

Pastor and People.

A POEM FOR SABBATH NIGHT.

WRITTEN FOR MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.

Rest him, O Father! Thou didst send him forth,
With great and gracious messages of love;
But Thy ambassador is weary now,
Worn with the weight of his high embassy.
Now care for him as Thou hast cared for us
In sending him; and cause him to lie down
In Thy fresh pastures, by Thy streams of peace
Let Thy left hand be now beneath his head,
And Thine upholding right encircle him,
And underneath the Everlasting Arms
Be felt in full support: so let him rest,
Hushed like a little child, without one care;
And so give Thy beloved sleep to night.

Rest him, dear Master! He hath poured for us
The wine of joy, and we have been refreshed.
Now fill his chalice, give him sweet new draughts
Of life and love with Thine own hand. Be Thou
His ministrant to-night; draw very near
In all Thy tenderness, and all Thy power;
Oh, speak to him: Thou knowest how to speak
A word in season to Thy weary ones,
And he is weary now. Thou lovest him
Let Thy disciple lean upon Thy breast;
And leaning, gain new strength to "rise and shine."

Rest him, O Loving Spirit; let thy calm
Fall on his soul to-night. O, Holy Dove,
Speed thy bright wing above him; let him rest
Beneath its shadow; let him know afresh
The infinite truth and might of Thy dear Name,
"Our Comforter!" as gentlest touch will stay
The strong vibrations of a jarring chord.
So lay Thy hand upon his heart and still
Each overstraining throb, each pulsing pain,
Then in the stillness breathe up in the strings
And let Thy holy music overflow,
With soothing power his listening, resting soul.

ON PUBLIC WORSHIP.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

The Sabbath rest lies not merely in cessation from the toils of the week, mental or physical, but in spiritual worship and service at home and in the house of God. We have a twofold nature. We are soul and body, and both need rest. The one is rested by release from manual labour, the other is rested by communion with God. God is the sea in which the soul bathes itself; from whom it draws new life, fresh invigoration, purer motive force, mightier energy and a sufficiency of grace to help in time of need. The soul cannot live and thrive without God. It must come into contact with Him somehow, and feed upon His love, and be blessed by His mercy, and rejoice in His faithfulness. As Augustine acknowledges in the first book of his Confessions: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it repose in Thee." David's cry was like this, oft-repeated, and every time with deeper meaning and more heartfelt emphasis: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none in all the earth that I desire beside Thee." When David was driven by conspirators against his royal authority from the city where God held His seat and manifested His glory, he pours out his plaint in this wise: "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary."

The cry of the soul is for God! God! God! Nothing else; no one else can satisfy it. And that God may be found, He has promised to meet with those who seek Him in His house, in His own appointed way. This meeting with God in His sanctuary we call public worship. It is not a formal act, but one intensely spiritual. One that demands the concentrated energy of the man to accomplish it aright. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." There must be faith and love and sincerity in the act. The soul of the man must move Godward in it, and find God. And that it ever does when it comes to God through Jesus, who is the way, trusting in His sacrifice and pleading His righteousness. God is unknown and unknowable in His Fatherhood and in the glorious constellation of His attributes, except in and through Christ. This act of approach therefore to God is one of such importance that it should not be lightly or thoughtlessly or carelessly gone about. It requires the determination of the will, the outgoing of the heart's love, the apprehension of the intelligence, the conjoint action of the entire nature. We need to pray: "Unite my heart to fear Thy name." We should remember this word of exhortation: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools." God is there, waiting to be gracious. God is there, ready to pardon. God is there, desirous of showing His face and imparting His love, and girding the soul with His strength. Everything depends on the spirit of the worshipper as to its outcome.

Some Sabbaths ago I sat in the pew and joined in the solemn service of the sanctuary. From this coign of vantage many things very noteworthy in their way came into clear light. The first of these was prayer. Prayer is so necessary to us, and so enters into our worship, that it is the most prominent act. The service is begun, continued and ended by it, and so God says: "My house shall be called an house

of prayer for all people." It is prayer that makes the whole service profitable. The spirit of prayer that comes of a serious preparation for the worship of God should underlie everything that is done—be its element! And wherever there is the reverence that is born of this, it will manifest itself outwardly. It matters not what attitude is taken in the act of prayer. Many positions are allowable, but only one spirit. And yet every one will allow that the right spirit will seek expression in the proper attitude. Think of a young minister not long out of college, who before service sits still in his chair, and with his hand over his face patronizes God by a prayer of exceeding brevity and of great folly. He was going to preach on "The Church," and has taken his text from Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, and this was his prayer: "O Lord, we thank Thee for this Epistle to the Corinthians; we wish we had an epistle for each American Church, and one for this Church, but since we have not we shall try to make the most we can of this." We need hardly say that he was emphatically a young man. As he grows older he will learn both reverence and wisdom. When such an exhibition as this can be made in the pulpit we have no occasion to marvel at impiety in the pew.

In another church while the opening prayer, which was pulsing with tender feeling and weighty with judicious thought and redolent with the spirit of sonship, was being offered, we chanced to see a gentleman with his fair face resting on his silver headed cane, smirking and smiling at his wife, whose face was responsive to his, while their two children caught up the temper displayed and laughed too. This continued for a while. It was a most pitiable sight. There was not even common decency in the house of God during one of the most sacred and solemn exercises. And their position was one in a theatre used for public worship, which made them visible to the entire congregation. By the way, did you ever observe how, when you look over a house full of people, you are able to mark the expression that plays upon the face. The play of every feature is in the light; the twinkle of the eye, the lines about the mouth with all the curl of the lip, the falling of the chin, the lifting of the eyebrows, all speak, and they speak a language to one accustomed to look at the face that cannot be misunderstood.

And so, not only the inattention of the worshipper, but his frivolity or his indifference are declared, and the children observe it, and the ungodly mark it, and it becomes a hindrance to good and a stumbling-block to many who might otherwise have been helped. Ah, me! how often we by our want of thought fight against God!

In prayer the head should be bowed down and an attitude of reverence assumed, the eyes closed so that without distraction the soul may take hold upon God. Eyes open during prayer is a door by which Satan enters in and fights against the best interests of the soul. "A fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth."

Second was the singing. All should sing. If there be no possibility of harmonious sounds, yet we may make a "joyful noise to the God of our salvation." Say the words with the singers. Speak them, that they may break upon the soul as the waves upon the rocks, and discover their brightness, their splendour and their glory. Did a whole congregation sing, how grand would be the effect? As we look over a congregation and take note while praise is being sung, how many are silent, how many scarcely-open their lips while they sing and how few sing with genuine heartiness?

Were all the people to sing with heart and voice what an ocean of song would swell around each worshipper, and fill the sanctuary, and roll out beyond it, saluting the dull and heavy ear of the world? What a manifestation of the Christian's joy and gladness might be given in singing? It is the voice of a happy heart, one from which the burden has been lifted, and one to which streams of blessing have consciously come. Appropriate songs or psalms should be sung. At the beginning of the service such as invoke God's presence, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to awaken, to arouse, to enlighten the soul, to give it the fitness it needs for entering into the worship of the hour. And throughout the service such as will crown the teaching given with its passionate feeling.

Praise should give wings to the soul. And all the people should take part. It is a great loss when they do not. They suffer loss themselves and their fellow-worshippers also, and the ungodly are not impressed as they might be. "Praise ye the Lord" is the injunction laid upon all. Great pains ought to be taken to have all sing. All should take part in the service. One of the great forces in revival times is the singing! It should be solemn, but that does not hinder it from being bright, cheery, impressive. The music should suit the sentiment, and at the same time it should be such as the multitude can sing. What is better than the old familiar tunes found in the "Brown-Robertson" collection? These are at once well-wearing tunes and full of pathos and easily sung. A congregation takes hold of them as a man takes an old friend by the hand. They are favourites with all who know them. We miss much when we part company with them.

The third was as to the listening, in connection with the form of the building. The amphitheatre is a good place to speak in, but a poor place to listen in. Its form admits one into the presence of the whole congregation. It exposes the worshipper too much to the gaze of others. It is full of distraction therefore. We cannot but think that the old churches had great advantages for the listener. Each face was set forward toward the preacher, and the mind was intent on what he had to say. No doubt they were hard on the

preacher, but they gave him a better chance to deal with the soul. The eye had not flaunting before it feathers and flowers and gaudy ribbons and all the beauties of a millinery establishment; nor yet the sharp inquiring eyes of Miss Jones or Mr. Smith, or the affected movements of any who would be seen. The position of the worshipper was favourable to devotion.

Our new churches would need all over their walls such texts as these to solemnize the mind and concentrate the thoughts and affections: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools." "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground." "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." "O Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer, give ear, O God of Jacob."

Devotional hearing is the most likely to be profitable to the soul. Merry-making in the solemn assembly is an abomination to God, and disgusting to all sensible men, and a stumbling-block and a snare to the religiously irresolute. It has no justification.

PRINCIPAL CAIRNS: A MINISTERIAL MINIATURE.

The following appears in the *British Weekly*: To what shall we liken him, and with what may he be compared? Say the stone cut out of the mountain without hands; only think of it as a stone that lives, and rolls by a force in itself, and proper to a mass. Certainly nothing must be thought of that is fitful, jerky, trifling or other than vitally impelled. Not so many of our ecclesiastics have so well represented the old Scottish element that produced Carlyle for its maximum fruit, and has given a hundred other men of living force to the world. Homeliness marks the race; a fine, soft, ruggedness of the rock and the yellow broom, and the wide green hillside. Dr. Cairns sprang of the same race as the immortal Dumfriesshire peasants; in the make and physique of him he is the whin-stone builder, acute, firm, cautious, with a composed energy of devising and doing which never loses breath. Absolutely, there is nothing vague, uncertain, or nervous here, but some of the power with none of the temperament of genius. One supposes that long ago, by the instinct of a strong man, John Cairns understood what he might achieve, and has always quietly known it to be achieved, up to a certain point. More of the analytical, and philosophy might have had another Scottish son; a single or two of the restlessness so pungent in the Carlyle blood, and literature might have despoiled the Church. But the solid, strong-bedded nature belonged to Calvinistic evangelicalism by birth and training, and was infused with the Calvinist passion for synthesis. Dr. Cairns is one of those who must reconcile, and must do it in the deeps, where thought calls to thought. The Scottish intellect demands large groundwork and immense vistas. Nothing parochial, nothing feudal pleases it. Detached from the schools, as in Carlyle, it makes *theologia viatoris* for itself, and wanders on through the immensities. But this is not Dr. Cairns. He belongs to the Church, to the Evangelical Alliance, to any and every Synod of the reformed faith. Nevertheless, one of his chief marks is a refusal to be hedged in by the limits of school and creed. He demands the grand and sublime of an omnipresent, omniscient God-head. His personal bearing, his rhythmic mode of utterance, his choice of subjects for thought are indications of the mind and temper. As a preacher, he allows, at first, the hearer to be somewhat indifferent. The man of quality is quite evident; robust thinker, careful student, fellow of Christendom, not of a parish; but it is possible for an ordinary ear to catch no particular hint from the earlier sentences of a discourse. He seems to take man on the old familiar ground, to be stating, with full ability, the usual case. But there is a slow, strong beating up from the levels, a mounting movement of speech and thought which masters. He is holding fast to the risen and redeeming Christ. Upon that centre of all things he advances with gathering energy and singular abrupt swelling cadences of speech. In the God-man he finds synthesis for reason, object for action. The horizon is illimitable for clear, coherent life. With a flail sweep of the arm the voice also sweeps. The wonderfulness of Christianity absorbs preacher and hearers, and lights up all the shadows of time and space.

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