

**PIGEON-HOLE PARAGRAPHS.**

*From the Irish Monthly.*

It is extraordinary how men like Gladstone find something appropriate to say to every sort of audience. I have preserved this scrap for the sake of the words addressed to the students of Glenalmond, which prepares young men for the Anglican ministry. The admonitions as far as they go, might be taken to heart by candidates for the priesthood: "The one thought that comes to the mind of the old man when he speaks to the young is this: "Oh, that it were possible to make them know how precious are the hours, how fraught with consequences of incalculable importance, which now fill up each and every day of their comparatively easy lives. I would not ask you to relax your attention to the games that fill up your leisure hours. On the contrary, I should regard it as a great misfortune were there to prevail a laxity and an indifference in the pursuit of youthful and innocent sports; but, I say, let every one, with the same energy with which he plays cricket or football, with the same energy with which he applies himself to leaping or running or to any exercise whatever his of corporal powers—and he wants very little exhortation, so far as my experience goes, to be energetic with that portion of his duties—let him carry the very same spirit into the work which is intended to develop his mental faculties. The extension of Government employments has given an enormous enlargement to what may be called the official classes—in fact, there are a much larger number of professionals competing now than competed together in the days when I came into the world; but, depend upon it, the profession of the clergyman, if it be more arduous than it has ever been, is, on that account nobler than it has ever been."

The *Times* once wrote: "It has been proved beyond a doubt that Lord Mulgrave has actually invited to dinner that rancorous mouthed ruffian O'Connell." Even the *Times* would speak very differently of O'Connell now, though it might not have the magnanimity to adopt what Gladstone said at Limehorse on the 16th December, 1888: "O'Connell was their leader because he was a man incomparably elevated in talent, power, and devotion to his country over any contemporary, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, throughout the length or breadth of Ireland."

There is a maxim of worldly wisdom which may be very useful in our spiritual concerns: "Short accounts make long friends." When we don't pay in ready money, when we order goods freely, if not recklessly, and keep no account of our outlay, it is pretty certain that, when the bill at last is furnished, we shall be greatly startled at the total amount. "Is it possible? Surely I can't have got all that wine? Did that cost so much?" And we are apt to dispute the account, if possible, or, at all events, to pay with a bad grace, and perhaps part on bad terms. Whereas, if we had forced ourselves to settle our accounts at certain short intervals, if we had tried to pay our way for the most part in cash—for "ready money is a great check to the imagination"—the effort would make us curtail our outlay, the necessities of life would be found not to be quite so necessary, our debts would be kept within reasonable limits, we should be better satisfied with our merchants and they with their customers, and our accounts, almost as short as our tempers, would be in a normally satisfactory state. The application of all this to our consciences is obvious enough; and this is fortunate, for there is not time now to enter into particulars.

Lord, give me grace and strength of character to tear myself away promptly

from what, if not bad, is less good, and to give myself earnestly, diligently, self-denyingly, to the better and the best.

We should not waste regrets on the irrevocable past, but to force ourselves to use well the fleeting present. Of course, we are bound to be sorry also for the past, so far as we have misused it. A little boy gave it as his idea of heaven, "the place where you are never sorry." Certainly that description does not hold for this earth. If you are good for anything, if you have any proper ideal, you are sure to be sorry very often to escape being sorry by being very dull, and worthless, and heartless, is far worse than any amount of trouble and sorrow. Coarser natures, like ours, are not likely to have an excess of regret and self-reproach, and we ought to use our faculty of remorse to good purpose. Regret the shortcomings of yesterday or of half an hour ago, in order that you make amends and avoid similar mistakes to-day or in the next half hour. "No use watering last year's crops," said Mr. Poyser. Tears will not make the flowers to spring up which we ought to have planted last year, and did not, but take your watering-pot into your hands to refresh the drooping flowers that are pining in your garden this minute, so pale and sickly as rather to be eyesores than ornaments, weeds rather than flowers.

God pity the wretched creatures who cannot get enough of sleep; and God convert the still more wretched creatures who take habitually too much sleep. The writer of the following list of doggerel belongs to neither class. Not to the first: since one of his subjects of thanksgiving is that he has never lost a night's rest in his life and has never been obliged to have recourse to any more dangerous narcotic than a sleeping draught of Hail Marys. Not to the second: for on the contrary these rhymes open with self-reproach for having cut down the sleeping time too much—and also the time of prayer, which sometimes comes too near deserving the other name also:—

More sleep, more prayer!  
Then do and dare  
All that you can  
For sinful man,  
Yourself the first,  
God knows if worst,  
So will God bless  
With true success  
(Which oft is known  
To Him alone)  
Whatever you  
Think, say and do  
From morn to night  
In heaven's sight,  
Till your last breath—  
Then welcome, Death!

That is a useful peculiarity in the German manner of naming the days of the week, which calls Wednesday *Mittwoch*, "Midweek." With Sunday as the first of the week, we have three days before and three days after, and Wednesday is the middle point, so that we may say, "here we are, half way through another week." It will be well for us to make Wednesday another warmer of the flight of time, as noon separates morning and evening, and in the declining hours of every day it is easier to feel that our life is verging towards its close. Let every Wednesday exhort us to spend better the last half of the week.

Dr. Frederick Kolbe, the clever editor of the *South African Catholic Magazine*, throws into the form of "a modern fable" his refutation of the pretensions of sundry sectarian bodies to represent the Apostolic Church: Once there was an Oak tree, which having stood many years of storm and sunshine, was all gnarled and knotted with age. A wind arose in the early spring and tore off one of its outer twigs. Now the twig, lying on the ground and comparing itself with its neighbours, said to the oak, "Behold you seedling just springing from the acorn—a true Oak in its earliest beauty; see its faint green leaves, its slender stem, just like mine. You, on

the other hand, with your tough stem and huge bare branches, you are as unlike it as can possibly be. Surely then, it is I that have gone back to the early simplicity of the oak and am the true representative of the species, from whose type you have so far degenerated." And the old oak replied, "My poor little broken twig, you talk after the manner of Twigs. That there is a certain external resemblance between you and the seedling that I once was may be true, but if so it is entirely owing to your fast union with me. But where are your roots?" "To-morrow or the day after, your leaves will have withered, your stem shrivelled. Another kind will arise, and some other fresh twig will be lying where you are now; it also will be talking just like you. It is too late for you to learn that the resemblance between the young oak and the old consists not so much in stem and leaves, as in the power to put forth new stems and leaves. Oaks and seedlings grow, not broken twigs." And even while he spoke the twig began to feel limp, and soon the evolution theory interested him no more.



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