

Pastor and People.

TAKE AWAY THE STONE.

The stricken sisters and the Master Lord
Had gathered in that solemn burial place,
And other friends had come to hear the word,
To hear the wondrous word of saving grace.

"Take ye away the stone," and they obeyed,
But O! methinks with awe and many a doubt,
Can he, who in the grave so long hath lain,
From its dark, gloomy cavern, e'er come out?

"Take ye away the stone," ye faithless ones!
"And Jesus wept," ere while the sisters wept,—
"Lazarus come forth!" the low, soft, God-like tones
"Awake the sleeper," tho' in death he slept.

"Lazarus come forth!" the words had scarce been said,
Ere Lazarus, with his grave clothes wrapp'd about,
And the white napkins all about his head,
Stood there among them—could they longer doubt?

"Take ye away the stone" from off the heart,
The stone that crusheth out the hopes of life!
Look up to Jesus, He will power impart
And give you strength to war, amid the strife

Look up to Jesus, "take away the stone,"
And tho' your dearest ones sleep in the tomb,
He'll call them back again, with love's sweet tone,
And, with His smiling, brighten up the gloom.

—*Mrs. A. A. Hunt.*

FIGHTING THE MINISTER.

"Don't you think things are rather quiet at our Church?"

"I hadn't thought of it," was the good-natured reply of the young business man, arranging himself in the car seat beside one of the "older brethren."

It was Saturday night, and one of the last trains out of the great city, filled with tired business men, was just departing from the station. These two men, neighbours and members of the same Church, it appeared, sat just in front of me. I could not avoid hearing what they said.

"I think we are dull," said the first speaker. He was a little wiry grey bunch of nerves, restless as a weathercock. "We need stirring up. Why, we have not had a genuine interest in our Church for three years!"

"Are we now at peace?" answered the young man, folding up the evening paper. "Are we not out of debt? Have we not a fine property, a number of useful benevolent enterprises? Do you not look forward to the morrow with a sunny anticipation of the bright walk with your family to the beautiful temple, to the greetings of quiet and well bred people in the thronged vestibule, and the sense of fraternal interest in each other's welfare? Do you not enjoy the music? And to sit down, restfully, in one's pew, with the beloved household at one's side, in the house of God; to listen to the wholesome words of our pastor—all this is to me very, very sweet, as I anticipate it now."

"Yes?" was the sinister response. "But it's very quiet round there."

"Quiet, my dear sir. You keep harping on that," exclaimed the young man with a slight touch of impatience. "You would not have a racket in a Church, would you? A Church is different from a circus. What else would you have in a Church but gentle, loving peace and the dignity of worship?"

"Well, young man, you are not so old a member as I. I like to see a Church active and interested. Now, the trouble with us is we have no debts, no burdens; have lots of nice people who enjoy worshipping together, and go sliding along to heaven on flowery beds of ease. I propose to break this lethargy. I do."

"How, if I may ask?" questioned the young man.

"Well, let's stir up the pastor."

"How stir him up?" His kind hands and heart are pretty busy now, I take it."

"No," he needs stirring up. He is getting too comfortable, needs shaking. A good way to employ a lethargic Church, in my experience, is to begin to fight the minister. You will observe that those Churches which make the most noise in the world, every now and then have a savage fight with the pastor. We need one. We do not do very much fighting with sin and Satan, nowadays. For my part, I can't, I'm too busy. Besides, it's very hard work to fight sin and Satan; and it's dangerous, too. But it's very safe fighting a poor minister; he can't hit back very hard if he tries. Then, too, you can't fight Satan secretly; you have to come right out and face the devil; for, being a spirit, he knows just who you are, and where you are, and what you are doing. But a simple-hearted pastor, like that young fellow we have now for instance, would be as blind as a bat in a fight. You could work all in the dark, poke his ribs and pit-fall his feet; and then stand off at a safe distance and see him squirm. Oh, it's fun! I tell you," and the old man rubbed his hands in the thought; "for real sport hunting and fishing are nowhere in comparison with stirring up trouble with a minister and seeing him squirm."

"You have had some experience, I judge," said the young merchant, calmly, yet white with indignation.

"Yes, I've seen, and helped to make, trouble with the pastor in every Church I ever belonged to. You see, it is so

easy—much easier than attacking the liquor traffic, or public immorality, or any of the crying evils of the day. Let the pastor do all that, and while he is at it, begin to assail him in the rear. Censure him on the way he does it. Say you could preach better than that yourself. Say you think he is a lover of his own ease. Say that he preaches false doctrine. Oh, there are ten thousand ways! for a pastor lives in a glass house. You can't throw a stone amiss at a minister, any more than at a woman. Even a whisper is enough. That's why I like it—because it is so easy. I could never go to war, nor fight a duel, because I might get hit in return. I don't like that kind of fighting. Ministers are my game. For a real jolly show, I'd prefer a Church fight with the pastor, to the opera which I never attend."

"You certainly are not serious in what you are saying?" exclaimed the young merchant, clapping his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Indeed I am, though," was the reply. "I hold the preacher responsible for everything that goes wrong in the Church. He is paid for it, and paid well—that is, paid as well as most book keepers and salesmen. If the pews do not rent I blame the preacher. If the pews rent too high, and the poor are crowded out, blame the preacher. If the meetings are dull, find fault with him. If the brethren misbehave, lay it all on the preacher's shoulders. Why, we had one preacher who actually found fault with me because I was not exactly up to the whole law when I went through bankruptcy! I told that man plainly that he was to preach the Gospel, and not business affairs. I don't pay pew-rent to hear about business on Sunday. It's wicked to bring business into the house of the Lord. I hear enough about business all the week. On Sunday I want to hear about heaven. What do I want to hear about giving three feet to the yard and sixteen ounces to the pound? Nothing. Tell me about heaven. It is that which I want. I don't pretend to keep the whole law, I rely strongly on the Gospel."

"So I struck that fellow. I charged that he was not spiritual. You see that was easy. It took like wild-fire. There were lots of our people who did not hanker much after such preaching as touched every-day life. They wanted to hear of heaven. So they stood by me, and we made it hot for him, with his yards and ounces. He left. That was before you came. It was great sport to see him move. Had a little house on Franklin Street, right alongside of my son's, and took great pride in it, fixing it up better than my boy could afford. Of course he had to sell at a sacrifice. His children were at school; had to leave. His wife hated to budge. Ah, ha! but they had it fixed so nice, as if to stay forever. But that is not for ministers; they have here no continuing city, but should be seeking one above. I reminded him of it. It costs ministers nothing to move. Home is nothing to them. Their wives are the possession of the Church. Their children belong to everybody to train. Bundle them about, and see them trot. That's my doctrine. I can't move, and so hear different ministers. I have made my home here in Roxbury. Why, the peach trees in my garden cost me a thousand dollars. I'm a fixture. So let the preachers move, and that gives us variety. Home's home to me."

The young man arose at the next static saying:—

"My dear father in Israel, my dear Aaron, dear Hur, blessed peacemaker, most sweet angel of comfort, thou precious and most lovely Judas, I must bid you farewell. I am not worthy to ride into Roxbury town by your side. For I love the Prince of Peace and all His sincere preachers. I will be in the next car when this one goes off the track. Adieu, happy old man."—*N. Y. Weekly.*

FOG.

Just before retiring on a calm September night, you walk out into your yard and look up. You are not sorry for the act. The air is balmy and as clear as crystal. The stars hang like countless diamonds in the heavens, and the moon, now in her first quarter, rides as a queen in her silver boat down the great sea of the western sky. The wonderful beauty, the serenity, the soft splendour, the tender glories of the night—who shall ever describe it all as it impresses you? The next morning you awaken to find your room looking ugly and bare. There is a mean, chilly sensation in your body. You look out. Ah yes, that explains it all. There is a thick fog.

But a fog is not only dismal and to the last degree unromantic. It is unwholesome. It shuts out the cheering revivifying rays of the sun so that we are chilled into utter discomfort, and we long for the hour when the sun shall conquer and the mists shall roll away. Its unwholesomeness is more clearly manifested in the fact that it is the favourite medium for conveying the germs of malaria and deadly fevers. Thus it is "a chill and pestilential air," and he who would take care of his health must avoid fogs, or if he has to go through one, be well fortified with wholesome, sustaining food.

It is also a familiar fact that fogs are extremely perilous. Every year thousands of lives are lost because of fog. Great steamers, laden with rich cargoes and hundreds of precious lives, meet upon the ocean and, before they can change their bearings, collide and sink into a watery grave. That these destructive collisions should be so frequent, and that, too, in spite of many and careful precautions, is due to the peculiar impenetrability of fog to light. An electric light which can

be seen for ten miles the darkest kind of night, cannot be seen one-twentieth of that distance through a heavy fog, yet for objects near at hand the fog seems to hinder vision much less than ordinary darkness. So that fog is not only impenetrable to light, but at short distances is very deceptive. Or, perhaps, we might say that in the intense darkness of a cloudy night a little light will go a long way, while in the darkness of a foggy day a very bright light shines for only a short distance.

Now there is in the moral world a certain thing which resembles fog. The only difference is that it is more continuous and far more pervasive. Physical fog clings to the coast of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and is not generally prevalent except under certain well marked conditions of temperature, but this other fog in the moral world seems at present to pervade all grades of society, and in every part of the globe makes its baleful influence felt. The fog I speak of is doubt. Heart and mind are of different temperatures, the first stone cold and the other warm. Result? The pestilential vapours, the deceitful mists of doubt. When the heart is warm and the mind is cold, the result is superstition, extravagance, fanaticism, anything that can express zeal without knowledge. But when the mind is warm, and the heart is cold, then look out for the cheerless, comfortless fog, doubt; or if you prefer a large sounding name for a poor possession—Agnosticism.

And this fog is so full of peril! It chills and weakens all spiritual energies. It paralyzes all effective effort. It hinders all religious progress. It carries the soul into unknown waters, and in many an instance wrecks it upon unforeseen shoals of despair. And, observe, the great reason for its perilous nature lies in just this fact. It does not seem dark, yet it is peculiarly impenetrable to light. Ignorance is just plain darkness and can, therefore, be penetrated and changed by the light of knowledge; but confirmed doubt is a cold, thick fog, and you may turn on all the light you please, and it makes but little difference.

We have known some men who were proud of their doubts, and were rather given to parading them whenever an opportunity occurred. We have never been able to look on such folly without distress and wonder; distress that a man should be in such a hopeless, impenetrable fog, and wonder that he did not appreciate the perils of his position. For surely no man should boast when there is fog on land and sea, and the soul is being slowly, but surely, chilled to death. —*W. W. W., in Southern Churchman.*

LIGHT IN THE DAYS OF DARKNESS

"I am not seeking to cast any shadow upon glad lives when I say that every young woman should learn in the sunny days where to find light in the days of darkness. If you are about to enter Mammoth Cave, while you are still out in the sunshine the guide puts a lamp into your hand. It seems useless then, as you walk down the green bank, and its beams appear pale and dim. But when you enter the cavern, you understand the value of your little lamp, and its light is very beautiful as it shines in the dense gloom."

"The lamp of Christ's comfort may seem useless to you in the happy days of youth, when you have no sorrow, but some time it will grow dark about you, with no earthly light to shine upon your path, and then this heavenly lamp will be most welcome. Keep the picture before you, therefore—at Christ's feet in sorrow. It will teach you where to go when the night darkens about your own soul."—*From Mary of Bethany, by the Rev. J. R. Miller, D.D.*

THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT.

In the gentle story of the poor woman who timidly made her way through the crowd to the gracious Healer, and by her faith, imperfect though it was and unexpressed by any words, obtained her cure, we are wont to direct attention mainly to the circumstances of her modest and simple touching. But let us note also the Lord's answering chord of sympathy, as given by Luke, "Somebody hath touched me." Full of encouragement this to every shrinking, lowly bowed soul who it may be, weak in faith and but as "smoking flax" or a "bruised reed" yet presses to the throne of the Sympathizer. Is the approach feeble? Is the cry faint, the speech broken? Is the look timid? Is it only a groaning that cannot be uttered? But the putting forth reaches Him; the cry, inarticulate it may be, enters into His ear. The hand, not strong to grasp the promise, not violent to take by force the kingdom, can only touch the garment; but that touch is felt in the breast of the great High Priest. "Some one hath touched Me." Oh, the quick responsiveness! No miscarrying in the appeal of a faith which may be no more than even "an upward glancing of the eye." The Lord now in the glories of His mediatorial reign yet feels every timid outermost reaching forth of hands, and makes the gracious recognition, "Somebody hath touched Me." From the beds of sickness, from the depths of hidden sorrow, from the privacy of penitent grief, shrinking timid souls, the surging crowds around seeing them not and feeling not their griefs, are continually going out to Him who seeth in secret. And "It can ne'er be said that praying breath was ever spent in vain," for to every such putting forth, "unuttered or expressed," the ready acknowledgment is made "Somebody hath touched Me."—*Mid-Continent.*