

Last Words of the Famous.

How eagerly loving ears strain to catch the farewell words of dying friends! In the hushed chamber heads are placed close to the lips that can scarce articulate, while the strong hand of health holds in its warm and vigorous grasp the feeble, almost pulseless hand of the death-stricken. The message waited for may be one of guidance concerning temporal affairs, one of affectionate regard for the survivors, or (more momentous) one of assurance as to the spiritual state of the departing. Such words are so rarely treasured through the mourning years which follow. Frequently, however, there is keen disappointment for those so soon to be bereaved. Sometimes no expectant word is spoken—no sign given; at other times the last words are strangely commonplace, and seem to be sadly out of keeping with the solemn mysteries of the border-land. In many cases the last words are much the same as those which have preceded them during life. The ruling passion is strong in death, and the personal characteristics come out most markedly when the curtain is about to fall forever upon this world's stage. The jester has been known to shake his cap and bells in the face of death, and utter his quips and cranks with last-failing breath. This is not, by any means, always due to bravado, or to lack of serious apprehension as to the meaning of the great change: it is often simply the bent of nature showing itself powerfully ere nature sinks exhausted to sleep its last sleep.

Charles Lamb holds forever a place among the bright particular stars in the firmament of English literature. The humor which pleasantly flavors his writings was innate, inextinguishable, and unconquerable. It asserted itself under the most adverse circumstances, and even sat smiling upon his dying pillow. In his last sickness he wrote: "My bedfellows are cough and croup; we sleep three in a bed." No later words are recorded of him.

As we think of him we are reminded of another well known humorist—Tom Hood. Hood was at once a great poet and a great wit, who, while he left behind a few words which are assured of immortality, never perhaps fulfilled all the promise of his splendid genius. No one who has read the pathetic Memorials of his life can help loving him. That life of his was one of struggle and suffering, and yet none of its untoward vicissitudes could quench the gaiety of his spirit—a spirit brave, sympathetic, tender and true. It has been said of him that it was the permanent habit of his mind to have seen and sought for a ludicrousness under all conditions. When he was dying of consumption a mustard plaster was put on his emaciated chest, whereupon, looking up with a quizzical smile he remarked, that it was a great deal of mustard for such a little meat.

While some laugh and create laughter to the very end, thereby doing this sad world a much needed service; others spend their waning strength to cheer or console the world with "concord of sweet sounds." Thus it was with the great composer, Mozart. The last piece he wrote was his famous Requiem Mass, and as he was about to pass into the world of richer and fuller harmonies, he said: "Did I not tell you that it was for myself I composed this death-chant?" That was true to a greater degree than he knew, for while for many another those grandly mournful notes have been sounded, every time they are heard men remember him from whose musical soul they were struck into deathless being.

Soldiers in the delirium of death fight over again their battles, or march once more to martial music. We are not surprised to learn that as the spirit of the great Napoleon passed away during a terrific storm, his last words should be of the French nation and army.

Nelson's final words were of a piece with his whole life, and according to the tenor of his celebrated signal. As he lay wounded on his ship, the Victory, he thought of the suffering sailors, and requested the surgeon to attend them first. Then as he felt life ebbing away, while around him raged the crowning battle of his glorious career, he said to the true friend whose arms supported him: "Kiss me, Hardy, thank God I have done my duty!"

The closing utterance of Elizabeth Barrett Browning was most fitting on the lips of a dying poet: "It is beautiful!" Oh, she had long loved and cherished beauty, had gazed with eyes of genius upon the fairest scenes of earth, and had imagined scenes fairer far as only poets can; but her first glimpse of heaven surpassed all her loveliest dreams and desires. As the veil is lifted she can only exclaim with wonder and rapture:—"It is beautiful!"

A poet of a different and a larger stamp was Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe. He possessed a master mind which cast its victorious spell over others, and left its impress upon some of the most verile intellects of modern times. His last words, with whatever intention they were uttered, have for us a prophetic significance:—"Open the shutter and let in more light." Goethe was a man of immense wisdom and deep insight; yet how little did he know, how limited and obscured was the range of his vision! Death was for him, as it is for all, the opening of darkening shutters, and the letting in upon the soul of more light.

What a satisfaction there is for all right thinking people when "a noble life hath noble end," and the last words are as the amen to a prayer or the finale to a beautiful symphony. Such were the words of Prince Albert. As the

Consort of the great Queen he stood in a difficult position where all eyes were upon him, and everyone was ready to detect the least indiscretion. He bore himself blamelessly even in "that fierce light that beats about a throne." Though somewhat misunderstood and not sufficiently appreciated in his lifetime, posterity awards him his meed of praise, and he is forever known as "Albert the Good." His last words were worthy of a character so noble: "I have such sweet thoughts!"

The name of Richard Baxter is wellnigh forgotten now, but there was a time when a copy of his great work, "The Saint's Everlasting Rest" was found in almost every English home. It is a pity that it has given place to other books less sublime in style and subject. Baxter lived in the 17th century, and, though a life-long invalid, he was an indefatigable laborer in the vineyard of Christ. As he lay dying he said: "I have pain—there is no arguing against sense—but I have peace! I have peace!"

Another good and great man was Adorim Jusdon, who toiled for forty years in Burma. Though beset with sorrows and difficulties he faithfully performed the task God gave him to do. He died at sea in 1850, as he was sailing for home. We can understand his holiday spirit, which was no less a spirit of holiness, as he exclaimed in the near prospect of his heavenly home: "I go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from school, I feel so strong in Christ."

Alas, many dying words have not been so calm, confident and triumphant in tone as those just cited. They have rather partaken of the nature of warning and admonition. Life assumes a different aspect from the death-bed, and some awake to its true meaning too late for their own profit, though barely in time to exhort others to a better use of its opportunities. Surely very few can refuse to listen to a sermon which has a dying man for its preacher!

The experience of many is summed up in the last remark of Sir Thomas Smith, Secretary of State to Queen Elizabeth. "It is a matter for lamentation that men know not to what end they were born into the world until they are ready to go out of it." And it is a lack of that essential knowledge which leads to such a state of unpreparedness for death as was indicated in the dying speech of the victorious Caesar Borgia: "I have provided in the course of life for everything except death; and now alas! I am to die, although entirely unprepared." Many insure everything except their souls, and, leaving their all on earth, pass into a hopeless eternity.

All lovers of poetry admire the genius of Robert Burns; yet all must regret his mispent life and early death. Of him it has been said truly and concisely: "It was the strength of his passions and the weakness of his moral will which made his poetry and spoilt his life." Some of us do not feel disposed to moralize upon the ways of such a gifted man. Let him speak for his self. As he was expiring he said to a friend by his bedside: "I may have but a moment to speak to you. Be a good man, be virtuous, be religious, nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here!"

The last words of an eminent French scholar, a man of vast and varied acquirements, will form a suitable application to our short homily. Salmasino who died in 1653, said, addressing those around him, "Oh, I have lost a world of time. Had I but one year more it should be spent in perusing David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles. Oh, sirs, mind the world less and God more."

St. Martin's, N. B.

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Value of Church Membership.

BY J. B. GAMBRELL, D. D.

Unorganized forces have never accomplished much in the world and never will. George Whitefield was a much greater preacher than Wesley. He moved people very powerfully, but he left them unorganized, while his co-laborer organized everything he touched. It is needless to say that Wesley's work remains, while Whitefield's has been scattered.

When Christ began his ministry he quickly gathered around him a few disciples as a nucleus of his world-wide movement. With the ongoing of his kingdom there was a ready absorption of every convert into an organization—a church. The converts at Pentecost were baptized and added the same day. The Scriptures leave no place for the convert outside of a church. Christianity could not be maintained without churches. To say that churches do not save people is saying nothing to the point when the matter of Christian duty is involved. Churches do not save people instrumentally by upholding and preaching the truth. If churches fail, all fails in the long run.

But the blessings of organization are manifold for the saved. Every convert needs exactly what a true church can give him—sympathy, love, support, instruction, comradeship, protection. The churches of Christ was ordained to meet the deepest needs of the new life. Life of every sort needs environment for its comfort and development. Nature provides environment, light and atmosphere with a proper temperature in which to bring all its products to perfection. The God of all grace, who is also the God of nature, has provided a resting place, with suitable environments, and a heavenly atmosphere in which to bring spiritual life to full

fruitage. The home of God's child on this earth is a New Testament church.

Paul's conception of a church still further enforces the value of church organization. He takes the human body to illustrate. Christ is the head and all the members are members one of another. They co-operate to the mutual comfort of all. No one Christian is strong enough or complete enough to meet all his own wants. Some are far ahead of others, but all supplementing. The eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the hands, the feet, all supplement and help each other. The same thing is true in a church.

Sometimes it is said that, if one is converted, he can live all right in or out of a church. It is a mistake. No one can do well in a life of disobedience to Christ, and whoever refuses to unite with a church sets the wisdom and the command of the Master aside. For such an one there is no real spiritual growth or happiness. Whoever saw a great Christian grown up outside the fellowship of a church? I certainly never saw one or heard of one.

Many years ago, when I had time and a place for it, I greatly enjoyed gardening, and was reasonably successful in it. One year, following the usual custom, I sowed cabbage seed in a bed, and in due time transplanted the young plants to the rich, mellow soil of the open garden. Here they were cultivated and grew to large proportions. Passing by the neglected plant beds, I opened the weeds and grass to see what had become of the plants left in the bed. They were there still living but leafless and with only a little bud at the top to show that there was life left. They had been choked with the weeds and grass. This is a picture of a converted man, left out in the world. He will never perish, neither will he grow.

And then there is that other great question, the question of usefulness. We are kept in the world for what good we can do others. It will be next to perdition to live and die having done no good in the world. A converted person out of a church cannot be useful. He cannot help doing harm by a pernicious example. He is a rebel in the kingdom of grace. If his heart kept warm, which would never be, singlehanded, he could do but little. There is a heavenly arithmetic which works in God's kingdom and warfare. Here it is. "One shall chase a thousand, and two shall put 10,000 to flight." How marvelously do we increase our usefulness by combinations. Beyond the weighty obligation to obey Christ there is, running through life, a moral obligation to do those things which mark for our highest usefulness. A stray soldier in any army counts for very little. Marathon is forever glorious, for on that field the immortal 10,000 Greeks locking shields, standing and marching shoulder to shoulder, cut through and defeated the almost countless hordes of the barbarians, while the victors sang their peans of victory. A church like that will be a conquering force anywhere in the world.

Why write all this? Just to set out a fine idea? No; far from it. Just now thousands are turning to God, and I notice a great disparity between the number of professions and the number joining the church. This may be explained many ways. All who profess are not real converts. Many converts have their church notions set towards other denominations. But I raised the question whether in their zeal for soul-winning many are not painfully lax in giving converts timely and faithful instructions. Is this not true. Let every preacher and worker answer before God for himself. I trust I am not censorious, but I much fear that a sinful laxness in not teaching converts their duty in respect to joining the church results from a kind of unwritten compromise with error. For one, I have no sympathy with much that goes under the fine title of defending the faith. But I hold this to be true and self-evident: Preachers are to preach the teaching revealed in the Scriptures. It is not our primary duty to take care of any church or denomination. Our duty is to preach straight on, just as if every one believed the truth or would do it, when he heard it. We owe a grave duty to God and a solemn obligation to the converts to lead them in the way of their highest happiness and usefulness. If some one says people will not hear us, if we preach the full truth, the reply is, that is mostly a mistake, provided we preach the truth in love; but anyway, we are not obliged to have everybody hear us. We are obliged to be true to God and his word. But beyond all human wisdom there is a supreme factor in the problem of successful preaching, and that in union, the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Men will hear whom God anoints, and he never anoints trimmers nor makeshifts.

My plea is for faithfulness right up to the Scripture standard on this, as well as other matters. We are no way responsible for what is in the Bible, nor for people's notions unless, indeed, we have failed to declare the whole counsel of God, and thus contributed to their false notions. There are plenty of texts for preaching what is here suggested.—Baptist Standard.

Paying the Fare.

BY THEODORE L. CUTLER, D. D.

When Jonah took it into his foolish head to run away to Tarshish "from the presence of the Lord," he went on board an outward bound vessel, and "paid the fare thereof." That was an expensive excursion. He lost the approval of his