

## PERILS OF SELF-INDULGENCE.

BY THE EDITOR.

“ACCORDING to their pasture so were they filled.” Hos. 13: 6. There is a very pointed accusation made by Jehovah in this passage, “I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought,” he says. “In that wilderness I fed thee with manna sent from heaven, and in that land of drought I gave thee water to drink out of the smitten rock. But that did not satisfy. The people complained of this light food and said, “Who will give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely: the cucumbers and the melons the leeks and onions and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all beside the manna before our eyes.” Then God “gave them their request and sent leanness into their souls.” They were filled, and filled *according to their pasture*, and not according to God’s provision. Alas! fatness of body is a very poor equivalent for leanness of soul; and fulness of bread a very inadequate offset to a starved and stunted spirit. And yet this is the way it generally works. Pampering the flesh is a sure method of pinching the Spirit. There is a sort of equilibrium between the soul and the body which is constantly disturbed, and which constantly needs adjusting. Take out something from the scale of fleshly indulgence every day, my brother, and you will find that it is so much put into the scale of spiritual growth and power. It is a wonderful thing — this system of checks and balances between the different elements of our personality. Let the eyes be blinded, and the sense of touch grows more acute, so that one learns to read with his finger-tips. That is to say, the loss of one member is gain to the other. Here is the philosophy of fasting which is so greatly discussed among Christians to-day. The body is deprived of its weight of food and pleasure for a day, in order, if possible, to let the

soul tip the beam for a little while; that communion with God may outweigh communion with the world. Oh, how much we all of us need such discipline. We are filled with something. Nature abhors a vacuum and so does grace; we are none of us empty, — but we are filled according to our pasture.

Are you a student, devoted constantly to your books? You are filled according to your pasture, with the wisdom of Homer and Cicero and Virgil, and Plato and Shakespeare. This is well, provided every morning and night on bended knee and with open bible you say, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” “Give ear, oh Shepherd of Israel, and lead me into green pastures and beside still waters.” Are you a merchant filled all day long with the food of ledgers and day-books and bonds and stocks? this may be right provided each day you resist the temptation of the adversary to find your portion in the world. Meet him with the Lord’s own text, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God. Study and business are right and necessary callings, only we must beware lest we be *surfeited* with even wholesome food. And how much more with that which is unwholesome! How many young men are filled with frivolous and idle talk as they are about their business! And how many young ladies are surfeited with light and unprofitable novel reading! And how many young men are more filled with the daily newspaper than with the saving words of Scripture, and how many young ladies are filled with society talk and social gossip rather than with the holy food of truth! And according to your food so will be your life.

“Coarse food makes coarse flesh,” says Physiology. Light food makes a light and empty spiritual life: and so true is this that God provides us with a substantial food, and Christ meets us with this tremendous, mysterious but true say-

ing, "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God ye have no life in you."

It is such a scandal and reproach to our human natures that the moment we get prosperous and comfortable then we begin to be proud. And when I say "prosperous" I refer to several kinds of prosperity.

There is such a thing as a moral prosperity, which is simply an ancestral inheritance. One is virtuous and sober because his parents and grandparents before him were so, and he has inherited their traits. And he is proud of what he never earned by any terrible struggle of self-denial. You tell him he needs to repent and confess that all his goodness is worthless without the new birth, and he resents it, and thinks you are trying to force him into bankruptcy by compelling him to take the poor debtor's oath. You talk to him of the vital need of Christ-righteousness in order to salvation, and he is as offended as though you were to offer him your cast off clothing. A prosperous moralist, who has never known what it is to struggle with temptation is the hardest of all subjects to bring to Christ. He is so faultlessly correct, that he thinks that a gospel which requires "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" must be grossly incorrect.

And it is exactly so with those who are prosperous in their *wordly position*. You are in a good business or in good society, but more from happy fortune than anything else. And instead of being humbled in the dust in view of the fact you attribute other peoples' ill-luck to indolence or unthriftiness. You are filled, and your heart is exalted. Oh, let us beware of our prosperity. An old Puritan preacher once said to his congregation, "Remember, my hearers that the moon is never eclipsed except at its full. And likewise it is when you have all and abound, that you are in most danger of the hidings of God's face."

And the danger extends even to religious prosperity. So many Christians because of their own outward consistency in grace, seem to have no tenderness or forbearance towards those who are forever halting and stumbling in the way. "Did you know that Mr. So-and-so has been overtaken with his old appetite and was seen staggering up the street last week?" they ask. "We must call a church-meeting and put him out at once lest we all be disgraced." But perhaps you have been all the while staggering in your spiritual walk and conversation. So that whereas God has said, "*Walk in love as dear children,*" you have been walking in envy, and malice towards your own brethren: and while you are commanded to "*walk in the spirit*" you have been walking in the flesh and fulfilling the lusts thereof; and when you should "*walk in the light as he is in the light*" you have walked in darkness because of your disobedience to the Holy Spirit, and thus perhaps your unsteady gait has been more offensive to God than that of the drunkard who reels through the streets. Oh let us beware of being lifted up with the pride of respectability so that we shall judge others by ourselves. "Amos what seest thou?" said Jehovah to the prophet. And he answered, "a plumb line." "Then said the Lord *Behold I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel.*" It is for us to test ourselves every day by that line. If we do we shall find that we are all out of perpendicular and all making crooked paths. Ah reader, whatever else you do, don't compare yourselves with others to find your bearings. Many a time you have sat in a rail-road car and imagined that you were moving forward, because the train on the parallel track was moving backward. And so in the church: we imagine that we are advancing in the Christian life because somebody else is back-sliding, and thus our hearts are lifted up, when if we looked at the plumb-line of the

law, and perfection of Jesus Christ, we should be humbled in the dust in view of our wretched failures. According to a skilful classification there are four kinds of pride — pride of ancestry, pride of personal appearance, pride of social position, and pride of religious attainment. In other words there is Race-pride and Face-pride, and Place-pride and Grace-pride — these four. And the greatest of these is grace-pride. Let us beware of all these, but especially of the last.

“ I KICKS AG'IN' IT, SAH ! ”

BY REV. A. J. GORDON, D. D.

**S**UCH was the vehement exclamation of Brother Moses, as I met him one day in front of an aristocratic mansion where he was busily at work dusting carpets, trimming the lawn, etc.

But before I rehearse his sidewalk discourse, I must tell my reader something about this ebony sage, whom I have known now for more than twenty-five years. Like the singer in the Canticles, he is “black but comely.” Not that he has any natural beauty to attract one; but when he becomes animated upon spiritual themes, the listener forgets his dark visage and thick features, and the “beauty of the Lord” seems to shine out in his face.

My first acquaintance with Moses began thus :

Soon after the close of the war, when a considerable influx of freedmen had set in towards the North, a Unitarian neighbor said to me one day : “ I wish you would call in and see my colored man who has recently come to me from the South. I assure you he is a character. He seems to take a great interest in the welfare of my soul, and as he is of your persuasion I would like you to make his acquaintance. By all means get him to tell you of his ‘experience.’ ”

I called one morning according to request, and found Moses busy in the stable

polishing the harnesses and beguiling his labors with the weird strains of an old plantation melody.

After a pleasant introduction, and some interchange of Christian fellowship, I said :

“ Brother Moses, I wish you would tell me your Christian experience, if you can spare time for it.”

“ I allers has time enough for dat, sah,” he replied, “ and allers shall till I puts off dis clay tabernacle, and then I'll hab all eternity to tell it in ” — and then a shine came into his dusky visage more brilliant than that which he was imparting to his master's leather.

“ It was on de sixth day of October, 1853,” he continued, “ at three o'clock in de morning, in massa's cornfield in ole Virginny, that the Lord spoke peace to my soul. You see, I had been a mournin' for weeks, yet all de while more or less confidential in myself, and settin' store by de heaps of good works and prayers and repentins I'd done. But at last dese deceitful refuges began to gib way, and de foundations of de great deep broke up in my soul, and for three days and nights I could neither eat nor drink nor sleep, a-mournin' and a-wailin' for my sins. At last, nigh sunrise, in de third day, out in de cornfield, I says, ‘ Lord, you must save dis despairing sinner or he'll die. I know I's wicked and vile and rebellious, but, den you's all merciful and forgivin' Dat's your reputation, Lord, and I begs you for de sake of your great name to show mercy and not judgment.’ And so I cried an' pleaded dare on de ground. Den de Lord 'peared to me in de visions of de morning and reached out his hand to me. But He didn't reach it out to me flat-ways as though he had any bread of life to give to my hungry soul. Time hadn't come yet for dat. But he reached out his hand edge-ways towards me; and if dat hand had been a sharp two-edged sword, it couldn't cut me open quicker'n it did; separatin' de jints and de marrer, and layin'