

Pastor and People.

The Rev. W. F. Stevenson, Rathgar.

A recent number of the London (Eng.) Christian Globe contained a capital portrait of Mr. Stevenson, and a well-written sketch of his life, from which we take the following, which will doubtless be interesting to many of our readers:

He is the son of an honest merchant in a country town in Ulster, where his early years were spent. When his school days were ended, he gave promise of a fair scholarship, he was encouraged to pursue his studies, and at the time when youths of his age were going to business, we find him graduating in Glasgow University. When he had finished his curriculum in Scotland, he did not enter immediately upon ministerial work, but determined to devote at least another year to study and preparation. He went to Germany and spent some time at the universities, looked at all he knew under other lights than those with which he had been long familiar, and had opinions and convictions thoroughly tested, strengthened, and enlarged. Upon re-arriving at length, to commence pastoral work, his first step, although one of the wisest that could have been taken, did not mark him out in the judgment of some as actuated by any very high ambition. Having been licensed, he offered himself to become the agent of what is known as the Town Mission, in Belfast. His work was to go among the poor, and the very lowest of this class. In the presence of poverty, and often of what was far worse than poverty, the young student had gifts, scholarship, and attainments fairly put to the test, and he was not the first who has found that they were only valuable, as they helped him to tell yet more plainly the good news of the Kingdom of God. While thus engaged, he received an invitation to fill, for one winter season, the post of the Rev. Dr. Graham, the well-known missionary to the Jews in the Rhenish Provinces, and he was proceeding successfully with his work, when his attention was urgently directed to Rathgar by the Rev. Dr. Hall, who was at that time in Dublin, but has since removed to New York. The hundreds who have pleasant memories of Dr. Hall in this country will remember how, at times, he could seem almost authoritatively to say, "Such is your field for labour, and on no one does it make louder call than upon you. And so, although Rathgar had little to recommend it beyond the hard work that was to be done in it, our friend went thither, and was publicly ordained a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The church at this time was at a very low ebb so far as membership was concerned. There were really not twenty members—seventeen, we think, was the exact number, and they met in a little room, the ceiling of which was so low that a man of ordinary height could almost reach it with his hand, and the width of which was little more than its height. Here the work was begun; but ere long, Rathgar Presbyterian Church—though not so large as the one now known by that name—was erected, and opened for Divine service by the late Dr. Norman Macleod, in 1862. Since that time "the little one has become a strong one." Instead of the seventeen members, and the nondescript little room to which we have above referred, there came the present building, which has once, about three years ago, undergone enlargement to provide accommodation for an increasing congregation. We understand that the good people of Rathgar can hardly yet consider themselves to have done with the builders, because more room must be found for those who are desirous of regularly attending Mr. Stevenson's ministry. When we look, as we have the means of doing, at the amount of money contributed by his congregation during the last sixteen years towards missionary and other operations, we are not surprised to learn that the church at Rathgar holds a high place in the esteem of Presbyterians generally. When it is borne in mind that during the period referred to the church has contributed £28,000, and that its voluntary offerings now amount to £2,000 a year, we can readily understand that the church ranks second to none in generous activity, and in true missionary zeal.

God's Arrows.

There was a deacon of Dr. Wardlaw's church who kept a respectable spirit-shop in Glasgow, Scotland—a wholesale dealer, I think, and a good man. At the prayer-meeting one evening, in order to distinguish him from another of the same name, Dr. Wardlaw said, "Brother Ferguson, the spirit-dealer, will lead our prayers." The good doctor had no intention of shooting an arrow into the heart and conscience of his friend by making such a distinction; but he did it. Praying and spirit-dealing thus conjoined seemed so utterly anomalous as to make the gentleman very uneasy in soul. Shortly after, his youngest son, who was a thoughtful boy, was playing about the shop door, where an empty cask had been rolled out for removal. He went up to the barrel, gave it a kick, and said: "I wonder how many souls you have sent to hell!" His father heard the startling words. They formed another fiery arrow, and the last that was needed to convince him of the evil nature of his business, and to bring him to a right decision regarding it. He speedily abandoned the spirit trade; became an abstainer and a minister; originated a new church a few miles from Glasgow; and has recently retired from a thirty years' successful ministry in one of the Evangelical Union churches of Aberdeen. The boy, who, under God, helped to bring about such a change, at the age of twenty-one was ordained pastor of an Evangelical Union church in Glasgow, where he has laboured for thirty years as one of the most popular and successful ministers in that city.

A LITTLE CHILD was dying, and called her mother to her bedside. She had a cross and unympathetic parent. "Mother," said the child, "is there room for me in heaven? You always said I was in the way here. Will I be in the way there?" And the poor mother wept bitter tears as she said, "Yes there will be room there."

Saying and Doing.

Luke, the Evangelist, was a physician. And doctors get in a habit of plain-speaking. They are used to quibbling complaints, and know how to manage inconsistent impatience with firmness. So people learn to bear more from such sources than from any other.

It seems to have arrested Luke's mind alone that the Great Teacher introduced into his well-known discourse such an ex postulation as this: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" So he records it in his gospel as in the peculiar and forcible demand, for a union of logic and life had impressed it upon his memory.

Sonship in God implies work for God. Every Christian is loyally bound to be about his Father's business, or else surrender his hope. This is the way in which that alternative comes out to view. If he is a Christian, then he is a son; if he is a son, God says to him, "Son, go work;" if he disobeys that order, he forfeits the relationship. "Ho that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Duty, therefore, is commensurate with privilege. Every man is simply put forth on his piety. His Christian character is at stake, if he just talks and does nothing. It is an altogether false ideal of religious life, which centres itself in sweet experiences of tranquil satisfaction in times of activity, and occupies its highest moments in reading its own "title clear."

God sometimes leaves us to search by ourselves, and find out what is our precise work to accomplish. In the parable, the father who owned the vineyard seemed to permit the largest liberty of choice of occupation. He did not bid his son dig the ground, nor trim the vines, nor pluck the clusters. He only said, "Go, work." Surely, the thing for such a son to do would be to start for the field, and take instantly hold somewhere or anywhere.

More real effectiveness as servants of God is lost in merely frittering away important moments, professedly in quest of work, than in any other manner. People are apt to think they have reached a very edifying and conscientious state of mind, when they begin to ask whereabouts is this vineyard of the Lord of which they have in one way or another heard so much. "He that waits to do a great deal at once," said Dr. Johnson, "will never do anything." Only one condition and limit is prescribed: let the work be done in the vineyard, not in simply getting in.

The reward of fidelity is oftentimes found in the work itself. The fruits of the vineyard are free for present refreshment. The possession of the vineyard is eventually given in the inheritance. And over and above these, there is a growth of sinewy strength, a health in the system, a flush of content in the heart, that comes to every toiler as he labors on.

Some Christians may not have happened to meet the Eastern fable of a father, who surprised his children by leaving them nothing in his last will and testament but a garden. But he accompanied the bequest with the injunction that they should dig it well, for a treasure would be certainly found in it. They ploughed up every foot of the hard soil; they broke every rock in pieces; they upturned the deep mould from underneath. But they found no jar of gold, no coffer of coin. Only by-and-by, these things they did discover: the labor gave them appetite, the early rising brought them vigor, the industry famed them through the land, and the sub-soil they put into new service filled their garner with extraordinary yield. In the end, they were rich with their garden, though it concealed no mysterious treasure.

And we may turn the figure at our will. Earthly care is a heavenly discipline. And earthly successes make part of heavenly rewards. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."—Dr. Taylor in Christian Weekly.

We all have Faults.

I have been a good deal up and down in the world, and I never did see either a perfect horse or a perfect man, and I never shall until two Sundays come together. The old saying is, "Lifeless, faultless." Of dead men we should say nothing but good, but as for the living, they are all tarred more or less with the black brush, and half an eye can see it. Every head has a soft place in it, and every heart has its black drop. Every rose has its prickles, and every day its night. Even the sun shows spots, and the skies are darkened with clouds. Nobody is so wise but he has folly enough to stock a stall at Vanity Fair. Where I could not see the fool's cap, I have nevertheless, heard the bells jingle. As there is no sunshine without some shadow, so is all human good mixed up with more or less evil; even poor law-guards have their little failings, and parish beadles are not wholly of heavenly nature. The best wine has its lees. All men's faults are not written on their foreheads, and it's quite as well they are not, hats would need wide brims; yet as sure as eggs are eggs, faults of some sort nestle in every man's bosom. There's no telling when a man's sins may show themselves, for haros pop out of a ditch just when you are not looking for them. A horse that is weak in the legs may not stumble for a mile or two, but it's in him, and the rider had better hold him up well. The tabby-cat is not lapping milk just now, but leave the dairy door open, and we will see if she is not as bad a thief as the kitten. There's fire in the flint cool as it looks; but wait till the steel gets a knock at it, and you will see. Everybody can read that riddle, but it is not everybody that will remember to keep his gunpowder out of the way of the candle.

It is foolish to expect the five following things from the following persons: A present from a poor man—service from a lazy man—success from an enemy—counsel from an envious man—and true love from a pride.

For the Free-lancers.

Work, Christian.

O Christian work, while lasts thy day, See it is waiting fast away. A few short hours, and it is gone; Then shines on earth no more thy sun.

Shake off dull sloth, nor idle wait, The harvest, lo! is very great The fields are white on every hand, And reaping times all haste demand

The Master speaks—He urges on, He says "Go occupy, my son"— The Gospel preach—for laborers pray, For I shall come some other day.

But I can't preach, I hear thee say; If not, O surely thou canst pray; For prayer is the Christian's breath— He prays in life,—he prays in death

And thou canst give if aught thou hast, The widow once her mite did cast into the treasury of God, And to her praise this went abroad.

Work then, and lest thou weary, Consider Him who wrought for thee, What pains, what sorrows he endured, That life for thee might be ensured.

—W. Ross

Preach Your Best Sermon.

Rev. Dr. — had prepared himself very carefully for a Sabbath evening service. The day was stormy, and he expected very few persons would be present, and was tempted to use an old sermon, and save his last and best for a fine day and a full house. But he remembered the advice of the venerable Dr. DeWitt, "Never change your subject; let the weather change, but always adhere to your preparation!" To a very few people he preached. At the close of the services a stranger came forward, exhibiting traces of emotion, thanked him heartily for the sermon, and asked the privilege of walking home with him.

The talk was suggested by the sermon. Reaching his house, the stranger was invited in. He regarded the sermon as personal, believed that his religion should be practical, stated that the Lord had blessed him "in his basket store" beyond his highest expectations, and asked the doctor to aid him, by his advice, in bestowing his riches wisely. The doctor answered that he knew of an orphan society that was needy, but it would require a large sum to give it real relief—at least \$10,000. The stranger said nothing; but, taking some checks from his memorandum book, filled up one for \$10,000 and handed it over. He then asked him to name other charities that were really deserving. As names were given, checks were drawn, in sums of from \$1,000 to \$10,000, until he took his departure, leaving in the hands of the astonished preacher checks to the amount of \$65,000.

Thinking over the matter, the conclusion was reached that either the man was insane and the checks worthless, or that, under the influence of deep feeling and sudden impulse, he had in haste done what he would repent at leisure. He was confirmed in his impressions by the stranger presenting himself early next morning, and supposed he would ask the return of his checks. But no; it was to ask if there was not some other object that, on reflection, the doctor could recommend as deserving a helping hand. He politely answered that he really thought the matter should, for the present, end where it was; that his gifts were already munificent. The stranger answered, "It is the Lord's," and insisted. The doctor then said that the Foreign Missionary Society of their own church was in a strait—necessities great, contributions small, a debt impending, and missionaries about to be recalled. "What amount would give relief?" He hesitated, but answered truly, "Fifty thousand dollars." A check for that amount was filled up. The man was in his right mind. The checks were good, and duly paid. Ever since, Dr. — has concerned himself about his preparations, and is not troubled about the weather; adheres to his preparation, and leaves the rest to God. That man, or a duplicate of him, would be welcome in many a church to-day.—United Presbyterian.

The Power of the Gospel.

In the Trinity College was a Romish student named Thomas Binley. Like Luther, he carried a burdened mind in a body enervated by penances which afforded him no relief. Hearing his friends talking about Erasmus' Testament, he felt a strong desire to possess it. But it was a prohibited book, and when he saw it at first he dare not touch it. It lay before his eyes as yet a hidden power—a fountain sealed, whose living water he needed to quench the thirst of his soul that was consuming his body. Hoping he might find something in it to ease his heavily burdened mind, he mustered courage to purchase it secretly, and then hastening to his room, shut himself in. With a trembling hand he opened it and read, with astonishment, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "What! Paul the chief of sinners, and yet Paul sure of being saved!" He read it again and again, and broke out in ecstasy of joy, "At last I have heard of Jesus! Jesus Christ, yes, Jesus Christ saves!" And falling on his knees, he prayed, "O Thou who art the truth, give me strength that I may teach it and convert the ungodly by means of one who has been ungodly himself." Calling in his college friends, and opening the Testament, he placed his fingers on the words that reached his own soul, and they were a power to reach their souls also.

He that loses his conscience has nothing left that is worth keeping. Therefore, be sure you look at that. And in the next place look at your health; and if you have it praise God, and value it next to a good conscience: for health is the second blessing that we mortals are capable of, a blessing that money cannot buy, therefore value it, and be thankful for it.

Paying the Preacher.

Returning from the city about a week ago, I was compelled to listen in the railway-cars, to a very bitter tirade against the supposed exorbitant salaries of city ministers. It was, however, a mere tirade, without any attempt at reasonable argument, unless a constant iteration of a comparison between the poverty of the apostles and the luxury of modern preachers may be taken as a definite inch of solid ground for reason to stand upon.

Now I have always noticed, that this poverty of the disciples and apostles is the stereotyped statement upon which all the disaffected stand. "Why do not the clergy go back to the simplicity and poverty of the first Christian ministers?"

It seems to me that this inquiry is just as good for the Christian laity as for the Christian clergy. Why do not they also go back to that estimable primitive condition when rich and poor in the household of faith, "had all things in common?" When opulent lay Christians are willing to sell their possessions, and all they have, for the commonwealth of the church, then ministers will also be willing, like St. Paul, to support themselves by the labor of their hands. It would be easy to prove that many now do so, but I am only taking the argument in its most obvious sense.

But if in the exigencies and progress of society, this positive equality of goods is quite impossible, then it is the grace and wisdom of the gospel that it adapt itself to varying social circumstances. The apostles were not expected to mix with and influence a wealthy and refined society. They did not have to prepare themselves for such a position by a long and expensive course of study. They were not called upon to exercise a graceful and generous hospitality; or to take the lead in all charitable objects both in purse, time, and effort; neither were they expected to marry women of such refinement and education as were fit associates and co-laborers with the wealthy and intelligent; capable of bringing up and educating a family in the same social standing.

But just as long as these things are expected of clergymen, and as long as clergymen are human, they must be regardless of incomes. They cannot support flesh and blood on spiritual duties. They cannot repair worn clothing, and pay rent and grocers' bills, by miracles. There has been no special creation of self-supporting wives and children for their relief. The ministerial office in a large and wealthy city is certainly a mission, but it is also a liberal profession; it demands, like other liberal professions, generous recognition, and liberal rewards for prominent merit.

If apostolic poverty was the rule, two things would surely follow. First, ignorance and fanaticism would take possession of our pulpits. We cannot be sure, by any means, when a man is enthusiastic and wants no money for preaching, but that self-inflation, and not evangelism, is the ruling motive.

We should have crude personal prejudices and opinions, in place of the reasonable settled views of learned scholars, and ripe, thoughtful Christians: for the years our ministers spend in college studying the thoughts and systems of great souls passed beyond the skies is our gain; and we could ill afford to exchange it for the personal opinions of an unlettered clergy. In our educated ministry is funded all the excellent knowledge, and the gathered wisdom of nineteen centuries of Christianity; ought we not to be willing to pay the men who dispense it to us?

Then again it is not in human nature to spend its strength for naught. A clergy not paid in money, will pay itself, sooner or later in power. Look at the orders of Catholic priesthood; the more poverty they profess, the more intolerant and spiritually dictatorial they are. To many men, power is a more excellent thing than money; and the barefooted friar, holding the keys of heaven and hell, remitting and retaining sins, blessing and cursing as he sees fit, would not change places with the comfortable preacher who only "ministers to" his flock, and does not rule them.

All see a perfect propriety and obligation in supporting well the great offices relating to social and educational economy. Yet here is an office and a power beyond all others in influence and authority: a power possessed by thousands, and exercised from week to week upon the most numerous, the most orderly, industrious, reflecting, and moral part of the community. For hearing sermons is to millions, what reading is to thousands—their chief source of information on topics not connected with their daily work and daily bread.

Consider, then, the importance of an educated, reasonable, thoughtful ministry—and then consider, that education, thought, reason, are the results of long, careful, and expensive training. Any one can now lift the threads of such a condition and see that simple honesty alone demands adequate remuneration for a carefully prepared ministry.—Mrs. A. E. Barr, in Christian Weekly.

"In my Vineyard"

"Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." A figure of wonderful appositeness and beauty, and one of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures. The royal Psalmist uses it in much the same connection when speaking of Israel. Solomon uses it when counselling as to one's own heart. Here it seems to mean the world at large as a field of labor. God's vineyard is any place where there is religious work to be found and to be done for God.

There are some very exquisite analogies suggested by this figure. Vast amount of labor is one of them. For a vineyard in the East always presumes the most extensive and careful cultivation. In the days when this parable was earliest employed there was a regular profession of vine-dressing. A class of men grew up whose skillful office it was to manage these valuable and delicate enclosures. Weeds and brambles may grow alone. But those whose hopes are set on clusters of grapes must perforce toil for them.

In this is discovered an analogy so common-place as often to be overlooked or forgotten. Good Bishop Lightfoot never said a truer thing than when he uttered the

opening sentence of his wonderful commentary upon the epistles of Simon Peter, "The grace of God in the heart of man is a strange plant in an unkindly soil." It requires diligence to do even a little work in this world; it requires vast and continuous labor to bring our whole fallen race home from its wild rebellion unto God.

Variety in labor is another analogy suggested in this figure. In a thrifty vineyard there is room for all kinds of ingenuity and all amount of strength. In vine countries the world over, employment is furnished specifically for the entire members of a household at once. The old men and the children, young men and maidens, all find their appropriate places. So through the year. There must be steady industry in the tilling of the soil. There must be delicate skill in the training of the tendrils. A calm oversight must be kept. There will have to be almost infinite patience in watching the foxes—those "little foxes, which spoil the vines." There must be swift and joyous expedition in the gathering in of the ripe clusters.

He who seriously asserts he has no aptitude for any sort of work in a vineyard must be a laggard indeed. And he who, in a troubled, busy world like this, is out of employment for Christ has not yet learned his own heart; he surely has not so much as begun to enter into his Master's spirit.

Unwavering faith in labor is also suggested by this figure. Indeed, here is found the oldest and finest analogy of all. For every success in a vineyard, as truly as every success in a church, rests implicitly upon the covenant of God, or it is hopeless from the beginning. Every seed in the ground, like every truth in the human heart, depends for its germination and fruitfulness upon the divine fidelity to an expressed promise. As long ago as the deluge God himself said, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And every husbandman who has dropped a kernel of grain in the warm earth since has solemnly invoked the faithfulness of an unchangeable God. Inspiration itself, after describing this natural process of bringing forth man's food from the soil, turns the figure, "So shall my word be; it shall not return unto me void."

Hence every honest effort to do good casts itself with all hopefulness upon a covenant of grace divine and un failing. It is the faith in it—not the genius in it—which gives it all its final vintage of clusters.—Dr. Taylor in Christian Weekly.

Random Readings.

THOSE who have life are conscious of the ebbs and flows of life.

Not a moment, if you and I watch moments, but we come short of God's glory.

WHAT assurance can I have that Jesus died for me if I am not living truly unto him?—Dr. Cuyler.

An envious man repines as much at the manner in which his neighbors live, as if he maintained them.

There is this difference between hatred and pity; pity is a thing often avowed, but seldom felt; hatred is a thing often felt, but seldom avowed.

The mind of childhood is the tenderest, holiest thing of earth. Let parents stand as watchers at the temple, lest any unclean thing should enter.

In Providence, as in the Scriptures, we must accept readily whatever is plain; and whatever things are hid from us we must pass them over, and in faith and patience wait for light—if need be, for the light of eternity.

God's plans, like lilacs pure and white, unfold; We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart; Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.

And if, through patient toil, we reach the land, Where weary feet, with sandals loosed, may rest, Where we shall know and clearly understand, Then we shall surely say "God knows best."

It was by "house to house" visitation that the apostles of Christ succeeded in gaining their first victories, and if we have the Spirit of Christ with us, we shall not be satisfied with running our Sabbath-schools or setting up our pulpits, but we shall seek out the poor ones in their homes and speak to their hearts of the blessed Saviour we have found.

ONE has said, with some propriety, "God can use any sort of man—only let the man give himself as he is to God. This is what Elijah did; utterly surrendered his nature to God." No matter what the peculiarity of temperament, that peculiarity, if sanctified by grace, may be mightily and affectively employed in the divine service. The point is, and it is the essential point, that there be an utter surrender to God. Only let the individual lie passive in the hand of God, and he will show forth his glory in employing him in the great harvest field.

If we have any work to do the true policy is to go on and do it. The longer we hesitate, permitting ourselves to grow lethargic and dreary over its unnecessary consideration, the more sure we are to fail. There are dozens of men who fail in the labor given them to do because they dawdle over its beginning and slothfully follow up its details. The Bible rule, which instructs us to do what we have to do "with our might," is one of large application, and if it were followed more universally there would be fewer disappointments among men and fewer disasters to the cause of truth.

CATHOLIC priests are by no means so spiritual that they do not take interest in politics and the results of elections. Some of them, if not all, instruct their people how to vote, and not only instruct, but in some instances, it is said threaten them with ecclesiastical penalties if they do not vote in certain directions. The trouble about it is, that they all desire despotism, and the triumph of principles and measures which are opposed to our higher national intelligence. Nearly all these people are foreigners, enjoying the blessings of a land which offers citizenship to such as wish its beneficence; but coming here, it is with a spirit of hostility to the very doctrines and policy which have made their country desirable and possible.