the first moment of its burial. We begin to lose it the very moment we cease to use it. The life that bears no interest shall lose its capital too ! "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." If we live a life of thoughtless selfishness, all the altruistic tendrils in our soul will begin to wither away. That is an awful and appalling possibility. A man may begin his life with a little capital and he may end it with no capital at all.

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." Again, I say, this is no arbitrary and capricious judgement. If we blow out our lights, if we quench and smother them in selfish and thoughtless indolence, what else can we expect but the darkness ? It is beautiful, when men grow old, to watch how every talent, having been well and wisely used, burns and shines like a lamp. It is beautiful to see such men in their eventide, every room in their life

lit up, the house resounding with music, and everything ready for the coming of the King. But it is pathetic and chilling to see men arrive with their lights out, already in the darkness, already in the desolation which is the doom of those who live in idle alienation from God. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." I have nothing to say about that. I will leave the words just as they stand. Those tears, those bitter tears, falling in the night, the night of abiding remorse! I will leave it there. The life, which began in foolish self-disparagement, ends in dark and wintry bankruptcy.

J. H. JOWETT.

OLD TESTAMENT NOTES.

P's GENEALOGICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL LISTS.

It has long been the accepted view of Old Testament scholars that the numbers of the Israelites during their journey from Egypt into Palestine are devoid of historical value. But few serious attempts have been made to discover their origin and the system upon which they were based, and their seeming verisimilitude has not infrequently been taken as proof of their genuineness. It was recognized (by Nöldeke) that a round total of 600,000 was divided among the twelve tribes, and so manipulated that half should be over and half under the average number, and B. Jacob has recently made a comprehensive examination of the principles which appear to have been employed. In *Der Pentateuch: Exegetisch-kritische Forschungen* (Leipzig) he discusses the passages in the Pentateuch wherein tribal lists and enumerations occur, and finds throughout the same artificial, or, to use his term, arithmetical treatment. He illustrates by this means the favourite use of the numbers 7, 12 and 70, which underlie the system, and collects numer-