FAULTS OF A NEIGHBOR

Many People Consider Themselves Messengers of Evil.

(Entered according to Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Three, by Wm. Baily, of Toronto, at the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.)

A despatch from Chicago says :—Rev. Frank De Witt Talmage preached from the following text :—II. Samuel i, 20, "Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon."

There is great excitement in the Davidic encampment. A sentinel sees a courier at full speed running down the valley. Coming nearer, he calls out with panting voice, "Tidings, my lord—tidings for the new king !" From the different tents the swarthy limbed soldiers, who were resting from the conquests over the Amalekites, swarm forth. They lead the new arrival to the young commander. There he prostrates himself upon the ground. He announces that Saul has been defeated and has committed suicide ; Jonathan has been slain. The empty throne is now ready for its new occupant, the conqueror of the mighty Philistine, Goliath. What was the result ? Did David tell his followers to exult over the fallen king ? Did he say to his companions in arm : "Good for Saul ! His defeat servtd him right. Divine justice has avenged my wrongs. He had no business to try to kill me to satisfy his jealousy. He had no right to drive me into exile. He should not have become an apostate and defied the divine power which had anointed him king of Israel ?" No ! David had the silver tongue of speech. No psalmist ever sang sweeter than this sweet singer of Israel. But David had the golden lips of gospel silence. He lifted his hand in warning. He practically said this : "Do not exult over your fallen king. Do not advertise his faults to the world lest the unciecumcised Philistines rejoice. Do not sneer at God's anointed. Let his faults be buried in his tomb. Only remember and talk about his good qualities. Tell it not in Gath ; publish it not in the streets of Askelon." Would that we, one and all, might be as charitable in our comments upon those who have sinned and wronged us as David was with Saul. Would that we might talk only about the good qualities of those with whom we come in contact and not examine a nan's faults with the magnifying power of a microscope and study his virtues with the minifying power of the inverted end of a telescope.

GOLDEN LIPS OF SILENCE.

The golden lips of gospel silence never banquet upon carrion. We know that a healthful physical body has to draw its strength from clean provender. If a piece of meat is decomposed and microscopically diseased, it will make unclean any body into which it is absorbed. What is true in reference to the physical body is also true in reference to the mind and the spirit. If we allow our thoughts to feed upon what is depraved in other men's characters, then our thoughts will themselves become depraved. If we allow our lips to revel in uttering the scandals and describing the weaknesses and the sins of our neighbors or friends or enemies, then our own tongues will become defiled.

This law—that what we let our minds feed upon decides what our minds are to be—is irrevocable and all powerful. It is so farreaching in its results, that Jesus, in the gospel of Matthew, declares that he will condemn us not only for our evil actions, but also for our evil thoughts. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." We are to be condemned not only for what we say and do, but also for what we think.

"Oh, no," says some hearer. "That is not square. A man should not be condemned for what he thinks. The thought action of the brain is absolutely involuntary. We think in spite of ourselves. We sin only when we carry out our evil desires of our souls. We do not sin necessarily when we think evilly." Ah, my brother, you are mistaken. A man can indirectly govern his thoughts, as he can directly govern his actions. If a man allows his eye only to see pure pictures and to read good books, his ear to hear only what is good and true in reference to his fellow men ; if a man allows his tongue to repeat only that which is generous and loving and gentle—that man's mind and spirit will become true and good. If his mind becomes pure, then his thoughts and his desires will become pure, as well as his actions.

REACHING FOR LOFTY IDEALS.

The golden lips of gospel silence are often just as important for our spiritual development as the silver tongue of speech. Joseph Addison, the great English author and critic, once gave a description of his feelings when listening to a masterpiece rendered by a noted orchestra. He said that he was not so much impressed with the great tidal waves of sound which dashed themselves against his eardrums as the waves of the mighty deep in midwinter beat against the Holland dikes or with the volume of mingled sounds, as when the voices of the celestials seemed to blend with the voices of the terrestrials, as he was impressed with the deep silence which suddenly ensued when the orchestra leader lifted his baton in the midst of the piece and commanded his musicians to halt. "Methought," he wrote, "this short interval of silence had more music in it than any short space of time before or after it." The most eloquent passages of our spiritual development may often be found when we press the golden lips of gospel silence against our neighbor's faults, when we are dumb and say nothing, absolutely nothing.

SCANDALS PUBLISH THEMSELVES.

The golden lips of gospel silence should remain closed because, as a rule, it is not necessary to emphasize scandals. Scandals are always loud voiced. They publish themselves. As I speak some one sitting in a pew has been saying to himself : "Is it not right to denounce other people's faults ? Shall we not warn our friends against these sins ? Shall we not point out men's errors as well as their virtues? Did not Paul write to young Timothy enjoining him to rebuke as well as to exhort, to reprove as well as preach the word?" Yes, that is true; but,as a rule, when a man sins he does not find a very great lack of reprovers and rebukers, while there is generally a great scarcity of exhorters and encouragers when he does right.

A clean heart instinctively finds some good in every man's nature. A honey-bee always scents the flower. It is the firefly of the night who loves to light his little lantern and to hunt for the creeping vermin in the quagmire and in the disease breeding recesses of the miasmatic swamp. An old and yet a very suggestive story goes thus : One day a wagon was driven up a country road io front of a Pennsylvania farm-house. The driver had all his children and goods and chattels in his vehicle. He was moving and wanted to find a new home. He called out to a Quaker farmer sitting upon the porch: "Stranger, what kind of people live in the next town —I mean in that town which is just over the hill? I want to settle there." "Well, friend," answered the Quaker farmer, "what kind of people did thee leave in the place from whence thee came?" "Oh," replied the farmer "they were the meanest people on earth. Every one of them would stab you in the back if he could. They would cheat you and cut your throat. I never could get to like them. That is the reason I am leaving and trying to find a new home." "Friend," answered the old Quaker farmer, "thee will find the same kind of people living in the next town." Next day another emigrant drove up to the same house. He asked the same question. "Friend," asked the Quaker farmer, "what kind of people did thee leave in the place from whence thee came?" "Oh," answered this new arrival, "they were the kindest, the dearest people on earth. I would never have left them, but my dear wife died. Then the old homestead became intolerable. Every room reminded me of her. Every friend would open the bleeding wound of my heart. I could not believe that any people could ever be so kind as my old neighbors were during my late trouble." "Friend," answered the Quaker farmer, "thee will find the same kind of neighbors in the next town as in the place from whence thee came."

SPEAK ONLY OF THE GOOD.

Like the old Quaker farmer, I would declare that each hearer can find good in all men or bad in all men just in proportion as his own heart is good or bad. And if we have any good in our own makeup it is very important that we have the "silver tongue of speech" in order to talk about other people's virtues. Let others, if they will, advertise the errors; we will only speak about the good.

The golden lips of gospel silence never foolishly whisper sinful tales into the ears of wrongdoers by which they shall try to justify their own sins. A good example is infectious.

What is true in reference to the infection of a good example is also true of the infection of a bad example. Some of the toll keepers in New Zealand have trained sheep, which, for a small consideration, they let out to the sheep drovers to lead their flocks of sheep across the bridges which span the rivers or the ravines. When the sheep, which are being driven to market, come up to these bridges, they are frightened and will not go over. Then these trained sheep come to the head of the flock and lead the way. When the untrained sheep see that some of their number can cross the bridge, with a steady rush they follow after their leaders. There are scores and hundreds of thousands of men and women who want to do wrong. But when they hear of the shortcomings of their fellow men, they say to themselves: "Well, if So-and-so can sow his wild oats, I guess we can. If So-and-so can safely cross the rickety bridge spanning the river of death, I guess we can also trust ourselves upon the swinging span. Here goes!" "Tinder is not more apt to take fire," once wrote Phillips Brooks, "nor wax to take the impression of the seal nor paper the ink than youth is to follow ill examples." "When the abbot throws the dice," goes an old legend, "the whole convent will gamble also." Everywhere we find that when a great man does wrong his evil conduct is taken as an example, or rather as an excuse, for hundreds and thousands of similar sins.

THE ARTIST'S MASTERPIECE.

Never give any man a chance by the recital of some wrong or sin to turn his face for one instant from purity and right. When Leonardo da Vinci finished his great painting, the "Last Supper," he made a cup which was a masterpiece. In form and character and in the luster of the precious metal this central cup was clearly and beautifully wrought out. The common praise which was first heard from every lip was this: "How marvelous is the art displayed in the wine cup." This eulogium so incensed the great Italian artist that he took a great brush and blotted out the splendid cup as he said: "I meant the face of Jesus Christ to be the only and the central and the most important part of that picture. Whatever draws away the eyes of the beholder from that must be blotted out." And so whatever draws away the thoughts and the desires of our and purity and love must be blotted hearers and companions from truth out. And mark you this, my brother, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred no man is as good a man after hearing the rehearsal of a scandal or a sin as he was before. There may be exceptions. There may be times when people, by illustration, ought to have the red light of warning flashed before their eyes. But in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred a man's spiritual life is developed better by hearing of the virtues and self sacrifices and Christian purities of his fellow men than by wallowing in the mud of scandal and of sin.

This harsh criticism which we may utter against our neighbors always has a bad reactionary effect upon those who make it. Therefore if we want to have a great influence for good it is very essential for us, for the most part, to talk only about the virtues and the good qualities of those with whom we come in contact.

THE FOLLY OF SAMSON.

Blind Samson tumbled down the Dagon temple upon the heads of the 3,000 Philistines. But when Samson destroyed the enemies of his people he also destroyed himself. So when we attempt by harsh criticism to destroy others we contribute to our own destruction.

The golden lips of gospel silence never intentionally speak a harsh word against a sinful neighbor. Why? Their owner knows that in the sight of God he is a sinner and that as a lost sheep he has erred and strayed far from the divine pasturage. The better a Christian is the more he realizes the enormity of his own sins, the more inclined he is to be less harsh upon the sins of others. When Paul first had his blind eyes opened by the good Ananias, he was able, to some extent, to see his own faults. He wrote, "I am the least of the apostles." Then Paul went on in his spiritual growth. He saw his past blacker and blacker in the eyes of God. Then he wrote, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all the saints." Paul went on growing higher and higher in spiritual life until at last, just before his martyrdom, he could cry out in rapture, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation — that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Oh, my brother, by prayer and consecration and by grace cannot and will not you come so near to God that you will cease to condemn your fellow men? Cease because, like Paul, you can feel that you are the chief of sinners?

When we hear people harshly criticized, may we, in the name of Christ, say nothing or only, if necessary, speak up in their behalf as Christ would have us speak. May we learn this lesson not by standing before the picture of an earthly hero, but by the tomb of a martyred Lord.

PAT WAS A SIDEBOARD.

An Irishman went to a foundry after work.

When he arrived he found another man there on the same errand.

The foreman came, and Pat, being unaccustomed to asking for work, stood back, with the intention of hearing how the other fel,ow went about it.

After the man had asked, the foreman said: "What trade are you?"

"I'm a dresser," replied the man.

"Come to-morrow," said the foreman; "I'll start you."

Turning to the Irishman, the foreman asked him what he was.

"Be jabers, sorr," replied Pat, "Oi'm a sideboard!"

THE S. S. LESSON.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON, APRIL 19.

Text of the Lesson, Rom. xiii., 7-14. Golden Text, Rom. xiii., 10.

7. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

After assuring us of our high and holy place in the love of God through the gift of His dear Son and that nothing can possibly separate us therefrom and telling us in chapters ix to xi of God's unchanging purpose concerning Israel, he then entreats us from chapter xii onward to let God have our whole being that by a righteous life which He will live in those who are yielded to Him He may make Himself known to others. Subjection to the powers that be, cheerfully paying tribute and taxes, rendering respect as foreigners would in a country where they are temporarily abiding—these things Christians should gladly do because they are citizens of heaven and thus command the country to which they belong.

8. Owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

Some one has said that love is the law itself in manifold action, an obligation never fully discharged. Love is seen perfectly only in Christ, never in sinful mortals. If any think that they have seen it perfectly in some redeemed one, let them consider such in the light of I Cor. xiii, 4-7, and also consider one of Mr. Spurgeon's definitions of sin as anything that the Lord Jesus would not think or say or do or bless. If one should ask, Where, then, is the perfect love which casteth out fear? (I John iv, 18) one answer would be, There can be no fear while abiding in His perfect love.

9, 10. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

These commands deal with our treatment of our neighbor, for we can prove our love to God (the sum of the first four commandments, Matt. xxii, 36, 37) only by our love to our neighbor. "He that loveth not his neighbor, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" (I John iv, 20). Love is always kind, studies to please, cannot injure, seeks not its own welfare first, but rather the welfare of others, therefore cannot engage in any pursuit or business which would impoverish others while enriching itself.

11. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

The epistles are written to believers, those who by faith in Christ are saved, have passed from death to life and yet seem to be asleep and talk in their sleep (Isa. xxix, 10; lvi, 10 margin). The tendency of believers to sleep, both under the most glorious and the most awful circumstances, is seen in Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration and in Gethsemane (Luke ix, 32; xxii, 45, 46), showing how utterly foreign, even to redeemed people, heavenly things are and how unable we are to grasp them. Samson asleep in the lap of Delilah shows how the strongest are apt to be overcome by the things of this world, and Jonah asleep in the storm while the heathen captain and sailors called upon their gods is a wonderful picture of the church, asleep to such commands as Mark xvi, 15, while the blind zeal of the heathen should put us to shame.

12. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light.

It seems strange to those who boast of the progress of the century to speak of this being still the world's night, but it is even so, and the day will not dawn till the morning star appears and then the sun (Rev. xxii, 16; Mal. iv, 2). When He said, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v, 14), He certainly meant that the world needed sight and was therefore in darkness. The progress is like that of Cain and is not progress in or toward righteousness for the whole world still lieth in the wicked one (I John v, 19). Believers are children of the light and of the day (I Thess. v, 5) and waiting for the day to dawn, for only then will our full salvation come, to which we are drawing nearer every day, as stated in the last verse.

13, 14. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

The believer is said to receive Christ (John i, 12) and also to put on Christ (Gal. iii, 27) and to be in Christ (I Cor. i, 30), but in whatever way our relation to Christ is spoken of the fact is recognized that the old man, the self life, is still in us and is to be persistently reckoned dead or put off (Rom. vi, 11; Eph. iv, 22, 24; Col. iii, 9, 10; II Cor. iv, 10, 11). We are to have no confidence in the flesh, to worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus (Phil. iii, 3). We are to have the mind of Christ Jesus and, as He never pleased Himself, so we, if filled with His Spirit, will not live unto ourselves in any selfish way (Phil. ii, 5; Rom. xv, 3). There is no salvation for any sinner or any kind of a sinner except by the blood of Christ apart from any works of ours (Rom. iv, 5; Tit. iii, 5), so the life that is expected from us cannot be lived by us, but must be lived by Christ in us without our help. We yield ourselves to Him, and He lives the life and works the works (Gal. ii, 20; Phil. ii, 13). Whatever is done, it is His working in us His good pleasure (Col. i, 29; I Cor. xv, 10; II Thess. i, 11), that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen ! (I Pet. iv, 11).

COURT-ROOM HUMOR.

When the Lawyer Sometimes Gets the Worst of It.

The contest between counsel and witness must necessarily be an unequal one, and it is little surprise that the sympathies of the public are more often with the latter than the former, or that whenever a witness scores a point over a bullying cross-examiner it is hailed with delight.

"Have you ever been bankrupt ?" a pompous counsel once asked, in the writer's hearing, of a provincial tradesman.

"No, never," came the decisive answer.

"Now, be careful, sir, how you answer this question. Have you ever stopped payment ?"

"Yes."

"Ah !" said the barrister, with satisfaction, "I thought we should get at it. Now, sir, tell his lordship when that happened."

"After I had paid all I owed," the witness answered, amid a roar af laughter, in which the judge himself felt compelled to join.

On another occasion a conceited counsel had been cross-examining a young woman at considerable length upon the age of a person with whom she professed to be well acquainted. Finally he asked her, "How old, now, do you take me to be ?" The witness scrutinized her persecutor closely for a moment or two, and then answered, "From your appearance I should take you to be sixty; from your questions sixteen."

This story reminds one of an equally crushing answer given to another counsel, whose physical dimensions were incommensurate with his sense of importance.

"Did you see this tree that was mentioned by the roadside ?" the barrister inquired.

"Yes, sir, I saw it very plainly."

"It was conspicuous, then ?"

"No ; I shouldn't say it was exactly conspicuous," the witness answered.

"You are trifling, sir," counsel continued. "If, as you say, you saw the tree plainly, how can you say it was not conspicuous ?"

"Well, it's just like this," the unabashed witness replied ; "I can see you plainly among the rest of the lawyers, though you're not a bit conspicuous."

"You really mean to say," once asked a well-known lawyer, now a judge, "that as the result of this accident your son will never be able to follow your business ? If he's not fit to be a butcher, what do you propose to make of him ?"

"Well," was the answer, which convulsed the court, "if he's no good for owt else, I'll make a lawyer of him."

"You say this Mrs Robinson was a friend of yours ?" a learned Q.C. once asked a witness.

"Yes."

"Is she here ?"

"No."

"Do you know where she is ?"

"No."

"Now, sir," counsel retorted, in a fury, "I warn you to be careful, and to remember that you are on your oath. You say that, although this woman is a neighbor and friend of yours, you do not know where she is to be found. Tell the court at once, sir, where she is."

"That's more than anybody knows, sir," came the startling answer, "She's dead."

But perhaps the smartest retort ever administered to a bullying lawyer was the following. A counsel, after vainly trying to break down the evidence of a witness in a murder trial, so far forgot himself in his exasperation as to say, "I do not believe a word you say. I can see scoundrelism reflected in your face."

"Sorry for that, sir," came the crushing answer ; "I didn't think my face was such a good mirror."

DANGER IN THE PIPE.

Death, and a most terrible form of it, is declared to lurk in the tobacco pipe if it is made of clay. Such is the startling statement made by the Irish Registrar-General in a special report on cancer in Ireland just laid on the table of the House of Commons. The clay "dhudeen" is very common amongst the peasantry in Ireland. It is often smoked until the shank is quite short, and then it so irritates the lips of the smoker that cancer sometimes supervenes.

Mrs. Brown — "Mrs. Jones complains that her baby is so hard to manage." Mrs. Perkins — "Well, she shouldn't expect a baby to be as easy to manage as a husband."