



SALT

YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

MRS. S.S. BAKER

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EARTH.”

BY MRS. S. S. BAKER.



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He "by whom the worlds were made and for whose pleasure all things are and were created," has spoken of true spiritual life as salt, and even of his own faithful followers as "the salt of the earth." We, in our ignorance, cannot fathom all the deep analogies that were present to the mind of our Lord in this comparison, but it must be profitable to make those that are most apparent the subject of devout and careful meditation.

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SALT.



“SALT IS GOOD.”

“SALT is good!” This is the universal testimony, but it is spoken of the true salt only.

To whom do men go when they are in distress? Where do the afflicted, the puzzled, the worried, the doubting, the penitent, and the dying find counsel and comfort? Worldly livers, scoffers, and boon companions may do for friends in sunny days, but for help men turn to the true Christian and own his priceless worth. Comforted, helped, cheered, advised, and encouraged, the late sufferers exclaim in fulness of heart, “‘Salt is good;’ the true Christian is the best friend!”

How great then is the responsibility of

the so-called Christians who bring disgrace upon religion! Christians have their Master's honor in their keeping. They are called by his name, they assume to be of his family; let them be careful to bear the family likeness.

You have no right to be mean and selfish and disobliging; you have no right to be cold and time-serving and worldly; you have no right to be false and unreliable, or bitter and unforgiving, and yet call yourself a Christian. This is not the family likeness.

Be pure and true and cheerful and helpful. Keep close to the Saviour by frequent, trustful communion with him, and you will imbibe his spirit who went about doing good, who washed the feet of his own disciples, and had a word of comfort for the dying thief in the midst of his own cruel pains on the cross.

Follow your Master, and the world will indeed say of your walk and conversation, "This is what we need! Salt is good!"

SALT IN SOCIAL LIFE.

ROCK salt, coarse salt, table salt of the purest and whitest, all stored year after year in a warehouse, closed and locked—salt it is, who can doubt it? But is it doing its lawful work?

The same experiment has been tried as to the spiritual life. Men have sought holiness shut out from family ties and cut off from the sweet and kindly influences of social intercourse.

We may not deny that there have been pure souls in this voluntary retirement, who have blessed the world through their prayers and have left divine thoughts, written down, to be a help to all Christians. But while this is true, how often in this unnatural life the salt has lost its savor, and become only fit to be "cast out and trodden under foot of men."

In these days we have the experiment repeated in another form. Earnest Christians will willingly cluster together in a charmed circle, drawing away even the hem

of their garments from the outside world, lest their own sanctity should be tainted. So a certain kind of religious life surely is fostered. Salt it may be, but it is not salting the earth! Salt to be of service must be sprinkled over, or mingled with, or made to interpenetrate the substance it is to flavor or preserve.

It may be very comfortable to associate only with congenial souls, who have kindred hopes and aims and consolations, even the same that are your own stay and joy. Very comfortable it may be; but salt, to be useful, requires contact with the substance to be salted.

Most Christians own that the drunkard and the outcast should be sought for diligently and brought into the Master's house, but few feel any responsibility towards those who are nearer to their own character and their standing in life.

To be a missionary to the heathen has a charm to the enthusiastic and devoted Christian, and we honor such devotedness and

such work. You may perhaps have a mission nearer home, and who can reckon its possible importance?

You can at least meet with friendliness all overtures to social intercourse, and in a loving spirit mingle with your fellows in kindly communion, giving them the pleasure that always flows from a frank and cordial responsiveness. In this way you will draw near to many human hearts, and when the timely moment comes you may sow the good seed with the taste and propriety requisite in order that it may spring and take root and bear fruit.

When and where the true Christian may safely mingle with the children of this world, must be left to the individual conscience to decide. Our Lord did not shrink from being found in any social gathering, or even from taking a place at the table with publicans and sinners. Perhaps in proportion to your real likeness to him you may safely do the same.

Where love leads you, where you go in an utter indifference to the pomp and pride

of life, with the pure unselfishness and unconsciousness that desires not the highest place, not the due meed of attention, nor the favorable opportunity to shine, you may bravely venture. It may be that the very presence of one unsullied by the world may purify the air from the mists of folly or the cutting blasts of a scornful pride.

Not that we would encourage any to frequent places of amusement which their consciences condemn, or which they find numbing to their own spiritual life. We are speaking of such intercourse as brings human beings together with an opportunity for the real and purely natural talk by which they may learn to know one another.

The surest and safest way for Christians socially to "salt the earth" is by a large and liberal and unostentatious hospitality. For those who have ample means and spacious homes, this is an easy matter. The host and hostess can give the tone to conversation in their own drawing-room and at their own table, felt at first, perhaps, negatively, but in

time having a positive influence, sure and strong. Nor is this means of usefulness confined to the rich. There are few persons who have comfortable homes who cannot receive a little circle of friends now and then for an evening or an occasional invited or uninvited guest at their own table.

Somehow the giving of a friend better food than he would probably have in his own home has come to be considered a necessary part of hospitality. This notion has a natural and kindly origin, but it has done much to check free social intercourse, and to prompt to an effort to make a false impression on the guest as to the resources of the host and hostess and their ordinary way of living. It has led, too, to that social emulation which ends in ostentation and extravagance. The hostess often grows chary of her invitations because of the trouble they involve. Because she cannot receive her friends without a certain lavishness and empty show, she cuts herself off from a means of wide and salutary influence.

Let Christians exercise a loving hospitality towards the chosen or the chance guest or the gathered circle, themselves consistent to their own principles, and acting them out in word and deed under their own roof; and many a stranger, many a lonely struggler, many a worldling, will have cause to bless the firesides where in an atmosphere of warm friendliness they were allowed to see and share a true Christian family life.

Surely the salt of the earth may mingle with persons not certainly and thoroughly Christian in efforts for the relief of the poor, for temperance, and for morality. If you are to save the crew of a sinking ship, you must not be too particular who it is that helps you to send out the life-boat. A common object, a common effort, draws men together; and if you be of the salt of the earth, your influence will be felt, and the whole undertaking will be the more bravely and wisely carried on for your presence.

We have not been agitating the question how far mere pleasure-seekers may go in

search of amusement. To them we would only say in the words of Holy Writ, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." It is of the salt of the earth we are speaking, not of them who are "of the earth, earthy."

Be not timid, suspicious, self-conscious Christians! Go, loving and large-hearted, to mingle with your fellow-men in society, in the office, in the workshop, in the homes of the rich and the poor, and your salt will not lose its savor, but it will be yours to share in the blessed work of salting the earth!

THE PURIFYING OF SALT.

"SALT is never found perfectly pure." Take courage from these simple words! What Christian can fail to be sometimes disheartened in the contest with his inherent faults of character, that seem to be interwoven with his very life; his besetting sins,

that though once cast out and triumphed over, still come back with new strength to claim the mastery.

Be patient! He who "sits as the refiner and purifier of silver" will not disdain to enter on the same work with the salt.

"Salt is separated from the water with which it is found by artificial heat, by exposure to the rays of the sun, and by freezing." *

You wish to be made pure; are you willing to submit to the process that God will ordain for your purification? Are you ready to be "salted with fire," tried in the furnace of affliction? Bereavement, the loss of the dearest you own, may be necessary for you. Days and nights and even years of pain may be your portion. Troubles, worries, disappointments, humiliations may be in store for you. Are you ready to take each day's proportion of trial as it comes, to take it humbly, meekly, and if possible joyfully, and let it do for you its work of purification?

* Prof. Peckham on Salt.

Human nature shrinks from the prospect of being purified by fire, but in the midst of the flames there will be seen One walking beside you in the likeness of the Son of God. With such companionship as the Man of Sorrows, you will have sympathy and support in all that is before you, and his loving acknowledgment that you are truly of his own.

Perhaps your merciful Master may be pleased to purify you by sunshine. He may see that you need the joys of life to perfect your character. He may even fill your cup with earthly blessings and human love. In such sunshine forget not the Giver. Like a grateful child lift your heart to your Heavenly Father. Thank him for his good gifts, and share with a free hand whatever blessings of the earthly or the spiritual life you have received from your Heavenly Benefactor.

Do not be terrified if the means of your purification should be like benumbing cold, and seem to threaten to turn even your own

heart to ice. You may be while in the civilized world like the lone missionary in the midst of the wild heathen, with only God for his friend. You may be surrounded by near relatives who know not God and despise his children. You may be among those who scorn your church organization, and will not own any as true Christians who are without their own narrow fold. Do not fear! You will come out from this trial purer and happier if through it you are drawn nearer to the Saviour, looking to him only for your joy and consolation. This world's desolation and coldness will have no chill for you, living in the full rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

Fear not any means that may be used for your purification! You will have just what you need, no more, no less! Your soul has been trusted to your Master's hands, let him do with it what seemeth him good. Say with the brave king of old, "Let me suffer, if I must, but let me not fall into sin."

SALT AT TABLE.

ALL plans for education, all efforts for the poor, all social reforms, all struggles after sanctity that tend to destroy or set aside the influence of family life, must fail.

The interchange of affection in the family is one of the great sources of the beautifying and purifying of the human heart. Were there no little children about us, with their tender caresses, their innocent charm, and their contagious merriment, what a light would go out from the household! Were there no old people to prompt to respect and kindly consideration, and to give us the wisdom from their long experience, what a means of education would be taken from us! Alas! if we lacked the bond of brotherhood, the companionship of our life-long comrades, endeared to us by the ties of blood, the interchange of mutual offices of love, and the common memories of a common home! Had not the father his unselfish motive for ^{exerc-} ~~edu-~~ cation, the winning of daily food and the com-

forts of home for his dear ones, how dreary to many a man would be the struggle of life! Were there no mother's love to embrace, like the love of God, the worthy, and the unworthy, what a joy, what a refuge, what a consolation would be taken from mankind! God has "set us in families;" his name be praised for the blessed institution!

The hearthstone has become the symbol of family life; but is it not rather round the family table that this life is nurtured, spiritually as well as physically? Here all, old and young, meet together again and again during the day for free and natural intercourse and the exchange of kindly courtesies, as well as for the eating of daily bread. How much would many a busy father see of his children, if he did not meet them at the family table? Where can a mother be sure to take in in one glance of love her dearest treasures, if not at the repast which her forethought has planned and perhaps her own hands have helped to prepare?

The system which adopts for children

the old table motto, "Let your food keep you quiet," makes that food the one object and interest of the meal, and while it fosters greediness and daintiness, robs the parents of one of the best opportunities of knowing what their children really are in themselves and in their relation to each other.

It is at the table that public events are often discussed, family matters talked over, or plans for pleasure or benevolence agitated. Here the children come to understand the drift of the family life, their parents' real aims and interests, and so are daily and insensibly moulded into a likeness, in opinions, tastes, and principles, to their elders.

The family meal should be a cheerful occasion, where even a burst of childish merriment would not be altogether unfitting, but it should be seasoned with salt.

The physical salt at table is not a taste that is obtruded upon us. It simply makes our food more agreeable, or acts as a relish to prompt to its enjoyment. It is much the

same with a true spiritual life in this gathering together of the family.

This spiritual life appears positively, however, in the blessing before or the thanksgiving after meals. It is this that reminds the assembled group that their Master is present with them as he was with his disciples of old. Though unseen, he must not be forgotten or disregarded.

This thought, rightly explained and realized, will be a check to much that is undesirable that may easily arise in the free conversation of a family at meals.

The negative influence of the true salt at the table will prevent all immoderate eating and drinking, all that pampering of the appetite that tends to make bodily indulgence a matter of importance and a growing temptation. It will season the conversation with the spirit of love that shuts out gossip among the elders and tale-bearing among the children. It closes the mouth to harsh words and provoking taunts. It remembers that we must be "first pure," allows no doubtful

story to taint the lips of the elders and sully the minds of the children. It makes the whole conversation natural, cheerful, and agreeable.

The very necessary decorum and kindly courtesies of the table are important things in education. They help to keep down the animal in children, which inclines to take the upper hand, especially with boys, at the presence of food. The neglect of this exalting of the soul over the body at table may foster tendencies that produce the future glutton or drunkard.

If need be, the spiritual salt at table will sometimes make itself sharply felt by a pungent rebuke of anything low or irreverent or unkind that may creep into the free family talk. The conversation may, not seldom, glide into holier and deeper subjects, where people "speak good thoughts naturally," because they "always think them." Such subjects will be treated reverently, not in the spirit of discussion, but simply and cheerfully and lovingly, as one speaks of things

that are tender and precious and true and dear to the heart.

What a power for good is such a family table where it is never forgotten that the Lord himself is present, even at the daily breaking of bread!

“HAVE SALT IN YOURSELVES, AND HAVE PEACE ONE WITH ANOTHER.”

THERE is no such thing as entailed spiritual life. You cannot inherit this treasure from your forefathers; you cannot transmit it to your descendants. You receive it for yourself alone as you do birth and death. It is the gift of God to the single soul, which he offers to each and all, particularly and specially, through the Great Redeemer.

You may not rely on Christian education. You may not think because you belong to a certain church organization and have partaken of the sacrament you are necessarily of the body of Christ. You may not flatter yourself that all is right with your religious

life because you are sound in doctrine. Even good works are no sure reliance. You may be an admirable machine for distributing alms, but only a dead machine, with no life in you. You must have salt in yourself, personally, thoroughly, abidingly.

If there is any kind of a quarrel that is particularly disgraceful, it is a family quarrel. Who would expect such quarrels in the family of Christ, who claim to have the same Father, the same law for their rule of life, the same Elder Brother through whom they are to inherit eternal joy, and the same home in heaven where they are all to be blessed together? Yet what bickering and falling out there are by the way!

It was not without special reason that our Lord coupled together the two admonitions, “Have salt in yourselves,” and “Have peace one with another!”

It is the lack of the true spirit of humility and love in the individual members that makes this dissension in the family of Christ.

There are Christians who are zealous for

the spreading of the truth and for all good works, and yet there is something in the way that limits their usefulness, that breaks down their best schemes and makes the wise shrink from joining in their undertakings. What stands in the way of these honest, would-be active workers? It is even their own personality! Perhaps it is their fickleness or their unreliability. Perhaps it is their eagerness to be first in everything and to take the credit in all the good done. Perhaps they are visionary and unpractical and untruthful because unwilling to see and represent things as they really are. Perhaps they lack the perseverance and patient waiting that do not expect to see the fruit when the seed is just planted. Perhaps they are obstinate and wilful and domineering.

Let those Christians who would be actively useful be careful lest their own personality be the worst stumbling-block in their way. Let them see that they so have salt in themselves that no indulged faults of character may limit the usefulness they so

heartily desire, and for which they are so truly willing to labor.

USE YOUR SALT!

WE have spoken of salt in social life, but some one may say, "I cannot be useful in that way. I am too shy or dull of speech, too insignificant and unattractive, too inconsistent, too full of faults, to do anything by personal intercourse."

Grant that you know yourself; find out then some work suitable to your peculiarities and the atom of salt you are privileged to possess. Be like Moody, the evangelist, in your energy and your humility. When Moody was told, in his early manhood, that he was too inexperienced and too little gifted to speak as he had been doing in a little gathering of Christians for mutual edification, he accepted the rebuke, kept silence, but sought out at once a poor negro boy and patiently taught him to read. This was work he was sure he could do, and he did it. God had greater work in store for him!

There is no human being who cannot have some sphere of usefulness; limited it may be, but if well filled, there is awaiting the humblest worker the blessed words of approval, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

Some friendly counsel lovingly written in a letter to a young friend may sink deep into the soul and prompt to better things. Can you sing? Perhaps your voice in a hymn may reach some heart closed to the preached word.

Can you gather little children about you, perhaps your own brothers and sister, and talk to them of Jesus? You can at least read to them the "old, old story."

You must be able to make somebody happier at least once a day by a friendly, encouraging word. If you cannot lift the burden of poverty from any home of want, you can perhaps contribute some trifling comfort where there is the utmost need, or a little gift that meets no bodily necessity, but cheers

because it speaks of loving interest. Have you no good book to lend? Have you no printed leaflet, to say to a friend what will not come from your trembling lips?

You can try to be a ready listener when others talk of their troubles, and give sympathy if you can give nothing else. You can wear, perhaps, the cheerful face that comes from peace within, or from full health and a naturally happy disposition, or from pleasant surroundings and freedom from care. Go then to the lonely and sorrowful and let your light be sunshine for them.

You say you can do nothing. You can certainly do the best work: you can pray earnestly and persistently for those whom you would benefit. Pray for them by name and with individual, hearty interest, and there will be blessing on your secret work of love.

It may be that while you are fancying you can do nothing because of your personal or mental or moral deficiencies, you have yet a material means of usefulness,

outside of yourself, which you neglect or undervalue.

Has the little salt you possess found its way into your purse to season thoroughly its contents? Here you perhaps shelter yourself with the excuse that you have little to give and little wisdom in giving. Perhaps you have some wise friend who will help you and teach you when and where to give what you can spare. Work given and industry encouraged can never be dangerous.

Perhaps you have large means and have not yet felt your responsibility. People in moderate circumstances generally give more liberally in proportion to their income than the very rich. They who are accustomed to have far more money at their command than their mode of living requires are subject to a kind of sluggishness and indifference with regard to the employment of their surplus. Give yourself the trouble to think what you could possibly spare for benevolent purposes. Be it little or be it much, let it take a definite form, in numbers, before your eyes. To

whom does it belong? Whose steward are you? To whom must you give an account of your stewardship?

Shut up in your purse, in your bank-book, or in your investments, there may be sums that ought to relieve the want in that poor family, or that might furnish work to those unemployed hands that in their helpless idleness may be tempted to steal. Those outcast children growing up to be more brutes, savage brutes, than men, might be softened and refined and Christianized and made happy by the use of your idle treasure! How many suffering patients, neglected in their sick-beds, might have kind care, with a little help from you!

Loosen your purse-strings! Pour out your gold! Pour it out, but pour it by means of hands that are guided by heads and hearts instructed in the wisest way of giving. Let not your gold, hoarded for want of resolution, rise up to witness against you at the last great day!

We have spoken of a home of comfort as

a means of usefulness, through hospitality, but there are many accessories to such a home that may be made to pay tribute. Who has not heard of or tried those dreary drives "to exercise the horses," as it is generally put? How many invalids would be glad to have an airing in that same carriage on a sunny morning, if you would take the trouble to ask them! Is there no old lady to whom a chat with you, in the quiet companionship of your carriage, would give pleasure and refreshment? Do you not know some little children to whom the very sight of the horses and the motion of the wheels would be a delight, not to speak of the pleasure of seeing unaccustomed sights outside their ordinary range for walking?

The flowers that are an every-day enjoyment for you, what pleasure a plant or a little bouquet might give in a sick-room, a home of sorrow, or in some mean, low dwelling-place, where refined tastes must be content in poverty or self-denial.

Fruit, delicate luxuries of the table, let

them find their way sometimes to palates grown dainty through long confinement; let them find their way with a friendly message of inquiry for the invalid.

What are you doing for home missions? Help the true-hearted men and women who are living among the poor and stretching out to the lost the hand of Christian love!

We repeat, if you are shy and retiring and uninteresting, perhaps God has given you a power for good that is slumbering in your purse.

“Freely ye have received, freely give!” and we may add, freely give and you will freely receive, even a joy the purest that wealth can bestow.

SALT IN CONVERSATION.

“Let your conversation be with grace seasoned with salt.”

To talk piously on purpose is a very dangerous experiment, and however it may profit the listener, is sure to be injurious to the

speaker. Be at least natural, true, and sincere in all that pertains to your religion.

Strange to say, in these over-civilized days, to be natural seems to be a rare and difficult attainment. We even speak of it as a special and uncommon charm. This lack is a sore drawback to the enjoyment of ordinary social life, but it is inexcusable and inadmissible in religion. Here we may only speak as the heart prompts, and it is to the heart we must look as the source of profitable religious conversation. All religious talk that does not come from a heart truly given to God is treason towards man and an offence towards our Maker.

The idea has somehow come to prevail that one must talk for the spiritual advantage of the listeners. Quite the contrary: you must be what you ought to be, and then your most unconscious words as well as acts may be a help and a blessing.

If you thoroughly abhor what is wrong in yourself as well as in others, you will feel the pure and righteous indignation that will

prompt you to rebuke sinful talk by a dignified silence or by a well-timed expression of disapproval. If the spiritual life of your friends is your deepest interest for them, you will surely find the time and occasion to come near to them on the most important of all subjects.

If your heart is full of love to God and welling over with his peace and joy, you will not need to try to talk about it, but rather to be on your guard that you do not too freely open your secret soul to others, to the dimming of your own inner life.

It is a good rule in conversation to listen and learn when a subject is agitated about which you know little or nothing. The same rule is valuable as to religious matters. A quiet listener to a talk on holy things is often more profited than those who join in the conversation. Be "slow to speak" is here a wise and salutary caution, especially in the presence of many hearers. In a *tete-a-tete* it is quite different. There two friends may safely open their hearts to each other to the

advantage of both, and such communion is often a real source of growth in the religious life.

If you are a Christian at all, of course your whole conversation should be thoroughly salted by the strong negative influence that seals your lips to all that offends against the law of love. All slander, gossip, ridicule, all falsity, all harshness, bitterness of retort and scornful suppression of the gentle, will be unknown to you. The slightest breath of impurity in anecdote or allusion will be abhorred and avoided. The drollest story that touches on irreverence will be sacrificed and kept back. The piquant hit couched in the words of Scripture will never pass your lips. There is no danger of being over-watchful on these points. If it is with the tongue you most frequently offend, chain it! Accustom yourself to an irksome silence till you can have it, at least in a measure, under your control. This negative salting of your conversation will doubtless be more useful to your fellows than any directly religious

words that are in danger of being soon followed by your uttering something that offends against reverence or purity or love.

SALT AND CORRUPTION.

IT is the bodies that are made for life that fall into decay. Let that life be wholly or partially extinct, or let its functions cease in but one portion of the system, and corruption begins. How eagerly we remove from the neighborhood of our homes the dead animal, late so full of life, but now a loathsome object. If it be suffered to remain near the dwellings of men it will be a revolting source of discomfort and even of alarming or mortal illness. The very plants in their decay must be put far from us or consumed by the purifying fire.

Far more horrible, far more dangerous, is a soul given over to moral corruption. Moral decay in your neighborhood as surely taints the air as the grossest forms of material rotteness. It may work more slowly, but the

result is inevitable and sure. To this you perhaps willingly shut your eyes.

You may think yourself of the salt of the earth and live on comfortably in your pure and tranquil home, unmindful of the sink of sin perhaps in your very neighborhood. Marble walls and curtains of lace cannot keep out its contagion. It is perhaps corrupting your children before you know it. It is coming into your house through the back alleys. Your servants are feeling it. Perhaps you yourself are unconsciously taking in the poison.

Is there nothing to stay this corruption? "The salt of the earth" must anticipate and prevent the ruin wrought in and by these decaying masses. They must salt these imperilled classes and preserve them from utter ruin.

There are places where vice and crime run riot in Christian lands, and so-called Christians shut their eyes and close their ears and think to go peacefully on towards heaven. Perhaps at heaven's gate they may be met

with the solemn question, "Where is thy brother?" Can they then plead the excuse of a selfish love of ease or a cold indifference to their fellow-men?

Even in this world the retribution may come. The human race is one. You stand or fall with it. Your own nation is one. You must share its blessing or its curse. You cannot escape the consequences of sin that is festering around you. Pestilence from the noisome homes of the poor, anarchy, tumults, confusion, the disorganization of society, sin in the upper classes, sin in the lower classes—these and many nameless horrors threaten you. You cannot if you will wrap around you the garments of your own sanctity and resolve to know nothing of the sin that is at your very doors. You may have a rough waking, the waking of the passenger in the sinking ship, too late even for his own escape. Wake now! Be active! Save at least the children! Can you not take charge of one "little one," who without your helping hand would grow up in sin and sink down

into the homes of vice? Intemperance, what are you doing to check the advance of this horrible enemy, destroying yearly its thousands of victims?

If you will but really open your eyes you will have no sleep for them, no slumber for your eyelids, till you personally as a Christian are doing something to reform the vicious or at least to save the children from a career of sin and shame.

SALT AND SACRIFICE.

“Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.”

WE are all familiar in daily life with certain would-be unselfish people who go about with a resigned air, helping everybody continually, yet making everybody uncomfortable by an expression which seems to say, “I am imposed upon and I know it; but I am so lovely I am willing to be sacrificed for others.”

Such a life of self-sacrifice is not necessarily a sham, but it is without the true salt of

love, which can alone make it a blessing both to the giver and the receiver. It is hard to accept such service, really half-grudgingly tendered, be it in the sick-room, by the hearthstone, or in the intercourse of neighbor with neighbor.

It is written, "God loveth a cheerful giver," and in this at least we are all like our Heavenly Father. Give rather, if need be, less service, but give for love, and let love be mingled in all service. What you do for others do heartily and willingly and cheerily; so will your life be a source of joy as well as help to all around you.

It is even possible to go on a mission to the heathen or to minister to the wants of the poor in a dreary and yet a self-righteous spirit. The foreign missionary can have a sanctimonious air, as if he were holy and self-sacrificing above all men, and at the same time the most miserable. His offering should rather be salted with an unconscious, self-forgetting, cheerful devotedness.

A so-called friend of the poor may give

time and interest to benevolent purposes, and yet be full of complaints that the best hours of the day are taken up with hearing these tiresome applicants or in visiting "those trying, ungrateful paupers." All this may be said in the martyr spirit that would willingly have its martyrdom known. This too is a sacrifice without salt!

As to money, better the two loving mites of the widow than the purse full of gold grudgingly or ostentatiously given, no salt in the offering. Of this most Christians are convinced: but whose practice will always bear the test?

But what of the great offering of all you are and all you have, the full consecration which is a necessary part of a true, deep-established Christian life? A man may reckon up his powers of usefulness, all the essential parts of his being, and all his possessions, and with this inventory in hand question himself whether he has offered or is willing to offer up to the very essence of his being and the last atom of his possessions.

He may answer in the affirmative and yet not be giving to the Lord in the spirit of love, as the child gives, as the mother gives, as the true wife gives, not counting or reckoning, but with a depth of affection that can keep back nothing because it can own nothing apart from the beloved one. Where true love has had the victory there is an end to mine and thine; all favors, all possessions are but tributary means of promoting the joy of the beloved one or of furthering his wishes.

Think not to be able to say to the Lord in a mercenary spirit, "I have given everything I am and have, and now in return I shall receive all."

There are many devout souls who unconsciously have given all to the Lord and but live to render him a glad and willing service. His almighty love has so taken hold of their hearts that they count nothing their own. Time, money, and affections are all consecrated to him in whom they truly "live and move and have their being." This is

true consecration. This is the offering that springs naturally from the loving gratitude of the pardoned sinner, the ransomed prisoner, or the repentant prodigal humbly rejoicing in the presence of his Father, serving, but serving as a son in his Father's house!

SALT IN THE HOME.

“AN impurity of three per cent. makes salt unfit for domestic purposes.”

It is first in the home that the true Christian life finds its sorest test. It is comparatively easy for the spurious form to hold its place with the outside world, but at home its true nature is betrayed.

To be of use at home one must be much at home. Many despise this slow, unostentatious, prosaic way of doing good. They must be running hither and thither, neglecting their private every-day duties for something more heroic, more telling, “more fruit-bringing, more satisfactory,” to use their own words. There is nothing more

unsatisfactory in the end than a neglected home!

The mother whom all are praising for her active benevolence, who has her bonnet on from morning to night to be at this bazaar and that committee, to speak a little here and exhort a little there, while her young children quarrel and pilfer, or by incompetent nurses are bribed to submission by this unlawful tit-bit or that forbidden indulgence; yes, the mother who so deserts her proper charge will find, too late, pampered bodies in full mastery and evil habits formed and wrong propensities established which subsequent care can hardly eradicate.

The simple, quiet, stay-at-home mother with a sound Christian life has often a slow and sure influence for good that is inestimable. She may not be gifted; she may not be brilliant, but there is about her an atmosphere of rest and peace and comfort and love which the little ones know without understanding, and the elder members of the family know and understand and appre-

ciate. Such mothers are the most uniformly successful in rearing a Christian family.

There are other mothers, more gifted, more brilliant, who have the family machinery in full order, and dare to be absent now and then for a friendly visit or an errand of mercy, and come back to their natural sphere, themselves refreshed and brightened, to cast joyousness about them like a flash of sunshine and to awake an enthusiastic affection for themselves through the whole household. Such mothers have a wonderful formative power. They carry all with them, husband and children and servants, and carry them in a right direction, towards a cheerful, loving home life and a warm-hearted Christian interest in the outside world.

Again, there are the invalid mothers who must often in the quiet sick-room bear their pains in the strength that cometh from on high. They are lifted above the world by their frequent communion with their heavenly Friend. They have a deep spiritual life that spreads through the family circle, a

blessed salt that silently seasons the whole and fits it for the Master's use. God bless the invalid mothers! They are always at home, they are instant in prayer, they bear their cross meekly and bravely, and not seldom that crown awaits them which is only given to them that "turn many to righteousness."

We have spoken first of the mother in the home because she must be there the central figure: that her piety should be of the sterling kind is all-important. The father is more like a commanding general. He cannot always be in intercourse with his little soldiers; but on his faithfulness to his Almighty King, his bravery in the battle of life, and his wisdom and justice, the fate of his little army may depend. They look to him for commands in all important matters, and his approval is a dear and precious reward they well know how to prize.

What a privilege, what an honor has been given to the father! He is allowed to stand before his family as an image of the great

heavenly Friend! Alas for him if he makes the name of father a symbol of harshness or coldness or injustice or repulsiveness! Alas for the family where the father is the slave of the body or the drudge in the service of worldly honor or riches. Alas for the father if he so loses the respect and affection of his children that the very opening of the Lord's Prayer goes reluctantly over their infant lips, and they cannot turn with love and reverence towards God if he be called by the name of Father!

The piety of a sister must be more than the reading of devotional books and the frequenting of many religious services, if her brothers are not to regard her religion as a wretched sham. She must be lovely and lovable in the earthly home, if she is to lead her brothers towards the heavenly home which she so fervently prays may be in store for them!

Has the brother who indulges himself in disrespect to his parents, in unbecoming, irreverent language, who speaks lightly of sin

and yields himself to life's temptations, has he thought of his influence on his brothers and sisters? Will he willingly destroy them by his evil example? Inconsistent, even bad young men, are sometimes caressingly fond of the little ones of the family. Let such young men, if there is an atom of real love left in them, spare the children the pollution of an unholy example! Let them be themselves what they would wish these baby prattlers to be when they one day come out into the battle of life or stand at the gates of death!

But there are members of the household, not by birth or education, but such as by the providence of God have come to cast in their lot with the family as faithful servants. What a tie binds together a true Christian household! Master and mistress and children and servants, all walking in the heavenly way, in daily interchange of mutual kindness and Christian communion—these are the households that God will abundantly bless! These are the bright spots in this

dark earth! Happy the mistress of such a family, happy the servant who may find a welcome and a firm foothold in such a home!

INSPECTORS OF SALT.

“IN many salt-works there are inspectors appointed to test the salt and brand it according to its quality.”—PECKHAM.

Inspectors of the true salt, appointed and not appointed, have at all times had their places in the church. There has been the old method, by authorized officials, who inquired into the most minute particulars of daily life and devotional duties, and scrutinized and criticised and disciplined the offenders.

There has been the later method of sounding the deep inner experiences of the soul, and its consciousness of acceptance with the Heavenly Father.

All this supervision and dissection of the life outward and inward, with the laudable desire to keep the church pure, has proved

powerless to exclude a large class of persistent evil-doers who fell under the most severe condemnation of our Lord when on earth, even the hypocrites and the self-righteous.

All this machinery, which must be more or less inadequate, could be done away with and discarded if but the individual members of the church would be faithful in the much-neglected and much-disliked duty of self-examination.

Only the man himself can truly know the state of his own soul before God. This he shrinks from ascertaining, like the timid patient who, suspecting that he has some secret and mortal disease, undergoes months and years of pain and anxiety before he will simply ask a skilful physician what are his prospects for life or death.

It is not that rules for self-examination are lacking. It is not the want of time of which the honest can complain. The thing is simple, if you have a hearty will to set yourself to the work.

You may bring to bear on your self-exam-

ination the same calm, sound judgment that you would use in important worldly matters. You have the inspired Word for an infallible guide. The character of the true servant of God is there too faithfully described for you to be at a loss about its unfailing outlines. The distinction is broad and simple. There is no middle ground. Either you are a child of God or you are not. Go humbly and prayerfully and honestly to the work. Find out surely and certainly where you belong.

If after this examination of your aims, your occupations and your affections, you have the calm and glad conviction that you are, and wish above all things to be, a child of God, thank your Heavenly Father in all humility. Pray to be hourly kept from falling, and to be made stronger in the great duties of love to God and man.

Do not be driven to despair if all be not right with your Christian life. Thanks be to God, though self-condemned you may plead like the dying thief for a share in the abun-

dant compassion of Him who was tempted in all points as we are, and yet without sin.

Repentant, accepted, forgiven, you must go bravely and prayerfully on in your Christian course, keeping near to the Elder Brother who has known your sin and your repentance, and is able so to cleanse you that he can present you pure and holy before the throne of the Heavenly King.

UNAUTHORIZED INSPECTORS.

YOU have a white powder before you. It may be salt or sugar or borax or arsenic or a hundred other things. You must touch it, smell it, or even taste it, or perhaps mix it with other substances, before you can tell surely what it really is.

The trained inspector, even when he is certain that he is dealing with salt, is careful to examine it properly before he will pronounce upon its quality.

What shall we say of the unauthorized inspectors of the spiritual salt? They are will-

ing to pronounce judgment from a passing word, a single interview, an attitude, the cut of a dress, a hasty expression of an opinion, or the betrayal of a single fault, on the character or real existence of that subtle thing, a devout inner life!

They will own that there is rock salt deep down in the everlasting hills, salt in the wide sea, in the welling springs, and in the wonderful lakes, each to be separated from its impurities and to be used after its kind; but the specimens of the true salt must be alike from the very beginning, all after the same pattern, like bullets cast in the same mould! God has always in his works uniformity with variety. In nature the leaves of a single tree are of the same form surely, but not alike to a hair's breadth; of the same color, but of how many varying shades!

Every Christian has through his natural character and his experience the capacity to develop into something peculiarly lovely, to the glory of his Maker and for the good of his fellow-men. He can be, through the

grace of God, a sanctified soul, different from every other, and a precious gift to the church of the Lord. He has too, alas! his peculiar faults and temptations and shortcomings. It is his responsibility to so place himself under his Saviour's teaching and influence that the good in him may be fostered and the evil suppressed. To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Leave that Master to pronounce on his completed work!

Is it in vain that it is written, "Judge not, that ye be not judged"? Must fellow-Christians be found seizing one another by the throat with the cry, "Pay me that thou owest!" forgetful of their own great debt, cancelled alone by their blessed Redeemer?

"The impurities of salt are different in kind and quality," and it is even so with the spiritual salt. This is why the would-be charitable are often harsh and severe in their judgments. They are ready to overlook faults or temptations which they themselves understand, or which they have set down in their own small list of pardonable sins

or admissible shortcomings. God has no such list. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin in the repentant believer as well as in the just-awakened sinner.

God alone knows the temptations that assail any one human soul. He alone knows its power of resistance and the mode and strength of its struggles. He knows for what he is forming the instrument. Its past and its future are known to him alone. The patience of God towards man is inexplicably great. The patience of man towards man is infinitely little.

The brother you despise may be called to a work for which you would be incompetent. The soul that you condemn in the midst of the fires may be purified till it will reflect at last its Master's noble image.

If you must judge your fellow-Christians, judge them as a tender mother judges her erring son, in the spirit of an abounding love. She sees his sin as his danger. His faults are symptoms of threatened destruction. Her heart warms towards him in his

peril. Her spirit yearns to help him. She tries to win him from his temptations by increased affection and loving counsel and importunate prayer to her Heavenly Father for her darling. She does not spread abroad the tale of his misdoings. She is slow to speak of his shortcomings. Even unkindness to her cannot alienate her. She watches and loves, and waits for better things. So deal with your fellow-Christians, and the blessing of God will be on you and them!

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SALT.

FAMILY affection and the love of country are among the most beautiful traits of the natural man. Yet family affection may become an enlarged selfishness, a hedging in of the love that should find its way to our most distant neighbors. The love of country may so narrow down one's circle of vision that one can see nothing good beyond the bounds of one's native land. There are persons who will despise everything from the Christian

literature of other lands, and listen to no religious teacher not born or nurtured under their own flag.

There is to be a time when the King of kings shall reign the round world over. May you not anticipate some of the blessings of that glorious day by a cordial appreciation of the light the Sun of righteousness may be flashing on lands distant from your own? Ought you not to be willing to learn from your fellow-Christians in any part of the earth? Ought you not to meet them personally, when you can, and love them as brethren? Ought you not to be so closely bound to our Lord and Master by the bonds of love that your heart will go out spontaneously in fellowship towards all who worthily bear his name and reflect his image?

Do you claim to be of the salt of the earth, of the whole earth? What then are you doing for the heathen? Perhaps you say you are leaving them to the mercy of God. But can you blot out the command to preach the gospel to all nations? Living in a

Christian country, and gratefully enjoying its privileges, have you no pity for the millions of human beings indulging in all sin, and reaping the bitter consequences here on earth? Have you no desire to share your greatest consolation with the nations that must suffer pain and affliction, and feel the approach of death with no sense of the Almighty arm around them to sustain them here, and no sure hope beyond the grave, to light the dark valley? Have you no heart or time or money to give towards telling in every tongue the story of the cross? Can you not, by self-denial, help on this glorious work? Can you not give it its rightful place in your interest and in your prayers?

THE SALT THAT HAS LOST ITS SAVOR.

OUR thoughts turn back to a motionless figure standing rigid on a desolate plain. It bears a human form, but it is form alone. Its substance is changed. There is no life in it. It is material salt, but not for helpful

household use, not to be served with the bread as a sign of hospitality, not to purify the substances with which it is blended. Its whiteness is to be sullied by the driving sand; its depths are to be penetrated by the sulphurous fumes that fill the air; its last glitter is to reflect the angry flames from the city of destruction. Once the wife of a righteous man, delivered with him by the angels from the wrath that fell on the city of their abode, that desolate, tainted pillar of salt stands an emblem of the almost saved, the salt that has lost its savor and is cast out, unfit even for the dunghill. Let us see well to it that there is no root of bitterness in us, no besetting sin, no secret temptation, no growing coldness and indifference to spiritual things, no deafness to the voice of conscience, that may bring us at last to that lowest depth, the condition of one who has been numbered with the children of God, but has lost his heavenly crown!

Let us watch and pray and strive, lest we should hear those words of condemnation,

“I know you not! Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity!”

THE PERFECT MAN.

IT is pleasant to turn from the struggles and shortcomings and possible condemnation of the so-called salt of the earth to the one only perfect Example.

The saints below are at best a poor and faint image of the one perfect Man, the man Christ Jesus. We have him no more beside us in bodily form, but his presence, if we are truly his own, is around us and about us and within us, a presence that brings light and consolation and sacred joy. We can think and speak and act in the consciousness that his loving eye is upon us. We can fly to him at once in temptation, sure of conquest through his freely given aid. We can look to him for comfort in outward affliction and in troubles of which the world cannot know. We may live a life of such nearness to him that we shall day by day be conformed to his image. This is our blessed privilege!

“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!”

THE PERFECT HOME.

THERE is a place where what the children of God have most longed for on earth will be enjoyed in its fulness. Here they may not shut themselves up to walking only with their brethren. Such is not their present mission. In the heavenly Jerusalem there awaits them the choicest companionship. There even we, if we are faithful disciples, may sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. There we may come “unto the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly of the first-born, which are written in heaven,” “to the spirits of just men made perfect, to God the judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.”

What society to look forward to! What converse, what sympathy, what joy there will be in heaven! There we shall need no purifying fires, for we shall be washed and

made white by the blood of the Lamb. There we shall not mistake or misjudge our brethren, for all will be clothed in the garments that befit the bride, the Church of Christ! There the Lord will come in and sup with his children, and they with him, a united family.

There there will be "no more strangers and foreigners;" all will be fellow-citizens of the house of God.

There there will be no more fear of coming into the condemnation of the virgins with no oil in their lamps, no falling from the first love, no blotting of names from the Book of Life.

There the saints will have received their crowns. Thankfully casting them down before the throne of their King, they will worship him, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." "Even we are the works of God's hands," created in his likeness and redeemed by his love.

We may be brought into His holy city, where the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things shall have passed away."

Let us lift up our heads and be of good courage! Let us go forward joyfully, hoping unto the end, the end that is to be to us the beginning of a life all purity and joy and love!

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