

Pastor and People.

The Significance of Death.

With the return of autumn come sad thoughts and melancholy recollections. Not so much to those who live in the city; for the processes of nature and the sentiment of seasons, except, perhaps, in the sky and the drifting clouds, are shut out by brick walls; but to dwellers in the country, who see the pretty vines and flowers that have cheered them all summer long, disfigured and killed by the frost, and the withered leaves whirling down from the trees, and feel how keenly the east wind sweeps over the desolate stubble-fields, the fall brings many sombre reveries and suggestions. The village poet is quite sincere in the mournful verses on the "Death of the Flowers," which he prints in the village paper. The minister preaches a sermon on "The Falling Leaf;" and there are tears in the good man's eyes as he speaks of those who have already fallen, and how soon the time must come for all. It is, no doubt, the suggestion of death, in all its mystery and inevitableness, that touches us with this feeling of uncertain sadness, and makes us question within ourselves what it means—what is the use and purpose of decay in the economy of the world. We see that all things are subject to it; most of all those that are loveliest and best. Not less, surely, than the return of autumn, do men and women and little ones that we love fade away. What is the significance of death? Has it anything of promise for the future?

The answer, thank God, is not far to seek. It is a law of the universe, written quite plainly in simple words and illustrations, that decay is the necessary condition of growth. Life out of death is nature's method. "Every end," some one has said, "is also a beginning." From what has served its purpose and fallen, comes something vital, carrying along the same spark of life, working a new and better result. Death in nature is but a change of form. The energy, the germinal power, remains, and is transmitted. It is as if it dropped its garments, to emerge in a new covering of beauty and vigor. And even the cast-off forms are made serviceable to life. The withered leaves fall to enrich the ground about the tree that bore them. The wild flower, dying, fertilizes the spot where its own seeds have planted themselves. And the seed itself, instinct with life, the very symbol of vitality, must pass through this gateway of decay into full development. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Its form and character must be changed by decay; the mass of food which formed the body of the grain must perish; as a corn of wheat, it must die before it can emerge into its new existence as a living plant.

Carry the same law into the history of the human race, and you will find that it controls the phenomena of society. Human institutions do not perish until they have fulfilled their uses; when that time comes they die; and from their ruins others arise, to take their places, and perform new and higher functions. The germ of truth that is in them is the vital thing; that does not become extinct, but is transmitted from one to another. Look at the history of the church. The mission of the Jewish Theocracy was to preserve a pure Monotheism. When that was accomplished the church of the old dispensation died; but the spark of life was not lost, it dwelt, quickened, and enlarged in Christianity. The mission of the Holy Catholic Church was to protect and spread the Gospel until it had gained a firm, steady footing in the world. When that was accomplished it died as a church universal, and from the side of effete Romanism sprang the Churches of the Reformation. Doubtless, when the mission of the Protestant denominations, which is the many-sided development and propagation of Christian doctrine, is effected, they in their turn will give way to another and a higher form of religious life.

Carry the same law into the history of the individual man, and see how true it is that death is the condition and forerunner of renewed life. Men rise

Of their dead selves to higher things." Not until the old error has perished does the new wisdom emerge from the wreck; not until the old character has been sloughed off does the new man appear. The human body dies in some of its particles day by day, and by that process of decay it grows and is strong. The human soul, if it be alive and growing, must pass through the same constant death and renewal. It is in this way that Paul describes the processes of the Christian life. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." That deep repentance, those passions of anguish for sin, through which the soul passed, were the death-brother of the old existence, as well as the birth-pangs of regeneration. Looking at the physical death of man, that inevitable, dark event, whose shadow underlies most of our earthly sadness and unrest, may we not interpret its mystery in the light of this law of decay and growth? Paul does so in that wonderful chapter of First Corinthians on the resurrection of the body. May we not take the consolation of these hopeful symbols, and look upon the "second birth of death" as the process of some beautiful and marvellous change in the soul? With such a faith as this, we may not, indeed, lose all the sadness which the imagery of autumn brings to us; for there yet remains much mystery, and to the timid soul all change is sad; but the melancholy will have no bitterness, for we can say with Longfellow,

"There is no death. What seems so is transition; This life of mortal breath Is but a suburb of the life Elysian, Whose portal we call Death."

—Phil. Presbyterian. "It is generally the case with bad boys," philosophically remarks Mark Twain, "that they look like their mother and act like their father."

The Mule in the Church.

A few words with your readers about a well-known quadruped of mongrel breed. Some regard the animal in question as the only proper synonym of a very bad man peculiarly, or as the possessor of this one only characteristic and nothing more! The majestic aural appendages that adorn its solemn head are taken for some indications of an unconquerable stubbornness.

During the recent war, while serving as a chaplain in the army, I was so frequently shocked by the profanity of mule drivers, that I resolved, if possible, to stop some of it by the offer of a fine Bible to every one who would "drive a mule team four weeks without swearing." Having published the offer, and completed satisfactory arrangements with the Bible Society for a liberal distribution of the sacred volume among a needy class of sinners, and willing to spend a respectable portion of my salary for this object, I waited in my tent for applicants. But the crowd that I expected, came not. Only one man applied. He a poor, honest Dutchman, a member of an orthodox church.

When questioned on the subject, he declared it as his opinion that, by nature, no man was able to do it, but by the grace of God alone mules could be driven without oaths.

Here is his solemn affirmation, in his own words, which are buttressed by two certificates, one from his class-leader, and the other from his captain: "Dis is to certify dat I have driven a mule team four weeks without brofanity." He further more declared that ever since his conversion he had entirely abandoned swearing.

This man received the premium, and doubtless deserved it.

From that day, however, it has been hard for me to tell which of the two classes—the mules or the swearers—ought to have the preponderance of our sympathy. Those who are accustomed to the use of mules, and have sense enough to treat them properly, say that no other animal is more appreciative of good government or more easily managed by kindness. Some even contend that the mule is far more intellectual than the horse!

But the object of this article is not to furnish ideas for the enrichment of an address to be delivered at an agricultural fair. I have written this simply for the purpose of illustrating a moral subject—"The mule in the church." And I affirm, here and now, that when people copy the trait for which the mule has taken out letters patent, they are far less willing to part with the transcript, than is the mule to part with the original!

The early settlers in Ohio contended that after Simon Girty left the whites and joined the Indians, he became the most savage among his new comrades.

Thus it is also with the man who incorporates into his manhood the singular trait that belongs pre-eminently to the mongrel quadruped of which we are discoursing. "A bratish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this;" but it is a fact, nevertheless, that a muleish man is worse than a mule!

"Eleven of the stubbornest men I ever saw," were the words uttered by the Scotch deacon after an angry discussion all night on the subject of a verdict. It was intended as a very virtuous remark in reference to his trouble with the men in the jury-room, whom he had "hung" until their patience was gone, and then they all submitted to his opinion.

Yes, it was virtuous indignation. We will so mark it on our own book. But was this all? I always have painful misgivings concerning the peace of Jerusalem when I see a member of the church taking a wrong stand in opposition to the majority. Then am I reminded of the expression of a friend in Mississippi, who had a colored servant, to whom was committed the management of a mule. One day the team stuck in a mud hole, and the colored man "gave up in despair." When asked why he made no attempt to urge the mule forward, he simply pointed to the animal and said: "If that thing once sets her ears as she has 'em now, there's no use of trying to make her go."

If the person in the church who improperly adjusts his ears, belongs to what is termed the "light material," it matters but little; but if he commands any influence, his motion portends trouble. I then see a mule in the church. From that day forth we must anticipate something, against which omniscience alone can guard us. The ordinary remedies for allaying disturbance are all powerless now. "Reaching the Rot Act" has no effect. All signs fail in dry weather. The predictions of Old Probabilities are not worth reading. Slam bang! go the doors, so faces, fretful expressions, unkind innuendoes, and other evidences of unsanctified human nature, and the presence of an unchained devil, are "plenty as blackberries." The mule is doing mischief. "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

That was a singular confession of a stern old Covenanter, who, in his prayer, asked to be kept right, because if he once went in the wrong direction, the Lord himself could not get him back!

It was the honest intimation of one who perhaps understood human nature much better than theology. He knew too well his liability to an attack of muleishness, but rejoiced that the spell was not yet on him, and so he preferred the ounce of prevention to the pound of cure.

"I am determined to have the highest seat in the pinnacle, or none," was the stern declaration of a mother in Israel, who had suddenly resolved on a change of base among the pews of the church that she attended. In order to carry her point it would be necessary to drive out an "outsider," who had wanted the pew that she now wanted. Be it remembered, she had already selected hers and used it for several weeks, when this strange freak took her. But the pastor and several members of the church called on her and reasoned the case with her, but without success. The quotation that has been given actually fell from her lips, and it brought sadness to our hearts, because, by insisting upon the change, she virtually insisted upon driving one from the congrega-

tion who had but recently expressed a desire to become identified with us. But this female mule was now in the church! Her intelligent daughter, ingrained not only at her misquotations, but her misconduct, ventured kindly to say, in an undertone:

"Ma, you mean not the highest seat in the pinnacle, but in the synagogue."

"None of your impertinent interference, Lizzie. I mean just what I said," was the response.

Perhaps David's advice to her, and all such, would have proved equally beneficial. "Be ye not as the horse or the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."—N. Y. Observer.

The Church in Thy House.

In his tender, earnest, and courteous letter to Philemon, his "dearly beloved fellow-laborer," the Apostle Paul, then a prisoner of and for Jesus Christ, salutes a godly woman Apphia, Archippus "a fellow-soldier," and the "church in thy house." It is likely that a portion of believers in Colosse were wont to meet at the house of Philomon for worship and instruction, for in the times of the apostles there were no public edifices used by Christians for what we have come to designate public worship. Companies of the faithful assembled where they could for the hearing of the Word and the breaking of bread. The vast revolutionary forces of the Gospel began to touch, quicken, and lift society by processes which were obscured to the eyes of those who found in the florid pomp and gorgeous spectacles of heathenism the completest expressions of the religious spirit. The individuals, the households, and the groups of like-minded people—most of them in humble stations—that composed the early church were at first despised, as being quite beneath the notice of the philosopher, the priest, or the politician. The kingdom of heaven moved forward, for a time enjoying the contempt of the chief masters of mankind. Yet the Word of God grew and prevailed. Its strongholds were in loving hearts, and in those families where the Church was established in the beauty and power of the truth as it is in Jesus. At length these little domestic clusters of believers were multiplied until their light combined in a glowing galaxy that arched the clouds of ancient superstition, and began to disperse them.

As it was at first, so it is now—the Church of the First Born sends the roots of its strong and sturdy life into the household, there to be watered with the tears of penitence, and invigorated by a faith that discerns the grace and majesty of its sovereign Head.

A declension in religion, a decrease of moral power in the community, and a fatal lukewarmness in the service of Christ, have ever sprung from some gross neglect in families of those duties and obligations which conscience has recognized, and habit nullified. A return of spiritual activity in the Church, and of improved public virtue, have also been found to be connected with a revival or a reformation in the households of the people; so that we come back and take up Paul's phrase, "the church is thy house," and find it to contain a meaning quite universal in its bearings and applications.

How many families there are who go to church, but never bring the church home with them! How many who delight in ordinances and hate the commandments! How many who are devout in listening to public prayers, but quite averse to having prayers in the house! How many serve to the rules of sect who do not wish an undivided Christ to reign over the domestic circle! Much there is of true, sincere, self-sacrificing piety, of well-instructed faith, and of the beauty of unaffected holiness to be found among the homes of the American people; but there is also a fashionable, showy, or outward seeming religiousness, which parades itself in a vain-glorious spirit, attracts attention, gets renown, and flaunts its triumphal banners amid ostentatious tricks and devices, and which at home maintains neither the form nor the power of godliness. It is from this real severance of the order of a family from the order of the church, that many of the most deadly vices of society flow forth to pollute the land.

When the church is in thy house, the Head of the Church will be there too, to exercise His most benignant sway. His authority will be confessed, and the culture of the family will be shaped according to the mind of Christ. The reading, the engagements, the recreations, the whole life of the household will receive a direction from the Holy Ghost.

When the church is in thy house prayer uttered or unexpressed will abound there for the spread of the truth, and the success of all those good agencies which the church employs for the establishment of the truth, the wide world round. Thus there will exist a fellowship of spirit with the highest and best movements of an enlightened benevolence. The family thus raised above selfish isolation, or narrow cares, will feel the inspiration of great hopes and worthy aims, and be in sympathy with the grand and elevating evangelical efforts that are being made for the recovery of mankind.

The church in thy house will consider that lavish expenses at home, attended by extreme penury of giving for the enlargement of the church on every side, is a crime which our Lord condemned when He shamed the Pharisees by citing the example of the poor widow who gave her all in the single mite which she cast into the treasury of the temple.

To sum up the matter, it is certain that only those families obtain the best results of religious instruction, who sincerely and faithfully apply such instruction at home, and unite the influence of the sanctuary to the quiet and steady influence that should pervade every relation of the household. A genuine revival felt in any congregation usually has its beginnings in families that in some way have been moved to resolve, in the language of Joshua, "We will serve the Lord."

Pastoral Calls.

"Husband your strength for making and receiving calls," said Dr. John Hall in one of his late Yale Seminary lectures. "On Preaching." Some of the papers, says a contemporary, thought the statement facetious, and so unadverted on it; but if they had read further, or waited longer, they would have understood the Doctor better; for in a subsequent lecture, in denouncing the elements of papist power, he took occasion to emphasize the necessity of giving thought and study to the manner of making and receiving pastoral calls. One of his illustrations was this: "Dr. Norman McLeod, of the Barony parish, Glasgow, had immense power as a preacher to working men. When you heard him, as I did, you were most struck with the sensible advice he gave them; but back of his unadorned words lay the visits he made at their homes, the counsels of their clubs, and the organizations he built up for their good." Concession was made as to the difficulty of finding strength and time for regular extensive pastoral work; but at the same time the Doctor urged that we ought to give as systematically of both these things to pastoral work as to preparing for the pulpit.

But what kind of "calls" shall these pastoral visits be? We find an answer in one of the papers. Comparatively small value do we attach to those, as a mere parish formality. The "going from house to house," unless it results in a true acquaintanceship and unweaving of the heart, is but wasted time and effort. A pastor cannot afford mere gossiping calls. He had better be in his study, or even off-trouting. But the calls that are valuable, both to himself and to his people, which will enable him to preach better, both in the pulpit and out of it, are calls in which the trust and deepest emotions of the soul come to the surface. Therefore, be frank with your minister. Tell him your religious thoughts and feelings plainly, clearly, honestly. Through such a call he will know you better, understand your needs, spiritually; be better able, and far more likely, to speak the "word in season" for your advantage. Such a coming together, too, is just as valuable if it take place on the sidewalk or in the cars. Some of the most valuable "ministerial" calls ever made have had for witnesses only the jolting seat of a wagon-load, or the dusty beams of an old barn, or the steaming kettles of the kitchen stove, and apologized for "looks" of the unswart room; or the old wood pile where we caught the man with his "frock" on, and in a twinkling got our hearts together, for the moment thought only of the one fact of our being travellers to eternity together, who might help each other. Such pastoral calls can never lose the gold out of them. Their memory will make heaven itself the sweeter. Would that we could make more of them! Ah! it takes two to make such calls as those. You must call on the pastor the same time he calls on you.—Churchman.

A Serene Old Age.

I once knew a dear old lady—so sweet, so bright, so clever; wearing her eighty years "as lightly as a flower." When you talked with her you would have thought her a woman of thirty, so full was she of all the quick sympathy of youth, the wise tenderness of middle age. Of the weaknesses of old age she had absolutely none. Her interest in all those about her was such that she never seemed to think of herself at all. No complaint, no murmur at her own ailments—and she had ailments and sorrows too—ever fell from her lips; her only anxiety was about the cares of other people, and how she could lighten them, in great things and small. Her bounty knew no limits except her means, which were not great "but," she once said, smiling, "I need so little; and then you see, my dear, I always pay my bills every week, so as to give no trouble to anybody afterwards." Thus she kept house, with the utmost order, yet with ceaseless hospitality. It was, indeed, the House Beautiful, to whose gates all who came departed refreshed and strengthened, and whence no creature who came in want or grief was ever sent empty away.

I need not name it; many now living will remember it; and none who were familiar there could ever forget it, or her, as she sat in her quiet corner, with her sweet old face and her lovely little ringed hands—peaceful, idle hands; since for some years before she died she was nearly blind. Yet her blindness—though, coming so late in life, it made her very helpless—never made her sad or dull; she could still listen to and join in conversation, and she greatly liked society, especially that of the young. There was always a tribe of young people coming about her telling her all their doings and plans, their amusements and their troubles. She was fond of them, and they—they adored her! One girl in particular owned that the first time this dear old lady voluntarily kissed her, she felt "as if she had been kissed by her first love."

When she died—at over eighty, certainly; but her executors had to guess at the date, for she was an old maid, without any near relation, and had often said she did not even know her own age, it was so long since she was born—when she died there was found among her private papers a portrait of a young man in a foreign military dress. No one could guess who it was; the name—there was a name—no one had ever heard of. At last some old acquaintance recalled a far-away tradition of her having been once about to be married; somehow the marriage was broken off, but the two remained friends, and, it was believed, corresponded and occasionally met, till his death, which happened when she was about fifty years old. For his nephew—and heir, he having died unmarried—had then been to see her; somebody recollected having met the young man at her house, and her introducing him by the name on the miniature. After that all was silence. She was never heard to name the name again. Yet she lived on for thirty more years.

"What do you do when you are quite alone?" was once asked anxiously of her when she was too blind either to write or sew or read.

"What do I do? My dear, I sit and think. I have so much to think about—and so many."

"And are you never dull?" "Dull! Oh, no! I am quite happy." She was, I am sure. You could see it in her face. Her last act—the last time she ever crossed her threshold—was, I remember, a visit of kindness, partly as an excuse to take for a drive a person who was too feeble to walk much. She was then extremely feeble herself; and climbing a steep stair, one who assisted her said anxiously, "I fear you are very tired." "Yes," she replied, "I am always tired now. But," turning suddenly around with the brightest of smiles, "never mind; it will be all right soon." Four weeks after she lay in her final rest, looking so young, so pretty, so content, that those who best loved her choked down their sobs and smiles, saying, "it was like putting a baby to sleep."—Sermons out of Church, by Miss Muloch.

Random Readings.

If the rebuke of a popular sin be not "in good taste," how many people will be offended more by the rebuke than by the sin which called it forth?

The word "bunyboby" (1 Pet. iv. 15) is a very remarkable expression. The Greek word means literally, "a bishop in another man's diocese."

An old minister once said to a young preacher, who was complaining of a small congregation:—"It is as large a congregation, perhaps, as you will want to account for at the day of judgment."

It is not honorable to God to believe that he makes his plans from day to day, even as a child wanders through the fields, gathering daisies here, nightshade there, guided only by the moment's fancy.

HORACE MANN's way for accounting for the success of the early Christians should be remembered:—"I have never heard anything about the resolutions of the disciples, but a great deal about 'the Acts of the apostles.'"

FAITH is the master-spring of a minister. "Hell is before me, and thousands of souls shut up there in everlasting agonies. Jesus Christ stands forth to save men from rushing forth into this bottomless abyss. He sends me to proclaim His ability and his love. I want no fourth idea. Every fourth idea is contemptible!—every fourth idea is a grand impertinence!"—Cool.

THERE is no one way in which we are to do Christian work. Not more diverse are the countenances of men than their dispositions and tastes, and the character of their work will be according to these. And it is well it is so. There would be a tiresome monotony in the world if it was going on in the sing-song way of unvaried uniformity, and its life would inevitably tend towards a dullness and torpor.

If the disposition to speak well of others were universally prevalent, the world would become a comparative paradise. The opposite disposition is the Pandora-box, which, when opened, fills every house and every neighborhood with pain and sorrow. How many enmities and heart-burnings flow from this source! How much happiness is interrupted and destroyed! Envy, jealousy and malignant spirit of evil, when they find vent by the lips, go forth on their mission like foul fiends to blast the reputation and peace of others.

NEVER forsake a friend. When enemies gather around, when sickness falls on the heart, when the world is dark and cheerless, is the time to try true friendship. They who turn from the scene of distress betray their hypocrisy and prove that interest only moves them. If you have a friend that loves you, who has studied your interest and happiness, be sure to sustain him in adversity. Let him feel that his former kindness is appreciated, and that his love was not thrown away. Real fidelity may be rare, but it exists—in the heart. They only deny its worth and power who never loved a friend or labored to make a friend happy.

THREE whole days I was at Augsburg without the imperial safe-conduct. Meanwhile they earnestly entreated me to say, "Revoco." After three days the Bishop of Trent came and showed me the safe-conduct. Then I went in all humility to the Cardinal; fell at once on my knees, the second time on the ground, the third time prostrate there so long that three times he bid me rise. Then I arose. That pleased him much. He hoped I would think better of it. When I came to the Cardinal the second time, and would not recant, he said: "What meanest thou? Dost thou think the princes will defend thee with arms and armies? Surely, no! Where then wilt thou take refuge?" I said, "Under heaven."—Luther.

It is common with a class of persons to ridicule the old doctrines and practices of the past, as if, because they were different in expression and method from those of the present, they were stupid and superstitious. Thus one man will tell of the beauty of modern life, and then laugh at the rigid and harshness of the Puritan forefathers. Another will praise the enjoyment of children as they read current youthful literature, and jest about the intolerance that compelled the young of fifty years ago to study the catechism. A third will describe the gladness of a nineteenth century Sabbath, and then write caricatures of the dreary Lord's day which plagued the young of former generations. They are unthinking, heartless persons who do so. If we have made improvements—and it is to be hoped we have—they are not such that we can contemplate them without at the same time lamenting our losses and disasters; and we should always remember that the stern, inflexible life which was natured by the processes at which so many are ready to laugh, was that of which all that is good in our more malleable times is a legitimate product. If a good man reviles the Sabbath and ostentation of his fathers, and his life that was produced under their influence, he is possessed in part by the spirit of a parasite.—United Presbyterian.