

Pastor and People.

THE REFUGE.

Within the car a little girl
With hair of gold, and tress and curl
Like living sunshine—all alive,
Kept sitting up and down the aisle;
Now here, now there, from seat to seat
Danced merrily the little feet,
The sunny face now pressed the pane,
Now called the sunshine back again.

All loved her, as from place to place
She fluttered with a bird-like grace;
And now with this one, now with that,
Stopped to exchange a smile or chat.
So the long journey we beguiled;
Her blue eyes could so friendly be,
Nobody knew whose treasure she.

But suddenly from sunlit plain
Into a tunnel rushed the train.
Ah! then we knew whose arms should hold
The little one with locks of gold.
"Papa! papa!" she trembling cried,
And, groping, sought her father's side;
As out into the day we dashed
Her head lay on her father's breast!

'Tis so with us; when life is fair,
We, too, forget our Father's care,
And wander wheresoe'er we will;
But oh, He's watching, watching still:
And when the shadows round us fall,
He hears and heeds His children's call.
We run to Him with fear oppressed—
He folds us to His gracious breast.

—The Congregationalist

LITERARY BEAUTY OF THE BIBLE.

Those who drawn to the Bible by its literary characteristics are prone to dwell most on its grandeur and sublimity, or its simplicity and grace, and to pay scant attention to the beauty and depth of its pathos. Yet in its pathos consists much of the purely literary charm of Holy Writ, and especially of its poetry, narratives and traditions. In the Old Testament it is a marked literary characteristic, the pathos lying in the insistence of the Israelites on carrying out their own purposes, and their absolute and unquestioning submissiveness when those purposes are overruled by God. Their attitude is that of a child pleading and arguing with its father for permission to follow its own course, at times offering to modify its will to gain its way in part, and always certain that an impartial hearing will be granted it, but accepting the final decision without sullessness, and as irresistible and irrevocable.

Recall, for example, the almost dogged pertinacity with which Abraham pleaded for the safety of Sodom, coming back again and again, each time with a smaller number of righteous as its price. Or the submissiveness of David when his pleadings for the life of Bathsheba's son had been overruled by God. So long as there was a hope in his mind that the divine purpose might be accomplished by his own change of heart, and that this effected, the child might be spared, he never ceased to wrestle with God. But when the divine will had declared itself, he "came into the house of God and worshipped." A still better example of the pathos of this mixture of tenacity and submissiveness is found in the story of the Shunamite woman, perhaps the most beautiful, from a purely literary standpoint, in the Old Testament. The reserve which she maintained with respect to her child's death, and her reply to the questionings of her husband and of the prophet's servant, "It is well," is, as an evidence of the unquenchableness of human love and tenacity of human faith in divine power, one of the most pathetic in all literature. She never once let go the belief that the prophet who had revealed to her God's purpose to give her a son, could also carry out the divine purpose to restore him to her. The history of the Hebrew people is full of the pathos of insistence on their own way and of resignation to the will of God, of an overweening confidence in divine grace and of absolute submissiveness when the divine decision is clearly understood. They argue and expostulate with God, yet they say, with Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good."

But while the literary beauty of the Bible, whether considered with respect to its sublimity or its pathos, is unquestionable, and is fully appreciated only by a few, thinking men will question, with a recent writer in the *Spectator*, whether its study from that standpoint is likely to greatly stimulate recourse to it for spiritual strength and guidance. Very many men frankly admit and greatly admire its unequalled literary excellences, who do not accept its teachings as binding on the conscience. The value they attach to it begins and ends with its literary charm. The passages which have the highest spiritual interest for men, and which most directly teach the way of life, evoke no enthusiasm, because in the main they are lacking in purely literary characteristics, in fact, are not literature in any true sense at all. There is no great literary grace in those which treat of the Bread of Life, nor even in the Sermon on the Mount, yet their theological significance and their spiritual value far exceed many of those quoted as examples of literary excellence. The psalm called *De Profundis*, the ode to Saul and Jonathan, and the lament of the exiles in Babylon do, as the writer quoted points out, contain much of divine revelation, in that they show the wants, the love, and the penitence of man, while they are of great literary grace and beauty. But they do not unveil the divine will and purposes of God toward men, nor afford men such direct and specific guidance, as the more didactic and dogmatic portions of the Bible. The pure revelation contained in the passage in Hebrews, "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched," etc., is not comparable in literary effect with the psalm of Creation or the courtship of Isaac and Rebekah, yet it is a divine revealing of infinitely greater value in the salvation of mankind. The part of the Bible which directly teaches, and which lays down hard and fast rules of conduct, best fulfils its real functions, and that part is not literature in the highest sense. There is danger, then, that in seeking after literary effect the deepest teachings of revelation may be lost sight of, and that our nature may be satisfied only on the human side, in its craving for grace of style, and in its sympathy with the cries and yearnings and griefs of poets and prophets and people. — *New York Observer*.

DR. MUNRO GIBSON ON THE FUTURE LIFE.

Dr. Munro Gibson, preaching in St. John's-wood Presbyterian Church, said we must not think that the life to come would be something so strange and foreign as to be out of all relation with present experience. Though there would be a change there would be no breach of real continuity, for the life which was to come was but a further unfolding of the 'life that now is,' and this was taught all through the New Testament. The change at death would be mainly a change of environment and conditions, but so far as the spirit of a man was concerned, as he left this life so should he begin the next. That did not mean that a Christian would carry sin with him into the next world. If a man was identified with sin so that it was part of himself and not of his environment, it must go with him, but if he was a true Christian he was separated in his will from sin; it was not a part of himself, and he would not take it with him; he would leave it all behind. That did not mean that he would be perfect in his attainments, but it meant that a Christian would start equal in the life to come. Take, as an example, the thief on the Cross. They could not suppose that he would start the life to come on the same level as the Apostle Paul, but it did not mean that he would be a thief in Paradise. He would start in the next life very low down, but he would have a fair start; he would not need a purgatory to take the thieving out of him. There would be great differences between Christians in the next world, no doubt, but it would not

be a difference between morality and immorality; it would be such a difference as that between childhood and manhood, between feebleness and strength, between high and humble service. There were those who thought that a second opportunity would be given to the wicked in the next world. He saw nothing whatever to justify any minister of Christ in holding out such a hope. As for those who had never had an opportunity of accepting or rejecting Christ, whether in heathen or lands called Christian, not having had Him fairly presented to them, God would certainly deal with them not only in justice, but in mercy; but for those who deliberately and to the end rejected Christ in this life there was no other experience than the fearful looking for of judgment. There was no promise of the life to come for the ungodly. It was only godliness that had it. Therefore, having refused to the end that life—the godly life, there was no promise for them; they passed into the outer darkness, where was weeping and gnashing of teeth.

PURITANISM AND MODERN PAGANISM.

Mr. C. F. Aked, speaking in Pembroke Chapel, Liverpool, said a revival of Puritanism seemed assured, and amid much darkness this was a gleam of light. They had been brought face to face with a revival of Paganism; the reaction had begun, and Puritanism would gain in strength and in influence throughout the country. The new Paganism had sought to make religion odious, and Non-conformity especially it had bitterly assailed. It put on airs of aristocratic superiority, and affected to think common morality a vulgar thing. But from time to time they were reminded of the hideous vileness to which the Pagan pursuit of pleasure led. Tragedies of sin and shame marked the track of a culture which had no place for God. Wreck and ruin attested the ghastly hollowness of the Pagan creed. The eternal order, unbroken, unerring for Rome in the first century or London in the nineteenth—for Florence in the day of the Medici, or Liverpool in the present, demanded for the sowing to the flesh a reaping of corruption. Paganism, openly and without disguise, glorying in its shame, calling itself sometimes the "New Hedonism," and sometimes sheltering itself behind a pretence of art; unveiled, sometimes in decadent fiction, and sometimes speaking by the lips of poets from whom they expected better things—had unquestionably gained a foothold in the land. But with the revival of Puritanism, which he foresaw, men whom society had honoured would not even be tolerated. Alike in art, in literature, in common life a more decent regard for goodness would have to be observed, and a more decent reticence concerning many forms of evil, while the pulpit would continue to proclaim, "Love not pleasure: love God. This is the everlasting, Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."

THE TIME IN WHICH THE BIBLE CAN BE READ.

I found that the reading of the first five books of the Bible required an average of one hour thirty-four minutes each; the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, an average of one hour twenty-nine minutes each; the Psalms, two hours forty-three minutes; Mark, one hour; Luke, one hour forty-two minutes; John one hour, Acts, one hour thirty-seven minutes; while such books as Second and Third John, Jude, Philemon, Titus, and some of the prophetic books required only from three to six minutes each. The amount of time required for the entire Old Testament was thirty-eight hours twenty-seven minutes; and for the New Testament, eleven hours thirty-four minutes.

The total amount of time, therefore, was almost exactly fifty hours.

Some would read more rapidly than this, others more slowly. But that this a reasonable estimate seems to be borne out by several instances which have come to my notice. I have been told that a certain man makes it his practice to read the Bible through during the first week of each year. Another, with whom I have been long acquainted, is a mechanic, who is obliged to remain at the shop during the noon hour. He told me that by using such time as he could save out of this noon hour he had read the Bible through five times in fifteen years. In the "Life of Catherine Booth" it is stated that Mrs. Booth read the Bible through from cover to cover eight times before she was twelve years old.—*Professor F. S. Goodrich*.

THE POWER OF INFLUENCE.

A young man recently at a religious meeting told the story of his conversion. It shows how great an influence we may be exerting on others all unknown to ourselves. He said:

"On my way to and from my business, I pass a certain home. I am generally on my way about their breakfast time. As I passed one day I saw the head of the house, a man only a few years older than myself, sit down to the table. He had a Bible in his hand, and in the passing glance I saw his wife and little girl, with heads bowed, waiting for him to read. It was only a glance, but it haunted me all day. It had a purifying influence. The next morning I found myself looking into the window as I passed with curiosity, mingled with more respect than I ever had for religion. Morning after morning it was the same.

"I had never been a church-goer, but one Sunday morning I resolved to go to church near by. I was ignorant of the time, and so dressed leisurely and sauntered in. The Sunday School was in session. I glanced over the classes, and was pleased to see my unknown friend teaching a class of young men about my age. Before the year was past I had made the good confession. That was twelve years ago, and my faith is stronger to-day than ever, but somehow I always feel that the picture I saw through the open window had more to do with my conversion than anything else."—*Ram's Horn*.

John Watson ("Ian Maclaren"), addressing a class of theological students took for his subject "The Art of Preaching." Of all arts, he said, preaching was not only the oldest and most important, but ought to be the most beautiful and the most perfect. Every art had some canons, and he would submit them from the standpoint of the pulpit, hoping that they would also commend themselves to the pew. Preaching must have the following requisites: unity, lucidity, beauty, illustration, charity, delivery, and intensity. A sermon ought to be the most beautiful thing in the way of speech that people would hear from one Sunday to another; but it would never be made beautiful by mere quotation—which, if not the climax of what one had to say, was often a vain-glorious and foolish interruption—nor by mere abundance of illustration. After expressing a preference for the delivery of unwritten sermons, which did not necessarily mean a lack of preparation, the Rev. gentleman concluded by urging as supremely important that the passion of Christ should fill the preacher, the love of Him who died, and the love of the people for whom He died.

Luther claimed the following ten qualifications as those of good minister of the gospel:—1. He should be able to teach plainly and in order. 2. He should have a good head. 3. Good power of language. 4. A good voice. 5. A good memory. 6. He should know when to stop. 7. He should be sure of what he means to say. 8. And be ready to stake body and soul, goods and reputation, on its truth. 9. He should study diligently. 10. And suffer himself to be vexed and criticised by everyone.

The man who isn't religious enough to do right when he isn't watched, isn't religious when he is watched.