

Pastor and People.

VENI, VIDI, VICI.

BY REV. JOHN DUNBAR.

I came to Jesus as He bade
In faith and hope and fear,
Drawn by the loving words He said,
Come unto Me. Be not afraid,
But be ye of good cheer.

I saw the loving look He had,
The kindly deeds He wrought,
He healed the sick, He raised the dead,
He pardoned sin, made mourners glad,
And bless'd all that Him sought.

I conquered by His sovereign grace,
So far the power of sin,
As caused its condemnation cease,
And thus ensure an endless peace
And purity within.

"I came," "I saw," "I conquered," all
By grace so freely given,
That now being freed from Satan's thrall
And found in Christ, my all in all,
He makes me meet for heaven.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MISSIONS.

Let us never forget that so far as concerns our obligation, neither the sufferings of missionaries nor the presumptions or probabilities of success have anything to do. We stand precisely where these disciples in the text stood when the Spirit said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Not a word as to any conditions. Not a word of promise as to idolatry loosening its hold, temples becoming churches, Cyprus redeemed, Asia Minor redeemed; not so much as the barest hint at any success that was to follow. They were to go forth simply because the Holy Spirit assigned the work. Theirs the responsibility of testifying—His, of making the testimony bear fruit.

Exactly so with us. Neither success nor failure determines duty. We are soldiers. From our great Captain's lips one summons rings ever in our ears—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is not for us to debate, but to obey.

Ah, if in this age of sentiment, of little sense of God, of loosened grip of conscience, and of obligation, the Lord's professed people could only be got face to face with Him, as Moses when the bush flamed with the ineffable presence of Jehovah! or as Isaiah, when the splendours of the eternal throne with its attendant seraphim flashed before him! And if, while they were conscious of the overshadowing of God, and of the allegiance they owe to Him, there could be stamped on their souls in letters of fire that old and almost forgotten word, *obedience*, a revival of missionary zeal would be sure to follow.

I am sure, my brethren, that our greatest need lies here. Genius is well, and eloquence, and learning, and sagacity, and money; but they are not the foremost needs of this great work. When God sent Moses on his mighty errand, and failed to convince him that he would have success, you remember, He said to him at last, "What is that in thine hand?" Moses answered, "A rod." "Cast it on the ground," said the Lord. He did so, and it became a serpent, the instrument of a miracle. It was the commonest bit of a thorn bush—rude, battered, unsightly—just such as the Arabs of the desert use with their flocks to-day. Yet God yoked His omnipotence thereto! And thenceforth, wherever that rod went, God went; wherever it was lifted with reverent and prayerful heart, the majesty of heaven seemed obedient to its behest. Plague after plague came and went, the sea was cleft, the Amalekites were defeated, waters burst forth from the rock—there was nothing that could withstand its power. And when the day of its service was over, it seems to have been laid up by the ark, a rod covered with buds and blossoms—to be a memorial evermore of how God chooses the weak things, and base things, and things that are despised, to confound the things which are mighty, and bring to naught the things which are.

In this profound conviction of our utter nothingness, and in the kindred conviction of the infinite resources of the Holy Spirit as always available, always waiting to be appropriated by the Lord's disciples, must always lie our real inspiration and the secret of our success. Think a moment why.

Christian living is a battle, not a hymn. Here are two mighty kingdoms—the kingdoms of light and of darkness, of good and evil, of Christ and Satan—pitted against each other, and having as their issue the triumph of truth or error; of holiness or sin. What tremendous and dire conflict does this involve! And how manifest that, in the final struggle that impends, the forces of good and evil will be marshalled with the utmost sagacity, and hurled against each other with an energy and a determination never paralleled before.

We stand on the eve of the final battle. Mighty as the antagonisms of the past have been, this is the hour of supreme conflict. Hence the resources of the potentate of evil, all his infernal craft, and malignity, and far-reaching influence, will be taxed to the last degree. For, if he fails now, he fails forever.

The issue is not doubtful. Yonder empty tomb, yonder ascending Lord, hardly less than the word that cannot be broken, give certain pledge of the triumph of the Christ-kingdom. But tremendous warfare foreruns, and conditions that triumph; and in waging this, we need the highest encouragements and helps. Such we have pre-eminently in the leadership and sovereignty of the Spirit. He was in the counsels of

eternity, and with the Father and the Son projected the scheme of redemption. Here is He who, from the beginning, has known and had to do with everything pertaining to this work of saving men, who fathoms all the plans, and machinations, and secret thoughts of the arch-adversary, who possesses in Himself all the measureless resources of the Godhead, and whose most intense desire and purpose are centred in the final exaltation of Jesus Christ as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And let us remember that we are not alone in this great conflict with the powers of darkness. Above us, crowding the very vault of heaven, is a mighty cloud of witnesses. Patriarchs, prophets, kings—the innumerable company saved by a Gospel that they knew only in type and shadow, yet rejoiced in—are there. And there are apostles, evangelists, teachers, whose delight was in witnessing this Gospel, and who counted it a divine privilege to share their Master's reproaches, and lay down their lives in His behalf. There, too, is the gathered host of those missionary toilers, who, in later years, faced dungeons and stakes, and savage hate and cruelties, that they might make known the tidings of salvation, and whose bones whiten to day on the soil of every continent beneath the sky. And there, mingled with all these, is the countless throng of angels whose supreme joy it is to know of the victories of the cross. What a glorious fellowship is this, bending eagerly over the battlements of heaven, full of ardent sympathy with our aims, sending down, as it were, their words of cheer, and with palms in their hands inciting us to deeper zeal, and waving us on to victory! Yes, and above them all, more interested than they all, there flashes the vision of one with feet as burnished brass, with eyes as flaming fire, whose countenance is as the sun shining in its strength, and whose voice is as the sound of many waters. The prints of the nails are still in His outstretched hands; the scars of the thorn-crown are still discernible on His brow. And as I look, His lips part, and there comes to my ears the message: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."—*Edward P. Goodwin, D.D.*

MY REDEEMER.

There is one word full of meaning, from which we collect the truth of sympathy. It is that little word of appropriation, "my" Redeemer. Power is shown by God's attention to the vast, sympathy by his condescension to the small. It is not the thought of heaven's sympathy by which we are impressed when we gaze through the telescope on the mighty world of space, and gain an idea of what it meant by infinite. Majesty and power are there, but the very vastness excludes the thought of sympathy. It is when we look into the world of insignificance which the microscope reveals, and find that God has gorgeously painted the atoms of creation and exquisitely furnished forth all that belongs to minutest life, that we feel that God sympathizes and individualizes.

When we are told that God is the Redeemer of the world, we know that love dwells in the bosom of the most High; but if we want to know that God feels for us individually and separately, we must learn by heart this syllable of endearment, "My Redeemer." Child of God, if you would have your thought of God something beyond a cold feeling of His presence, let faith appropriate Christ. You are as much the object of God's solicitude as if none lived but yourself. He has counted the hairs of your head. In Old Testament language, "He has put your tears into his bottle." He has numbered your sighs and your smiles. He has interpreted the desires for which you have not found a name nor an utterance yourself. If you have not learned to say, "My Redeemer," then just so far as there is anything tender or affectionate in your disposition, you will tread the path of your pilgrimage with a darkened and a lonely heart; and when the day of trouble comes there will be none of that triumphant elasticity which enabled Job to look down, as from a rock, upon the surges which were curling their crests of fury at his feet, but could only reach his bosom with their spent spray.

THE INFLUENCE OF PREACHING.

No lecturer or political orator or speaker upon literary topics, whatever his ability, could continue year after to address the same congregation every week and maintain his reputation. Yet this is what is done with increasing reputation by many preachers, by some of even ordinary ability. The average congregations of the most gifted preachers equal the occasional audiences of the most popular lecturer or orator, and their sermons, when printed as literature, hold their own with the popular history or novel. The fact is that all favourable conditions unite to give the preacher an unrivalled opportunity of addressing and influencing his fellow-men. He speaks from an exalted position. Even when denied his ancient claim to be a prophet, an oracle of God, or a teacher of divine truth, he has the authority of the Church behind him. He speaks to the most easily-moved of all human feelings—the religious emotions. Both the fears and the hopes, often the conscience and the reason, of his hearers are upon his side. He deals with subjects which in all times have been considered sacred, and which his hearers have been taught from infancy to regard as of transcendent importance. . . . The preacher's vision has been extended, and his range of topics enlarged. Once he dealt mainly with the past or with eternity; now he deals more freely with the practical problems of the present life. No doubt the pulpit is still in certain directions open to the charge of narrowness. . . . If it ever seems to be barring the way, it is only that man's vision may have time to make itself clear. The advocates of any reform or heresy have cause, therefore, to be patient with the clergy, and to be confident that they will be found on the side of truth when the truth really becomes plain. Even if

the religion of Jesus Christ should have to be materially modified, if it should eventually give place to a religion of humanity, it will be found that nothing else has contributed so much to make a better faith possible as the religion that has been supplanted. There is an unconscious evolution going on within the Church, as in the world outside, and its preachers are all contributing, in spite of themselves, to the "one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." Heretics or saints, we are all building better than we know. Further than this, preaching has an important influence in educating and refining the people. . . . The clergy have largely created the desire for education, the habits of reading, and the general intelligence so characteristic of New England people. For many years they were the main educator: they filled the professors' chairs in the colleges, their carefully-written sermons commanded attention and moulded public opinion. Their place has largely been taken by specialists in the colleges and by journalists in the press, but it should not be forgotten that the pulpit has been influential in creating the demand to which these public servants minister. . . . The growth of journalism and other great educational forces has narrowed the preacher's sphere, but the one left him is large enough to satisfy his aspirations. To discover the eternal laws of right and wrong and to strive to bring human conduct into accord with the highest standards, to speak to the conscience of man and convince him of his sinfulness, to awaken aspirations after a nobler life, and to make that life alluring, to disclose the temptations that beset man's path at every step, and to infuse into his heart courage and wisdom to resist them, is now the preacher's sphere. It is when confining himself most closely to this work that the pulpit is most influential.—*Providence Journal.*

AVOID DISCUSSING SERMONS.

"Avoid discussing sermons—raising a wind to blow away the seed." These are golden words. Would that all Christians would remember them! How often a harsh criticism has destroyed the effect of a sermon that otherwise would have blessed the hearer! "I thought it was a good sermon," said a young girl, "till I heard them talk about it at home." Who can tell the harm such talking does? How quickly will Satan take advantage of the effect it produces to snatch away the seed! "Avoid discussing sermons." Listen to them, pray over them, but never by a hasty expression of your opinion undo their work on the souls of others.

TEMPERANCE IN ALL THINGS.

A correspondent of the *Woman's Journal*, writing upon the "relation of food to liquor-drinking," offers the following suggestive thoughts:

"Do we realize as we ought that much of the food placed upon our tables tends to the dominion of appetite?"

"Would that temperance advocates were 'temperate in all things.' We 'draw the line' at wine, beer, and distilled liquor; and inside that line, we lay the reins on the neck of appetite, and let it carry us whither it will.

"Suppose I were to say, 'I'm not well to-day.—I was out last night, and we got to drinking brandy; and I suppose I took too much, and I am all down to-day.' Wouldn't you be shocked? But suppose I said, 'I have a fearful headache, I ate cake and ice cream at the social last night, and knew at the same time I'd pay for it.' Or, 'I dined with Mrs. A. yesterday and ate some of her spiced pickles, delicious mince pie; they always make me sick, but I am so fond of them I can't let them alone.'

"Did you ever hear temperance men and women say anything like that?"

"I have,—and without a tinge of shame at the confession.

"True, such indulgence does not so greatly benumb the higher faculties, and deprave the nature as does indulgence in strong drink. Yet while appetite sways,—in all that is true, and pure, and noble, we live far below our possibilities."

HOW TO SAVE BOYS.

Open your blinds by day and light bright fires at night. Illuminate your rooms. Hang pictures upon your walls. Put books and newspapers upon your tables. Have music and entertaining games. Banish demons of dullness and apathy, and bring in mirth and good cheer. Invent occupations for your sons. Stimulate their ambitions in worthy directions. While you make home their delight, fill them with higher purposes than mere pleasure. Whether they should pass boyhood and enter upon manhood with refined tastes and noble ambitions depends on you. With exertion and right means, a mother may have more control over the destiny of her boys than any other influence whatever.—*Appleton's Journal.*

VALUE OF READING.

Reading is an educator; whether it is a good or bad educator depends on what you read. Read good literature. The best books are within the reach of the most meagre purse. Your trouble is perhaps not want of money, but want of time. No! We all have time enough to learn if we have wisdom enough to use the fragments of our time. Henry Ward Beecher used to read between the courses at the dinner-table, and when he got interested in his book, would take it for dessert. Hugh Miller lay prone before the fire studying while his companions were whiling away the time in idle jest and stories. Schliemann, as a boy, standing in queue at the post-office and waiting his turn for letters, utilized the time by studying Greek from a little pocket grammar in his hand. The man who uses his fragments of time has nearly one month more in the year than his neighbour, who is wasteful of the precious commodity.—*Irish Advocate.*