

gradually develops the riches of the text, following it out in its details, not perhaps running into a formal proposition and argument, but at the same time not disregarding the good-truth of the passage (*his in-eris Factori*) the essential unity of the thought, the broad generalization which comprehends the whole. It has a true subject which may be usually defined by some general title, such as "The Centurion's Faith," "The Healing of the Blind Man," "The Golden Rule," "The New Commandment." Thus the teaching is brought directly out of the Scriptures in a fresh original way, in all its spiritual power, with nothing as it were of human invention intervening between the living word and the living hearts of men. This is apt to be edifying preaching, feeding souls upon the bread of life.

ALONE, YET NOT ALONE.

BY R. W.

"And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

We live alone.

I care not though our souls are linked,
By closest bonds of heavenly forging!

We are alone.

We live alone.

No other soul can read our real history,
The fondest searcher finds but mystery.

We are alone.

We live alone.

Our sternest toils no hand on earth can share,
Our bitterest sorrows we *alone* must bear.

We are alone.

We live alone.

Our actions day by day, for weal or woe,
Have motives which no closest heart may know.

We are alone.

We live alone.

Though 'neath us lie the fairest scenes of earth,
We vainly strive to give our rapture birth.

We are alone.

We live alone.

The hills of God o'erwhelm our souls with awe,
Could pen explain by what most subtle law?

We are alone.

We live alone.

The sunset's glow incarnadines the West,
Could words translate the feelings of our breast?

We are alone.

We die alone.

We have no partner in the pangs of death,
Amidst our loved we draw our parting breath

Alone? No, not alone.

SAY "OUR FATHER."

BY REV. HOWARD SPRAGUE, A. M.

THE doctrine of prayer has gained new interest of late in both the religious and the learned worlds. It is indebted for this to the asserted inconsistency of prayer with natural laws, whose universal and unyielding empire every day's discoveries illustrate more and more. Prayer, they say, is a superstition in the utterance, and an impossibility in the answer. And they are so sure of their position, that they challenge believers to a practical test.

No intelligent Christian denies the prevalence of law or quarrels with its control. He believes it would be ill for this world and for men if this were otherwise. He knows that the sins and miseries of men come largely from their ignorance of law or their disdain and defiance of it. He holds that law exists in the spiritual as in the physical realm, and is as stern in morals as in matter. He subscribes with entire heartiness to Emerson's saying, "The day of days, the great day of the feast of life is that in which the inward eye opens to the Unity in things, to the Omnipresence of law." But he does not, therefore, admit that the power of prayer consists in its influence on the hearts that make it, and that it has no actual power in the world of God. Its influence on the heart depends on the belief that it is pleasing to God and prevails with him. Destroy this and you destroy that. And he, the intelligent Christian, cannot believe either that any illusion can, in God's universe, be a source of greater comfort, of surer victory over evil, of greater purity of heart, than a knowledge of the facts could give; or that, in a revelation of the moral order of the world, God could so trifle with the creatures made in his image as to say, "In everything let your requests be made known, and the peace of God shall keep your hearts," if he were held back by his own laws from answering earnest prayers.

Apart from this feature of the case, what that is new can be said about the nature, need, or power of prayer? As for its necessity, in all ages and countries men have prayed. It is an instinct of the human heart, in times of trial at least. The avowed Atheist, with flippant tongue denying and deriding the being of a God, in the sunshine and prosperity of the voyage, has fallen on his knees to entreat the mercy of that God, when the storm grew terrible and the breakers reared a-lee. And as for its efficacy, from him who in the night, and by the lonely river, prayed and prevailed and was called a "prince of God," down to this very year of grace, the experience of praying men has proved that prayer is strength in trial, light in darkness, peace in sorrow, the staff of the daily road, and the light of the valley of death. While human hearts remain as they have ever been, prayer can never go out of date. Let the speculating and sceptical intellect find what plausibility it will in the suggestions of science, the voice of the heart can never be silenced, and, while the world stands, care and grief and sin will bring their daily burdens to the God that answers prayer. And this deep-heaving heart of humanity which ever "crieth out for the living God" is stirred, as no other voice can stir it, by that word from the Galilean hills, "When ye pray, say Our Father."

That word lifts our thoughts adoringly to the Personal God, the only satisfying object of worship, trust, and love. There is no other portion for the soul. Atheism looks abroad over all the world of life and beauty, and up into the solemn heavens, investigates the laws of matter and mind, observes the adaptations that everywhere prevail, and says "there is no God." All things from an atom to a sun, all beings from a mole to a man, according to the folly of Atheism, have simply happened to be. But "Atheism is without hope, without glory, as it is without reason. It has its own terrors with nothing to calm them. It gives the soul no security against the direst conceivable evils, and it takes away every moral reason for believing in any ultimate triumph of truth and goodness. Such a hope illumines the darkest aspect of theism; clouds and darkness are round about him, but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

No better for man is that fascinating theory, fascinating to destroy, which professes to worship God, but adds the explanation that all is God; or that God is that spirit of life and motion and beauty which impress the universe, and has no being apart from it, a

"Something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And reels through all things."

Between Atheism and Pantheism the distinction is more verbal than real. The influence on character and life, on the man and the world, must be substantially the same.

Nor is there more of strength and hope for man in that dominant philosophy of to-day, which removes God's action as far back into the past,—makes the field of his action as narrow, and reduces himself as near to nonentity as possible, and retain his name at all; which relegates to rude and superstitious times all faith in a God who "in the beginning created the heavens and the earth," and still presides over all, governor of the world, guardian of the child; and which, instead of this Father of the bodies and Father of the spirits of men, exalts the idol of a universal law, and calls in all, on pain of being branded fools, to fall and worship. Who would not utter against such an attempt upon his intelligence and feeling Wordsworth's earnest protest.

"I'd rather be a pagan
Suckled in a creed outworn
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn,
Have light of Proteus coming from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

"Our Father!" Son of the Father, we thank Thee for that word. It tells of pardon for our erring past; it professes strength to our failing hearts; it whispers comfort in our time of grief; and to our brief and burdened lives it promises heaven and home.

BEAUTY is admired, talent adored, but virtue is a woman's crown. With it the poor are rich; without it the rich are poor. It walks through life upright and never hides its head for high or low.

How beautiful, great and pure, goodness is! It paints heaven on the face that has it; it awakens the sleeping souls that meet it.

PRAYER AND POTATOES.

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"—JAMES ii. 15, 16.

An old lady sat in her old arm-chair,
With wrinkled visage and dishevelled hair,
And hunger-worn features;
For days and for weeks her only fare,
As she sat in her old arm-chair,
Had been potatoes.

But now they were gone; of bad or good
Not one was left for the old lady's food
Of those potatoes.

And she sighed and said, "What shall I do?
Where shall I send, and to whom shall I go
For more potatoes?"

And she thought of the deacon over the way,
The deacon so ready to worship and pray,
Whose cellar was full of potatoes.
She said, "I will send for the deacon to come;
He'll not much mind to give me some
Of such a store of potatoes."

And the deacon came over as fast as he could,
Thinking to do the old lady some good;
But never for once of potatoes.
He asked her at once what was her chief want;
And she, simple soul, expecting a grant,
Immediately answered, "Potatoes."

But the deacon's religion didn't lie that way;
He was more accustomed to preach and pray
Than to give his hoarded potatoes.
So, not hearing, of course, what the old lady said,
He rose to pray with uncovered head;
But she only thought of potatoes.

He prayed for patience, goodness, and grace;
But when he prayed, "Lord, give her peace,"
She audibly sighed, "Give potatoes."
And at the end of each prayer which he said
He heard, or thought he heard, in its stead
That same request for potatoes.

Deacon was troubled, knew not what to do;
'Twas very embarrassing to have her act so,
And about those carnal potatoes.
So, ending his prayers, he started for home.
The door closed behind; he heard a deep groan,
"Oh! give to the hungry potatoes."

And the groan followed him all the way home.
In the midst of the night it haunted his room,
"Oh! give to the hungry potatoes."
He could bear it no longer; arose and dressed,
From his well-filled cellar taking in haste
A bag of his best potatoes.

Again he went to the widow's lone hut
Her sleepless eyes she had not yet shut;
But there she sat in the old arm-chair,
With the same wan features, same wan air.
And, entering in, he poured on the floor
A bushel or more from his goodly store
Of choicest potatoes.

The widow's heart leaped up for joy,
Her face was pale and haggard no more.
"No," said the deacon, "shall we pray?"
"Yes," said the widow, "now you may."
And he knelt him down on the sanded floor
Where he had poured out his goodly store;
And such a prayer the deacon prayed
As never before his lips essayed.
No longer embarrassed, but free and full
He poured out the voice of a liberal soul;
And the widow responded a loud "Amen!"
But said no more of potatoes.

And would you who hear this simple tale,
Pray for the poor, and praying prevail?
Then preface your prayer with alms and good deeds.
Search out the poor, their wants and needs;
Pray for their peace and grace, spiritual food;
For wisdom and guidance—all these are good;
But don't forget the potatoes!

THE "CHRISTIAN STANDARD."

BY REV. A. M'GREGOR, YARMOUTH, N. S.

A WORD or two, touching the expectations naturally raised by the adoption of the above, as the name for this paper. It is not simply a standard, but The "Christian Standard." The dictionary definition of a standard is, "an ensign or flag in war; a kind of banner borne as a signal for the junction of the several troops belonging to the same body." The qualifying word in this title, plants "The