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THE TAPROOT.

ON a bright and bracing afternoon early in March, returning from a visit to an afflicted family, I met with one of my intelligent parishioners sitting on a fence. A gorgeous sunset was displaying its glories in the west, and my friend gave true indications that the day closing around us had not been spent in idleness. "What," said I, in a friendly tone of recognition, "are you doing here?" "I want," said he, "to transplant that pretty elm into my door-yard, and I have been laboring here for hours to dig it up, in vain. The tree, perhaps, is a little too old to be transplanted; but if removed early in the spring, and with a large root, trees frequently live, even beyond the age of this."

I crossed the fence to take a view of the tree. I found it surrounded by a deep trench, and its lateral roots all cut, and feeling that a strong push would lay it on the earth, I gave it one. Not a twig nor a leaf moved the more on that account. I wondered—and turning to my friend, I asked, "Why is it so firm, when so many of its roots are cut and when united to the earth by a stem so small?" "The *taproot*," said he, "remains, and until that is cut, it will stand firm." Hearing the phrase for the first time in my life, I asked, "What do you mean by the *taproot*?" "Almost every tree," said he, "has its *taproot*, which goes as straight down into the earth as the trunk goes into the

air; and until that root is cut the tree stands, and will grow. And if I should fill up this trench now, the tree would feel but little the cutting of all these lateral roots. They would soon grow out, and the tree would be as strong as ever."

We soon parted. I pursued my way home pondering these remarks. The tree was transplanted, and now stands, a noble and beautiful tree, just in the place selected for it. My friend has been transplanted to another world. Years have passed since the above conversation, but it has never been forgotten. It has suggested many truths to my mind; and it explains many things frequently occurring under our own observation, and which frequently cause doubt and hesitation. Ponder some of these.

Are trees transplanted with difficulty after they have received a certain growth? This all admit.-- The rule is, transplant them, whether fruit, forrest, or ornamental, when young. Such is the law which rules in the kingdom of grace. "How can a man be born when he is old?" is a question of emphatic import to those who have grown up to mature years without repentance.

Has almost every tree its *taproot*? So every sinner has his besetting sin, which sustains him in his rebellion against God more than any other, and even when almost all others seem to be laid aside.

Are the lateral roots cut in vain, until the taproot is cut? Does the tree stand until the taproot is severed? So, as far as their salvation is concerned, men are reformed in vain from immoral practices, until the heart is converted. A depraved heart is the taproot of that tree of evil which bears fruit unto death.— And until that heart is taken away, the tree stands.

Is the tree sustained by one root when all others are cut? Through that one root is it nourished into a permanent, if not a luxurious growth? So one sin unmortified, with its power over the soul unbroken, secures its final, its eternal loss.

How manifold are the illustrations of these truths in the Bible. Why did Balaam, who understood the will of God, and saw the visions of the Almighty, do as he did? Why did Judas, after having preached the gospèl, and wrought miracles, and been numbered with the apostles, betray his Master? Why did Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus, do as they did? Why did the young man who asked of Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life, and whom Jesus loved, do as he did? In all these cases *covetousness* was the taproot sin; and that was uncut. O, covetousness—often miscalled prudence and economy, but, by God, idolatry—how many souls hast thou destroyed and art thou destroying.

But I have said that the above conversation with my friend at the tree also explains many things frequently occurring, and which induce doubt and hesitation.

Under the ministry of a faithful pastor sat an amiable man, with unfailling regularity, for years. All hoped he was a Christian. At each returning communion season it was expected that he would profess his faith in Christ; but he came not. None were more tender than he seemed; and his pastor supposed that he was kept from the communion of the saints only by that diffidence and distrust which are often the accompaniments of true piety. A truer explanation came at last. He loved *strong drink*, but took it only at night. The appetite grew until it vanquished shame, and he became a daily and open drunkard.

He forsook the house and the ordinances of God. During the absence of his family at church on a certain Sabbath, he drank beyond measure—he fell into the fire—and when his family returned he was dead, and a portion of his body burned to a cinder. Why did not this man, in the days of his tears and tenderness, take Christ for his portion? The taproot was not cut.

I knew a young man, who, although the child of praying parents, grew up an alien and outcast from the commonwealth of Israel. Grace is not hereditary; it is the gift of God. In a spiritual refreshing, he was deeply convicted—he hoped he was converted.—He sought admission to the church; but fearing that all was not right, he was kindly requested to wait until the next communion season. In a few weeks afterwards he sat at a gaming-table until the stars were quenched in the light of the rising sun. And he continued until his death, tenfold more the child of hell than he was before. The taproot was not cut.

And the prevalence of some one sin—its reigning power over the soul—is the reason why every sinner that hears the gospel does not believe it; or, that believes the gospel, does not at once, by repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, seek the salvation of his soul. And the remaining influence of a sin whose power has been broken, is the reason why any Christian fails in consecrating himself a living sacrifice to God.

Reader, are you a sinner convinced of the truth of the gospel, without repentance, without faith in Christ? If so, how important to know the sin that holds you back from the work of your salvation. There is some one sin that does this more than any other; perhaps, more than all others. What is it?

What are the objects that most delight you? What are the gratifications on which you bestow most time? Thoughts as to what, most intrude themselves when alone? The last thing which the sailor throws overboard, in his efforts to save his sinking vessel, is that which he deems most precious: which is the sin you are most anxious to retain? When you think of being a Christian, what is the sin, the pursuit, the habit, that you feel in prospect would give you the most pain to abandon? These questions point to your besetting sin—your taproot sin. Unless cut, you are lost.

But if old trees cannot be transplanted, may not old sinners be converted? Yes, they may. As to aged sinners, the difficulty lies in the nature of man, and of sin, and of evil habits, and not in the grace of God.—Grace is all-conquering when God sees fit to apply it. Reader, are you an aged sinner? I have seen the man, fourscore and two years old, who bled in the battles of the Revolution, who learned its worst vices and continued in their practice until the age stated, hopefully converted. I have seen him brought, trembling with palsy, in his arm-chair to God's house, and there joining himself to the people of God; and having commemorated the love of Christ, lifting up his withered hands to heaven in thanksgiving for the mercies vouchsafed.—And his subsequent life and triumphant death testified that the work was of God. But in my experiencethis stands out as a solitary case, to check presumption on the one hand, and despair on the other. Take then these thoughts for meditation:

1. You have a besetting sin, stronger in its bad influence over you than any other.

2. It is of the highest importance to you to know what it is. Resolve to know it.

3. Reformation is not conversion. The tree stands when all its lateral roots are cut.

4. Unless by the grace of God your heart is changed,

all is vain. The tree of evil, whose fruit is death, remains, because the taproot is not cut.

5. However aged, or wicked there is grace and power to meet your case. Seek them without delay, and aright, and they are yours.

FEARFUL WARNING TO SABBATH BREAKERS.

Upon the banks of a noble river in a sister State, lived a thrifty farmer. Though respectable and orderly, and generally esteemed by those who knew him as a good citizen—a term, by the world too indiscriminately applied—he was nevertheless, one of those who in their hearts have little reverence for the laws of God, and often and fearlessly transgress them; while, as far as the code enacted by men is concerned, they are very careful to confine themselves within the strict letter of the law, and to do nothing that can affect their standing in the community as honest, upright, and law-abiding citizens.

This man had two sons, of the respective ages of eleven and thirteen, noble, promising boys, the light of the household, and the joy and pride of their doting parents' hearts. 'Twas springtime and a bright and beautiful sabbath morning. The sun had just lifted himself above the horizon, and shed his gentle beams

across the broad landscape, and the dew-drops still glistened in his morning rays. Everything was full of life and beauty. The glad notes of the little birds as they sang their morning praises to the God who made them, filled the air with melody, and there was nought to disturb the quiet and reigning beauty of the scene. It was just such a morning as will call forth the highest strains of praise from the christian's heart, as he gazes out upon the beauties of nature, and meditates upon the goodness and mercy of God.

Very differently was the mind of the farmer engaged, and he was intent upon spending the hallowed hours of that beautiful morning in a very different way than in praising God. Having arisen and dressed himself, he proceeded to the chamber where his sons were still wrapped in their morning slumbers dreaming perchance of happy days to come. Having aroused them from their slumbers he ordered them to dress and accompany him to examine a "trout line" which he had stretched across the river a day or two previously. The three went down to the river together, and having entered a little boat tied to the shore proceeded to their sabbath morning business and sport. They had reached the middle of the stream, apparently well rewarded, as they had drawn several fish out of the water when the boat suddenly sprung a leak and rapidly filled and sunk to the bottom. All were good swimmers, yet strange as it may seem all were drowned.

Thus the lives of the Sabbath-breaker and his sons were suddenly and unexpectedly destroyed; the father going down, not only as a sabbath-breaker, but we may say, as the murderer of his own offspring. What a fearful weight of guilt! Some one standing upon the bank of the river conveyed the mournful intelligence to the remaining members of the household, and the wail of agony which came up from the widowed

mother's heart, and broke the stillness of that sabbath morning, was enough to move the most obdurate to tears of sympathy.

What a fearful warning was this to sabbath-breakers ! For one thus suddenly cut off in his career of wickedness there is no hope. The awful fate of the ungodly is sure to be his. The portals of eternity, to the sabbath-breaker, dying unrepenting, unforgiven, open only upon the very blackness of despair and misery.— Then let all such beware, lest they venture too far.— The slender cord of life by which they are suspended over the burning lake may be snapped in the twinkling of an eye, and they will sink to rise no more forever, into an abode of unappeasable torment, and of anguish unallayed. He who hath said “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,” hath also said, “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” and “he is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent,” and it well becometh all those who habitually desecrate his holy day, and devote its sacred hours to the pursuit of business, or pleasure or frivolous amusements, or idle conversation, or vain display, to pause ere the final summons come, and the command go forth, “cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground.” And the summons may come when least expected.— The command may be executed without warning!— Then it will be too late to pause and turn ! Then it will be too late to repent. Then it will be too late to cry for mercy ! All will be lost, finally, irretrievably and eternally lost !

J. B. R.

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