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"And simply call attention to the merits of Hop Bitters in as plain, honest terms as possible.

"To induce people

"To give them one trial, which so proves their value that they will never use anything else."

"THE HERALD so favorably noticed in all the papers,

"Religious and secular, is

"Having a large sale, and is supplanting all other medicines.

"There is no denying the virtues of the Hop Plant, and the proprietors of Hop Bitters have shown great shrewdness and ability * * *

"In compounding a medicine whose virtues are so palpable to every one's observation."

Did She Die?

"No!

"She lingered and suffered along, pining away all the time for years."

"The doctors doing her no good!"

"And at last was cured by this Hop Bitters the papers say so much about."

"Indeed! Indeed!"

"How thankful we should be for that medicine!"

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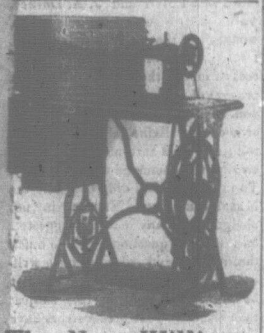

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FROM PELOUBET'S SELECT NOTES.

First Quarter.

Lesson 3.—Jan. 18. Acts 20: 28-38.

PAUL'S FAREWELL.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.—Acts 20: 28.

1. AN EXHORTATION TO FAITHFULNESS.—Vers. 28-31. 28. *Take heed therefore.*—We must ourselves first be cleansed, and then cleanse others; be instructed, and then instruct others; be enlightened, and then enlighten others; be conducted to God, and then conduct others to him. Second, they must take heed not only to themselves but to all the flock. The church is the flock of Christ, sheep of his fold. This is the Old Testament figure (Isa. 63: 11; Jer. 31: 10; Mic. 7: 14). And Christ calls himself "the Good Shepherd." (John 10). *All the flock.*—The rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the old and the young. A shepherd regards the interest of the tenderest of the fold as much as the strongest. Indeed the weak, the poor, the neglected the erring, the despised should be the especial care of the under-shepherds, as they were and are of the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep. And especially should they take heed to the young, the lambs of the flock, whose whole future may depend on their faithful feeding and guidance. Paul now gives a number of reasons why these elders should thus take heed.

FIRST REASON. God had committed the church to their care. *Over the which.*—"In (not "over") which," since the bishops made part of the flock while they had the direction of it. *Hath made you overseers.*—The Greek word rendered here "overseers" is usually rendered "bishops," as for instance the same word in the singular in 1 Pet. 2: 25, "Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." *To feed the church.*—To be shepherds of. It applies to the whole shepherd care of the flock, watching, tending, leading, as illustrated in Ps. 23 and John 10: 1-18. It gives no authority over the church except that which comes from greater piety, wisdom, and experience. The flock is to be fed with the Word of God, guarded from false teachers and errors of doctrines, to be led into rich pastures of the highest Christian experience, and into fields of usefulness.

SECOND REASON. The preciousness of the church to Christ. *Which he hath purchased.*—The expression "purchased" does not imply that a person (the devil) has a right to the sinner, but only to what the purchase cost the Redeemer,—sacrifice and suffering. *With his own blood.*—With the sacrifice of his own life; for blood is often put for life, and to shed the blood is equivalent to taking the life. This represents the atonement as consisting pre-eminently in the sacrifice and death of Christ. See Matt. 20: 28; Rom. 3: 24; Eph. 1: 7; 1 Tim. 2: 6; Heb. 9: 12; 13: 12, etc. Nothing can so show the intensity of God's love for his people as does this fact of the infinite cost to him of their redemption. And whatever Christ suffered God suffered. It was well for these elders to take heed to the church which was so precious to God.

THIRD REASON. Dangers from without. 29. *For I know this.*—We find traces of the fulfilment of the prediction in the "turning away" of 2 Tim. 1: 15; the "fiery trial" of 1 Pet. 1: 7; 4: 12; the suffering "as a Christian" of 1 Pet. 4: 16. *That after my departing.*—After his leaving them, not after his death. He was about to leave them not to return again. *Shall grievous wolves enter in among you.*—Wolves ravage and destroy the flock. They are from without, but disguised in sheep's clothing they enter in among the flock, and hence it appears that they were to be baptized Christians, belonging to the church. Teachers of false doctrines and bad morals, dividing and misleading the people, bringing in false principles and worldliness, ravage the church like ravening wolves. *Not sparing the flock*—Seeking their own selfish interests, no matter how many are lost or injured by it. It has been suggested with great probability that the apostle foresaw that his bitterest enemies would be the Judaizing teachers who came from a distance, and that they who had injured him and his cause in past times, are hinted at here.

FOURTH REASON. Dangers from within. 30. *Also of your own selves.*—That is, from their own community; not necessarily from the number of these present. *Shall men arise, speaking perverse things.*—Perverted things; truths distorted and made an instrument of error. The most dangerous errors are truths distorted and perverted; truth enough to make some believe them, and error enough to injure or ruin those who do believe. Even in the New Testament writings no fewer than six of the pioneers of these fatal teachers of error are mentioned as belonging to Ephesus. Hymenæus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1: 20), Phygellus and Hermogenes (2 Tim. 1: 15), and Philetus (2 Tim. 2: 17, also 3 John 9) fulfilled this prediction. Unfortunately false charity has made dangers of this kind too little dreaded in these days. These whom Paul calls "grievous wolves" and speakers of "perverse things" are too often deemed "smart men." *To draw away disciples after them, i. e.,* "to draw away the disciples." Those who had previously been disciples of Christ and his apostles. This was at once the motive and the result of the work of the false teachers. They will do their best, after their own falling away, to drag others likewise from the true faith.

FIFTH REASON. Paul's own example and labors. 31. *Therefore Watch.*—The sort of watching implied is that unsleeping alertness which can never be taken by surprise. *The space of three years* may be a proximate expression, but must come nearer to three years than two. The three years consists of three months' preaching in the synagogue (chap. 19: 8), May to July, A. D. 54, two years' ministry in the school of Tyrannus (chap. 19: 10), Aug., 54 to Aug., 56, and then several months longer, to May, A. D. 58. *I ceased not to warn.*—To admonish; to place before the mind, setting the danger and duty of each individual before him. *Every one.*—He had admonished each individual, whatever was his rank or standing. *Night and day.*—Continually; by every opportunity. *With tears.*—Expressive of his deep feeling and his deep interest in their welfare. Observe how every word in this sentence here has its significance; every one' indicates personal work; "night and day," ceaseless industry; "with tears," warmth of feeling. There must be something serious in life and something formidable in eternity if this kind of perpetual, personal, sorrowful warning was judged necessary or reasonable by St. Paul.

II. PAUL COMMENDS THE EPHESIANS TO GOD.—Ver. 32. 32. *I commend you to God.*—I place you in God's hands. *And to the word of his grace.*—"The word of his grace" means the gracious promises of the Gospel, such as those which Christ gave to his disciples when he foretold the mission of the Comforter (John 17: 7-12). And the Gospel as a truth and rule of faith and life. *To build you up.*—To edify you. To build you up as a temple is built. The figure was a natural one anywhere (comp. 1 Cor. 3: 10), but it would gain additional vividness from the stately architecture of Ephesus, perhaps also from the presence of one among St. Paul's companions who may have been himself an architect. *And to give you an inheritance among them which are sanctified.*—The figure is taken from the apportionment of the promised land among the Israelites.

III. PAUL'S COUNSELS ENFORCED BY HIS EXAMPLE.—Vers. 33 35. 33. *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.*—In other words, "I seek not yours, but you." The only wealth he cared for was that which has been finely called "property in souls."

34. *Ye yourselves know.*—For they had often seen him at his work. *That these hands have ministered unto my necessities.*—No doubt he held them forth, and they bore marks that not only while at Ephesus, but since that time they had labored for the means of living. He doubtless worked at his trade a tent-maker here as he did at Corinth (Acts 18: 3). In his letter to the Corinthians, written at Ephesus, he refers to his labors with his hands (1 Cor. 4: 12).

35. *I have shewed you all things.*—"All things" here signifies "in all ways," by teaching and by life. Not only have I told you in words what is the duty of a Christ-loving man, but I tried to live the life before you which I told you of. *How that so labouring.*—As I have done. *Ye ought to support the weak.*—No Christian should labor chiefly for himself, but that he may support those dependent on him, and may give to the poor, and spread the Gospel of our Lord. *To remember the words of the Lord Jesus.*—The words that follow are not found in any of the four Canonical Gospels. They furnish accordingly an example of the wide diffusion of an oral teaching, embodying both the acts and the words of Christ. *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*—Here we have a word of Christ rescued from sinking into oblivion; a word of Christ with a word of Paul wrapped around it; the jewel and its setting; the kernel and its shell are both here. The Lord Jesus speaks from experience when he explains how pleasant it is to give.

IV. THE PARTING.—Vers. 36-38. Nothing can be more touching than these three concluding verses, leaving an indelible impression of rare ministerial fidelity and affection on the apostle's part, and of warm admiration and attachment on the part of these Ephesian presbyters. Would to God that such scenes were more frequent in the church.

Over a Coffin Lid.

"She—was—a—good—wife—to—me. A good wife, God bless her!"

The words were spoken in trembling accents over a coffin lid. The woman asleep there had borne the heat and burden of life's long day, and no one had ever heard her murmur; her hand was quick to reach out in a helping grasp to those who fell by the wayside, and her feet were swift on errands of mercy; the heart of her husband had trusted in her; he had left her to long hours of solitude, while he amused himself in scenes in which she had no part. When boon companions deserted him, when fickle affection selfishly departed, when pleasure palled, he went home and found her waiting for him.

"Come from your long, long roving,
On life's sea so bleak and rough,
Come to me tender and loving
And I shall be blessed enough."

That had been her love song—always on her lips or in her heart. Children had been born to them. She had reared them almost alone—they were gone! Her hand had led them to the uttermost edge of the morning that has no noon. Then she had comforted him, and sent him out strong and whole-hearted while she stayed at home and—cried. What can a woman do but cry?—and trust? Well, she is at rest now. But she could not die until he had promised to "bear up" not to fret, but to remember how happy they had been. They? Yes, it is even so. For she was blest in giving, and he in receiving. It was an equal partnership after all!

"She—*was*—a—good—wife—to—me!"

O man! man!—Why not have told her so, when her ears were not dulled by death? Why wait to say these words over a coffin wherein lies a wasted, weary, gray-haired woman, whose eyes have so long held that pathetic story of loss and suffering and patient yearning which so many women's eyes reveal—to those who read. Why not have made the wilderness in her heart blossom like the rose with the prodigality of your love? Now you would give worlds—were they yours to give—to see the tears of joy your words would have once caused, bejewelling the closed windows of her soul. It is too late.

We have careful thoughts for the stranger,
And smiles for the sometime guest,
But oft for our own
The bitter tone,
Though we love our own the best.

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