

## Pastor and People.

### NOT SHUT IN.

Written by a lady who lay upon a bed of extreme suffering for many years.

"Shut in!" did you say, my sisters?  
O no! Only led away  
Out of the dust and turmoil  
The burden and heat of the day,  
Into the cool, green pastures,  
By the waters calm and still,  
Where I may lay down in quiet,  
And yield to my Father's will.

Earth's ministering ones come round me,  
With faces kind and sweet,  
And we sit and learn together  
At the loving Saviour's feet:  
And we talk of life's holy duties,  
Of the crosses that lie in the way,  
And they must go out and bear them,  
While I lie still and pray.

I am not shut in, my sisters,  
For the four walls fade away,  
And my soul goes out in gladness,  
To back in the glorious day.  
This wasting, suffering body,  
With its weight of weary pain,  
Can never dim my vision,  
My spirit cannot restrain.

I wait the rapturous ending  
Or, rather, the entering in  
Through the gates that stand wide open,  
But admit no pain or sin.  
I am only waiting, sisters,  
Till the Father calls, "Come home!"  
Waiting, with lamp all burning,  
Till the blessed Bridegroom come.

### ON PREACHERS AND PREACHING.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

NO. XVI.—PLAIN PREACHING.

The minister of the Gospel is under the greatest obligation imaginable to preach plainly, because the matters of which he treats are of the highest moment—they touch eternal issues. That ought to work in him such seriousness that he will of necessity use great plainness of speech. When life and death everlasting hang upon his words he must be sober-minded, and with judicial calmness express his thoughts. Then, in the solemnity of the occasion, everything fanciful and fantastic falls away. Then honest, straightforward simplicity comes into play. Then, like Mark Antony, he speaks as "a plain, blunt man," that loves his fellow-man. Intense seriousness gives no room for rhapsody. Close dealing despises the grandiloquent oration—there is too much aloofness in it. Heart to heart must be the order of the day. One who would save a soul must be at once simple and sensible. He must reach the reason and the conscience. His discourse must be level with the understanding. He must have some accurate knowledge of the condition of the people to whom he is speaking. Or he may be missing totally the mark. When John McLeod Campbell was making his first round of visitation to his congregation at Row, he called upon an aged couple who lived in a cottage about a mile south of Garelochhead. On his leaving them they went with him to the brow of the hill, overlooking the loch, on which their cottage stood, and each had a parting word for the young minister. The old man said: "Give us plain doctrine, Mr. Campbell, for we are a sleeping people," and his wife solemnly quoted the words: "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." How beautiful is that! A bit of imperishable loveliness! It is a word for every minister the wide world over! It was not ill-bestowed. "Great plainness of speech" is necessary because the people think little along theological lines. They do not exercise themselves in searching out the meaning of the truth or its relations, or its bearing on their own case. Their minds are engrossed with home duties or business or pleasure, and to win them to a thoughtful consideration of the things that belong to their peace, there must be such an earnest, faithful, homely dealing with them that they cannot miss the meaning of what is spoken. Dr. Samuel Johnson, speaking of the successes of the early Methodists, uttered words well worth quoting in reference to this point. He said: "It is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner, which is the only way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregations, a practice for which they will be praised by men of sense. . . . Sir, when your Scotch clergy give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country." Ah, when that comes to pass in any country, religion decays, for it does not move about in parlours in silver slippers, but in the lowly homes of the common people. It sends its roots down into the common soil and grows there.

Its stronghold is the hearts of the humble. Those whose speech may be void of scientific terms and poetic phrases, and fine polish, but whose minds are nevertheless strong, honest and manly, distrustful of learned dust cast into the eyes, while no reality is offered to the soul. Luther was wont to say, "to preach simply and plainly is a great art." Dr. Erasmus Alberus asked Luther as to how he ought to preach before the elector, which led Luther to say: "Your sermons should be addressed, not to princes and nobles, but to the rude, uncultivated commonalty. If in my discourses I were

to think about Melancthon and the other doctors, I should do no good at all; but I preach in plain language to the plain, unlearned people, and that pleases all parties."

To do that is far from being easy. It is a high attainment. As Archbishop Usher said: "It requires all our learning to make things plain." The utterance of great thoughts and deep truths in simple language is the very perfection of preaching. It shows the mind of a master. One who knows, and who can so employ his powers, and is so self-possessed in the action that all seems to be child's play. But is it therefore that? He knows who has tried it. Philip Henry strove earnestly to do this. He says, "We study how to speak that you may understand us; and I never think that I can speak plain enough when I am speaking about souls and their salvation." "We are debtors to the unwise," as well as "to the wise." We ought to make ourselves understood by them. The question may be asked, How? In many ways. Let us cultivate simplicity of language. For this we may take Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" as our model. The high commendation of Macaulay is worth recalling as an encouragement. "The style of Bunyan is delightful to every reader, and invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a wide command over the English language. The vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. There is not an expression, except a few technical terms of theology, which would puzzle the rudest peasant. We have observed several pages which do not contain a single word of more than two syllables. Yet no writer has said more exactly what he meant to say. For magnificence, for pathos, for vehement exhortation, for subtle disquisition, for every purpose of the poet, the orator and the divine, this homely dialect, the dialect of plain working-men was perfectly sufficient. There is no book in our literature on which we could so readily stake the fame of the old unpolluted English language; no book which shows so well how rich that language is in its own proper wealth, and how little it has been improved by all that it has borrowed."

Illustration is another mode of making ourselves understood. A figure, or a simile, has often more force than a plain statement. How admirably our Lord illustrates! This is a great power. But great care is to be taken in its use, or the fault of Verelst who painted James II. will be repeated—the king was painted among sunflowers and tulips, which completely drew away all attention from the central figure. This is not infrequently done, and that in various ways. How often is the cross hidden by rhetorical displays! How often is the edge of the sword of the Spirit taken off by fine phrases, so that it never cuts the conscience or reaches the heart? Style is cultivated at the expense of souls. Sermons as orations are sought after at great pains, while saving the soul sinks into secondary consideration, or out of sight altogether. And so the great object of preaching is not kept before the mind, and not attained. Men may make altogether too much of their own work, whether it be of style or arrangement or treatment. So much that the inherent quality of divine truth as living and powerful may be forgotten. There can be no objection to the best arrangement of any subject, the most incisive style and the most tasteful, skilful and elaborate treatment of the theme so long as the souls of the individuals dealt with are kept in touch with the truth. Fine speech for curious ears is just what Bishop Stillingfleet calls it, "stroking the consciences of the people with feathers dipped in oil." It lulls to sleep, it eases consciences that ought to be troubled; it allays fears that ought to be deepened; it cries peace, peace, where there is no peace. It is a gaily-attired lordling strutting on the stage when it ought to be an honest working-man rescuing the perishing.

One has well observed: "The vanity of learned preaching is proved by its unproductiveness. The plainest preachers in a Christian spirit are commonly the most successful." Robert Hall on being asked his opinion of a highly rhetorical discourse, said: "Very fine, sir, but man can't eat flowers." Bread! Bread! Bread is the cry, the Bread of Life!!! The bread that came down from heaven to give life unto the world. A hungry soul is not particular about the plate on which the bread of life is served, nor the cup in which the water of life is given. Give it that which it must have to live!

Interrogation is an assistance to the making plain of the subject on hand. Question the speaker, and let him answer in the hearing of the people what he means to teach. Suppose the questions that arise in the mind as you go on. Put them and let the answer be clear and simple.

The minister may never fear being too plain. He should seek so to lay down the truth as that a plain man may be able to take it up readily and without hesitation. In view of the judgment seat of Christ we may be seized with compunction and a sense of guilt, as we call our oratorical displays or exhibitions of knowledge, our seeking glory of men and much more of the like along these lines, but we shall never be sorry that we strove to make our message plain and simple and clear, even to the meanest understanding.

### A GOOD NAME.

"A good name" does not mean simply credit at the bank. We think of one, worth many thousands, whose very name is a reproach, and now of another who is poor, and yet the very mention of whose name suggests ennobling thoughts. A good name is within reach of all, and yet how many are sacrificing this in vain attempt to secure great riches.

### A GOOD JUDGE OF PREACHING.

He who sets himself up as a "good judge of preaching" is not always the most enviable or agreeable of persons, nor is his judgment as infallible as he often imagines. He claims to be an authority, and to hear him talk one would think that he knew all the fine points of a discourse better than the pastor, and was able to enlighten him as to how it should be composed, and how it should be delivered. He sets up a high standard, and expects all to come up to it. He demands each Sabbath two first-class productions according to his "ideal." He will tell of the magnificent preachers he has heard, and what an impression they produced. After listening to his disquisitions upon his favourites, his own minister begins to discount his pulpit performances, and grows discouraged about ever reaching the prescribed models. However he is occasionally favoured, in a patronizing way, with the commendatory remark of his critical hearer, "That was a good sermon you gave us to-day." This at first is inspiring and consoling, but its effect is spoiled by the implied intimation that his previous sermons were seriously lacking in the elements of good preaching. Besides, knowing the circumstances under which the praised sermon was prepared and comparing it with his better performances, he recognizes that it is not up to his best efforts, which received no recognition from his critic, and he begins to think the man is not so good a sermonic judge as he supposed. He comes to take a sensible view of things, and seeks to do the best he can, as far as each week's duties will permit, without the fear of "the judge of good preaching" before his eyes. Aiming to be biblical, earnest, pointed, practical and evangelical at all times, he feels that he is preaching what his Master approves of as good preaching, *i. e.*, gospel truth, sent home to the conscience and heart with telling effect. This also is the every-day good preaching which the every-day hearer wants, because it helps, cheers, comforts, enlightens, and benefits him.—*Presbyterian (Philadelphia).*

### PLENTY OF MONEY.

"I should be entirely happy if I had only plenty of money. It would make me good-tempered, too, and everything that is charming. But this everlasting struggle with poverty is wearing me out."

"How much money would you regard as enough to work these delightful changes in your life?" enquired a friend of the first speaker, who was a young wife, ironing her baby's petticoats in a hot kitchen, while she passed now and again from her table and her basket of folded garments to the cradle, where her pretty rosy boy laughed and cooed.

"A queen couldn't show a finer baby," said her friend. "What a superb little fellow he is!"

"Yes," said the mother, "but when he is older he will need shoes and stockings faster than we can buy them, and he must go to school, and there will be endless expenses, and we are so poor, Carrie, you don't know! Then Roger is not strong, and he may break down altogether. What would I consider plenty of money? Why, to be sure, enough to live on in comfort, without anxiety; enough to pay for necessities and a few luxuries, and to have a little margin left over for a rainy day. My ideas are moderate."

"Did it ever occur to you that ideas expand with the means to gratify them, and that if you had four, or ten, or twenty times as large an income as you have at present, you might still be hampered and not have enough?"

"I know what you mean, but it isn't my case," said the young wife, taking up the baby. "One does not get so weary of cutting and contriving, of working and saving! And children consume so much of one's time and strength!"

"Yet you wouldn't part with the baby?"

"Part with him? Not for all the money in the wide world! Money couldn't buy this boy!"

After all, there are rich women who have not plenty of money.

### POVERTY RATHER THAN HARM-DOING.

There is in some of the daily papers a story about Lady Burton, of England, that at least attracts attention. Without attempting to verify it, we may assume its truth. It is to the effect that on the death of her husband Lady Burton found in his papers the manuscript of a book which he had just completed. It was a peculiar book, sensational in the extreme, but containing allusions, descriptions or discussions so gross as to be injurious to morals.

Soon after the death of her husband an offer was made to her of \$30,000 for the manuscript. She was without means. If she should refuse this offer, she would be dependent on friends the rest of her life. She took the manuscript, examined it, and satisfied herself of the probability that its publication would do mischief. Then she deliberately committed it to the flames; and thus put herself out of the reach of temptation ever to yield.

"A heroine" is the universal cry. Yes, that was heroism. It was noble and right.

But what a contrast with some of us! For thirty thousand dollars she would not utter that which might do mischief. Alas, how many of us, for no gain except a moment's fun, do utter that which may do the greatest injury. Oh, that Christians, all Christians, would use the same self-denial as did Lady Burton, in all the circumstances of our lives. Often, oh, so often, by refraining from some word or deed, we can influence the world for good, or at least avoid influencing it for harm.