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Building God's House.

Haggai is the prophet of commonplace, unwellcome duty. Fifteen years had passed since that first outburst of national enthusiasm had led a great company of the exiles back to Jerusalem. On the familiar soil of Palestine they had confronted the hard conditions of pioneers. They had to construct all the surroundings and instruments of civil and religious life from the ground up. The help of Persian Government, upon which they had so confidently reckoned, had largely failed them. The opposition of the Samaritans had placed a serious obstacle in the way of work upon the Temple. That enterprise, which had been the inspiration of the Return, had been suffered to lay. The private houses of the more prosperous people far surpassed "the House of the Lord." Haggai could justly say: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?"

The truth seems to have been that the difficulty of getting a firm foothold on the soil, a succession of bad harvests, and failure of the Persian subsidy had led the people to believe that they were doing pretty well if they succeeded in providing for their own wants, and that "the House of the Lord" must wait for better times.

Now Haggai's message was addressed to the actual state of affairs. In substance he anticipated Secretary Chase's famous expression, "The way to resumption is to resume." He told the people that the way to build the House of the Lord was to go to work and do it. "Go up into the mountain and bring wood and build the house." They had not begun to realize their own capacities for successful work. A little industry, enterprise, and self-denial would achieve wonders.

We can hardly imagine a more wholesome lesson for many of our churches to day than the blunt words of Haggai. The institutions of religion in many a community are declining from the causes which the prophet discerned. The people have about all they think they can do to support themselves; times have been bad; the State Convention has not kept up its appropriation; the church building is out of repair; no pastor has been settled because it is cheaper to have "supplies;" the general condition of religious interests is frayed and shabby. Haggai tells us what should be done. Without waiting for outside help, or better harvests, let each one give of the time and strength and money he has for building the House of the Lord. "Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house."

Haggai saw clearly that this interest and self-sacrifice for the material side of worship would react upon the distinctively spiritual life of the people. The style of Haggai is crabbed and uncouth, but from her lips, like water gushing from a flinty rock, there sprang exultant expression of the spiritual glory of Israel. You can do nothing toward arousing an interest in sustaining religious institutions until you have a revival of religion, some people are always saying. That is only a half truth. You may go far towards securing a revival of religion by the performance of some of the most commonplace duties connected with the material side of religion. The determination of a church to keep everything connected with the meeting-house in a manner befitting the honor of God is often the beginning of a renewed spiritual interest, and time and again the payment of a church debt has been the commencement of a revival. The love and sacrifice elicited in the performance of a material service extends itself over all the activities of the soul. — *Watchman.*

The reason some preachers did not call a council in Jerusalem to pronounce upon the undue excitement of Paul's preaching was because — they were not there.

A Hero.

A few years ago, a fire broke out in a charming little Swiss village. In a few hours the quaint frame houses were destroyed.

One poor man was in greater trouble than his neighbors even. His home and cows were gone, and so also was his son, a bright boy of six or seven years. He wept and refused to hear any words of comfort. He spent the night wandering sorrowfully among the ruins.

Just as daybreak came, however, he heard a well-known sound, and, looking up he saw his favorite cow leading the herd, and coming directly after them was his bright-eyed little boy.

"Oh, my son, my son!" he cried, "ate you really alive?"

"Why, yes, father. When I saw the fire I ran to get our cows away to the pasture lands."

"You are a hero, my boy!" the father exclaimed.

But the boy said: "Oh, no! A hero is one who does some wonderful deed. I led the cows away because they were in danger, and I knew it was the right thing to do."

"Ah," cried the father, "he who does the right thing at the right time is a hero."

Nobody Made It.

Beecher and Ingersoll were always great friends. Mr. Beecher had a celestial globe in his study, a present from some manufacturer. On it was an excellent representation of the constellations and stars which compose them. Ingersoll was delighted with the globe. He examined it closely and turned it round and round. "It's just what I wanted," he said; "who made it?" "Who made it?" repeated Beecher. "who made this globe? Oh, nobody; colonel, it just happened!"

More Than Ever.

There is a good thought in the following incident, told in the "Review of Missions." It is not enough for the Christian to go on year after year on the same level. He must rise to greater heights; he must grow in grace and love.

One of the shining lights among Japanese Christians is a major in the garrison stationed at Kumamoto. When he was transferred from his former station to Kumamoto, and reported for duty to the commandant of the garrison, the latter asked him:

"Well, Major, still a Christian?"

"No," was the prompt reply. "I'm not still a Christian; I'm more a Christian than I've ever been before."

"Then Lift."

Two men were at work on a sewer together. One of them, who was a Christian, spoke to the other about his soul. Just then it became necessary to lift a pipe, and the man who had been speaking of Christianity left his companion to do the lifting alone. The second man stopped a moment. "You say that you are a Christian?" he asked. "Yes." "Then lift!" was the prompt retort.

A Happy Christian.

A young mechanic who had strayed into a religious meeting and there gave his heart to Christ, went home and told his wife that he had become a Christian. He immediately set up a family altar and began to ask a blessing on his food at table. "One day," so his wife reported, "he lifted up his face from the table over which he had bowed to give thanks for his daily bread, and, with tears running down his face said, 'Wife, it has only been a week since I began to live. It is a blessed thing to alive with God.'"

The First Gospel Church.

A brother sends us the following quaint lines composed many years since, and quite familiar with the older brethren. The author's name is not given.

In witness to the gospel an ordinance we find,

And in the third of Matthew this ordinance enjoined;
Enjoined on all believers, come witness how the Son,
Did come and was baptized by His own servant John.

Not at the river Jordan, but in the flowing stream,
Stood John the Baptist preacher when he baptized the
Lamb;

And Jesus Christ the Saviour, out of the water came,
To show that we must follow and pattern after Him

Some say that John the Baptist was nothing but a Jew,
The Word of God informs us, he was a preacher too;
A preacher to the people the gospel to impress,
Likewise enforce the need of a Saviour's righteousness.

Tradition will tell you that these sentiments are new,
But read the third of Matthew, you'll surely find
them true;

That there were none baptized but such as did believe,
And none but believers will almighty God receive.

Then read the Gospel story, go read it o'er again;
That there were none baptized, but did repentance
bring;

If you believe on Jesus you'd be baptized like Him,
So long as you neglect it, it is to you a sin.

This ordinance of Jesus doth stand so firm and strong,
That none can overthrow it though they've endeavored
long;

And Jesus and His Kingdom shall stand forever sure,
When antichristian power shall fall to rise no more.

Infants were brought to Jesus, were brought for Him to
bless;

His blessing they received and shall forever rest;
Then welcome tender parents to bring your babes along,
But not to be baptized, for Jesus baptized none

John was a gospel preacher when he baptized the Lamb,
And Jesus was a Baptist, and thus the Baptists came;
If you would follow Jesus as Christians ought to do,
You'd come and be baptized, and be a Baptist too.

When one hears a preacher tell a wonderful story of quite ancient origin, which he has often heard told in the pulpit before, and then hears the preacher make himself one of the chief participants in the remarkable incident, it must be confessed that it is difficult, to say the least, to appreciate fully the moral which the preacher draws from it. It is a perilous habit to associate oneself with stock illustrations. It usually does not add to the story, while it may detract from the speaker's credibility.

The idea of classes for men in the Sunday school is gaining ground. Many schools have established them with the most desirable results. One serious problem is to get the right kind of teacher. The pastor is often called upon for this work, but he should hardly undertake it if any other suitable person can be found to perform it. These classes should be rigidly restricted to grown men. It is fatal to their success to have a sprinkling of half-grown boys. One reason why the Sunday schools fail to hold many adult scholars is that they do not make any provision for them. They appear to assume that milk is the proper food for men.

Paul was a sensationalist; he turned the city upside down because it was wrong side up.

There are as many different ways of preaching the gospel as there are men who preach it. Don't imitate, but originate. Some preachers try to preach as did Dr. Howard Crosby, without his brains.