

The Bible on Riches.

The Young Men's Christian Association of Cleveland Ohio is discussing the subject of riches and attempting to apply the Bible to present day conditions. As the question is of more or less interest to all, the following reply to an inquiry is given:

Dear Sir—I am in receipt of your favor asking for an opinion as to the present application of the first six verses of the fifth chapter of James, and saying that a similar request had been sent to a number of other persons. The passage referred to reads:

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

2. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

4. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

5. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

6. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you."

James, in the language quoted, condemned the practices indulged in by the rich to whom he was addressing his rebuke, and, since moral truths do not change, the same rebuke would under the same circumstances and conditions be administered to-day.

In considering a man's riches we must inquire, first, how they were acquired; second, how they are employed, and, third, what effect the possession of them has wrought upon his character.

The verses quoted furnish an answer to all three questions so far as they apply to the persons whom James was addressing. Verses four and six charge them with dishonesty, fraud and murder in acquiring their money; verse five warrants the conclusion that they were spending their money in the purchase of pleasure; and from the entire passage it is evident that the possession of riches had dwarfed their natures and deformed their characters.

In applying the text to the present day three propositions should be borne in mind:

First—No money is, in a moral sense, earned unless the person who receives the money makes to society an adequate return for the same. This does not exclude an inheritance. A person can inherit from an ancestor physical strength or mental vigor as well as money, just as he may involuntarily acquire high ideals and virtuous inclinations from the environment of youth, but all these gifts impose upon him a responsibility for their proper use. If one inherits money which was originally acquired by unlawful means, and accepts it with knowledge of the fact, he is in the position of one who receives stolen goods.

Second—Morally speaking, only that use of money can be defended which sustains, develops and strengthens the user and qualifies him for greater usefulness. In this connection he is to consider not only himself, but those also with whose care and welfare he is charged.

Third—The possession of wealth, if rightfully acquired and properly used, need not necessarily injure its possessor or exert a baleful influence upon his character. But that it may, and often does, contract his sympathies and separate him from his fellow men, is too evident to admit of refutation. No limit can be fixed with mathematical accuracy but wealth becomes a misfortune whenever it disqualifies his possessor for the discharge of the duties which he owes to society.

It is not money itself, but the love of it and the

struggle for it, to the neglect of more important things, that operate injuriously.

Paul in his first epistle to Timothy, chapter six, says:

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

And, to cite the highest authority, Christ, in explaining the parable of the sower, Matt, chapter thirteen, said:

"He also that receiveth seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

Agur, speaking seven hundred years before the Christian era, expressed a wish for himself, (Proverbs, 30. 8.) that contains so much philosophy as well as morality that it cannot be improved upon even today:

"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full and deny thee and say Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

In applying scriptural truths to every day life it is difficult for one person to pass judgment upon the conduct of another, for no one is in possession of all the facts which affect the decision of his neighbor. The most that can be said is that each should subject his own conduct to frequent scrutiny to the end that he may always be able to defend it on moral as well as legal grounds.

Yours truly,

W. J. BRYAN.

Destroying the Civil Service.

The republican platform of 1896 pledged fidelity to the civil service system. Mr. McKinley, in his letter of acceptance, emphasized that pledge; and yet, during his first administration, with one stroke of the pen, Mr. McKinley removed several thousand public officers from the civil service list.

Recently a vacancy on the Civil Service Commission was to be filled. Mr. McKinley appointed for that place former Congressman Rodenberg of Illinois.

The New York Times has discovered that on February 17, 1900, while Mr. Rodenberg was a member of Congress, Congressman Mudd, a republican from Maryland, moved to strike from an appropriation bill the amount provided for the payment of the expenses of the Civil Service Commission for the fiscal year. Congressman Rodenberg voted in favor of Congressman Mudd's motion, thus placing himself on record as being antagonistic to the civil service system.

The Philadelphia Times, commenting upon this strange appointment, says:

"Many members of Congress have been, like the Maine statesman with regard to prohibition, in favor of civil service reform but 'agin' its enforcement. Mr. Rodenberg, of Illinois, however, is one of those who have been 'agin' it all the time, in theory as well as in practice, and he is on record in the late Congress as voting to cut off the appropriation for the Civil Service Commission.

"This is the person selected by President McKinley to be a member of the very body which he wished to abolish. Mr. Rodenberg has been appointed to succeed the late Mr. Brewer on the Civil Service Commission. It was not a very enthusiastic group of civil service reformers before, but this appointment makes its attitude rather farcical.

"Mr. McKinley himself is more devoted to civil service reform in theory than in practice, but even he would hardly have made an appointment so as-

tonishingly unfit by deliberate choice. The fact was that Rodenberg had been left at home by his constituents and had to be cared for. The honorary commissionership and other sinecures had all been taken up by ex-Senators, and there was nothing 'equally as good' left for Rodenberg until this vacancy happily occurred and he claimed it.

"There is not much left of the Civil Service Commission that in times past did so much to promote the efficiency of the service and protect it from political blackmail, and there will be still less when Rodenberg gets through with it. But he will suit the administration and please the spoilsmen, and he has at least the merit of making no false pretenses."

The Value of a Life.

It is impossible to compute the value of a human life and all attempts at it result in fixing a figure that is purely arbitrary, but Congressman Meyer of Louisiana makes a pertinent suggestion when he compares the compensation demanded of China with the compensation awarded against railroad companies in the United States. He says:

"It will hardly do for a nation that expended three or four hundred millions of dollars for the sake of humanity in the war with Spain to crowd China to the wall with heavy damages for alleged injuries. If the matter has to be ratified by Congress, I am sure that the sentiment will be in favor of only receiving the most moderate compensation. In this country, for instance, the courts allow only \$5,000 for the death of a man in a railroad accident, and we ought not to demand from China five, ten, or fifteen times that amount for the death of a missionary. We are entitled to some damages, but I sincerely hope we will not name an exorbitant figure simply because foreign nations do so in the hope of wrecking China and dividing the empire among themselves."

O, Captain! My Captain!

By Walt Whitman.

(The Commoner of February 13th contained Lincoln's favorite poem, entitled, "O, why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?" Soon afterwards letters were received from several readers calling attention to Walt Whitman's tribute to the martyred president, written immediately after his death. As the assassination of Lincoln occurred on the 14th of April, it is fitting that this number should contain the poem suggested.)

O, Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won;

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,

While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring.

But, O, heart! heart! heart!

O, the bleeding drops of red,

Where on the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

O, Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;

Rise up!—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,

For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths—for you the shore's a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning.

Here, Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head!

It is some dream that on the deck

You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;

My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;

The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won:

Exult O shores, and ring, O, bells!

But I with mournful tread,

Walk the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.