

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

RANDOM APPEALS TO SCRIPTURE.

This is a practice that is becoming too common, not only by Christians but by ministers. The more startling or strange the application of the admonition or the promise the stronger the desire to give it publicity. In determining duty in the individual Christian life great stress is laid upon the casual presentation of passages of Scripture. Their seasonable occurrence to the eye or the mind is commonly supposed to prove that it is immediately from God, and without hesitation the man determines as to the state of his soul or the path of duty. Then great publicity is given to the fact and how the passage operated to the removal of his distress or the solution of his doubt.

Yet, it must be confessed the practice is perilous. All Scripture is no doubt true in itself, but many parts may be erroneous in their application to the present state of the individual. Jonah probably was encouraged when he came to the seaside to find a ship just ready to sail, and perhaps Judas was strengthened in his purpose to betray his Master by the command, "What thou doest do quickly." The angel of the Lord commissioned Gideon to go and deliver Israel as he was threshing wheat. A man engaged in the same work feels an inclination to go forth and preach, but has some doubt as to his sufficiency and success, when lo, these words come to his mind, "Arise, for the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour," and his doubts are scattered like chaff before the wind.

We have heard of a pious woman who had received proposals of marriage from an eligible suitor but had some conflict between inclination and duty because he was not a Christian; but her mind was determined and set at ease by opening the Bible, and casting her eye on the admonition, "Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with the men, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." We have read of a good old man who used to exhort people to live by the Ten Commandments, and not by impulses, and he used to tell how he got free from the delusion himself. When he was a lad he was poor and pious, and thought that all suggestions in Scriptural style came from heaven. Walking one day by a neighbour's hedge, and in his need wishing some of it to burn, instantly the word came, "In all this Job sinned not, and in faith of this he began to make free with his neighbour's wood. Happily the command, "Thou shalt not steal," remedied the application of the text and revealed his error, or, as the ingenuous relator remarks, the Word of God might have led him out of the church into the jail.

But all this is noticing the danger on only one side, though it is by far the most common side. The Word of God has its threatenings and denunciations, and there are persons of melancholy temperament and given to dejection. They are prone to look on the dark side, what wonder, then, when a threatening of Scripture strikes the mind in such a case, if the man, viewing it as a divine intimation, is plunged into distraction or despair.

We cannot love the Word of God too much or consult it too often. But we are to "search the Scriptures," and it is "to dwell in us richly in all wisdom." It is true also that it is the only infallible rule of practice as well as of faith; that it was intended not only to make us "wise unto salvation," but to furnish us thoroughly "unto all good works." But we are not to turn it into a kind of a lottery, or to use it as a spell, or a charm. We are to "understand what we read." We are not to take it separately but connectedly; and if we would be directed by it as to our duty, or satisfied by it as to our state, we are to peruse it with diligence, humility, and prayer; to observe the passages that refer to persons of our character and condition, that describe the temptations to which we are exposed, or the trials under which we labour. Thus, and thus only, will we find it "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path," lending us the most appropriate assistance under all circumstances and subserving "all things that pertain to life and godliness."—*Christian Weekly*

PINCHBECK WARES.

A lady correspondent, says the London "Weekly Review," favours us with the following. "On Sunday morning I went to hear the celebrated 'A. K. H. B.,' who is considered, I suppose, and no doubt considers

himself, one of the ornaments of the Scotch Church. We went accordingly to St. Mary's church, where he was to preach in the morning. I had no doubt I was in the right place until a voluntary was begun, when I thought perhaps we had come to the wrong church. I was further confirmed in this idea when a gentleman came into the pulpit, not certainly in a surplice, but with what I suppose is the doctor's hood over his gown, followed by a young man, in a chasuble or something of that kind, who went into the preacher's desk. I was reassured when I heard a hymn given out; but the whole service was as nearly approaching the English Church service as it was possible to be without using the Prayer Book. The forty-first and forty-second prose Psalms were chanted, the first four verses of the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah were chanted, the young man in the desk read the lessons from the Old Testament and from the New. Dr. Boyd intoned the prayers as much as he could, and preached a sermon of twenty minutes from the text: 2 Thes. iii. 2, 'That we may be delivered from unreasonable men.' If I am not an unreasonable man, I have little doubt but that Dr. Boyd would consider me a very unreasonable woman if I were to say that I prefer English Churchism, pure and simple, to a poor imitation, which must disgust all true Presbyterians who love and admire the purity and simplicity of Presbyterian worship, while it must excite contempt in the minds of the English Church people who see such an apeing after their ritual."

A SERMON FROM A PAIR OF BOOTS.

There lived forty years ago, in Berlin, a shoemaker who had a habit of speaking harshly of all his neighbours who did not feel exactly as he did about religion. The old pastor of the parish in which the shoemaker lived heard of this, and felt that he must give him a lesson.

He did it in this way. He sent for the shoemaker one morning, and when he came he said to him.

"Master, take my measure for a pair of boots."

"With pleasure, your reverence," answered the shoemaker, "please take off your boot."

The clergyman did so, and the shoemaker measured his foot from toe to heel and over the instep, noted all down in his pocket-book, and then prepared to leave the room.

But as he was putting up the measures the pastor said to him

"Master, my son also requires a pair of boots."

"I will make them with pleasure, your reverence. Can I take the young man's measure?"

"It is not necessary," said the pastor; "the lad is fourteen, but you can make my boots and his from the same last."

"Your reverence, that will never do," said the shoemaker, with a smile of surprise.

"I tell you, sir, to make my son's on the same last."

"No your reverence, I cannot do it."

"It must be on the same last."

"But, your reverence, it is not possible, if the boots are to fit," said the shoemaker, thinking to himself that the old pastor's wits were leaving him.

"Ah, then, master shoemaker," said the clergyman, "every pair of boots must be made on their own last, if they are to fit; and yet you think that God is to form all Christians exactly according to your own last, of the same measure and growth in religion as yourself. That will not do, either."

The shoemaker was abashed. Then he said.

"I thank your reverence for this sermon, and I will try to remember it, and to judge my neighbours less harshly in the future."

DR. CHALMERS.

Chalmers was Principal of the University and Professor of Theology and Divinity proper. He was also royal chaplain for Scotland, and subject to the order of the Queen to preach at any time or place that the royal will might determine. He was the Jupiter Tonans of Scotland at that time, and the Magnus Apollo of the evangelical party for over a quarter of a century. He at once moulded and led the best minds of Scotland. The country was ripe for such a movement as the Disruption of 1843, and that condition of public sentiment in the nation and in the Church of John Knox was the direct result of Chalmers' teaching, alike in the rostrum and the pulpit. When he preached he preached like an angel from heaven. When he lectured to his students he always spoke as

a man who was groping his way into the hearts as well as the heads of his hearers. His views had so thoroughly permeated the whole country that the Honourable Fox Maule (afterward Lord Panmure) in the House of Commons, warned the nobles of England against a measure which might result in the disruption of the National Church of Scotland, using these words: "I tell England, and I tell the civilized world, that if this Parliament shall hazard a disruption in our national Kirk, nine-tenths of the intelligence and piety will go out of the Church, simply because it is the movement of Thomas Chalmers;" and Lord Panmure's prediction was verified by the Disruption of 1843.

In the rostrum, as in the pulpit, Chalmers read closely. His manner was rather awkward, his dialect very broad Fishhire, and his voice by no means sweet or well toned, yet not harsh nor disagreeable. His eye was mellow, yet the very symbol of earnestness, purity and sincerity. When he became intensely interested in his topic or theme, his eye was the most expressive and overpowering organ of his whole head. It looked as though his brain was on fire, and his soul his whole soul aglow. As he swung back and forward in the rostrum, and the big thoughts rolled out of his great soul, the one hundred and thirty-four students who sat at his feet, and fifty or sixty amateur students in the gallery, were at times electrified. Old hoary-headed scholars and sages would look down from the gallery, and the embryo divines of Scotland and Ireland would look up—while both would feel literally spellbound by some of his magic sentences. The pens of the students would unconsciously fall on their note books, and after one of Chalmers' avalanches of thought, there would be a moment's pause, a still, breathless silence in the class room, then an audible utterance almost unconscious, but always earnest and unaffected, of approbation.—*Dr. R. Irvine, in Sunday Magazine.*

SPIRIT OF CHINESE CONVERTS.

Many who have some knowledge of missionary statistics have, doubtless, often wondered what sort of Christians the figures for communicants represent. Are Christians won from heathenism earnest, faithful, spiritual Christians, such as are found in the churches at home? At the London Conference on Missions the Rev. W. Fleming Stevenson answered this question, so far as China is concerned, from observations made by himself. He first showed how little Chinamen can gain by becoming Christians. At best, if they become helpers, they can only receive a very small salary, hardly sufficient to keep them alive; while, on the other hand, they lose the companionship of their friends and become outcasts, and have difficulties in their business which they never had before. In a worldly point of view they are losers, rather than gainers, in becoming Christians. But, says Mr. Stevenson, they take all this joyfully, and freely hazard their lives for the Gospel. "They can cut off our heads," remarked some Chinese Christians to Mr. Stevenson; "but they cannot behead Christ." There are many noble women among the converts. One who went to a missionary hospital became a convert while an inmate. When she left, she found her husband's home closed to her. For some years she was shut out; but she did not despair nor give up her religion. Finally she induced her husband to accept the gospel, then her son, and others of her relatives, until eleven in all were converted. In conclusion, Mr. Stevenson says:

"I have found nowhere in Christian lands men and women of a higher type than I met in China—of a finer spiritual experience, of a higher spiritual tone, or of nobler spiritual life. Where missions show such fruit, they are beyond the impeachment of producing shallow and transitory impressions; and I came away with the conviction that there are in the native churches in China not only the elements of stability but of that steadfast and irresistible revolution that will carry over the whole empire to the new faith."

WE see that R. W. Dale of Birmingham has been preaching lately a series of Sunday evening sermons on "Morality." Probably the Carr's Lane people do not need such addresses any more than the members of other congregations. We fancy that it would do no church harm to hear something pretty often of honesty, purity, truthfulness and so on. There is always a pretty strong tendency to divorce religion from life.