

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

## WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

What is your life? An inspired writer says: "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." It flies away as a dream, and cannot be found. Our life is wind. It moves swifter than a weaver's shuttle. It is as a tale that is told. It is swifter than a post. Hume says, "While we are reasoning concerning life, life is gone."

Short as life is, we strangely desire each period of it abbreviated. The child longs to be full grown. The youth at school wishes for the day when he will assume the duties of manhood. The man of business lives in hope of the time when he shall retire. It is marvellous how men waste their present moments. I have heard of a fool lighting his cigar with a bank-note of some value. The same man committed greater unwisdom than that—he wasted the precious minutes of a whole summer in doing nothing but iniquity.

Short as life is, it is the seed-time for eternity. Whatsoever a man sows here, he shall be reaping to all eternity. If he sows the wind, he shall reap the whirlwind. If he sows to the flesh, he shall reap corruption. If he sows in righteousness, he shall reap in mercy. If he sows to the Spirit, he shall reap life everlasting. This life is the day of grace, the season of mercy, when enduring riches may be secured. Many have seized the moments as they passed, and become immensely rich in faith, in good works, in bright hopes, and in a blessed inheritance beyond the skies.

Most men's lives are full of toil and care. Many are full of sorrow and disappointment. But, thanks be to God, all men's lives abound in opportunities of gaining and of getting good. Nor ought any to object to the divine arrangement, which fills up a great part of life with duties and responsibilities.

To every man life is the beginning of endless, shoreless, fathomless, inconceivable happiness or misery. To the wicked the end of life is the end of all sinful mirth and pleasure. To the righteous the end of their earthly existence is the end of all doubt and pain. There is no middle course. "The man who lives in vain, lives worse than in vain. He who lives to no purpose, lives to a bad purpose." Time misspent is not lived, but lost.

In former days public executioners carried an hour-glass to the place of death, and set it down before the unhappy criminal, telling him that when the sands were all run, he must close his eyes on earth. Sometimes his spiritual adviser said to him, "Your sands are almost run," and he saw it was so. But the sands that measure our days are hidden from our eyes. They have been running for some time. They are running now. They may all be run in another minute. But we may live some days, or months or years. This is our solemn condition. Yet how few are impressed by it.

Some indeed are wise. They live very much each day as they would if they knew it would be their last. They are waiting and watching. Should they at any time hear the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," they would respond, "Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly." These are wise. They are wise unto salvation. They shall shine as the firmament. They shall be forever with the Lord.

Because these things are so, I am resolved,

1. To esteem myself in fault, and to count that day lost, wherein nothing is done for the glory of God, nothing for the profit of my neighbour, nothing for the good of my own soul.

2. Always to do promptly what I can for increasing my knowledge, piety, and usefulness; and not to defer till the next hour what can be done this moment.

3. As "he lives long, who lives well," I will try to think most of the manner of spending my days, and but little of the length of my days.

4. As the number of my days is with the Lord, I may well mind my own business and let him say when, where, and how my earthly existence shall terminate.

5. I will try to set the Lord always before me, and keep in view the early and solemn close of my earthly life.

## THE OLD SCOTCHMAN'S PRAYER.

I was pleased the other day with a story which an aged Scotch minister told me about an old Scotchman,

who, many years ago, was on his way to a meeting of the people of God, held in a tent, or some such temporary structure.

The old pilgrim was poor and ill clad, and partly deaf, but he trusted in the Lord whom he served, and rejoiced in His kind providence. On his way to the meeting he fell in with another Christian brother, a younger man bound on the same errand, and they travelled on together.

When they had nearly reached the place of meeting, it was proposed that they should turn aside behind the hedge, and have a little praying before they entered the meeting. They did so, and the old man, who had learned in every thing to let his requests be made known unto God, presented his case in language like the following:

"Lord, ye ken weel enough that I'm deaf, and I want a seat on the first bench if Ye can let me have it, so that I can hear Thy Word. And Ye see that my toes are sticking through my shoes, and I don't think it is much to your credit to have your children's toes sticking through their shoes, and therefore I want Ye to get me a pair of new ones. And Ye ken I have nae siller, and I want to stay there during the meeting, and therefore I want you to get me a place to stay."

When the old man had finished his quaint petition, and they had started on, his younger brother gently suggested to him that he thought his prayer was rather free in his forms of expression, and hardly as reverential as seemed proper to him in approaching the Supreme Being. But the old man did not accept the imputation of irreverence.

"He's my Father," said he, "and I'm well acquainted with Him, and He's well acquainted with me, and I take great liberties with Him." So they went on to the meeting together. The old man stood for a while in the rear of the congregation, making an ear trumpet of his hand to catch words, until some one near the pulpit noticed him, and beckoning him forward gave him a good seat upon the front bench. During the prayer the old man knelt down, and after he rose, a lady who had noticed his shoes, said to him, "Are those the best shoes you have?"

"Yes," said he, "but I expect my Father will get me a new pair very soon."

"Come with me after meeting," said the lady, "and I will get you a new pair."

The service closed, and he went with her to her house.

"Shall you stay during the meeting?" said the good woman as they went along.

"I would, but I am a stranger in the place, and have nae siller."

"Well," said she, "you will be perfectly welcome to make your home at our house during the meeting."

The old man thanked the Lord that He had given him all the three things he had asked for, and, while his younger brother's reverence for the Lord was right and proper, it is possible that he might have learned that there is a reverence that reaches higher than the forms and conventionalities of human taste, and which leads the believer to come boldly to the throne of grace to find all needed help in every trying hour.

## ELEGANCE OF HOME.

I never saw a garment too fine for a man or maid; there never was a chair too good for a cobbler or a cooper, or a king to sit in; never a house too fine to shelter the human head. These elements about us—the glorious sky, the imperial sun, are not too good for the human race. Elegance fits man. But we do not value these tools for the housekeeping a little more than they are worth, and sometimes mortgage a house for the mahogany we would bring into it? I had rather eat my dinner off the head of a barrel, or dress after the fashion of John the Baptist in the wilderness; or sit on a block all my life, than consume all myself before I got to a home, and take so much pains with the outside that the inside was as hollow as an empty nut. Beauty is a great thing, but beauty of garment, house and furniture are tawdry ornaments compared with domestic love. All the elegance in the world will not make a home, and I would give more for a spoonful of real hearty love than for whole shiploads of furniture, and all the gorgeousness that all the upholsterers in the world could gather.—Dr. Holmes.

THE Prince of Orange, heir apparent to the throne of Netherlands, is dead.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

## ALCOHOL IN THE TREATMENT OF THE INSANE.

In the report of the Medical Superintendent of the Asylum for the Insane, Toronto, for the year ending 30th September, 1878, a defence of the use of alcohol in the treatment of the inmates is made. The necessity for this originated in a difference of the opinions of Dr. Dickson of the Rockwood Asylum, Kingston, from the other medical men who were requested to give evidence before a Committee of the Ontario Legislature during the Session of that year. It appears that Dr. Dickson prohibited the use of alcohol, substituting opium and chloral hydrate in its stead. These, Dr. Clark, the present Superintendent of the Toronto Asylum, considers worse than alcohol, and questions the consistency of Dr. Dickson in withholding the least injurious of the three, while he freely prescribes the two more potent drugs.

There are several interesting points in this case, one of which is the extent to which medical opinion varies on the subject of alcohol and its effects as a beverage and as a medicine. On page 54 the Superintendent says: "It cannot be denied that alcohol, as a beverage, has done incalculable injury to society. Its ravages are seen on every hand—among all classes of the people. In health no one needs it, and in disease it has to be given with discretion and judgment." This is a clear and concise statement of the opinions of the temperance men in the profession.

We quote again from page 55: "Were a physician to anathematize all such remedial stimulants and sedatives, and not use any of them in his practice, he might not be thought prudent, yet none would deny the consistency in so doing, but to pronounce severe judgment on one of a class and accept the balance equally potent for good or evil as a selection, passes my comprehension. If opium and chloral hydrate are recommended, but alcohol condemned, it cannot be from any radical distinction in their therapeutic effects, for the three produce analogous results. Is alcohol a stimulant in small doses and a sedative in large quantities? so are they. Does alcohol produce no real motive power? neither do they. Is alcohol not a food? the same can be said of them. Does the continuous use of alcohol produce serious organic pathological changes? they do more so." "The brain and spinal cord and all the nervous matter, like all other parts, become subject under the influence of alcohol to organic deterioration," says Dr. Richardson in "The Diseases of Modern Life." "This refers to habitual drunkards, and not to the administration of it as a medicine. The same can be said of the thousands who are habitually using opium and chloral hydrate in this Dominion (*Vide* Custom returns). The quantity of these drugs imported is largely in excess of that required for medicine. There is not a druggist in the Dominion but can tell of numbers of unfortunates who are victims of the vice of opium or chloral eating. One of these will consume more of the drug in a day than any physician in ordinary practice will do among his patients. I can recall to memory a large number of such who have come under my notice. It need scarcely be said to medical men that such excesses are more prencious than alcoholism."

It is with not a little pleasure that we make these somewhat lengthy quotations. They show that the medical profession understand the baneful effects of alcohol when taken to excess; that alcohol, opium and chloral hydrate are alike stimulating in small, and sedative or narcotic in large doses; that alcohol is not food, and produces no power that is valuable to the interest of those taking it; that its continuous use produces "serious organic pathological changes," and, according to Dr. Richardson, "organic deterioration." All of which we most heartily endorse. There is, however, one sentiment expressed in both of the above quotations that requires further consideration, viz.: that these deleterious effects "refer to the habitual drunkard, and not to the administration of it as a medicine." This is the "stumbling block" over which we "all fall into the ditch." We innocently set our house on fire and then deplore the loss of the building.

A misapprehension on the part of the medical profession, which appears to be a legacy from the middle ages, has led the civilized world astray on this most important question. It must be admitted that there