

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW

Published by Funk & Wagnalls Company, 44-60 E. 23d St., N. Y. Isaac K. Funk, Pres., A. W. Wagnalls, Vice-Pres. and Treas., Rob't Scott, Sec.

VOL. LIV.

NOVEMBER, 1907

No. 5

EDITORIAL COMMENT

"Thought is valuable in proportion as it is generative."

THE Hague Conference has come to an end after four months of hard work.

It has not accomplished all **Results of** that was hoped or even **the Hague** reasonably expected. It **Confer-** has, however, amply just-
ence fied its existence, and does not, we think, deserve the ironical criticism which has been heaped upon it in this country.

Serious difficulties attended the meeting. The delegates came from all the countries of the world. They came with their historic prejudices, their inherited animosities, their special interests, their differences of race, language, methods, and legislation. It was the first time that all the Powers, great and small, from the Old World and the New, had met each other in a general conference. That the delegates, under these conditions, continued in session for four months, discussing earnestly, with perfect frankness, and yet with unflinching good-will, the difficult problems before them is the great accomplishment. History records nothing else like it; and history will record this as the veritable inauguration of the parliament of the world, now clearly in sight.

In positive achievement the Conference has done much more than many suppose. In the matter of the restriction and regulation of war, still unfortunately a recognized method of dealing with international controversies, it has done much to stay the hand of passion and violence, to extend and safeguard the rights of neutrals, to

protect non-combatants, and to restrict the pretensions and so-called rights of belligerents. It has provided that a declaration of war shall always precede hostilities, that unfortified coast cities and ports shall not be bombarded, that submarine mines shall not be so placed as seriously to endanger neutral commerce, that explosives shall not be dropt from air-ships, that the territory of neutrals shall be inviolable. All these are in the direction of the preservation and confirmation of peace.

The Conference, further, has extended the Red Cross Convention to maritime warfare; it has created an international prize court to supplant the *ex-parte* national prize courts which have heretofore passed upon maritime captures; it has strengthened the provision of the first Hague Conference for commissions of inquiry to investigate disputed facts before resort to hostilities. It has thus widened the sphere of mercy, and strengthened the power of reason and law in international affairs.

On the subject of armaments, tho no agreement was reached for limitation, the Conference has exprest regret at the increase of armaments since the first Hague Conference, and urged the governments to take up the serious study of the problem. In other words, the commonwealth of the nations, through its authorized representatives, has voted its solemn disapproval of the present growth and rivalry of armaments. That is something, and it will

than the head, because they are expecting to be reunited there to those from whom they have been separated in this world. Some feel the attraction most in the conscience, being weary of the struggle with sin and the clinging presence of a body of death, and longing for a condition of moral perfection. But the intellectual attraction is well fitted to be a strong one, too. Many in this world have little opportunity of mental development, like those of whom it was sung:

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repress their noble rage
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Such will, in the next life, have ample opportunity to harvest the treasures of the mind which they have missed in this one. Intellects which have been dull and obstructed here will there experience a glorious emancipation; while those who in this world have been intellectually great, in comparison with

the majority, but, like one of the greatest, have felt themselves to be but as children picking up a few shells on the shore of truth, while the vast ocean stretched before them, unknown and unexplored, will there have ample leisure and boundless scope for the prosecution of their successful investigations.

For the scholar, the thinker, the lover of truth there is a heaven no less than for the ignorant and the erring; and an expansion of knowledge, endless and ever growing, is one element in the prize presented to our ambition when we are urged to "lay hold on eternal life." For learned and unlearned, nevertheless, there is only one way of attaining the goal. The only way to lay hold on eternal life is to lay a hand of faith on Him who says: "I am the resurrection and the life; if a man believe on me, tho he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

THE SOWER

BY RUSSELL CECIL, D.D., PRESBYTERIAN, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.

Behold, a sower went forth to sow.—Matt. xiii. 3.

OUR Lord was sitting in a ship when He spoke this parable of the sower to a vast multitude of people who were assembled on the shore. No doubt, He could see the plowed field sloping from the crest of the mountain down to the water's edge, with its deep loamy soil, with the foot-path running through it, with the stony point appearing here and there above the surface, with the occasional patch of thorns and briars which the laborers had been unable to subdue, and with flocks of birds circling through the air above it ready to seize upon any precious seeds which were exposed to view; and it is more than probable that He could see the sower also with the bag of grain upon his arm going forth to sow or already engaged in his work. Jesus often based His teaching upon concrete events transpiring immediately under His eyes, and this custom gave to the lessons He taught a significance deeply impressive and sometimes startling to His hearers.

The famous French painter, Jean François Millet, the creator of those masterpieces of art, "The Angelus," "The Gleaners," and

"The Man with the Hoe," gained his first reputation as a portrayr of peasant life by a picture called "The Sower," which many competent critics have pronounced the greatest of that remarkable series which came from his hand. It is an excellent illustration of the sower in our Lord's parable. I have the impression that the artist must have had this parable in mind, as well as the peasant life of France, when he executed his great conception. He came from a peasant's home himself, a home of simple and unaffected piety; he was a man of deep religious experience; and "The Sower" was painted at a crisis in his career, when, disgusted with the frivolity and sin of Paris and the kind of work he was compelled to do there in order to earn a living, he forsook the gay capital and took up his residence in the country. "The Sower" embodied his idea of life and its labors.

We usually think of our Lord's parable as applying to the preacher of the Word and his hearers, and seriously that is the only truth in it, but it also has wider application. It may be truly said of every young person, man or woman, who enters upon the serious duties of life, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow."

Every sower should be conscious of the value of his work. The soil must be prepared with diligent and painstaking labor, and the seed must be selected with care, attention being given to the quality of it and its freedom from tares. One can not anticipate a generous harvest except from good seed sown upon good ground, but when this preparation has been intelligently and honestly made, the sowing remains a very important matter. When the sower goes forth to sow, he should remember his responsibility, and what valuable interests are at stake in the work which he is proposing to do. Unless he performs his task skilfully and conscientiously, the results will be manifest in a poor harvest, and multitudes who are dependent upon it for bread will suffer hunger. In agricultural districts where men know so well the value of the harvest for the sustenance of the people and for the great interests of commerce, the sowing of seed is regarded with serious concern. In my boyhood, which was spent in the country, I have frequently seen the sower go forth in the morning to sow his seed, and I well remember the deliberate and often solemn manner in which, after taking the bag upon his arm, he would catch up a handful of seed and then would stand for a moment looking across the field and fix his eyes upon some distant object as a kind of guiding star before stepping forth to his task. In rural France where Millet was reared and where, with the exception of a few unhappy years in Paris, he lived all of his life in poverty, and where thousands of people are absolutely dependent for bread upon their daily toil, the sower of seed performs a sacred ministry. This was true also in Palestine in the days of our Lord. In our parable Jesus seized upon a matter of vital importance to His hearers with which to illustrate some characteristics of His kingdom. When He began this discourse from His pulpit on the sea, with the words, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow," His audience upon the shore understood what He meant, and their attention was immediately arrested.

Our task in life is that of a sower of seed. Whatever vocation we may have chosen for ourselves, or in whatever way our time and energies may be employed, we are sowers of seed. We should be conscious of that fact, and conscious also of the vital interests involved in it. When Millet started to Paris to study his art, his pious grandmother,

who was also his godmother, and to whose hand the rearing of him as a child had been committed while his own mother labored in the field, said to him, "Remember how I promised at the baptismal font, that you would renounce the devil and all his works; and know, my dear child, that I had rather hear that you were dead than that you had been unfaithful to the laws of God." A little later in his career, she wrote to him and reminded him of that remarkable expression of another great artist who said, "I paint for eternity," and endeavored to impress him with the importance of having a noble purpose in his work. It should not be surprising to us, when we know these things, that Millet should have renounced in disgust the study of frivolous and sensuous subjects, in which in early life he had become a recognized master, and that he should have become such an earnest sower of good seed in the production of that series of marvelous pictures to which allusion has been made, with which he has blest the world. As sowers of seed we should have an earnest purpose. It is an obligation which every one of us owes to our own generation and to the generations that are to follow us to cherish high and holy aims in living and toiling that the harvest which ripens from our labors, perhaps much of it after we are gone, may be a blessing and not a curse to our fellow men. Dante makes one of his characters in the other world, in speaking of his life on earth, call it "The time of my debt." What an impressive thought that is! This life is the time of our debt. Let us honestly endeavor to discharge it.

Every sower should accompany his work with prayer. It is said to be a custom, which may be observed in that part of France where Millet was reared, for the sower to begin his task with a prayer to God upon his lips. That is certainly a very appropriate and beautiful custom which should be practised by every sower of precious seed. Prayer is a recognition of his dependence upon God for the germination of the seed in the soil, and for rain and sunshine which are necessary for the growth of the plant and for the ripening of the harvest. The sower should be a man of faith in "the Lord of the harvest." The soil is prepared at great expense of time and toil; the precious seed which perhaps he needs for food for his loved ones is scattered broadcast over the field; it disappears from view, it can not be gathered together again,

it is apparently lost forever; there follow long and weary months of waiting for the sprout, for the stalk, for the full corn in the ear; and all the while he is absolutely helpless; he can not force it nor hurry it, but is dependent upon God. He must find solace in prayer, in faith, in the promise of God that while the world stands seed-time and harvest shall never fail.

It is very unwise for us to endeavor or to get away from God or to be forgetful of our dependence upon Him. There is an old Latin proverb to the effect that to pray well is to labor well, which should never be forgotten. Why should the man of prayerless life expect God to bless his life and work? If we desire His blessing upon our daily task, let us ask Him for it. Live in the consciousness that He is our Father, that all we have comes from Him, that we are constantly dependent upon Him, and that, therefore, we should be in daily communion with Him, and should make known our desires without hesitation or wavering.

Every sower should remember that his work involves sacrifice. Another interesting custom said to prevail in the agricultural districts of France is that the sower, just before he begins, takes a handful of seed and makes the sign of the cross in the air. What a suggestive and instructive movement that is!

There is a certain emblematic significance in sowing seed. The seed when thrown upon the ground is consigned to death, as Jesus was when appointed to the cross. Our Lord, in anticipation of His crucifixion said, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." When the sower makes the sign of the cross and begins to scatter the seed, it means that the hour has come for that seed to be glorified. It is then cast into the ground to die that it may obtain a better resurrection; that it may rise in newness of life and blossom out into the glory of an abundant harvest for the benefit of man and beast.

So the Lord Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." His death, like that

of the seed, was in order to life. That He might not abide alone forever as the only Son of God, but might multiply the children of the Father into a vast multitude which no man can number, the Lord Jesus Christ was sown upon the field of Golgotha, He died and was buried in order that He might be glorified, and in being glorified Himself might bring many others to glory with Him. When He arose from the dead, God gave Him glory. The mighty harvest of souls which He redeemed has been ripening ever since, and they are being daily gathered into the eternal garner of God.

When Jesus Himself went forth to sow He knew what it involved, and He did not flinch or withhold His hand. He made the sign of the cross almost at the beginning; He set His face stedfastly toward Jerusalem, and He would not consent to be turned aside from His high and holy purpose to give His life for the sins of His people. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." What a blest thing it was for us that this sower went forth to sow, and that He was lifted up to die! He shunned not the sufferings of the cross that He might make atonement for our sins and bring many sons with Him to glory.

Has not the hour come for our lives to be glorified? If Jesus was glorified by the cross we must be glorified in the same way. He says, "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." Our life will be glorified, if we accept the crucified Jesus as our Savior and Lord, and follow Him. Every life is glorified which touches His cross and is crucified with Him. Every soul that by faith goes with Jesus to Calvary and sees there the sacrifice for his sins is forgiven and justified and made glorious with the life everlasting.

Has not the hour come for our life to be made glorious in self-sacrificing labor? The corn of wheat that is not cast into the ground and dies, abides alone. It brings forth no fruit. We can never become fruitful until we are willing to be made like our Master. If we insist upon living selfishly, for the gratification of our carnal appetites and pleasures; if we insist upon saving ourselves from work and worry, from the sacrifice of ease, from hardness, from anguish of soul, from dis-

agreeable sights and sounds and associations, in short, from following our Savior with the cross to which He has appointed us, our life can never be made glorious. "He that will save his life," says Jesus, "will lose it, but he that will lose his life for my sake and the gospels, shall save it." The amaranthine crown of glory for the Christian lies in the path of sacrifice, and that runs by the way of the cross.

With what a rhythmic walk and action every sower should proceed with his work! Take a look a Millet's great picture. Observe how bold and confident the stride of the sower as he passes back and forth with measured tread across the field.

He is working for God and for eternity. How inspiring the sight to him who would sow in the hearts of sinful men the precious seeds of truth! Be courageous, brethren, you who are endeavoring to teach the people the way of life from the Word of God. There is no more sacred ministry than this! You have no need to be timid and apologetic in speech and manner. You are toiling for God and the souls of men, and such work calls for no defense.

Observe the tireless swing of the sower's arm as he scatters the grain upon the hungry soil. He will not cease until his task is done,

or until the evening hour, when, as Vergil beautifully says, "The great shadows seek the plain." The sower must not weary in well-doing; "for," says the apostle, "in due season, we shall reap if we faint not." Many tire soon of sowing, but the worker for God should not forget that while one soweth another reapeth, and the work is all of one. He that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together, as both of them receive wages, and gather fruit unto life eternal.

Observe also the look of hope in the sower's eyes. Now, he knows, are the days of toil and hardship to be followed by months of patient prayer and waiting, but it will not always be thus. God does not forget His workers. Rain and sunshine will come, the season will pass, yet a few months and then cometh the harvest and the time of rejoicing.

Much of our time is to be spent in sowing. Let us be sure that the seed we sow is good, and that we are diligent in our efforts. The harvest will come by and by. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," if not here, then in the life beyond.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROVIDENCE—A HARVEST SERMON

BY THE REV. GEORGE HANSON, D.D., PRESBYTERIAN, LONDON.

Doth the plowman plow all day, etc.—Isa. xxviii. 24-29.

THE prophet has just announced the approach of calamity: the judgment of God, he forewarns the people, is about to fall on Israel: "The Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; that he may do his work, his strange work."

But the Jews would not believe that any such fate was in store for them. Were they not the chosen people? Had they not been called out of Egypt and redeemed with signal proofs of the divine power? Had they not been preserved by the divine favor, and was not their country a "land of promise," secured to them by an indefeasible title? How, then, was it consistent with God's covenant and dealings with them to drive them into exile and deprive them of the possessions and privileges which, by His special grace,

they had so long enjoyed? How could such severity, amounting to the decimation of the nation and the destruction of their corporate life, be reconciled either with God's assurances of protection or with the actual proofs of His watchfulness over the people and His solicitude for their preservation and well-being? The scattering of the nation far and wide and the sending of them forth into captivity seemed so incompatible with the whole history of God's relations with Israel that the "scornful men" flouted Isaiah's solemn warnings and proclaimed Israel invulnerable: "We have," they cried, with blasphemous bravado, "made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us." The prophet's reply is the parable of the farmer, tilling the soil, sowing the seed, reaping the harvest, threshing and grinding the grain.