

Pastor and People.

Church Vagrants

People who live along our rural highways on any of those ancient stage-roads which lie between our larger towns, or even on the more retired country roads, are all familiar with the genus "Tramp." During the wintry months these human birds of passage are, for the most part, hibernating in unknown retreats, but when the spring comes, and the weather grows pleasant, they make their appearance in endless flocks, travelling to and fro, and, like the fowls of the air, gathering their food by the wayside. They are an idle, shiftless race, regardless of all social restraints, ignorant of the rights of man and man, never willing to settle down to more than a day of steady work, alike the pity and the terror of respectable housekeepers.

But the "tramps" are devoted to their strange ways, as much so as an gipsy that ever roved. There are some that have spent the better part of a lifetime in these wanderings. Nothing could induce them to resign their reckless freedom from duty, and law, and custom. From the short steps of childhood to the troubling and uncertain tread of old age, they war along life's highway, homeless and careless, until at last they tramp into an unknown grave.

There is in our church-life a class of people who correspond very closely with these chronic vagabonds. Every close observer must have noticed them, particularly in our great cities. Physically and socially, they are not different from ordinary men and women; there is nothing in their dress or external appearance to point them out; they do not belong exclusively to any class, or race, or denomination, but ecclesiastically they are vagrants.

The qualities and habits which mark them as such are easily noted and described. They are first, and most noticeably, destitute of any church home. They are always on the move. Sometimes on one pretext, sometimes on another, often without assigning any reason other than their own sweet will, they must be fitting. The minister does not suit them, or the congregation has not paid enough attention to them, or they have been insulted or injured by some one, or, to tell the truth, they want a change of religious air. And so they tie up their spiritual bundle, and start for a new place. A year is a long time for them to be settled in any one church. They come and go among the congregations, always new people, always restless, and ready for a change.

Such a life can have but one effect. "Three movings," says the proverb, "are as bad as a fire;" and household goods and chatties do not disappear in the regular spring migrations, more rapidly than the spiritual property of these church vagrants melts and vanishes in the course of their wanderings. The sense of worship as a duty, reverence, church feeling, that warm attachment to the people of God which marks a healthy Christian life, all are lost; and finally the only religious goods they carry with them in their changes, dwindle down to a bundle of hymn books and fans, which might easily be done up in a bandkerchief, and slung, tramp-wise, over a walking stick.

You will notice as another characteristic of this class, that they consider themselves free from the ordinary duties of church-life. They do not feel bound to take part in supporting the religious organization. They are a peculiar people, a class apart, willing to receive as much as possible from the church at the cheapest price.

It is said that the true beggar, sunning himself by the roadside, and levying an alms on every passer-by, believes with all his heart that the earth was made for his especial benefit; that the complex machinery of society revolves principally to subserve his convenience; in short, that the world owes him a living, and he holds out his hat to receive it. The church-vagrant has very much the same creed. Often he will pass years in moving from pew to pew, never, by any means, finding one which suits him well enough to rent it. If he goes to a church conducted on what is called the free-pew system, of which he is a warm advocate, you will observe that the situation of his seat has no relation whatever to the figures on his envelope. That celebrated skin-flint who "thanked the Lord that he had enjoyed the blessings of religion for twenty-five years, and it hadn't cost him twenty-five cents," must have been a distinguished practitioner of vagrancy. At the conclusion of such a career as his, he might well have dropped a ten-cent note, carefully folded, so as to look like a half-dollar, into the contribution-box with all the generosity of assured success.

Another characteristic of the ecclesiastical tramp is his dislike for work. He is always too new—too much of a stranger. He feels such a diffidence about intruding himself into the benevolent and religious operations of the church. He finds it much more congenial to sit at home and criticize, and suggest, and find fault. Besides, he does not think he has been treated with sufficient consideration; the minister has not come to see him often enough; he has not been sufficiently pressed for his valuable assistance; and really, after all, it is very doubtful how long he will remain in the church, so it is hardly worth while to begin anything at this late hour. And so he departs, having brought nothing with him, and leaving nothing behind him. Not even a footprint, a teacherless class in Sunday school, or a vacant place in the charitable society remains to tell of his presence.

Year by year this class of people seems to be increasing. The unsettled habits of our city life, the custom which consigns so large a part of our people to a summer of vagrancy and religious relaxation, the desire for sensational preaching, for a spicy gospel, something new and entertaining—perhaps these are some of the causes which foster this mode of church-life. At all events, we must recognize it as a spreading evil. Children are growing up under its influence. Whole families are drifting unconsciously into its ways.

If it were to be checked, it must be by the application of the golden principle. We must train for ourselves, and teach others,

that religion is not a mere matter of the emotions, to make us cry, or smile, or feel so happy. It is a new life, with its duties and ties, which we must respect and cherish. A Christian without a church is as worthless as a man without a home. It is only as he settles down into his proper place, and does his proper work, that he becomes useful. The closer he draws the bonds of church association around him, the better he knows and loves the minister and people among whom he lives, the more home-like the church becomes, just by so much the truer, and nobler, and sweeter will be his Christian life; just by so much the more surely will he find his children and his friends bound to him in the blessings of a common faith.—Philadelphia Presbyterian.

A Just Estimate

It is seldom that the secular press are as discriminating and just in their estimates of the character of eminent clergymen, as was the New York Times of Sunday last in an article relating to the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian church of this city, and its distinguished pastor, Rev. John Hall, D.D. The point of the article to which we have special reference is that in which the causes which lay at the bottom of the success of this great church enterprise and the personal characteristics of Dr. Hall, are stated with equal directness and truthfulness, as follows:

"It is a capital illustration of the devotion which, in spite of our undemonstrative ways, our people have for the religious institutions in which they have been brought up and educated. So far as any personal influence is concerned in this particular case, it ought to be said that the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian church has a pastor whose estimation by his congregation is something more than popularity. Dr. Hall owes his influence to higher gifts and graces than those which a mere rhetorician or 'sensational' preacher may possess. With a commanding presence and great personal dignity, Dr. Hall has a direct and unaffected style of presenting the simple truths of the gospel. He owes his power to a single-hearted purpose to preach Christianity, rather than to any desire to please men. Earnestness, simplicity, and devotion seem to be the chief elements of his success."

Strong Men's Sons.

It is a common subject of remark that men of force and character do not leave their excellencies to those who bear their name. In all probability, the facts which appear to sustain this impression are unintentionally over-estimated. For if such a young man is of only average power, he is rated below it by comparison with his father. Expectation is so high, that mere ordinary excellence disappoints. And great men being conspicuous in their sphere, exceptional attention is concentrated on those who succeed them. On this very account, the notable cases of degeneracy will seem more numerous than they are, because they are so striking; just as it is common to allege that more sons of clergymen turn out badly than of the same number of laymen's sons, though in point of fact, it is far from being the case. But one such scapegrace is widely known, much talked of, and multiplied to the vision and imagination of the unreflecting.

Still making all deduction, it must be owned that in many sad instances weak or vicious men inherit the fortunes and disgrace the name of famous fathers. Of a recent English landlord, of high place and low morals, this story is told. Addressing his son and heir—a known black sheep—he said: "It pains me to think that when I am dead my fortune will go to the greatest scamp in England." "Yes, father," said the dutiful and appreciative son, "when you are dead." It was a neat retort, but it was a horrible revelation. In America, the failures of families to perpetuate their position is regarded as more common than elsewhere, from the great fluctuation, it is called, of affairs, and the want of entail laws and hereditary titles. Whether it is so or not we do not stay to inquire. It is of more practical importance to throw out any hints that may tend to the diminution of an evil which, however we may reduce its magnitude by exact statement of fact, is large enough to call for consideration.

The natural history of a single weakling may suggest some precautions. It would run in some such way as this: The Honorable Henry Brown—his father—no matter what name you fill in—was early thrown on his own resources. He had to save, and deny himself, and economize every dollar. He had hardships, endurance of which rendered him patient; and difficulties, battling with which gave him strength. Every success nerved him for a new struggle. He had no time for trifling, and no means to devote to enervating indulgence. His poverty was his defence. He had no friends to allure him from the hard road he was travelling. It was not worth any siren's while to sing to him. The only consequence he could command was the result of his hard won successes. He had every motive to effort; and that habit of application was formed which multiplied, manifold, his native energy. So he, in the working out of ordinary laws of Divine Providence, achieved success. Superstitions called it "luck." He was credited with "genius." He knew that it was genius for work; it was the power to take pains and hold on that made the difference.

But now, let us study the position of his handsome, well-dressed, elegant eldest son, Mr. Henry Brown. Mr. Henry, since the day he learned to cry for more sugar in his pap, never wanted anything, that could be got for asking. He was cradled in a dainty crib, something between a big white lily, and a small pink cloud hanging near the setting sun. He was wrapped in furs in winter, and took his airings in summer under a parasol. He had books, pictures, toys, pleasures, as he wanted them, for the asking, and often without it. He was "born a gentleman." The deference of the very nurse told him he was rich. He has friends of the kind the rich have. He is worth courting and flattering if not for his own sake, "for the connections." Traditions are obligations. He has time, money, leisure, and those who can help

him to fill it up. His condition is in absolute contrast to his father's at the same time of life. All that went to make his father his miseries—all that his father escaped is in his lot. No wonder if Henry Brown, Junior, be not "his father's son," as men say of a "chip of the old block," but only, as they remark with a shrug, of a weakling, "the son of his father."

Now what should be done? what for these endangered children of fortune? what by them? They should be put, as far as possible, in the place their fathers occupied. Cut off all needless indulgences, luxuries, and hot-house forcing. Give fitting work to the child, the boy, the youth, the man. Insist on its being done. Some scenes of great houses are ruined, in England, by the great schools and universities, but more are saved by being put on a level with "other fellows," and cuffed, and dolled, and tanked "like other fellows." Some one has said that men are taught to be speakers as puppies to swim; "cluck them on!" So in many instances the youngsters of rich families should be taught to work. And yet a mistake may readily occur here. A self-made man may expect that in his sons, which at the corresponding period, was in him—without just reason. Your boy, Mr. Dives, to whom your wealth is not a profound secret, can not be expected to rate a dollar as you did at his age. You must allow for this in the kind of work, the training, and the surroundings of your son, or you may "provoke him to anger." Error here is often egregious and ruinous. And what should they do for themselves? "Plain rules for the sons of great men—to keep them from ruin"—that is what we require.

"Not many to read them," you say; "for there are few great men." We beg pardon. "Great" is a relative term. The grocer of Barton's Corners, the leading lawyer of Sandy Bottoms, the principal doctor of Grand Flats, the foremost preacher of the Enlightened Renovators' Association, the richest merchant in the town of Gooseville, the smartest politician on the "lower edge of the county"—all these are great men in their circles, and to their sons, and the sons of all like them, we give these following directions:

1. Never presume on your father's standing. He will not always be on hand. He will die. You may be where even his pre-eminence is unknown. Fortune fluctuates. Be a man on your own account. Never take liberties with money, manners or morals because your are his son. You may have friends on his account, but you may have enemies also. Great men have sometimes opponents, rivals, or envious detractors. Stand in your own shoes.

2. But do not churlishly refuse favours tendered you on your father's account. This is mistaken policy. It is often silly pride. Take gracefully and gratefully any tribute to him, paid through you, and proceed to prove yourself worthy of the continuance, on your account, of that confidence which was given you generously at first, on his.

3. Make the plane to which his energy and worth lifted him the starting-point from which you shall rise higher, not necessarily in wealth, or position, but in intelligence, culture, capacity to do good, and in general usefulness. You have to your hand the books, means of learning, of travel, of observation, of society, which he won by the toil of half a life-time. Go forward and upward. So you shall suggest to your generation your father's name, not by contrast, but by resemblance.—By Rev. John Hall, D.D., New York.

Freemasonry and Catholics.

The Times says:—The significance of the Prince's reception by the Freemasons last week must be measured, not by what might appear its importance, but by the circumstances which it illustrates and interprets. Lord Ripon's resignation reminded the craft in the most pointed manner that they are treated by the Roman Catholic Church as an irreligious, seditious, and even anti-Christian organization. There have been perhaps some excuses in foreign countries for the extravagant jealousy of anything which seemed like a secret society, but Lord Ripon informed the craft that the same unreasoning and illiberal jealousy was maintained in England. The reception of yesterday was in a great measure a national demonstration against this unjustifiable prejudice. The Prince of Wales, in accepting the office of Grand Master, has proclaimed to all the world that Freemasonry, at least in England, is a perfectly innocuous, loyal and virtuous association, and the craft in welcoming him have similarly proclaimed their possession of the qualities. The society against which the Pope fulminates all the terrors of this world and the next for its supposed hostility to everything loyal and sacred meets in innocuous splendor in a great music hall, welcomes with enthusiasm the heir to the throne, and makes solemn protestation of its loyal, religious, and charitable principles. Does not such an example say more for tolerance than for excommunication.

Tides of Grace.

Tides of grace, as opportunity, are to be taken at the flood. The Pentecost sun went down on a Church born in a day. Not here has the wonder, but in this, rather that we think it wonderful; that we see so few times of rapid ingathering and large God-ward movements of men which can at all compare with it. Some, thank God, have been seen. Would you have more? Then note these two things—that ten days of steadfast, expectant prayer, in which every believing soul took part, preceded Pentecost; and that it was when the Church had first been filled with heavenly assurance, joy, and praise, the testimony of her first preacher won the hearts of thousands. Lessons! These are the lessons:—The Spirit works when we beg him to work; and the ingathering to the church holds over a strict proportion to the life of the church. Christians are the fountain, fed from Christ, out of which dead souls around are to be quickened; but not till they run to him. As we would have the world converted, let us see also the Church overflowing.—J. O. Dyke, D.D.

Christ our All in All.

By the author of the Hymn, "Just as I Am."

I need no other plea
With which to approach my God,
Than His own ever boundless love,
Through Christ on man bestowed,
A Father's love, a Father's care,
And Father and answers to my prayer.

I need no other priest
Than one High Priest above,
His intercession ever has caused
Since first I knew His love,
Though that my faith shall never fail,
Even when passing Death's dark vale.

I need no human aid
In which to pour my prayer,
My great High Priest is ever near,
On Him I cast my care,
To Him, Him only I confess,
Who only can absolve and bless.

I need no prayers to saints,
Heads, robes, martyrs' shrouds,
Hardships, death which the spirit faints,
Yet still, some hardened, puns,
Christ's service which is joy and delight,
Easy His yoke, His burden light.

I need no other book
To guide my steps to heaven,
Than that on which I daily look,
By God's own Spirit given,
And this, when He directs my eyes,
"Thou shalt love me makes us wise."

I need no priestly mass,
No purgatorial fire,
My soul to anneal, my guilt to efface,
When this brief life expires,
Christ died, my eternal life to win,
His blood has cleansed me from all sin.

I need no other dress
In rage no other claim,
Then His imputed righteousness,
In Him complete I am,
Heaven's portals at the word fly wide,
No passport do I need beside.

Two Truths.

"Darling," he said, "I never meant
To hurt you," and his eyes were wet,
"I would not hurt you for the world,
Am I to blame if I forget?"

"Forgive my selfish tears," she cried,
"Forgive," I knew that I was not
Because you meant to hurt me, sweet—
I knew it was that you forgot!"

But all the same, deep in her heart
Ranled this thought, and rankles yet
When love is at its best, one loves
So much that he cannot forget."

Growing Old.

It is the solemn thought connected with middle life, that life's last business is begun in earnest; and it is then, midway between the cradle and the grave, that a man begins to marvel that he let the days of youth go by so half-enjoyed. It is the pensive autumn feeling; it is the sensation of half-sadness that we experience when the longest day of the year is past, and every day that follows is shorter, and the light fainter, and the feebler shadows tell that nature is hastening with gigantic footsteps to her winter grave. So does man look back upon his youth. When the first gray hairs become visible, when the unwelcome truth fastens itself upon the mind, that a man is no longer going up hill, but down, and that the sun is always westering, he looks back on things behind. When we were children, we thought as children. But now there lies before us manhood, with its earnest work, and then old age, and then the grave, and then home. There is a second youth for man, better and holier than his first, if he will look on, and not look back.—C. W. Robertson.

The Bishop of Manchester on Raffles

The Daily News, referring to the remarks of the Bishop of Manchester in the course of a sermon delivered at Weaste on Sunday, says:—With very great respect we venture entirely to concur with the bishop. It is quite true that the promoters of charities, public or private, show a lamentable want of scrupulousness in obtaining money from their fellow creatures. They flatter our vanity by making us stewards of high festivals; they hoodwink us by tricks of popular comedians at the Crystal Palace; they submit us to winning blandishments at fancy fairs and bazaars; and all because they want our sovereigns and half crowns. There is a great deal of shocking shamelessness about the fashion in which honest people are thus coaxed out of their money. When a charming young lady presses an old gentleman to buy a photograph at eightpence, and then remarks, with the most winning smile, that she really cannot give him change for a sovereign which the foolish old person has handed to her, what is to be done? Robbery is not robbery when it is committed by a duke's daughter. Thieving is not thieving when it is done in the service of the Church. It is with great pleasure, therefore, that we hear the Bishop of Manchester declare that we ought not to be cheated and swindled in this manner. The promoters of charities are warned that they should use honest means—persuasion and argument, for example. We shall be pleased to read their circulars and listen to their representations; but we have the authority of a bishop for declining to be seduced into any charitable sweepstakes, raffle, or game at cards. If the dignitaries of the Church begin to look askance at subsidies coming from such a source, what are these sensitive people to do? They can only keep a stricter guard over their conduct, and positively refuse to have nothing to do with that performance of shaking up bits of paper in a hat which some young gentleman is always ready to declare the most innocent thing in the world. On the other hand, as regards the promoters of local charities who resort to all sorts of raffles, bazaars, sweepstakes, and similar means of raising money, we fear that they will put forward a plea of necessity, and that not even the Bishop of Manchester's caution will cause them to cease from inducing their fellow-creatures to join them in these nefarious devices.

Our trouble is, that we write our mercies on the sand, and engrave our afflictions upon a rock.

Random Readings.

BETTER is the poor that walks, in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

GREAT as the wickedness of the world appears, it is like an iceberg, but partly seen above the surface; for evil-doers are inclined to hide their sins.

I would not give one moment of heaven for all the joy and riches of the world, even if it lasted for thousands and thousands of years.—Luther.

THERE is many a soul trudging along life's pathway with weary, uncertain steps, sad and downhearted, who would, if there was a kind hand reached out to help them, walk erect and step lightly, and avoid zig while passing over the rough places.

SINCE the knowledge imparted by the Spirit, respecting what is in God, is as eternal and unchanging as the Spirit of God himself, the conviction thus obtained that "God is love" becomes also the deepest and most reliable truth of our existence.

HAVE a special care to sanctify the Lord's Day. Make it the market for thy soul; let the whole day be spent in prayer or meditation; lay aside the affairs of the other parts of the week; let the sermon thou hast heard be converted into prayer.—Bunyan.

A SHEEP may slip into a slough as well as a swine. The difference is that the sheep dreads a fall, and speedily rises from it; while it is a habit with the swine to be unclean, and to love the same condition the other abhors.

IN the spirit of that significant Oriental usage which drops its sandals at the palace door, the devout worshipper will divest himself of secular anxieties and worldly projects, when the place where he stands is converted into holy ground by the words, "Let us worship God."

THE greatest power consists in being able to overcome ourselves, and the kingdom of Satan. God can put to shame all the devices of the craftiest, and all the might of the greatest in the world. Why will thou fear? Look to God! He can and will give the enough for all things.—Starke.

FAITH stretches itself over humanity as the prophet stretched himself above the child—eye to eye, mouth to mouth, heart to heart; and to work a kindred miracle, to bring back life to the dead, by restoring the one to the one—the whole nature of man to the whole nature of God.—Dora Greenwood.

THERE is nothing on earth so beautiful as the household in which Christian love for ever smiles, and religion walks, a counsellor and a friend. No storms can make it tremble, for it has a heavenly anchor. The home circle surrounded by such influences, has an antepast of the joys of a heavenly home.

PEACE is better than joy. Joy is a very uneasy guest, and is always on tiptoe to depart. It tires and wears us out, and yet keeps us ever fearing that the next moment it will be gone. Peace is not so; it stays more contentedly, and it never exhausts our strength, nor gives us any anxious, foreboding thought. Therefore, let us have peace.

I HAVE been young, and now I am old, and I bear my testimony that I have never found thorough, prevailing, enduring morality with any but such as fear I God—not in the modern sense, but in the old, child-like way. And only with such, too, have I found a rejoicing in life—a hearty, victorious cheerfulness of so distinguished a kind that no other is to be compared with it.—Jacobi.

OUR piety should never fall in kind words, in cheerful civilities, in wholesome encouragements; we must cherish all the sweet fidelities of friendship, the gentle tones of affection. Goodness and truth are of more weight than brilliant talents, and good temper goes farther than a great gift. We cannot expect people to believe either in our principles or our sincerity, when they see them failing to amend our faults and strengthen our virtues.

CYPRIAN, on his way to martyrdom, was told by the emperor that he would give him time to consider if he had not better cast a grain of incense into the fire in honour of the idol gods, than die so ignominiously. Cyprian replied, "There needs no deliberation in the case." John Huss, at the stake, was offered a pardon if he would recant. His reply was, "I am here, ready to suffer death." Thomas Hawkins, in like circumstances, said "If I had a hundred bodies, I would suffer them all to be torn in pieces, rather than recant."

THERE is more force than we are wont to suppose in the saying of our Saviour, "Except ye become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom of God." Childhood and youth are the periods for the easy reception of all truth, religious as well as secular. Whoever has undertaken to teach an adult the rudiments of education, has experienced difficulties, similar, though inferior, to those which the preacher of righteousness encounters in teaching men. It is not impossible for a man who has passed his second or third decade to learn his letters and make something of a scholar, but it is a herculean task, compared with the effort which a child makes to attain the same end.

BE thankful if you know, by your own experience, that there is such a thing as peace and love, even though you may for the time have lost them, if you have ever really had them. God never takes back his gifts. If he ever gave you a sight of his truth and love, you have it still. Clouds may pass between you and the sun, but the sun is there, and will shine forth again. It may be a stormy night, and the stars are hidden; but they shine on, permanent and pure, behind the driving rain, and will again look out upon you with their shining eyes, and say, from their inaccessible and infinite heights, "Be patient, little child! be patient, and wait till all storms and all clouds shall have passed away forever."