

Pastor and People.

CHRISTMAS GUESTS.

The quiet day in winter beauty closes,
And sunset clouds are tinged with crimson dye,
As if the blushes of our faded roses
Came back to tint this sombre Christmas sky.

We sit and watch the twilight darken slowly;
Dies the last gleam upon the lone hillside;
And in the stillness growing deep and holy,
Our Christmas guests come in this eventide.

They enter softly; some with baby faces,
Whose sweet blue eyes have scarcely looked on life,
We bid them welcome to their vacant places;
They won the peace, and never knew the strife

And some with steadfast glances meet us gravely,
Their hands point backward to the paths they trod;
Dear ones, we know how long ye struggled bravely,
And died upon the battlefield of God.

And some are here whose patient souls were given
By our hard words and looks of cold disdain;
Ah, loving hearts, to speak of wrong forgiven,
Ye come to visit our dark world again!

But One there is more kind than any other,
Whose presence fills the silent house with light;
The Prince of Peace, our gracious Elder Brother,
Comes to His birthday feast with us to night.

Thou who wast born and cradled in a manger,
Hath gladdened our poor earth with hope and rest;
O best beloved, come not as a stranger,
But tarry, Lord, our Friend and Christmas Guest.

—Good Words.

GOLDEN GRAIN BIBLE READING.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

WOMEN PREACHERS.

There is a strange prejudice against women preaching. But certainly this does not come from a study of the whole Bible. It rests upon isolated passages, and these, too, interpreted in a somewhat questionable way. In the Word of God we have beautiful illustrative instances of women doing a grand work for Christ in the proclamation of his Gospel, verifying that word of David: "The Lord giveth the Word; the women that publish the tidings are a great host." Ps. lxxviii. 11. Revised Version.

The woman of Samaria. John iv. 28, 29, 39.

Philip, the evangelist's four daughters. Acts xvi. 9.

Priscilla expounded the way to Apollos. Acts xviii. 26; Romans xvi. 3.

Tryphena, Tryphosa and Persis. Romans xvi. 12.

Phebe, a servant of the Church and a succourer of saints. Romans xvi. 1.

Paul refers to women who laboured with him in the Gospel. Phil. iv. 3.

Mary Magdalene witnessed to Christ's resurrection. John xx. 18.

These may be taken as the fruit of the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy quoted by Peter on the Pentecost: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy . . . and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

Some may say: "But they do not mount a pulpit." No; but where they speak, the spot becomes sacred and more glorious than if it were a pulpit of marble, or of olive wood from Jerusalem. It is holy ground.

A PREVALENT OFFENCE.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that two-thirds of all the talk floating about through society regarding persons and families is absolutely without foundation. Over every community one may observe at times this mist of misrepresentation and misunderstanding, sufficiently tangible to blur the outline and harmony of things, but never tangible enough to be traced back to its origin so that responsibility can be fastened. Not long ago, in a Church in another section of the country, it was suddenly reported from mouth to mouth that there was serious dissatisfaction with the minister in charge; a man of the greatest sincerity, integrity and fidelity, respected and beloved. There was instantly great anguish of mind on the part of many worthy people, who resented the injustice, and who detested the sort of spirit which manifests itself in Church divisions. Presently it occurred to a few sceptical spirits to ascertain the dimensions of the dissatisfaction. They went to all the persons whose names were mentioned in connexion with the movement, and from each they received not only a positive disclaimer, but a protestation of absolute ignorance; and both the protestation and the disclaimer were true. The whole dissatisfaction existed in the mind of one well-meaning but exceedingly irresponsible woman, who had excited herself to such a degree and talked with such volubility that she had persuaded herself and almost convinced a congregation that there was a serious disturbance at hand. This woman meant no evil, but she caused a great deal of suffering, and she might have been the occasion of a great piece of injustice. There is no way of punishing such an offence as this, although it is an offence which society ought to be able in some way to bring home to the offender. The

absolute lack of responsibility which a good many well-meaning people show in the matter of talking would be incredible if one were not constantly coming upon illustrations of its extent. Men and women give forth impressions and repeat, without qualification or condemnation, statements regarding others which have absolutely no foundation in fact, and to ascertain the truth or falsity of which not the slightest effort has been made. These people would shrink from the idea of burning down a man's house or taking a ten-dollar bill out of his pocket; but they do not hesitate to smirch his character or destroy his peace of mind, calamities much more difficult to bear than the results of arson or theft. Society stands in great need of sound education regarding personal responsibility for talk which affects the character and standing of others.—*Christian Union*.

CHURCH SOCIETIES.

In regard to the many societies organized to do certain kinds of religious work, the New York *Examiner* utters a word of caution, lest the good work they are doing may be overdone in some directions. It remarks:—

It was recently remarked in a public address that many churches are very busy in organizing societies to supersede themselves. To one who believes that Christ made no mistake when He instituted the Church to evangelize the world, there seems to be much in popular methods to justify this pungent criticism. And yet there is no objection to any number of societies *within the Church*. The practical difficulty is indicated by those three italicized words, namely, the tendency of these societies to get out of the current of Church life, out of the control of the Church, and to regard themselves as something apart and different from, even superior to, the Church. Those specially interested in a given department of work are so inclined to make a "hobby" of it, to regard it as the be-all and end-all of the Church, and to judge harshly all who do not take their view of the relative importance of things. Young Christians—just because they are young, and therefore ardent and inexperienced—are especially liable to commit this error. For this reason they should be wary and watchful, lest in excess of devotion to their own peculiar organization they fail in devotion to larger interests. The sentiment of loyalty to the Church, if not developed in youth, is very likely never to develop.

CULTIVATE A CHEERFUL DISPOSITION.

A cheerful disposition is one of the happiest of earthly blessings. Like mercy, it is not strained, and blessing him that gives, blesses also him that takes, and is mightiest in the mightiest. The morose man, the scold and complainer, the hectoring critic and fault-finder has his misery pictured in his countenance, and his shadow is cast balefully wherever he appears. His opposite is the man of genial spirit, who sees the good side if there be one, who smiles, has a word of kindness, and who turns benevolently towards the world in which, because it is a pleasure for him to do so, he desires to cast a little sunshine and radiate a little Christian warmth. It so happens sometimes that because of the perversions men are addicted to, and no less in religion than in other things, they forget the blessedness of the bright eye and glowing face, and therefore manifest their piety by groan, scowl, and austere rebuke of all about them. Very brightly rose the sun this morning. A radiance full of colour and sparkle adorned the east and spread itself over a portion of the sky, filling the earth with laughter, also, and making it gay with song. David never saw the Palestinian hills clap their hands more joyously than did these American ones, all drilled, and excavated as they are, nor did the corn-laden vales of the sacred orient ever send up a sweeter music than these, so discordant as they sometimes become when intruded upon by modern traffic. On the brow of the west sat a frown, black and reproofing, as if to remind the opposite horizon of its vanity and thoughtlessness amidst the serious and solemn realities of its existence. But the smile went on; it won its way, also, and even in the "evening time it was light," for lo, the clouds had vanished and the lustre of the morning, chastened into a beauty more heavenly than before, was reigning supreme at the going down of the sun. And so it is with the Christian soul which has in it the light of God; so is the life lived under the influence of Him who is the light of the world.—*United Presbyterian*.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

A great deal of unhappiness in home life comes from misunderstanding the people one lives with. Each of us is more or less affected by the personal impression of a conversation, incident or episode. The way it strikes us is very apt to push quite out of sight the way it may strike another. In consequence we misinterpret moods, or attribute to our kindred motives which have never occurred to them. The quiet manner is taken to mean irritation when it is simply weariness, or the impulsive speech is supposed to spring from anger, when it may have its origin in embarrassment or in indiscretion. At all events, life would be smoother in many a home if everybody would endeavour to understand his or her neighbour in the home, and if everybody were taken at the best, and not at the worst, valuation.—*Christian Intelligencer*.

SEVEN WAYS OF GIVING.

1. The Careless Way.—To give something to every cause that is presented, without enquiring into its merits.
2. The Impulsive Way.—To give from impulse, as much and as often as love and pity and sensibility prompt.
2. The Lazy Way.—To make a special effort to earn money for benevolent objects by fairs, festivals, etc.
4. The Self-denying Way.—To save the cost of luxuries and apply them to purposes of religion and charity. This may lead to asceticism and self-complaisance.
5. The Systematic Way.—To lay aside as an offering to God a definite portion of our gains—one-tenth, one-fifth, one-third or one-half. This is adapted to all, whether poor or rich, and gifts would be greatly increased if it were generally practised.
6. The Equal Way.—To give to God and the needy just as much as we spend on ourselves.
7. The Heroic Way.—To limit our expenditure to a certain sum, and give away all the rest of our income. This was John Wesley's way.—*The Silver Trumpet*.

SELF-LIFE OR CHRIST-LIFE.

It is in proportion as we curtail the self-life that we increase the Christ-life. Michael Angelo was wont to say of the chippings that fell thick on the floor of his studio, "While the marble wastes, the image grows"; and so as we chip away ourselves by daily watchfulness and self-denial, the life of Jesus becomes more manifest in our mortal body (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11).

A rose-bud may be grafted into a briar, but the briar must never be allowed to put forth its own shoots beneath it, or they will drain away its strength; so the gardener is ever mercilessly budding them off.

After the same manner must we deal with every assertion of self. "I have been, and am, crucified with Christ. . . Christ liveth in me."—*Rev. F. B. Meyer*.

TOO CHARY OF PRAISE.

We are too chary of praise. I think we must confound praise and flattery. I was much impressed once with seeing how determined God is that people who do right should be praised. So He has taken it upon Himself, and says: "A woman who feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." But, alas, it is often after she has gone from earth, and then we say she was very sweet! Why didn't you tell her so when she was here?

I had a dear friend once who had an only little daughter. She wanted her to be so perfect that she was always pointing out her imperfections, and she did not see that what the child needed was praise. One day when, in her closet, the child was kneeling at her side, she was so drawn out in thankfulness for the blessings of her life, and especially for the sweet child God had given her, that she became entirely unconscious of the little one at her side. As soon as the mother ceased, the child threw her arms about her mother's neck and exclaimed: "Oh, mother, how you did brag about me to God! Now I will be good."

Suppose you make a trial of this on some frozen ones around you. You complain that they are cold; perhaps you don't think how much they have to chill them; but try this way of bringing out the feelings that lie buried, and that love and praise may restore. We sing:—

Touched by a human heart, awakened by kindness,
Cords that were broken will vibrate once more.

But do it as well as sing it.

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