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Poetry.

THE DARK RIVER.

"And she said, 'It is only a little brook.'"
By that strange mysterious river,
On whose banks we mortal dwell,
Sustained with a nameless terror,
From the deep and rolling tide,
Stood a child, as pure in seeming
As if she had caught the gleaming
From the Throne of Glory streaming,
From the other side.
Once a troubled body stole a look
And the mighty stream before her
Seemed to swell in crystal billows,
Dashing onward to the sea,
Will her fragile bark be driven
By the gale, its white sails riven;
Or to her will be given, never before implored in vain?

Does she see the angels hover
All around her and above her,
How the waving of the pinions
Which will bear her safely o'er?
Does she see the shining portals,
Leading her to joy immortal;
Hear the glorious anthem swelling
From that dim and distant shore?

THE PULPIT OF THE OLDEN TIME.

The pulpit has gone through as many phases of life as the Christian Church itself. Augustine has left on record both precept and example as to an essential duty of a preacher—to preach so as to be understood of the people. Of all temptations to be avoided, he warns the Christian orator against the use of "suspensula verba." "What profits the golden key," he says, "if it will not open the lock? and what objection is there to the wooden key, if it will?"

In the twelfth century, rose Bernard of Clairvaux—the last of the Fathers." He was emphatically the preacher in high places. Kings and nobles were awed by the wondrous eloquence of his language, or won by the persuasion of his dovetail eyes, and pressed to take from his hands the crosses—the pledge of the Second Crusade—as fast as they could be supplied by tearing up his monastic owl. Anthony of Padua wore out his life (dying at thirty-six) in missionary labours throughout Italy. Wherever he went, crowds filled the churches at early daybreak to hear him. He, like Augustine, was a preacher to the people. Allusions to common trades and occupations occur continually in his extant homilies. He was also one of the first who introduced the element of humour into his sermons.

The history of the prodigal was a favourite subject with the Franciscan preachers. It gave ample scope for the dramatic details in which they delighted and excelled. Philip Bosquier thinks it "a mercy that the young man did not rob his father at once," instead of going through the ceremony of asking him for the money; many modern prodigals (St. Francis, his own founder, among the number) had done so before, and would do it now. He, too, dilates on the culpability of parents in the matter of unreasoned indulgence and neglect of discipline: he goes farther, and accuses the parents of his own day as not merely sinking at the immorality of their sons, but even venturing an immoral example in their own persons. "Such fathers," he says, "are devourers of their own offspring in a worse sense of Saturn of old." Such mothers are like the apes who crush and strangle their little ones in the foolish ardor of their embraces. "O blind affection!" he exclaims. "O worse than apish love! *Cocens amor proli!*" They will not even have the patience to wait," he says, "for their daughters' corruption in due course, when they shall come to years of discretion." Bosquier dwells much, towards the close of the story, on the indignity of a youth of high birth and breeding being set to feed hogs, of all employments; and he concludes this portion of his subject with the strong remark, that as he had chosen to live the life of a hog, so with the hogs he was at last set to feed.

A popular German preacher in the next century—Abraham de Santa Clara—seems to have studied Bosquier's exposition of the parable, and to have endeavored to emulate his fullness of illustration. His sermon is full of ponderous Latin puns; but there are points here and there which no doubt would tell upon a German congregation, over given to the frequenting of wine shops. "It might be said of the prodigal" (remarks the preacher) "as of Joseph, 'an evil beast hath devoured him'; an evil beast, indeed; an evil beast is the Golden Griffin; an evil beast is the Golden Eagle, the Golden Buck, and the Golden Bear." These tavern-beast had so dealt with him, that "his breeches were as full of holes as fishing-net."

The celebrated Father Honoré, preaching one Lent upon the vanity of human life, suddenly produced a skull, which he made the subject of a monologue, very much after the fashion of Hamlet in the tragedy. "Thou wast the skull of a magistrate—was it not so? He who makes no answer assents." Fixing on the ghastly

image the cap of a judge—"Ha!" said he, "hast thou never sold justice for gold? Hast thou never entered into a villainous compact with advocates or procurators-general? Then he would throw aside the skull, and produce another, on which he put a woman's head-dress. "Thou was the head of one of these ladies of fashion, it may be; where now are those bright eyes, which rolled so wantonly! those pretty lips, which formed such winning smiles!" So he would go through a series of imaginary characters, having the proper costume ready for each, producing such effect as may be conceived. These dramatic effects have been made use of by modern preachers. Mr. Jackson tells us of a Yorkshire Methodist preacher, familiarly called "Our Billy," who "has been known to take a pair of scales into the pulpit, and literally to weigh in the balance the several characters he described." Whitefield produced great effect upon his hearers on one occasion, by an illustration which appealed something in the same way, to the eyes as well as to the ear. "You seem to think salvation an easy matter. O! just as easy as for me to catch that insect passing by me." He made a grasp at a fly, real or imaginary. Then he paused a moment, and opened his hand—"But I missed it!"

Proverbs have been largely used by all popular preachers who addressed themselves to the masses. One need not quote the example of St. Paul, but the great medieval preachers are full of them. Bernard and Peter of Blois made frequent use of them. The French humanist preachers who have been noticed—Menot and Petit Andre and Maillard—naturally seized upon such a ready means of appeal to the dull popular intelligence. Latimer rejoiced in them, no matter how homely. But perhaps the most extraordinary use ever made of proverbs in the pulpit was in a sermon preached and printed by one Mr. Burgess, on the devil entering into the herd of swine. He entitled it, "The Devil driving and drowning his Hogs;" and he divided his discourse into three heads, inasmuch as he remarks, "the devil here verified these old English proverbs." 1. "The devil will play at small game, rather than none at all." 2. "They run fast, whom the devil drives." 3. The devil brings his hogs to be, in consequence of—this or—of even it may be, in consequence of—this more than homely illustration, those who have read the sermon pronounce it to have been not ill adapted to impress a rude and uncritical audience.—*Blackwood's Magazine.*

A LIVING CHURCH.

As in the material world life and death are ever contending, with victory now on one side, and now on the other, so in the spiritual world a similar conflict goes forward. The earth is a battlefield, on which the powers from the heavenly world and those from the nether spheres meet and strive. Here spiritual life is communicated from God out of heaven, battles with sin and death, the destroying agencies of evil. In the midst of this strife, and the cause and objects of it, are men; and heaven and hell divide the spoils of the field. The visible and organized army which God employs in this conflict, is the church. Through this, as his chosen executive agency, he carries forward his work.

Now, in this protracted strife sin ever continues to make inroads upon this army, and spiritual death ensues. As decay often seizes upon the branches of a tree, withering and killing a portion while the other portions still remain, so in a church the results of spiritual decay are often visible in the withering of the whole, and sometimes in the destruction of the whole body. Spiritual death within itself is the strongest enemy the church has to meet. Like a hidden foe, it fastens upon its vitals and robs it of its strength and life.

A dead church is powerless to do good. It has in it no strength, no life, no warmth. It can stretch forth no hand to save men. It can not preserve alive those which are within it. A body out of which the living spirit has departed though it have hands, and feet, and a heart can render no service to any requiring help. Its very touch is chilliness and death. So a church from which the soul of life is fled, is unable to carry blessing to any, however urgent their need. It chills by its very presence whatever warm life it comes in contact with. To a young convert, should such a one fall in its way, its breath is as a northern wind. In its freezing embrace no growth and vigor can be attained. As a new born babe is placed in the warm throbbing bosom of a living, loving mother, so God seeks for his new-born spiritual children the care of a church whose soul throbs with the pulses of a warm life.

The necessities of the present times peculiarly demand that the church should be a living body. As a half century to a century ago men were awaking from slumber, and seeking the animus of a new spiritual era, so at the present time powerful tendencies toward formalism are setting in. A cold religion of the intellect is with many displacing the warm religion of the heart. Men endeavor to reason themselves into Christians, instead of seeking religion as an inward vitality. Their religion becomes one of sentiment and the outer life, rather than one of faith and living inward power, with the inward attesting the presence and might of the inward. To counteract this tendency the church needs to drink from the fountain of a pure faith, and to have infused into itself again the vigor of that life which flows out of Christ.

Chronic apathy in many places is robbing the church of its life. The indifference which quietly creeps over a congregation is no less fatal than errors of faith. No heresies are so mischievous as those of practice. And when negligence in duty, and unconcern for the real welfare of the

church, supplants a lively interest in its prosperity, the mischief has proceeded a long way. Such a condition of things is too often found to present the most stubborn resistance to the progress of the church within itself, and its success in saving souls.

Christ designed his church to be a living body and a living church alone glorifies him. The indifference and death that prevail among his people are a hindrance and a reproach. In the living there is power to perpetuate the grand living mission to which the church is called. A living army will carry his truth forward, overthrow the works of unrighteousness, and establish his kingdom to the ends of the earth. This has power to liberate the nations from the bondage of darkness and sin, and lead them into freedom and light. In your own neighborhood, dear reader, a living church will be a power which will save the un saved around you. To such a church, as to a city set upon a hill, men will flock that they may find a habitation and safety. This life you need first in your own soul. See to it that it becomes a stirring, moving power within you, impelling you to unceasing earnestness and devotion in your Master's service.—*Religious Telescope.*

HOW MANY WILL BE LEFT.

A writer in the *Church Union* asks the following pungent questions. When the following classes are taken out of our churches how many will be left? All who will not pay their just debts. All who are hypocritical. All who are deceitful and talk about others behind their backs. All who go in debt without a prospect of paying. All who are proud and scornful, holding themselves above their fellow men, and snubbing those who are less fortunate than themselves. All who worship money more than they do their Creator. All who speculate on the ignorance of others. All who are tattlers. All who sell intoxicating liquors to make money. All who think more of a wicked rich man than they do of a pious poor one. All who oppress the poor. All who make long prayers for the sake of being seen and heard of men. All who are vain and self-conceited. When these, and a good many others that could be mentioned, are taken out, the church will be left almost without members. The religion of Jesus does not have any of the foregoing effects. It makes the true convert cheerful, hopeful, and charitable; disposed to visit the widow and orphan and to keep unspotted from the world. It does not make one proud and scornful to do good; on the contrary, makes one desirous to do good—to be meek and humble and to be kind to all, as opportunity may offer. O! that we had less pretensions in our churches and more truly Christian love and uprightness.

PRAYING FAMILIES.

A faithful Christian on one occasion sought to press the claims of the gospel home to the heart of a careless young man. The appeal was not only kindly received, but the young man addressed seemed to be deeply moved. "But when urged to accept Christ as his Saviour, he gave in substance the following reply: "It is useless for me to try to be a Christian. God would not listen to my prayers. He is a covenant-keeping God. He dwells with those who love and honor him. My parents lived without prayer. My grand parents were godless people. As a family we have dishonored God, and can I hope that God will now receive me? No, no. He will not regard my prayer. I have had no friends to pray for me. I was not consecrated to God in infancy. I have not prayed for myself, and now I cannot come to God. We have forsaken him, and he has forsaken us."

Very different is the following case: Among a circle of four or five families, all shoots from the same parent stock, family piety blossomed with uncommon beauty, and bore fruits of rare excellence. As one child after another attained to years of accountability, the claims of their Redeemer were acknowledged, and place sought among his people. What was the secret of all this? We hear the answer in the very words of a member of the favored household:

"I trace this stream of holy influence back to the prayers of a pious ancestor. Grandfather was an eminent man of God, and he prayed much for his children's children—in the fields, in the woods, at morning, mid-day and evening. He prayed for them to the third and fourth generations. His last years were literally spent in prayer. After losing his mind upon all other subjects, he could still lead the family devotions as no one else could."

What blessings a praying parent may call down from heaven upon his children! Happy indeed are those families in which God is honored, and His blessing invoked upon children and children's children; and wretched and poor beyond expression are those families where God is forgotten, or His name mentioned only to be profaned! The parent who stays away from Christ is not only shutting himself from the Kingdom, but is making it difficult for his children, who would, to enter in.—*S. S. Times.*

"The Christian life," says Luther, "consists of three parts—faith, love and the cross." Faith takes up the cross, love binds it to the soul, and patience bears it to the end.

THE CHURCH ASLEEP.

I used to hear a mother say, half in irony, of one of her boys, that he was "a very good boy when he was asleep." This is never true of Christians or of Churches. The worst conduct of Churches are ever guilty of, occur, almost invariably, when they are asleep. Sleeping Churches are not always inactive. They often exhibit a species of somnambulism—sleep as to healthy functions and useful offices, but performing hazardous feats of perverseness, quarrelling with each other, expelling their pastors, and repudiating their obligations. The religion of formalism is but a kind of somnambulist performance.

ERRORS IN PUBLIC SPEAKING.

Some ministers let their voices fall so far in certain words or syllables, and these often at the most important part of the sentence; that it is almost impossible for a large portion of the congregation to catch their meaning. Often some such phrase as this is heard: "It is necessary for the Christian to be—," the dash indicating the inaudible part of the sentence. Again, one sometimes hears the "Twenty-th hymn" given (the dash indicating the mumbled syllable), but which of all the twenties he cannot tell; or the "eight—th," but whether the 18th or 80th, or any one from the 84th to the 89th inclusive, nothing but an actual inspection of all these numbers will make out; and here we may remark that a minister should always give out the hymn again when he sees his congregation hunting their hymn-books for an unusual length of time. Or perhaps the chapter read will be the second chapter of Paul's epistle to the—ians, when, again, all the second chapters of his epistles will have to be looked over. Sometimes single letters are so indistinctly pronounced, that the hearer cannot tell whether, for instance, it is brother or mother that the preacher says; and yet all these, and kindred errors, are not caused by any defect of the organs of speech, but merely by the fact that the speakers are not conscious of a slaking of the voice or occasional indistinctness of utterance which is so tantalizing to their hearers. Not only, therefore, should every word of every sentence be pronounced distinctly, but every syllable of every word.

Some speakers are prone to sink the voice at the close of almost every sentence, so that the whole is left out; and some again, when they come to the most impressive part at the end of their discourse, sink into such a low tone of deep feeling that it is all dumb show to a large portion of the congregation.

Another error is the mispronouncing of some word or words which are sure to be used with alarming frequency, as, for instance, a certain preacher's discourse was always thickly interspersed with the word "infewence" instead of "influence," the use of any particular phrase with undue frequency is a mistake. We know one excellent minister who continually repeated the words, "my hearers," with much unction and emphasis; and another used the phrase "stand-point," till he set many of his congregation to stand pointing.

We need not say that when laymen preach, or exhort, or pray, distressing peculiarities are usually more frequent than with ministers. One has "My friends," and "My dear friends," and "my dear, dear friends," continually recurring in his address—and another makes about half of his prayer in a prayer meeting consist of the words, "O Lord," which are continually repeated and these words are, perhaps, the only audible part of the prayer, as he evidently thinks if the Lord hears him it is quite enough.

A third puts the word "grant" so often into his prayer that if he had had the composing of the Lord's Prayer, it would have run somewhat as follows: "Grant that thy name may be hallowed; grant that thy will may be done; grant us this day our daily bread; and, oh, grant that we may forgive our debtors, &c., &c. No one can fail to see the very great superiority of the simple Scripture models of prayer to these artificial styles, and it is only necessary to bring them into contrast to banish the latter forever from prayer meetings.

MR. GOUGH AND HIS MOTHER.

In one of his addresses in Exeter Hall, Mr. Gough said: "After a speech in Boston a short time ago, a lady came to me, and said, 'My father is dead, but he was always collecting curiosities, and he happened to light on your mother's Bible in Bristol.' I had resided there twenty-five years ago, and pleased was I to hear the Bible was found. I had it sent to me by express train. There were the names: 'Jane Gilbert,' that was my mother's name before her marriage, 'born August 12th, 1776.' 'John Gough, a present from his mother, on leaving England for America.' 'John Gough, born August 12nd, 1817.' I had my Bible in my hand. I remember how I had seen that mother with her lips white with hunger, and recollected how she took her iron-rimmed spectacles from her eyes to wipe away the tears, as she turned page after page. I saw her marks—'When the poor and needy seek water, and thirst, I will not refuse them; when they cry, I will say, I the Lord will help them. I the God of Israel will not forsake them,' with hundreds of passages more like that, all blessed promises, marked in that book. That mother's Bible brought her history before me. There remains no token to mark her last resting-place, no hearse and mourners followed her to the grave, she was followed by myself and sister alone,

and without a prayer she was consigned to the dust. But she left her children the legacy of a mother's prayers, and the Lord God Almighty as the executor of her last will and testament; and though that poor little body of a school-mistress has gone before, and her spirit has taken its flight to her eternal home, I stand before you to-night to declare that if I have ever done aught of good, what I am and what I have done, by the grace of God, has been through the influence of that mother."

NOISY SUPERINTENDENTS.

We once visited a Sunday School where the Superintendent seemed very desirous of having, and made great efforts to have an orderly school, and yet signally failed. During the general exercises he was continually calling for order. While talking to the school his leading topic was "better order," and he would stop at the end of a sentence to say "Hush!" and yet the scholars and teachers continued to converse with each other, paying no attention to what was said. It appeared as though the superintendent and the school were striving to see which could drown the noise of the other. It was a perfect Babel.

Now the difficulty evidently was, the superintendent made too much noise himself. If a superintendent wishes a quiet school, he must avoid speaking too high or loud. There is a magical power in "a still small voice." It is best to say but little about order. If there is whispering while the superintendent is talking, he should stop abruptly, say nothing, but wait till the disturbance is over, thus showing by his example that he thinks "it is not good manners for two to talk at once." The cases are very rare when this will not have the desired effect. In these cases it is seldom best to take any further notice of it at the time, but by consulting with the teacher from whose class the noise originated, something can generally be done to prevent its repetition. Don't talk to much about order.

INWARD PIETY AND OUTWARD WORK.

One cause of failure in Christian life arises from the tendency on the part of some to engage in outward Christian work, while they overlook the secret culture of the heart. I would not say one work against zeal in Christian work; zeal is good, but zeal with knowledge is better. Outward activity must be based upon inward progress. Work and prayer, labor and worship go together. It is the tendency in certain periods of the church to place much stress upon the outward activities of the Christian life, and the convert gets the impression that there must be a ceaseless running hither and thither, and proclaiming the good news from the house tops; and that is right, provided the inward progress of the soul in holy dispositions keeps pace with the outward work. This matter ought to be considered carefully: there is a deep philosophy in it. No man can have true soul-prosperity who engages so constantly in Christian work as to have no time no time for heart culture by means of meditation, prayer, and the reading of God's Word.

Healthy work springs from the inner life of devotion. Sensational work is a light that burns brightly and beautifully for a time, but soon vanishes away. Talking religion is good if it grows out of praying and reading religion. A community is now and then startled by the sudden fall of a minister, but that fall was the result of a secret separation between outward work and heart culture which had been growing for years. "How often has it happened that young persons lose in a few years the zeal that marked earlier religious life? Why is this? Why do those who learn to write or to read only a little, and with difficulty, forget and forsake the art altogether? Because it was difficult, and the result was unsatisfactory.

And so, in the freshness of new-born Christian love, well-meant but unsuccessful effort is put forth, and the worker loses heart and hope, and well for him if he do not begin to doubt the reality of that religion which he has unhappily learned to think of most in its aggressive aspects on the kingdom of evil outside of himself." Inward piety gives vigor to outward work, and it is extremely dangerous to forego secret communion with God because the hands are so full of outward labor. That is a process, which, unless arrested by our kind Father, will end in spiritual death.—*S. S. Times.*

FEARNS OF AN ELEPHANT.

The most remarkable events, in the career of menagerie, occurred in Forest, Miss., last week, during a morning exhibition of the great Mexican gymnast and menagerie. The huge elephant Hercules, which had been peevish and unruly for several days, became frantic, when a rustic fisted on him a piece of tobacco. The elephant broke his chain, after some violent struggles, during which the large crowd attacked a freight train which the ponderous beast attacked and struck it with so much force that he broke a tusk, was overcast and instantly killed. The locomotive was thrown off the track, butted into the canvas tent erected beside the road, and freeing her mate. The latter took flight out the town, scaring the plodding country folks nigh unto death, upsetting horses and wagons, smashing chicken coops into splinters, and otherwise violating rural etiquette. At last, advised, twenty mounted horsemen with guns, and dogs, were in wary pursuit of the royal quadruped.