

A SERMON FOR THE TIME.

Of all the vices the one that men universally agree to detest is hypocrisy. It is used as a last remnant of departed character, and to show that this vice is still abhorred, when there may be nothing else to suggest in behalf of a man, his friends or he himself, at last, may claim that he is "no hypocrite." As this stain most deeply and most subtly defiles the soul, if we can point out and aid to remove a most pervading form of it, we may be in the way of doing most good.

The world moves and it moves forward. We know, beyond any cavil or peradventure, Onward.

what strides we have taken in material improvement, and it stands to reason that our minds have advanced in like proportion, since there must be always a relation between the material, and the mental that impels the material. By general consent and evidence, our sentiments have refined and progressed from their earlier shapes. Hence if there be an incongruity between any prevailing sentiment, which is clearly the outgrowth or natural expression of existing conditions, and one that merely remains as handed down from the past, we may be sure that the former is the genuine, and the latter the spurious, to be discarded if we are true to ourselves.

Such an incongruity we find, of the widest range and the most intense degree. If there is one sentiment

Far Reaching. which now more loudly and universally utters itself in the world than another, it is that of patriotic exuberance; Empire, Annexation, National Expansion all the earth over. This, under present conditions, is necessarily accomplished by force of arms; and it is urged on under guise of principles held highest, as duty and honor especially. Directly contrary to this is a system of morals or religion, still professed quite widely in various degrees of apparent earnestness, called Christianity, which teaches, or used to teach, such ideas as Fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man, the duty of love and the love of duty, unselfishness, justice, and a deal more of the like; but all tending to one end, of the individuality, and that man must live for something beyond himself and the visible world. This teaching has come down from a distant past—estimated 2000 years—but in a large part it is more ancient than thirty centuries ago. Honestly, are we to concern ourselves with it any more? We can hardly say, from general appearances, that it offers much obstruction to the march of the grand ideas now so prevalent; yet it may be better, on the whole, that we discard even the semblance of hypocrisy.

Let it be admitted that there is a beauty in some of these old phrases to which we have so long been accustomed; that when we hear such

words as Our Father, and Kingdom of Heaven, and will give you rest, and lay not up treasures for yourselves on earth, and Blessed are the peacemakers, there is an effect in them like far-off music which may win upon us strongly if we do not reason for ourselves. Let us grant that if such realities existed, no more perfect expression of them could be conceived; that if a man did know what he was speaking of, just so would he speak. But what is there in these vague associations and suggestions? What is there to show for them, in actual existence? Above all, how do they meet the requirement of this present time, and its aspirations? Do we not hear the poets of the period, who should be most alive to such picturesque effects, hymning war and empire as they hardly ever did before? Do we not see the preachers, the very custodians of those old traditions, joining in the same chorus? It is a curious fact that this latter class have always, recently, tended in battlefield direction. They have been the first to urge on war and the last to counsel peace. When the sense of England in our revolution had grown tired of the hopeless struggle, it was the clergy who goaded up the panting steeds of Mars to the end. That effort indeed proved unsuccessful, but commonly it was otherwise.

It behooves us plainly to consider, whether we shall go on professing things we do not believe; since if we did believe them, they would affect our conduct to very different purposes. Who will lead the reform, and give us live sermons for the time, since those for Eternity seem out of date? * * *

THE CHRIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CONSERVATIVE:

The quotations from Elizabeth Evans in the last three numbers of THE CONSERVATIVE have startled me. I agree generally with your politics, and did not suppose that the subject of religion was to be taken up in your columns. But as it has been, permit one of your old friends a few words in reply.

I always feel sorry when a woman undertakes destructive work. A man naturally looks to women for high ideals, and when one of them undertakes to destroy his highest ideal and gives nothing in return, he pities her. This is especially so at this time when so large a portion of the world in one way or another is celebrating the birth of Christ, and trying more or less rudely to bring about the reign of good will among men.

The criticisms that this lady makes upon the Bible are familiar. They come up in every generation. They have been often answered. If any of your readers will get Whateley's "Historic Doubts as to the existence of Napoleon Bonaparte," he will find that the arguments of Miss Evans are just as cogent to show that

no such person as Napoleon ever existed.

I have been a lawyer for forty years. It has been part of my business to study the law of evidence. To my mind the existence of Christ as an historic fact is just as clearly proved as that of any other great historic personage, and the documents which record the facts of his life are as authentic.

I am well aware that many nations have had beliefs that are not unlike some of those that Christians hold. But the best thinkers, it seems to me, conclude from this; not that there is no truth in any of them, but that there is some truth in all of them.

There was no doubt a time when many Christians believed in the literal inspiration of every word in the Bible. A critic who starts from this standpoint will find many difficulties. But wiser thought has led most Christians to the conclusion that the Bible is a collection of books, written at different times, containing lessons in the form of history, of poetry, of parable, and of proverb, which does indeed contain the highest divine wisdom but which also contains a human element, and should be studied carefully with especial reference to the circumstances under which each book was written, and to the people for whom it was primarily intended. Studied thus, it is full of spirit and life. Christ himself said that "the letter killeth."

But even if every reader were convinced intellectually of the historic verity of the gospels, that would not necessarily make him a good Christian. The true Christian is such because he knows from his own personal experience that Christ now lives, and he loves Christ and strives to follow his Commandments. My observation teaches me that such men are loving, generous, unselfish, loyal to duty, good citizens, and good friends. Undoubtedly there are many who go to church and are called Christians to whom this description does not apply. Christ said there would be such. "Ye shall know them by their fruits." No doubt these men whose Christianity is purely a matter of outward form, have done great harm to the cause of Christ. But I hope sincerely that your readers, who get so much good instruction in politics will recognize the difference, and will believe, not because they have read in a book or been told by others, but because they know from their own experience, that "this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

EVERETT P. WHEELER.

New York, Christmas Day, 1900.

KIDNAPER.

As the crow flies and the yellow-kid journal lies, Mr. Pat Crowe—since he received \$25,000 in gold from Mr. Cudahy—has visited every city in the United States and sailed for Europe, traveling a thousand miles each ten hours since he quit Omaha.