

CONVERSATIONS

ON

TRAINING THE YOUNG.

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CONVERSATIONS.

CONVERSATION I.

MR. THINKMUCH AND MR. GOODMAN.

Mr. Goodman. Good morning, my dear pastor; I did not call to interrupt your studies, but to say that I was greatly delighted with your sermon on self-denial yesterday, and to hand you two dollars, one for myself and one for my wife, for the missionary cause, and also to ask your advice on a subject that has perplexed us a good deal.

Mr. Thinkmuch. Sit down, my good friend, and never be afraid of interrupting your pastor by complying with his exhortations. I should be glad to be interrupted by such a call from every member of our church. If its two hundred and eighty members would call on a similar errand this week, the result might be the establishing of the regular mi-

nistrations of the Gospel in three congregations in the destitute parts of the country; or it would give, let me see, how many "Baxter's Calls" at twelve and a half cents each—it would give to those who have no means of grace, one copy each to two thousand two hundred and forty persons. Or, it would support, at twelve dollars each, twenty-three heathen children in a boarding-school, for one year.

Mr. Good. True, if all the church would act together, the sum of their contributions would be great though each one should give but a little. That however is not to be expected in the present state of things. A few must do nearly every thing that is done. This troubles me. I feel that the small amount which I am able to contribute is of very little consequence, and I desire to learn whether some means may not be contrived that will enable a poor man to do something more for the missionary cause. My wife and myself have long made it a subject of earnest conversation, and have

agreed to pray that God would show us how we may exert a greater influence for the conversion of the world.

We have thought of two things. They are both attended with difficulties. Last evening we were talking together, when Polly said to me suddenly, "My dear, I have gained some new light to-day on the subject."

"What is it?" said I.

"Perhaps," she replied, "you will smile when I tell you: it is not light about the means of exerting our influence, but it is light about the way to get light. After coming home from church," said she, "and praying for direction according to our agreement, this saying of the wise man came into my mind, 'Wisdom is better than strength,' and then another, 'In the multitude of counsellors there is safety.' I thought if you would go and open your mind fully to our pastor, we might perhaps discover the path of duty more plainly."

This conversation was the occasion of my visit this morning. In reflecting upon the

subject and conversing more at length, we thought we should have a more confident expectation of success in our inquiries if we would accompany them with a donation devoted to the same object. I remember you told us once, that if we would see our prayers answered we must accompany them with alms.

Mr. Think. Yes, I have told you so more than once. But what are the two methods of exerting an influence for the conversion of the world of which you spoke?

Mr. Good. I am almost ashamed to tell you what they are, for they have both appeared more doubtful the more we have prayed over them and thought about them. The present income from our farm only enables us to support our family and give to benevolent objects \$150 a year. We thought of selling our farm. Then one plan was to go to the far west and buy a larger tract of land, and exert an influence there; and the other was to go into the city and set up a large boarding-house. Our neighbor, Mrs. Wood-

son, went to New-York ten years ago and made herself rich. If she could do it, Polly Goodman could probably do the same thing. Then we should have the means of doing more.

Mr. Think. Well, what were your objections to these plans? They seem practicable.

Mr. Good. Why the difficulties with regard to the first plan are so great, that we have pretty much given up all thoughts of it. We have seven children. That makes a family of nine. We shall have nine cases of exposure to the sickness of a new country, and know not whom we shall have for a physician. We are not certain of enjoying means of grace. The Sabbath-breaking and vices of the people may convert our children to their ways, instead of our doing any thing to convert the people to Christ. Then our children could not be well educated, and Polly and I have seen enough of the want of education to wish to give our children good opportunity of learning.

The other plan, besides being uncertain, may plunge us into so many cares that we are a little afraid we may be diverted from the work of converting the world, and may grow more close with our money the more we have of it. Mrs. Woodson does not give away as much now as she did when she was poor.

Mr. Think. Then, if I understand you, Mr. Goodman, your prayers and your reflections have led you to such views that you do not feel clear in making a change of so serious a nature.

It is well. We may doubtless enter upon a broader field of action, and ought not to shrink from it when the providence of God calls us to it. But to my mind it is a sufficient objection to both of these plans, that there is nothing in the Divine dealings with you to lead to either of them. You would give up in each case a comparative certainty for an uncertainty. Dr. Beecher has wisely said, "When you do not know what to do, do nothing." Besides, you would do well to reflect that there are other means of doing

good which are far superior to that of giving money. True, "The love of money," as the apostle says, "is the root of all evil." Avarice is a sort of disease, of such a nature that if left to itself it will pollute our whole being like the taint of leprosy. A constant course of self-denial in giving away money is necessary to counteract this disease. It is of vast consequence therefore to keep up the habit of almsgiving. Besides doing good to the poor and sending the Gospel to the destitute, it accomplishes still more by keeping our own minds in a proper tone for prayer and for active usefulness.

Mr. Good. I know that persons who have influence, or great talents or learning, may do a great deal of good, each in his own way; but we have settled it pretty clearly in our minds, that our only way of doing good is to earn money by hard work, and then give it to forward the great benevolent enterprises of the day.

Mr. Think. Perhaps it is very natural that you should think so. Our present

system of raising and disbursing funds, through numerous large organizations, has given great prominence to the bestowment of money for advancing the interests of religion. This mode of action seems indispensable too to the missionary work. If we send the Gospel to the heathen, we must provide food and clothing, and books and school apparatus, and ships for the transportation of missionaries. Churches must be erected, seminaries of learning must be established, and the arts of civilized society must be encouraged. In short, large expenditures as well as self-denying labors are absolutely necessary to a successful prosecution of the work.

But, while these contributions are a work that ought not to be left undone, there are other endeavors that are of still greater consequence. For instance, the constant attendance of yourself and Mrs. Goodman at our weekly meetings for prayer, may exert more influence towards the conversion of the world than the \$150 which you give to be-

nevolent objects. The excursions which you used to make every week down to the lake shore, distributing the Tracts and publications of the American Tract Society among that neglected population, were probably of more worth to the cause of Christ than your \$150.

Mr. Good. True, these efforts, though made in much weakness, were blessed, and did good in a silent way, perhaps where we did not know of it; but \$150 pays for 300 Bibles, or puts in circulation 1,200 copies of Baxter's Call. It does something that can be counted up. You know what it will do.

Mr. Think. We must be careful however not to deceive ourselves with our arithmetic. The 300 Bibles and the 1,200 Baxter's Calls will not of themselves do any good. There must be a large amount of this active piety somewhere to put them in circulation, or they will be of no avail.

Mr. Good. But I think you told us once that making sacrifices of one kind disposes our minds to every other kind of sacrifices

for the cause of Christ. If we give away money then, will not that have an influence to lead us to personal effort.

Mr. Think. Undoubtedly all the individual duties of a disciple of Christ tend to promote the conscientious discharge of all other duties. But while there is such an interaction among all duties, some operate much more powerfully as a cause than others. Money may be given with the best intention and fail of success, but pious and judicious effort to act on the minds of men by the direct inculcation of the Gospel, always promotes our spiritual benefit. You recollect we made a subscription of \$100 to employ a teacher for those poor people down by the lake. We sent that lame man Johnson down there to instruct them. We thought we were accomplishing a two-fold good. We were diffusing knowledge among an ignorant people, and helping an unfortunate man to employment. He prayed in his school night and morning, but was so ill-tempered as to render the people disgusted

with the religion professed by such a man, and then he proved intemperate. Hence, our money, instead of doing good, first brought religion into contempt, and, secondly, fostered a vicious man in his wicked propensities. But when you and your excellent friend Mr. Jones went down there and established a Sunday-school, and distributed books and Tracts among the people, a great deal of good was accomplished.

Mr. Good. Very true, good was done, but it was because God prospered our work. I cannot perceive, however, that such efforts are any more certain to be successful than the giving of money is to do good. Some of those to whom we made our appeals have been rather hardened than benefited. We failed in accomplishing any good through Johnson, and succeeded in Sunday-school labors and Tract distribution, because God in his inscrutable sovereignty, saw fit to bless the one effort and not the other. You know Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God alone can give the increase. We are exhorted to

use all sorts of means, not knowing which shall prosper, this or that.

Mr. Think. Yes, our dependence is alike absolute. We can accomplish nothing without the Divine blessing. But there is a difference in these two kinds of effort as related to the Divine promises. God has not promised with the same explicitness, that you shall have success if you will contribute money and employ some one else, according to your best judgment, to go and teach the poor, as he has promised to be with those who themselves propagate his Gospel with a humble reliance upon his aid.

The passage you referred to, which has respect to the prosperity that shall attend our efforts, I humbly conceive has been greatly misunderstood. The whole passage, which is found in Ecclesiastes, 11:6, is as follows: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." If the action referred to has

respect to the propagation of religion, (and I think it has,) it is by one kind of effort, namely, the diffusion of spiritual instruction. The promise amounts to this, if you will go forth sowing the seeds of divine knowledge as you and Jacob Jones did among those poor people, prosperity shall attend your efforts. You do not know precisely in what instances. Some of whom you indulged the most confident hopes shall be hardened, others shall be softened and converted. You do not know which shall prosper. The language fairly implies that some of the seeds shall germinate. It may be this, or it may be that, or it may be both, but Christ is always with his disciples when proclaiming his Gospel.

I must also correct your use of the passage where Paul and Apollos are represented as the mere instruments by which God has communicated his grace. The passage does not teach, that if Paul should plant and Apollos should water, it would still be uncertain whether God's sovereign blessing would se-

cure increase or not. On the contrary it refers to a fact, that, so far as it has any bearing on this point, teaches precisely the opposite doctrine. It certainly carries an intimation that whenever God employs such excellent and well-adapted instruments, 'he intends to secure a revenue of praise to himself in the success that follows. The passage is in 1 Cor. 2:6. Paul is maintaining that the praise of actual success belongs to God. "I *have* planted, Apollos watered, and God *gave* the increase." So far as the passage teaches any thing on the subject, it gives us encouragement, that if we will do the same work of planting and watering, there will be a similar result. God *will* give the increase.

I do not know indeed what good may have been achieved through your contribution of \$150 during the year in which you held those meetings. But I do know that there are now three flourishing Sunday-schools that have arisen from your labors down by the lake. The people are able to keep up a prayer-meeting by themselves. There are

ten converts, all heads of families; and one young man, of most promising character, is in a course of preparation for the sacred office.

Mr. Good. Then you mean to say, if I understand you, that I have attached too much importance to making contributions in money for the spread of the Gospel.

Mr. Think. Not exactly. No, I do not think your standard of giving is too high. I only mean to say, that when you think of increasing your influence for aiding in the world's conversion, you would do well to think of enlarging it in other directions, besides that of making greater donations to benevolent societies:

Mr. Good. I believe I comprehend you now. You think we might enlarge our influence more by increasing our *personal efforts* to act directly upon the minds of those to whom we can gain access, than we can by any plan to get money faster to buy Bibles and Tracts and support missionaries.

Mr. Think. Yes, and I mean more than

that. What I have said has been said to prepare you to contemplate one specific branch of usefulness to which God has plainly called you, and by which you can probably do more towards converting the world than by all other means put together.

Mr. Good. What is that?

Mr. Think. *The training of your children for this very end.* If you will imbue the minds of your seven children with your own sentiments; if you will form them to the habit of living to aid the work of the world's conversion, you may hope that each of them will be more useful than either of their parents. If they are brought earlier to Christ, and more highly educated, they will, most probably, do more good.

Mr. Good. But we are now endeavoring to bring up our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and I do not perceive how our influence is to be enlarged in that respect.

Mr. Think. I am aware of the fact that

you pay a good deal of attention to the religious education of your children, but I think much more may be done to train them for distinguished usefulness. We ought not to be satisfied with simply securing the conversion of our children. We ought to endeavor to exert the utmost influence for the cause of Christ through them that we possibly can.

Mr. Good. I understand you. You would have us educate them all for the missionary work—our sons for ministers and our daughters to teach heathen children.

Mr. Think. No, I do not mean that. Much must be left to the developments and the calls of Divine providence. But I mean to say that you and your good wife can find a great deal of most profitable employment in training your children to be practical christians—in preparing them to act their part extremely well in any station in which God may see fit to place them.

Mr. Good. I believe I do now see a little more into your meaning. Some things which Polly has said to me lately lead me to think

that this is the very light for which she has been seeking. Can you not come and see us, and explain yourself more fully to us together?

Mr. Think. I will do so most gladly. Pastoral visitation is always pleasant to me, but never so satisfactory as when a visit is appointed for a specific object. Suppose I go to-morrow at four o'clock in the afternoon. No, let me see, I have a funeral to attend. The day following is my Bible-class of young ladies in the afternoon. The next day I have no engagement, say Thursday at four o'clock; will that suit your convenience?

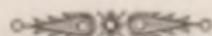
Mr. Good. Well, yes; but you know delays are dangerous, and you told us once, that when we were incited to any thing good it was the best way to enter upon it immediately before the first freshness of our feelings was worn off. Can you not come this afternoon?

Mr. Think. Yes, if you will be as well prepared by conversation with Mrs. Good-

man, and by reflection and prayer, as at another day.

Mr. Good. I think we shall be—for the more I consider it the more clear it is that God has heard our prayers, and has been preparing our minds for this very thing. I will go directly home and talk with Polly, and we shall expect you at four o'clock. Good morning.

Mr. Think. God willing, I will meet you at your house at that hour. Good morning.



CONVERSATION II.

MR. AND MRS. GOODMAN.

Mr. Goodman. Well, Polly, I believe we are on the right track now. What you said about the way into the way is all just so. The way to get light is to go where it is and seek for it.

Mrs. Goodman. Why, husband, what is

the matter? Have you found the light we have been seeking for?

Mr. Good. I cannot say that I have found it fully. I am like the man in the Gospel that saw men as trees walking.

Mrs. Good. Well, what is it?

Mr. Good. It is this. There is a way to enlarge our influence for the conversion of the world. With God's help we can make it greater than we had ever thought of, and that too without selling our farm or venturing upon any doubtful scheme—

Mrs. Good. You are satisfied, then, I hope, that "wisdom is better than strength," and that our first duty, if we would do any good, is to try to discover clearly what we ought to do.

Mr. Good. That I am. Was not God pleased with Solomon because he asked wisdom? And did not Saul of Tarsus commence his useful career by asking what Christ would have him to do?

Mrs. Good. Yes; but the light—what is it?

Mr. Good. Our duty is to expend more

labor and care on the training of our children, to make them useful instruments in the world's conversion. The prophet Isaiah, you know, was a polished shaft. If we cannot go into the battle on missionary ground, nor send large supplies to the Lord's army, we may temper and burnish weapons to be used in a future campaign.

Mrs. Good. That is the very truth we want. You know I said to you last summer that I had been thinking about being more useful by preparing our children for usefulness. You was afraid we should be selfish in it, and should be caring more for advancing our family than for advancing the cause of Christ. Does our pastor think we had better educate James to be a minister?

Mr. Good. No, he does not seem to think that it is certain that James should be a minister; but he thinks we might bestow a great deal more pains upon preparing them all to be ministers or teachers, or to do good in any station.

Mrs. Good. That is just what I have

thought ever since Mr. Thinkmuch preached that sermon on the text, "Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." He began by saying that it was a remarkable proof of the goodness of God, that he had placed the means of the most extensive usefulness so clearly within our reach. All who have children may, by properly instructing them, exert an influence as wide as the world and as lasting as time. I shall never forget that sermon. In one place, pretty near the end, he said, "Tell ye your children of it. How wide and far-reaching the influence. It is as if the prophet had said, let holy sentiments, sound instruction, stern principles of right pass from lip to lip; from an individual to a family; from each one of its members to their families; from all their members to a wider circle, and so on, increasing in a rapidly augmented ratio, till a multitude, like a nation, shall have their minds and hearts cast in the mould of a godly ancestor." James borrowed the

sermon, and copied this and a good deal more to learn for a piece to speak at school. You would be pleased to hear James rehearsing it. He brings out the word "nation" with such an emphasis. What influence, Dear, a good minister exerts upon the young people. They say that all the boys in school speak very much like Mr. Thinkmuch. He is a dear good man. I wish he would do a little more in the way of pastoral visits. Did you ask him to come and see us?

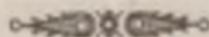
Mr. Good. Yes, I did, and he is coming this afternoon at four o'clock, and has promised to give us his views more fully in respect to this subject.

Mrs. Good. That's good. I will have my work out of the way, and every thing ready. Don't you think it will be best to keep the children home from school? The conversation will turn upon them, and it may do them a great deal of good.

Mr. Good. Yes, I had thought of that. We want to be in the same state that Cornelius was when he said to Peter, "Now therefore

are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

Mrs. Good. We have no time to lose. I must be very busy till four o'clock.



CONVERSATION III.

MR. THINKMUCH, MR. AND MRS. GOODMAN.

Mr. Goodman. How do you do again, Mr. Thinkmuch?

Mr. Thinkmuch. Very well, I thank you. How are you, sir?

Mr. Good. I am more than well, for it gives me a high degree of satisfaction to see my pastor at our own house. Walk in, sir.

Mr. Think. How do you do, Mrs. Goodman. I am glad to see you looking so well again.

Mrs. Good. I thank you, sir, my health is unusually good. I hope your family is well.

Mr. Think. Yes, I am obliged to you. How are all these little children? James

and Henry, you look very well; and how is my little Katy? Will you come and tell me what is the chief end of man?

Mrs. Good. Speak to Mr. Thinkmuch, Catharine, you can tell him what the chief end of man is. Katy is a little bashful. We kept them all home from school that they might derive some benefit from your visit.

Mr. Think. I am very glad you did so. There is no doubt in my own mind that children may derive as much advantage from a pastoral visit as their parents. Even when the conversation is not directed to them, they listen with intense interest, and comprehend it to a much greater extent than is commonly supposed. Besides, as our subject to-day has a reference to them solely, it is highly important that they should participate in it.

Mrs. Good. I was delighted to learn from Mr. Goodman that you proposed to impart to us some instruction about exercising an influence for the conversion of the world by giving more attention to the education of our own children. Neither Mr. Goodman nor

myself ever had very great advantages, and I am sure we must be very deficient in educating our children.

Mr. Think. It is not probable that you are deficient compared with our christian families generally, but it is possible to do a great deal more than you are now doing to train your children for great usefulness.

Mrs. Good. No doubt, if we compare ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise. It is just like our garden. We had a garden rather better than any of our neighbors. But three years ago a cousin of mine from the city visited us. He was enthusiastically fond of gardening. He gave me a great deal of instruction, and sent me a book on gardening. I prevailed on Mr. Goodman to let me have a little more assistance from the hired man in the spring. Then our two sons James and Henry and myself went into that garden. We made an asparagus bed, procured scions and a man to graft our fruit trees, planted out several varieties of grapes, erected an arbor and introduced a great

many shrubs and flowers, till they say there is not another garden in the whole township as good as ours. We were well satisfied with it when it was not one tenth part as good. Every thing is comparative.

Mr. Think. Exactly so; the garden is a capital illustration. You are accomplishing more to advance the cause of gardening in this way than you could do by any other means. You have learned also, that certain things can be done to improve your garden, of which you had no conception till you gave your mind to the subject.

Mr. Good. Well, sir, if you will do something for us in relation to the cultivation of our house plants, like what Mr. Goodrich did for Polly in respect to her garden, it will be a great matter. I suspect, however, it will have to be done through the same agency. Mrs. Goodman seems to be the inspiring genius in all our improvements.

Mrs. Good. My dear husband, you must not say so. Mr. Thinkmuch will be led to suppose that I bear rule instead of following

the example of Sarah, who obeyed Abraham. But really Mr. Goodman is so cautious and calculating and cool, and I am naturally so ardent and fond of new things, that I seem to be taking the lead when I am doing my best to follow his directions. But is it quite certain, Mr. Thinkmuch, that we may not be led away from serving Christ to serving ourselves in doing so much for our children?

Mr. Think. No, madam, it is not certain, if the kind of education be that primarily which shall excite their own worldly ambition and gratify the pride of their parents. But if you teach them to serve God, and form their minds and habits to doing it in the most effective way, there is not only no danger in it, but it is the best of all safeguards for their souls.

Mr. Good. But we have raised an inquiry of a different sort, or rather I have, for Polly has not seemed to feel the same difficulty. It is this. Since the spiritual well-being and salvation of our children are of no more value than if they were not our children, may we not

have a selfish desire for their advancement?

Mr. Think. Undoubtedly you may take wrong views of the nature of Christ's kingdom, and may imitate that fond and doting mother, who asked the Savior to place her two sons next to himself in honor. But if your object be the conversion of the world, you can scarcely be too earnest in preparing your children for the most useful instrumentality in this work.

Mr. Good. I think I see that now. I never thought of it in that light before. It is another illustration of your favorite saying, that God has connected our interest and our duty like the light and heat of a sun-beam.

Mr. Think. Exactly so. You can do no other work that shall so greatly advance the interests of your family, and you can do nothing that shall exert so wide an influence in behalf of the cause of your Redeemer.

Mr. Good. Now, Mr. Thinkmuch, I wish you would tell Polly some of the reasons why this should be regarded as the most useful kind of effort.

Mr. Think. I lay down this position to begin with. Most of the designs of God for the advancement of religion are accomplished by raising up *living agents* that are sanctified and instructed and prepared for the work. When God would lead forth Israel out of Egypt, he raised up Moses. When he would bring them into Canaan, he prepared Joshua. When he would people Palestine with a nation that should be able to resist the contagion of surrounding idolatry, he trained a whole generation by peculiar instruction and discipline. The reformations under the Judges, the checking of the tide of wickedness in the reign of good king Josiah, and the thorough moral changes wrought through the instrumentality of Ezra and Nehemiah, were produced by the same means. The raising up of all the prophets and apostles, and the coming of Christ himself, are illustrations of the same truth.

Mrs. Good. Excellent. But do we not contribute to the same result when we aid in the purchase of Tracts, and especially when

we assist the Education Society in training young men for the ministry?

Mr. Think. Yes, but not so directly and certainly. These institutions are excellent. You employ others to do your work. You know there is an old maxim of this sort: "If you do not much care whether any thing be done and done well, employ some person to do it for you; but if you would be certain of it, do it yourself." So far as these institutions accomplish their object, they are in their mode of acting like the action of parents which I am recommending. But the action of parents is the thing itself. The other endeavors are more or less perfect imitations.

Mr. Good. If you please, Mr. Thinkmuch, just explain to Polly your views about how much more certain it is that the living agents will do the work than it is that money will do it.

Mr. Think. To make it clear, I will suppose a case. We need more funds and more laborers for the missionary work. Now suppose that the funds of all our missionary associations could be made twice as large as

they have ever been. It would doubtless relieve present embarrassment and do good, but it is not certain that it would increase essentially the active piety of the church. But suppose that the present exertions of christians for the direct promotion of piety were so increased that the number of converts and the improved character of our young christians should augment the practical godliness of the church in the same ratio, do you not see that this would be certain to enhance the efficiency of the church. Doubling the funds would not be sure to make the good results twice as large. While money will not be certain to increase useful labor, useful labor will secure both more laborers and needful funds too. The parents that should be thus blest in the conversion of their children to God, would be led to give their sons and daughters to this work, and their patrimony with them. Such an increase of active piety would relax the grasp of avarice, and employ many thousands in earning money for the express purpose of

aiding in the diffusion of the sacred Scriptures and in all those means of good which may be bought with gold and silver.

Mrs. Good. That is a very interesting view of the subject. But does there not seem to be a difficulty in securing co-operation in this way? Now in giving money, as the Welsh preacher said, "the pennies are like rills, the shillings streams, and the pounds rivers, and the missionary fund a great reservoir, like the ocean, into which they all empty themselves." There is a beautiful unity and co-operation.

Mr. Think. O, to be sure. You must not understand me as depreciating the raising of money. On the contrary, not half enough is done in this way. But we need spontaneous effort. There will be unity and co-operation even when there is no formal organization to promote one particular kind of action.

Suppose you and all your neighbors should become more deeply interested in training your children for the conversion of the world than for any other enterprise, would there not

be a delightful harmony and co-operation even though you had formed no Society for achieving your object? I want to see more of the spontaneousness of our religion. Let all our youth be properly trained to feel and act for the world's conversion, and commerce would do more for christianity than it now does. Multitudes would seek the sacred office and go forth to preach the Gospel. Thousands of voluntary laborers would spring up and do the work of colporteurs at their own charges, waiting for no commission except what they could find in the command, "Go ye into all the world," and asking no aid but the well-earned confidence of their christian brethren. The church would retain its authorized form and its pastors regularly inducted into their office, but the whole body of the disciples would become in a certain sense preachers of the Gospel. Let the children of the present generation be properly trained, and the spontaneous outflow of zeal could not be repressed. Its movement would be characterized by such a depth and force of popular

impulse as would render it like a resistless ocean tide. The prediction of Isaiah to the church would be realized: "Thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited."

Mrs. Good. That is a delightful thought to be sure. But do you not think that these organized Societies make an excellent opening for usefulness for those who have not much learning, and who do not know how to exert a direct personal influence? I told Mr. Goodman once, that it seemed to me we were doing good in the same general way that the mules were at the Tract House. They used to move the printing-presses, and we, by another kind of brute labor, earned money to buy their provender. He replied that it was a humiliating view of the subject, but after all, that our actions would be judged of by our motives, and we ought to esteem it an honor to unloose the shoe-latchet of our Savior, when he is going up and down in his providence converting the world to himself.

Mr. Think. True, this mere brute labor, rendered for a good end, is an acceptable service. But you are certainly mistaken, madam, in supposing that God calls those who are not highly educated to that kind of labor only. On the contrary, my strongest reason for making the right training of children the most prominent work, in the means of converting the world, is found in the advantages which are thus given to all classes to take part in the direct spiritual endeavor to lead this lost world back to God.

A large proportion of the most useful and distinguished agents for promoting the kingdom of Christ have been persons of humble origin. God has blessed the poor and the unlearned with as many children as he has given to the more wealthy and highly educated classes. Moses was the son of a Hebrew slave. Samuel was of a humble family. David was a poor shepherd boy. Luther was the son of an indigent miner. The apostles of our Lord were nearly all of them from the humbler walks of life; and Christ him-

self, as to his earthly life, had his origin in the family of an unpretending mechanic. Indeed, there is much in the providence of God in these respects to call to mind that beautiful passage of inspired poetry in Hannah's song: "The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich; he bringeth low and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory."

Mrs. Good. A beautiful passage. Your sermon on that text last summer was the first thing which led me to think that God might accomplish great things through our children, if we would properly train them for him.

But do you not think, Mr. Thinkmuch, that Hannah was a woman of remarkable talents, and that Samuel was a gifted son?

Mr. Think. Undoubtedly Hannah was more than an ordinary woman, and Samuel was a remarkable child. You may not have reason to expect that one of your sons will ever exert as wide an influence as the prophet

Samuel did. Still you know nothing about it absolutely. Probably Hannah did not expect such an extraordinary character to be developed in her son, nor is it manifest that she exerted much personal influence in his training, otherwise than by her consecrating him, to God in prayer, exhibiting a pious interest in his education and placing him under a wise instructor.

Mrs. Good. Still is it not a fact that those families who are higher up in the world have more encouragement to hope for usefulness in this way than we?

Mr. Think. It cannot be denied that in certain respects they have. Affluence is favorable to an early polish of manners in children, from the influence of the circle into which it introduces them, and it also places it entirely at the option of their parents to secure for them the most competent teachers. But the children of such families as yours have equal if not superior advantages of another character. They are less exposed to the temptations that attend gayety and cost-

ly pleasures, and they have less to stimulate their worldly ambition. On the whole then, considering the superior hazards connected with the education of the children of the rich, those who are in moderate circumstances have at least an equal opportunity of contributing useful instruments for the world's conversion from their own households.

Mr. Good. Then you think we may enlarge our influence much by giving more attention to this branch of effort.

Mr. Think. Exactly so. Your influence for good may be increased beyond any assignable limits. Just as the poor woman that cast two mites into the treasury gave more than the whole crowd of wealthy and munificent donors; just so did Hannah when she brought her infant Samuel and consecrated him to the Lord, give more than all the princes of Israel who gave their sons and daughters to the nation with a less pure intent. So it *may be* with you.

Mrs. Good. Those are my views precisely, and I said to Mr. Goodman that I thought

that no effort we make to do good has such a strong spiritual influence upon ourselves. The monthly meeting for the instruction of our children seems to draw my mind from the world, and to make the things of eternity real. I commonly go with them, and my mind is on their spiritual interest all day. Nothing makes me feel more strongly that there is something above this world to live for.

Mr. Think. Well, madam, that is all very natural. You earn money to employ somebody to employ somebody else to do good, and you do not participate so directly in the blessing.

If the pious Mary had sent a servant with a sealed note enclosing money authorizing somebody else to purchase a box of costly perfume and anoint the Savior, such an arrangement would have implied faith, and could not have failed to be rewarded, but the superior blessing accompanying the act when she breaks the box and applies it with her own hand, is fitly represented by the fragrance which she necessarily shared in

common with her Lord. Besides, if you should be so happy as to see your children useful, it cannot but animate your zeal. The pious father and pious mother whose son is a missionary to the heathen, are sure to remember that good cause. They never forget the monthly concert.

Mr. Good. I think I can see now, that if every christian family will endeavor to create a living interest in the minds of their own children, this will secure every thing else.

Mr. Think. Yes, that you may depend upon. Why, just look at it in another point of light. The spread of christianity will be just in proportion to the extent given to brotherly and philanthropic sentiments. Now let me illustrate this. A gift of money or funded institutions to promote learning and piety might create a lasting sense of obligation in the people that should receive it, and might keep alive a peculiar interest among the people whence the benefit was derived. But there is no gift that awakens such sentiments

of gratitude as the gift of a *person* whose qualities have proved a blessing, and nothing else bestowed can create such an interest in the mind of the *giver*.

When a man gives a daughter in marriage to one that brings her into connection with a large family that were formerly strangers, if she prove herself to be a virtuous wife, if she manifest filial piety towards her new parents and exhibit lovely qualities to her new brothers and sisters, and win all their hearts by her goodness, what will be her influence in creating sentiments of brotherhood between those two families?

When the French nation only *lent* us their La Fayette they laid the foundation for a stronger friendship than could have been created by the gift of millions of money. So also, the greatest gift by which God would awaken our gratitude, is a person. He spared not his own Son, but gave him freely for us all. This is the most effective of all donations in its influence upon us. So when we give our children to those communities that

are suffering for the want of spiritual privileges, we awaken in our own hearts a peculiar affection, and in theirs a peculiar response of grateful love.

Mr. Good. I think we are satisfied and more than satisfied that the enlargement of our influence in promoting the conversion of the world is to be sought especially in training our children for the work. We must not relax our endeavors in giving money, but we must count the training of our children a weightier matter. But, how can we secure our object? We shall impose additional labor upon our pastor to aid us in this important work. I am afraid you will not find leisure to add this to all your numerous cares and engagements.

Mr. Think. On the contrary, it will diminish my labor and my anxiety. It would cheer and stimulate me to have three such appointments as this every week.

If the people will make their arrangements as you have done, to bring all their family together for a specific object, and that

of such a high and interesting character, I shall easily find time to meet them. I can always find time to meet those who send for me as Cornelius did for Peter, to render an important service. The work that wears out a pastor is meeting the merely social feelings by which persons are jealous of any little want of attention.

Then, as it respects the means of training your children, there is really no difficulty. "Where there is a will there is a way." I do not believe that Hannah was greatly perplexed about the method of securing the proper education of Samuel; nor can any ordinary christian woman fail in this work if she be first imbued with Hannah's spirit.

Mrs. Good. Yet, can you not give us some useful instruction in regard to the means to be employed? Wisdom is profitable to direct.

Mr. Think. Certainly, Mrs. Goodman, wisdom is better than strength; and it is of vast consequence to pursue a judicious course. But I mean to say if you have a right spirit you may begin to act with your

present resources, and acquire knowledge by the perusal of the Scriptures and good books, by prayer and experience, and counsel with judicious friends.

Mr. Good. But we shall be greatly obliged to you if you will be so good as to specify some of the most important subjects to be thought upon in relation to this great business.

Mr. Think. O yes; but you must keep in mind that you cannot proceed mechanically with the application of a set of rules.

You may consecrate your children to God daily and individually in your secret prayers. You may teach them yourselves, studying the word of God for this end, with fervent prayer for wisdom to impart well-proportioned instruction. You may secure a habit of subordination to your authority, and thus prepare them to appreciate more fully the authority of their heavenly Father. You can inform them of the spiritual necessities of this sinful world, and show them that the Gospel is a perfect remedy, and that the

very end for which God created them was that they might themselves partake of it, and make it known to others. You may educate their sympathies in such a way that they shall cherish sentiments of deep compassion towards the heathen. You may show them the practicability of the conversion of the most benighted nations. You may inspire them with a sense of the glorious nature of the enterprise. You may teach them to pray for the conversion of the world, and to make sacrifices for the attainment of the object. You may hold special meetings with them in respect to these ends, and may there pray with them, imploring the Holy Spirit to sanctify these endeavors, and to prepare them individually for acting some important part, either at home or abroad, for the recovery of the whole human family to God.

Mrs. Good. Will you not then, as our pastor, aid us in this work, by meeting us and our children at stated periods, and confer with us and assist our prayers for this object?

Mr. Think. Very gladly. If it will suit you, I will meet you and your children with my own and any others that are disposed to join us. We will hold a monthly concert and contribute all our children, and pray God with much entreaty to accept the gift. I feel that this meeting has done me good. It has moved my soul in relation to the most momentous enterprise in which human beings can engage. I wish all the church and all their children were now here. I would say to every christian parent,

My dear friend, do you desire, while burdened with the care of a numerous family, to do something for the propagation of the Gospel? Give, then, of your substance, give your personal exertions, give your earnest prayers; but give also a more substantial donation; give your children to God for this object. Let the Divine Providence direct how and where they shall be employed. Consecrate them to God as the best offering you can make, and be anxious mainly that they may fill their sphere well, be it secular

or be it sacred. Beg it as a boon of your heavenly Father, that he will make your children efficient instruments in advancing his kingdom in the world. Remember that well-prepared *living agents* will secure all the other facilities and appliances which the cause demands. Every young person that burns with a well attuned zeal to propagate the Gospel will find the means of doing it. If the number of active and well-qualified agents for this work were greatly augmented, organization or no organization, funds overflowing or an empty treasury, they would find means of bringing their energies to a practical bearing. The church would break forth, by spontaneous movements, on the right hand and on the left.

If you have not large wealth, but have a numerous family, you may say to the church as Peter did to the man who asked an alms, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee." And when you give your children, it will be equal to the miraculous bestowment of Peter in its effect.

The "feet and ankle-bones" of the suppliant church will receive strength to go on gladly in her heavenly mission.

Nothing else can give you such a hearty zeal for the missionary work as the cherished feeling that your children are given to it if God shall call for them. What can impart such an interest for any lost tribe of our species as the fact, that for aught you know to the contrary, and in accordance with your vows, your own children may yet identify themselves with it, and your posterity may be blended with it to a thousand generations. While, therefore, I would not have your zeal abated for aiding those that are in the field combating with the powers of darkness in the very fortresses of the enemy, I call upon you to consider whether you are doing all your duty in respect to consecrating your own children to this work.

Is not the reason why so many of the children of pious parents are in an unconverted state to be found in the fact, that they have not really devoted them to the service of

God for *any* work to which he may call them? If you educate your children for the most advantageous positions in society merely, have you not reason to expect that they will have their reward, and you yours in strict accordance with your desires? But on the other hand, if you give them to God, and educate them for him, have you not reason to believe that he will accept the offering at your hand, and qualify them by his grace for some good work in forwarding the conversion of the world?

But I must desist. Shall we meet your family and mine at my house four weeks hence, to consider this subject again?

Mr. Good. If you please, meet at our house.

Mr. Thinkmuch assented, offered a prayer, said a few words to the children, who had been listening with tearful eyes, and departed. But the consequences are not yet known.