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BUNYAN IN PRISON.

WHEN Bunyan in the prison pined,
The sights and sounds of cheerful day denied,
The legend says, he once in careless whim,
Took from his chair which filled the corner dim
A little rill; and lo! he deftly made
A rustic flute, his loneliness to aid;
And oft, as evening gloom around him fell,
And shadows slanted in the darkening cell,
When vision of his wife or daughter blind
Sore tried his faith, and tempted thoughts unkind,
The rill removed from its retreat would be,
With some sweet strains to make Apollon see;
Then Hope her pinions would again expand,
And Doubting Castle change to Beulah land;
But whence the sounds that marked each day's decline
The list'ning Janitor could never divine
Oft as he tried his hidden source to trace
He tried in vain—the rill was in its place!

In bondage here, by sin and sorrow tried,
We, too, as Zion's children must abide;
But, oh, dependent one, forlorn and sad,
Is there no "Way" to make the journey glad?
Say, did the Father for His child design
A life of care, a precious life like thine?
Behold to every blade of grass that blows,
In every stream that wakes the vale's repose,
In yonder sparrow flying to its nest,
A theme for music in a thoughtful breast;
With voice in common, one and all declare
Themselves the objects of the Father's care;
Learn thou the lesson, and thy joyful guise
Shall men behold, and praise with wondrous eyes.
—Quiver for March.

THE SERMON: THE PEW AND PULPIT IN UNISON.

THERE is a constant and reasonable demand that the sermon shall improve in its matter and manner. People naturally think that if preaching is the most important communication held between mortals, there should be no limit to the improvement of the sermon, except the limit of human possibilities.

In this they are manifestly right, and preachers bring no honour to their cause or themselves when they disparage preaching through under-estimating the sermon, or being careless in their pulpit preparations.

But there is another side which should be seen by the people who raise the standard of preaching to such a height. Preaching is not merely delivering a sermon: it involves its reception. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Quite true; but is it not pertinent to inquire, "How shall they preach without a hearer?" If a man went alone into a church and repeated something he had committed to memory, would any one say that he had preached a sermon? Certainly not. In our opinion, if a man were to repeat a discourse to a thousand people, and were concerned only not to make a mistake in the repetition, he would not be "preaching." Preaching concerns itself with the hearers and with hearing. The pulpit and the pew must unite together. No man, no angel, not even the Lord Himself, could preach to us if we refused to receive the Word. It is said in Holy Scripture of a certain audience, who sat under high preaching, that "the Word did not profit them, not being mixed with faith."

It is time that people, who call themselves Christians, should be made to feel the pew's part of the responsibility in the success of the sermon. In studying this subject, regard must be had to the laws which govern the case, and not to the extraordinary and quite exceptional occurrences in the course of much preaching. Even what seems to be exceptional results may be traced to the law when we can learn what that law really is. For instance, sometimes men saunter into a church in a state of semi-intoxication, and the Word of God cuts them to the heart like an arrow. Sometimes in crowds, the larger portion of whom are careless and prayerless, or even prejudiced against the preacher and his message, or even hating both, the people have fallen before the Gospel as Dagon fell before the ark. In all times of great revivals of religion, fools that "come to mock, remain to pray." But even in these cases, those who believe in the power of prayer must feel that some one was praying, that there was a peculiar state of the spiritual conditions, and that if the Holy Spirit in the overflowings of mercy towards them who are un instructed, pours blessings where they are not sought, by those who are of the household of faith, and those to whom the Gospel has come, the means which are appointed of God must be used if the end is to be fully gained.

There is this to be noticed about unsuccessful sermons, namely, that the responsibility is almost always laid upon one of the parties to the transaction, and that ordinarily he is the more innocent party—namely, the preacher. A congregation creates the conditions of failure, and then holds the preacher responsible. To a

man or a body of men, with such a temper, how can any good come from sermons?

Now, it seems to us that the Christian man in the pew should feel himself as much bound to sustain his end of the sermon as the preacher to discharge all his duties in the premises. To that end he should secure for himself all the physical, intellectual, and spiritual preparation needed to make a sermon profitable to his soul, and fruitful of good works in his life.

That preparation cannot be made on Sunday morning. It must begin earlier. It should be begun not later than Saturday. All business should be regulated so as to close on the evening of the last day of the week, and the house, as well as the business, be set in order for the approaching day of rest and devotion. There should be no companions entertained at the house, no places of amusement visited, however proper on other evenings, no sitting up late. A full and thorough night's rest should be sought. If there be freedom at the table, the Christian man should begin to diet himself and regulate his digestion, so as to be in the fullest possible bodily health to greet the Sunday's sun. He should see that his breakfast is sufficiently generous and temperate to secure the best stomachic conditions, so that the senses shall not be dulled by indigestion.

As far as practicable, all cares should be abated. Arrangements should be made to have all questions of a perplexing character put off till the next week, if not capable of being settled before Sunday. Into a mind full of saw-mills, and factories, and banks, and railroads, and unfinished bargains, how can the sermon enter with any prospect of doing good? This is plain, and yet some Christian men will sit up until midnight over their books, their plans, their specifications, their proposals, and after a troubled night's sleep, rise late, eat an unsatisfactory breakfast, rush off to church, and reach the service after the first lesson out of the Holy Scripture has been read and after the confession of sin and the intercession for pardon have been made. Then they demand that the sermon shall make a most delightful impression upon their perturbed spirits and muddled brains.

There is an intellectual preparation needed on the part of the people. Christians should spend at least an hour before service in studies that bear upon religion. There should be a Sunday library in every Christian home, a library of books of high character, discussing the practical themes of human salvation, in one department of which should be the books of such authors as Thomas a Kempis, Baxter, Doddridge, John Newton ("Cardiphonia"), Wilberforce ("Practical View"), Bunyan, Leigh Richmond, etc. Then there should be such books as the Hampton Lectures, the Duke of Argyll's "Reign of Law," the publications of the Victoria Institute and of the American Institute of Christian Philosophy, and of the Society for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge, and other books of real science—science taught devoutly. An hour among such books would do much towards tuning the mind for that worship which prepares for the sermon.

But, above all, there must be spiritual preparation. The man must go to the church to worship, to be taught, to be shown the sores of his soul, the needs of his spirit, the methods God has adopted and proclaimed for his recovery, and how all this is to be used. The whole force of his critical ability must be expended on himself. He is to have no time and no heart to criticise his neighbour or the preacher. He must be clothed with humility. He must desire truth and righteousness as a starving man hungers for bread and thirsts for water. He must look upon the preacher as upon the physician and surgeon of his soul, for whom he prays most sincerely and devoutly that the God who gives skill and success may bless His servant in the pulpit who has care of His servants in the pew.

This much at least is necessary to make a sermon a success. Every man who enters the church without any of this preparation militates by his presence against the sermon. It is like opening one window for the cold air to enter, and then another and then another, as one prayerless hearer after another takes his seat in the pew; and when all the windows are flung open the poor preacher is expected to keep the house just as warm as if every aperture were closed. It is this creating of antagonistic conditions and then expecting succour from the sermon, which demonstrates the folly and injustice of a great portion of discourse about sermons.

On a field full of rocks, unfenced, uncleared, unplowed, unmanured, a man is asked to sow seed. He sows the best seed in the best way, and we know the result. And because the result is not the same as when the seed is sown in the same manner on ground cleared, plowed and fertilized, the sermon is said to be losing its power.

Who is responsible? How far are you responsible?—*Dr. Dennis in Pulpit Treasury.*

A SACRED SIGHT.—There is no new and sacred sight open to the eyes of present generations better worth study, than the rising of the unobscured orb of Christianity in the far East.—*Joseph Cook.*

Mission Work.

A MEMORIAL.—Rev. W. H. Steel, D. D., has just given \$5,000 to the Reformed (Dutch) Foreign Missions as a memorial of his deceased son. Better than marble or granite.

A STRAW.—Not less than two thousand children marched in procession at the annual Sunday-School festival a few weeks ago in Lucknow, India. The boys were nearly all Hindus and Mohammedans, and two elephants graced the procession. That straw looks as if the stream were running. Missions are not quite a failure.—*Independent.*

THE MISSIONARY'S CONFIDENCE.—When Morrison, the illustrious pioneer of Christian missions in China, was taking his passage nearly eighty years ago, the consignees of the ship sneeringly asked, "Do you expect you are going to convert the Chinese?" His answer silenced if it did not satisfy them: "No, I am not, but God is." Here is the confidence of true faith—the faith that gives for mission work, as well as goes to it, for the giver and giver are partners with God in the glorious enterprise.

AFRICA.—Every new development as to the Congo Valley adds to its interest and importance. It is even more populous and fertile than was supposed. The course of the Congo seems to be a vast lacustrine territory, reached in all parts by boats of light draft. Missionaries on the Congo have penetrated a thousand miles into the interior. Fourteen Protestant and four R. Catholic stations erected, and from £2,000 to £8,000 disbursed. A prominent woman in Onitsha, just made *emue*, a sort of female sovereign, astonished all by decreeing that all women should go to church on Sunday; and herself going, heading a procession of women noted for idolatry. Slave trade still active on east coast; cargo of fifty slaves rescued in July, and mostly sent back home.—Native Christian martyrs in Uganda tortured and burned, clung to Jesus and praised God in the fire. Only eight years ago the Victoria Nyanza mission was started on the shores of Victoria Nyanza; church at Rubaga now has 108 communicants.—*Non. Monthly.*

A HIGH TRIBUTE.—Lately a Christian was bringing his daughters from his home, several days' journey in the interior, to the school at Chefoo. A prominent merchant from the city spent the night at the same inn. After the evening meal the merchant asked the Christian if he would take charge of a parcel for him during the night, as he wished to visit some friends. In the morning, when he called for the parcel, he remarked, "If I had not known you were a member of the Christian Church, I would not have ventured to entrust this parcel, containing many valuables, to you, hitherto a stranger to me. I have studied the Christian books and understand their teaching. I have watched closely the conduct and dealings of the missionaries and converts, and am persuaded that the Gospel is true; but the observance of the Sabbath, and other difficulties connected with a Christian profession, make it impossible for me to be a Christian and carry on a successful business at present." This man is undoubtedly a representative of many others.—*The Foreign Missionary.*

SCOTLAND AND CHINA.—Sir Michael Connal presided at a meeting in Free St. Matthew's, Glasgow, in connection with the local auxiliary of that English Presbyterian mission to China which was founded in 1847 when the devoted W. C. Burns, its first missionary, went out to the field in which he died. It was in 1855 that an association was formed in Scotland to aid the English Presbyterians in the good work; and it is a fact specially worthy of note that this association was the first public body in the northern kingdom to draw attention to Christian work in China. It should also be added that the missionaries sent out have, almost to a man, gone from Scotland. Their efforts have been remarkably owned and blessed. The first station was Amoy, and from that small centre the work has radiated until it covers a region on the mainland 500 miles long by 150 to 200 broad, the half of the island of Formosa, the Hak-Ka country in the north-western portion of Canton, and the island of Singapore. The solitary centre has increased to four large and important centres, and the staff from one ordained missionary to fifteen, seven medical, and two missionary teachers. In addition to these there are five native pastors and no fewer than 73 native evangelists. At each centre there are a fully equipped medical missionary hospital, a theological college, and elementary as well as secondary schools. Christian literature is being prepared and an active work, through the press, is being carried on at Swatow and in Formosa. The methods employed have been directed to the founding of a native church—self-governing, self-supporting, and aggressive; and it is one of the most hopeful features of this mission, which has now 3,105 adults in full communion, that its progress has been largely owing to the efforts of the native Christians.—*Christian Leader.*

Woman's Work.

W. F. M. S.

GUELPH PRESBYTERIAL SOCIETY.

THE first meeting of the Guelph Presbyterian Society was held in the lecture room of Chalmers' church, Guelph, on Thursday, 25th February. The day was very unfavourable, as heavy rain was falling, notwithstanding this there was a large attendance of delegates from societies in the Presbytery, and friends belonging to the city. The ladies of the Guelph auxiliary had provided lunch for the delegates on their arrival. At the afternoon meeting Mrs. Smellie, of Fergus, president of the society, occupied the chair, and conducted the devotional exercises, portions of Scripture being read responsively. Mrs. Wardrope, of Guelph, welcomed the delegates and friends. Mrs. Muir, of Fergus, replied in place of Mrs. Mullan, who was unable to be present.

The president reviewed the work accomplished by the Society since its formation, nine months ago, and gave a general outlook over the missionary horizon. Many new fields are open requiring increased efforts.

The secretary reported that the following auxiliary societies had been organized: Erin, Belwood, Fergus (St. Andrew's), Berlin and Eramosa, and two mission bands, one in Belwood, and congregation, and "Willing Workers," Melville church, Fergus. The Presbyterian Society now includes eight auxiliaries and two mission bands, with a total membership of 363.

The treasurer, Miss Helen Cant, of Galt, presented the financial statement: The whole year's contributions as shown by Society's reports amount to \$541.68. Of this amount, a part had been sent to the general treasurer by the societies existing before the Presbyterian Society was formed. Reports from auxiliaries were read by the respective secretaries, and all show progress and interest.

Miss Ebert, of Galt, read a very interesting paper on "India." An added interest was felt because Miss Ebert has the prospect of going out to India to engage in the work there. Mrs. Taylor, of Galt, read a paper on "The benefits we derive from this work as individuals and congregations."

The office bearers having only served a portion of last year were, on motion re-elected to hold office till the next annual meeting to be held in Knox church, Galt, next February. The officers are: President, Mrs. Smellie; Vice-Presidents, Mesdames Wardrope, J. K. Smith, and Drainie; Secretary, Mrs. McCrae; Treasurer, Miss Helen Cant. After prayer by Mrs. J. K. Smith, of Galt, the Doxology was sung, and a short time was spent in social intercourse before the guests left for their homes.

LANARK AND RENFREW.

THE third annual meeting of the Lanark and Renfrew W. F. M. Presbyterian Society was held on Tuesday afternoon, 23rd February, in the Temperance Hall, Carleton Place. There were delegates from Pembroke, White Lake, Renfrew, Arnprior, Clayton, Ramsay, Almonte, Ashton, Smith's Falls, Perth, Balderson, and a fair representation of the Carleton Place Auxiliary. In the absence of the President, Mrs. McKenzie of Almonte, took charge of the meeting, and was assisted in the devotional exercises by Mrs. Wilson, of Arnprior, and Mrs. Macalister, of Ashton. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and sustained, as were also the reports of the Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer. The address of "Welcome" to the delegates was given by Mrs. James Dickson, of Carleton Place, and responded to by Miss Riddell, of Perth. Then followed the President's address, urging upon the members of the Society the great need for more thorough consecration and devotion to the work. An excellent paper on "The Mite Box" was read by Mrs. Charles Frost, of Smith's Falls. The officers for the ensuing year are Mrs. A. A. Scott, Carleton Place, President; Mrs. McKenzie, Almonte, 1st Vice-Pres.; Mrs. Mylne, Smith's Falls, 2nd Vice-Pres.; Mrs. J. Dickson, Carleton Place, Rec. Sec.; Miss Wyllie, Almonte, Cor. Sec.; Miss Stark, Carleton Place, Treasurer. During the year there were five mission bands and one auxiliary organized. The amount contributed for 1885 was \$1,275, being \$559 more than the preceding year. After considerable discussion on various topics concerning the working of the Society, a very interesting and profitable meeting was brought to a close by Mrs. Ballantyne, of Pembroke, leading in prayer. In the evening a public meeting was held in Zion church, when the Society's reports were read before the Presbytery. In moving the adoption of the report, Rev. H. Taylor gave an address on "Women's Work" and was followed by Rev. D. J. McLean, who seconded the motion.

THE TRUE MISSIONARY SPIRIT.—When John Wesley was asked to go out to Georgia to preach the Gospel to the settlers and native Indians, his noble minded mother not only gave her free consent, but said, "Had I a hundred sons, I should be glad to see them all engaged in such a blessed work; although I might see them no more in this world."