



The
CHRISTIAN TREASURY

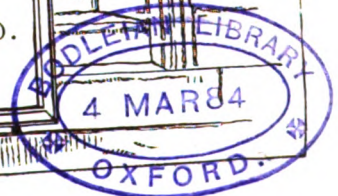
CONTAINING

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MINISTERS AND MEMBERS
OF
VARIOUS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS



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CHRISTIAN TREASURY.

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FOOLISHNESS AND POWER.*

BY EUGENE BERSIER, PASTOR OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF PARIS.

‘For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us
which are saved it is the power of God.’—1 Cor. i. 18.



FOOLISHNESS—power! These are the two names that Paul here gives to the preaching of the cross. I propose, my brethren, to study in succession these two ideas, in order afterwards to show you the tie that closely unites them together. This will be the plan

of our reflections.

The preaching of the cross is **FOOLISHNESS**. I pray you to remark, my brethren, that it is not an enemy of the gospel, but an Apostle, who says this to us. Christianity has not waited until the world cast this reproach at it; it has not left it this satisfaction. This insult it has itself seized, and been the first to claim as its lawful property. And let not men say to us that it is here a figure of speech, a bold apostrophe, that has escaped from the Apostle. The gospel is sparing in its use of these exaggerated epithets, of these figures of rhetoric; and, moreover, the same thought is found underlying the entire teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ presented His doctrine as a thing that the world would charge with folly. He clearly speaks of the incompatibility that there is between man's view of things and that which He preached; He foretold

His disciples that they would meet with opposition, hatred, and contempt.

This is, indeed, a strange method of seeking to gain men; so strange that it would be foolishness if it did not show a divine inspiration. Usually, when a man wishes to succeed, he promises to himself and to his disciples success. Every general well knows that in order to succeed he must announce victory to his soldiers. It is the same in the order of intelligence; a philosopher, a chief of a school, is forced to prove that his doctrine answers to all the needs of the age, and will satisfy all its aspirations; he points out intelligences already prepared to embrace it, and proselytes who are about to range themselves under his standard. We ourselves, sometimes yielding to this attraction, have we not announced the near triumph of our beliefs! Jesus Christ alone said to His disciples, ‘You will be judged, calumniated, hated because of My name;’ and it is this thought that Paul takes up when he speaks with so much assurance of the foolishness of the cross.

The cross specially merited this distinction and this reproach, for it is it which epitomises our entire Christianity. It is its centre; it is in it, above all, that there appeared what was strange and opposed to human wisdom. The preaching of the cross was designed to be foolishness; it has been so, my brethren, and Paul has said not a word too much.

And, first of all, considering it only from an

* Translated from the French for the *Christian Treasury*, by permission of the author, from the seventh edition of the second volume of his sermons. Paris: M. Fischbacher.

another. And it was, for she was like other girls in many respects, by no means perfect, and there were times when I hesitated about doing or saying things because of the effect they might have on her.'

'What ever became of her, mamma?' asked Alice. 'Where did she go when she left you?'

'She never left me, dear, and if you listen, you will hear her singing now to brother Willie.'

'Do you mean that she is Mary, our own Mary, who nursed us all? Oh, that is the very best story you have ever told us,' said Charley, while Ralph said soberly—

'I see, mother, where the thoughts come in that you intended for me, and I want to tell you that it helps to prove what uncle told me on Sunday night, that the little things of earth are sometimes the great things of heaven.'

—*American Messenger.*

GOD'S FATHERLY DISCIPLINE.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

IT is exceedingly important that we should have right views and right feelings about our Heavenly Father. We are only His children, with all the limitations of childhood. A Galileo, in God's sight, is but a child, playing with a telescope; a Shakespeare is a gifted child painting pictures of Nature and humanity; a Luther is an eager child studying his great Bible-lesson. That our Father in Heaven treats us as children is one of the clearest truths in His Word; and we ought to recognise it just as clearly in all His providential dealings.

If this be our actual relation to God, it is vitally important to our happiness and our spiritual growth that we have both a filial conception of Him and a filial faith that He will always do what is exactly right. Do we all have this just conception and this implicit confidence? Are we not too often tempted into a secret distrust of His absolute fairness, justice, and loving-kindness? Do we not often feel as if God has been hard with us, and has not done unto us what was, in our judgment, absolutely kind and right? Have we ever been as perfectly willing to bless God when He was taking away from us as when He was giving to us? I fear not. I fear that we too often insist on being the undisputed owners and sovereigns of whatever He has entrusted to us; we claim all these things in fee simple, and write on them, '*mine*; my property, my family, my life.' When we lose what we thus claim as personal possessions we are wounded, and weep bitterly, and gnash our teeth at God as a hard-hearted tyrant; and we do this to the utter wreck of our filial confidence in a Father who actually loves us better than we can love ourselves.

Now here was the beauty and the blessedness of Job's discovery. He discovered that God had a perfect right to 'take away,' because He only took what was His own. He recognised the fact that God was the sovereign possessor of every inch of those pasture-fields, and every sheep and ox in the herds, and of every child in that house whose 'four corners' had been laid low by the hurricane. Job does not even say, the Lord gave, and the

Sabeans and the Chaldeans and the tempest have swept it all away; his sagacious and sublime exclamation is—'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; *blessed be the name of the Lord!*' This noble utterance of the suffering patriarch throws an electric light on the great practical question of God's fatherly discipline, which shines clear on to us through the centuries.

This loving discipline has several purposes; and one of them is *correction*. Who knows our faults as well as our all-wise Father? It is a reasonable supposition that before the infinite mind of God there rises a complete and beautiful ideal of what His earthly child might be, and what he will yet be in the perfected estate of heaven. He so deals with us as to bring us nearer to that divine ideal. Before the mind of my friend Palmer there arose a certain conception of 'Faith kneeling before the Cross;' and he aimed to realise that conception in marble. With patient toil he applies the chisel to every false line that his artist-eye detects in the statue; no touch too trivial, if it cuts away the slightest blemish. So our Heavenly Father employs the chisel of correction; and many of us know to our sorrow that He cuts deeply, and sometimes cuts to the quick. He is a weak and worthless parent indeed, who imitates poor Eli, and never corrects the vices of his son. Can we suppose that our loving Father will ever commit so wanton a wrong as to spare His chastising rod, and thus spoil His earthly child for all the highest purposes of being? The bare thought is an insult. If we had more of the spirit of Job, and knew what was for our good, we would rather say—Father, stay not Thy hand, cut where Thou wilt; smite as Thou wilt; prune away as Thou wilt; perfect Thine image in us, and make us meet for the inheritance of glory! 'Happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.' It is a blessed thought that, when our Heavenly Father applies the knife, He hath the skill to cut the diseased spot; when He prunes, He knows just what limb to lop off. It looks like a ruthless process to put a plough through a velvet greensward; but the farmer foresees the springing blades, and that within a few

months the torn soil will laugh with a golden harvest. Why should you and I cry out in angry remonstrance when God puts the colter through the subsoil of our selfishness? Deep ploughing makes holy harvests. Ah! brethren, there are bitter mercies as well as sweet mercies; but all are mercies, whether they are given to us in wine or given in worm-wood.

2. A second purpose of God's discipline is *prevention*. His absolute foreknowledge beholds every possible contingency, and foresees not only what you and I will be, but also what we *might* be under other circumstances. It is against this preventive discipline of love that our ignorance often rebels most violently. Because we cannot see just what God is saving us *from*, we vent our foolish reproaches; if we could see this, we would often kneel down and thank God for certain trials as the richest of His mercies. That commercial calamity which swept away the fortune was sent because God foresaw that prosperity would work spiritual bankruptcy. When He lowered another into a vale of humiliation, it was to preserve His child from the dizziness which pride was bringing on; and when He laid another Christian's idol in the tomb, it was God's last inevitable protest against a worship that was perilous to both the living and the departed. From the 'evil to come' God spares the living as often as the dead. When we reach heaven we will wonder at and adore the chastening hand that often warded us away from many an unsuspected pitfall and many an unseen precipice.

3. We need hardly remind our readers how often our Heavenly Father employs His discipline for the development of character, and for the perfecting of graces. A boy reared up in luxury and indolence becomes mere pulp. God often lays heavy burdens upon us, which He could easily spare us as far as His power is concerned; but these loads are required to give us spiritual sinew. He makes the back equal to the burden. God might keep us, if He would, out of many a heated furnace of affliction. But He is a refiner; and hot furnaces often make bright Christians. They tell us that, when a silversmith is engaged in purifying his metal, he keeps a close eye on the molten silver. He is sure that the process is perfected when he can see his own face in the heated metal as in a mirror. So when our heavenly Purifier can see His own image in the chastened soul He is satisfied. The trial has wrought its blessed purpose; the affliction which was not joyous but grievous is working out its exceeding weight of glory.

4. God disciplines us often for the good of others. Parents are subjected to a certain regimen for the benefit of their children. More than one pastor has been tried in the fire for the profit of his flock. 'Six weeks of painful, dangerous sickness did more for me than six months in a theological seminary,' said a sagacious minister. That model minister in Rome wrote to his son Timothy — 'Therefore, I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.'

ANNIE'S NEW MOTTO.

BY FAITH HAMILTON.

ACT so that every one whom you meet in your daily life will be the happier for having met you.' The paper containing these words lay on the sitting-room table, and as Annie Egbert entered the room they caught her eye. The paper itself was not new, but that paragraph had never before been noticed. Though she had probably heard the same idea expressed in other ways, these words seemed particularly to arrest her attention. She read the sentence, and then, as if interested, went over it again more slowly, and afterwards repeated it aloud.

'I wonder,' she thought, 'if mother ever took that for a motto? She certainly does make every one about her happy, whether she ever saw this or not. And what do I do? Does any one feel happier for meeting me? I don't see how people can be so pleasant and cheerful when they have a dreadful headache or a hard cold. But then mother does it.'

Annie was not usually an unhappy young lady, but she had fallen into the habit of wearing, not exactly a gloomy face, but a very sober

one, when anything vexed or troubled her, or when she felt tired or sick. She was exceedingly undemonstrative, and only on rare occasions did other people get the benefit of her pleasant thoughts. In short, she had not learned the secret of getting out of self and of helping others by kindly, loving words, spoken just at the right time and in the right place.

'Now,' she continued, soliloquising, 'why shouldn't I try the motto and see if I am really capable of adding to other people's happiness? I suppose the first requisite to success is really to *desire* to make others happy by assisting them in any way I can. Then, if I take this for a motto, I must keep a very cheerful face, no matter how I feel.'

Annie stood several minutes thinking of the words, and weighing the pros and cons of the new undertaking.

'I'll try it first to-day,' she said, aloud, at length, 'and see if it will do any good.'

Have you ever noticed how soon newly-formed resolutions are tested? If not, just make a good resolve and see how short a time will elapse before some unexpected circumstances will try its strength. Annie found out