

Pastor and People.

WEARING MOURNING.

A correspondent in the *Herald and Presbyterian* says: Henry Ward Beecher showed his appreciation of a great and growing evil by directing his family not to wear mourning when he died. This custom is heathenish. If our friends have gone to heaven and are happy with the Lord, why should we go about for months clad in the habiliments of hopeless grief? The *Forum* has a suggestion on this subject which I wish to commend to the consideration of your readers. It says: This passionate mourning, which, instead of being hidden in the depths of the heart, is obtruded upon the notice of every passer-by, how shall it be made to harmonize with the belief that the good who die are infinitely happier than they were before? To don the sable weeds of mourning because some one we love has been promoted from this world of pain and temptation to an eternity of peace is, to say the least, strangely inconsistent; while to tell all the world that, despite our loved one's immeasurable gain, we can only think of our own loss, is to proclaim our selfishness with a frankness which is as unworthy as it is unnecessary. In this matter of crape-wearing it would seem that the older countries of the world might, with advantage, sit at the feet of Australia and New Zealand, and learn from those young colonies a lesson of which the former are much in need. In both those countries the announcement of a death, in the press, is often followed by these significant words: "By wish of the deceased, his relatives will not wear mourning." Again this suggests a still more efficacious method of abolishing the practice. As the world well knows, there are no injunctions so scrupulously obeyed as those which rich testators lay upon the recipients of their bounty. Let it, then, become the rule that among the clauses of every will shall be included one enjoining the legatees to wear no crape, on pain of forfeiture of their bequests, and the reign of crape will soon be ended.

Our kindred whom God has taken to Himself are walking in white before the throne. They are waving palms of victory, and singing songs of thanksgiving. Why then should we wear black and sing dirges? We can not help feeling lonely and sad, when we miss the familiar face, and hear no more of the voice that was so sweet to our ears. But the Gospel forbids the indulgence of selfish sorrow. It teaches us to do our own lifework more zealously, because there is one less to help us, and the recent death admonishes us that we too must die. The best way to honour our sainted dead is to be more saintly in our spirit and our lives. The money needlessly spent in mourning apparel would sustain hundreds of missionaries, and print millions of Bibles.

THE COUNTRY PASTOR.

The simple annals of a country pastor's daily life are uniform and uneventful, and afford little scope for the biographer's pencil. Interesting and precious as any work done on earth in heaven's eyes, it is the obscurest possible in the world's regard. Angels look down upon it, busy, eager, bustling men heed it not. A calm routine of lowly though sacred duties a constant unvaried ministry of love, it flows on in a still and quiet stream, arresting no attention by its noise, and known alone to the lowly homes it visits on its way, and the flowers and fields it waters. The young pastor of Dun was no exception to this. He preached the Word, dispensed the sacred supper; warned the careless, comforted the sorrowing, baptized converts, blessed the union of young and loving hearts, visited the sick, the dying, buried the dead, pressed the hand, and whispered words of peace into the ears of mourners; carried to the poor widow and friendless orphan the charity of the Church and his own, slipped in softly into some happy home, and gently broke the sad news of the sudden disaster far away, lifted up the fallen one from the ground, and pointed to Him who receiveth the publicans and the sinners—these things, and such as these, he did in that little home-walk for twenty successive years, day by day; but that was all. There is much here for the records of the sky, but nothing, or next to nothing, for the noisy annals of time.—*The Pastor of Kilsyth.*

QUESTIONINGS.

Why are we told that faith alone can save
A human soul?
Deep meanings lie between this side the grave
And life's long goal,
Which we interpret slowly till we come,
Through tribulation oft, to rest and home.

Oh! where is home? that picture of repose
We see in dreams,
And sometimes fancy ours, until we lose,
In meeting streams,
Our visions, our sweet rest, our hopes, our all,
Which melt like snowflakes, and like raindrops fall.

Is it so strange that doubt in this world thrives,
When so much pain,
And pangs of suffering, fill so many lives,
That death were gain,
If only freedom from a quivering sense
Of weakness and of sadness, banished hence?

If this world were the end and goal of life,
A failure then
We must have felt it, pregnant with a strife
Which could not tend
To worthy recompense for all the pain;
It must have made us feel all life is vain.

Ah, Faith! good angel from the kingly skies,
Blessed child of love,
We need thy influence, open thou our eyes;
Bring from above
The soothing balm, the genial warmth of heaven,
Which oft to troubled hearts sweet peace has given.

Oh, teach us thus, what most we need to know
When life is sad,
That Christ looks humanly upon our woe,
Divinely glad
That He has power in earth and heaven to save,
And keeps our crown of life beyond the grave.
S. Huxley, in Canadian Independent.

DO YOUR BEST.

The great secret of success in any enterprise lies in the thoroughness of the work performed. It matters little whether the work be of hand or brain; if it is well done, it seldom fails in its object. If it is done in a heedless, slovenly manner, only a change of circumstances can render it successful, and that success reflects less credit on the doer than on the favourable circumstances which render it possible. If a man be a common labourer, he can gain such respect by doing his work so well that his labour will be sought for and he will be honoured for his fidelity. Such men will not be long out of employment even in hard times, while those who are known to perform their work with the least possible trouble to themselves, or unskilfully, will always be complaining of the hard times.

If you are a maid in the kitchen, do your work so well that you will be invaluable in a household. A faithful servant is a friend, and will be so considered by those who do their work well.

Whatever your station in life, aim to do your best, and you can but honour the station you occupy. Think no work degrading which is well done, and all work degrading which is half done.

HOW TO ATTRACT A CONGREGATION.

A tremendous noise is one way of attracting a congregation, but whether or not it is one which Jesus and His apostles would have followed I leave to be decided by those best able to judge. The other day we read in an official report. "Brass band better than ever, thirteen blowing salvation through their instruments." If this be so, let them blow till all is blue; it is not for us to rail at sounding brass if it has indeed become a channel of salvation. Blow by all means. If any of you judge that this is your high calling, pursue it ardently, and if outraged humanity should pelt you with mud and rotten eggs, do not reckon that a strange thing has happened unto you. If you should also create about twice as much blasphemy as religious feeling, do not be surprised; if your course of action should bring ridicule on all religion, and educate the mob in the art of rioting, which they may use by and by with unexpected results, do not marvel. If you conceive this to be your line of usefulness, listen to no advice; reckon all who differ from you as your enemies; become martyrs; and go forward like good soldiers, so long as leather and brass hold out. Only be prepared for contingencies. Suppose the big drum and tambourine should cease to charm, what next? What else is to be done? Will you stand on your head? Hornpipes have been tried; will you try the

tight-rope? I cannot suggest to you a novelty—since we have already heard of Brummagem bruisers, devil-dodgers, converted clog-dancers, etc. No, I cannot continue the list, for it must include several profane titles if it become at all complete; and, above all, and worst of all, it must needs contain those blasphemous insults to the eternal and incommunicable name which arise out of the desecration of the word "Hallelujah." It only occurs to me to suggest the question, "Might it not be possible to be a little less vulgar, and so to create variety without extreme exertion?" It might be a novelty to some people to conduct a meeting in which there should be no slang—let it be attempted.—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

IMPROPRIETIES OF CHURCH-GOERS.

One of these is that of converting the churchyard into an arena for political and railroad discussions and other secular subjects, which are so unbecoming the place and time that we deem the simple mention of them as being all that is necessary for the present.

Irreverence is another, being manifested by words and actions that indicate an ignorance or disregard of the sacredness of the place, which is dissimilar to Moses putting off his shoes before the burning bush at Horeb, the Mount of God, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Our Directory for Public Worship, chap. iii., sec. 2, says: "Let all enter the assembly and take their seats or places, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner." If there be a place under the sun where men may be indulged with proud looks and a lofty mien, that place is not the house of God.

Listlessness or inattention comes in among the improprieties. It is due to ourselves, to the audience, to the minister, and, most of all, to the Lord of the house, that on entering the sanctuary we put ourselves in the posture of hearers, if not of worshippers. How far from that posture are they who are inattentive to the exercises, and receive no benefit therefrom while indulging in vain looks and in carnal imaginations.

Perhaps it has not occurred to our readers as falling in the category of improprieties, the practice of our referring with some frequency to our watches in sight of the minister, which practice produces the impression on his mind that we are tired of the sermon, and would be pleased to have it brought to an end. Let us not in apparently so small a matter as that of looking at our timepieces during sermon offend against a rule affecting our minister's comfort and power to do good.

What puts our church-goers in such haste to get out of the church? They seem to be restless. "Irenæus," of the New York *Observer*, on one occasion in a certain church counted fourteen men who drew on their overcoats while the minister pronounced the benediction. We have seen something in our Southern churches equivalent to this, men, women and children making haste to get out of the house, as though the house were on fire, and when they are out and have gotten into their vehicles their driving is scarcely in keeping with the sacredness of the place where they have been, or of the sacredness of the day which they have been attempting to observe.—*Associate Reformed Presbyterian.*

A PRACTICAL RELIGION.

We want a religion that softens the step and tunes the voice to melody, and checks the impatient exclamation and harsh rebuke; a religion that is polite, deferential to superiors, courteous to inferiors, and considerate to friends; a religion that goes into the family, and keeps the husband from being cross when the dinner is late, and keeps the wife from fretting when the husband tracks the newly-washed floor with his muddy boots, and makes the husband mindful of the scraper and the door-mat, keeps the mother patient when the baby is fretful, and amuses the children as well as instructs them; cares for the servants besides paying them promptly; projects the honeymoon into the harvestmoon, and makes the happy home like the Eastern fig-tree, bearing in its bosom at once the beauty of its tender blossoms and the glory of its ripened fruit. We want a religion that shall interpose between the ruts and gullies and rocks of the highway of life, and the sensitive souls that are travelling over them.