

Pastor and People.

Unperformed Duties.

When the learned Grotius was about to die, and the retrospect of his past life was vividly impressed upon his mind, he turned to those standing beside him and said: "Alas! I have squandered away my life laboriously in doing nothing." There is a tinge of oppressive sadness in this confession of the illustrious scholar. It intimates that viewed in the light of a dawning eternity much of his life-work seemed impertinent and profitless, while at the same time it implies the consciousness that many things which he might have done had been signally neglected. Perhaps almost any one of us, however, after candidly reviewing our individual career, would be compelled to make a similar confession. The actual of every man's life differs widely from its ideal. We propose, but we do not accomplish. We promise, but we do not fulfil. And when at certain intervals we survey our past lives, we discover to our bitter regret and shame that we have squandered away our time laboriously in doing nothing, and that we are weighed down with a constantly accumulating load of unperformed duties.

How many, for example, are the sins of this sort committed with reference to our family circles. The domestic relation is of all others most sacred and solemn. And God requires that those who are closely united as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as brothers and sisters, should be helpers of each other's faith and promoters of each other's salvation. But how very remote in these respects are the large majority of those who compose the membership of even our Christian households. It would seem that no believer in Jesus could rest content until all his immediate kindred were thoroughly renewed and sanctified. And yet as a practical reality the unoffered prayers, and unspoken exhortations, and unfaithful examples of those who bear the same name and possess the same blood are matters of such frequent occurrence as to excite little or no surprise.

Scarcely less in length, however, is the list of unperformed duties with reference to society. The Christian, though belonging to the brotherhood of the saints, is nevertheless a citizen of the world. He possesses a social nature, is surrounded with social institutions, and is required to perform social duties. For the most part, however, the obligations we owe to society are either wholly neglected or but indifferently fulfilled. How lamentably deficient are the efforts of the average believer to elevate the masses of the people—to raise the standard of social culture—to educate the poverty-stricken portions of the community—to suppress the ravages of intemperance and its kindred evils—and to infuse an element of Christian spirituality into the hearts of those who must otherwise be aliens and outcasts. Indeed, none of us can fail to deplore

"The wounds we might have healed, The human sorrow and smart, The evil we're wrought by want of thought, As well as want of heart."

But quite as numerous and aggravated are the unperformed duties which confront us when we consider our relations to the Church. Than this holy institution there is nothing more entitled to the sympathy and efforts of all who love the Lord, and enjoying its privileges and experiencing its benefits, those at least who compose its membership should discharge the duties which its interests demand. But alas! very few professing Christians realize this ideal. On the contrary, there are those in every communion who manifest more love for the world than the Church—whose prayers in behalf of the Body of Christ are neither frequent nor fervent—who can go to places of amusement when it storms, but deem it imprudent or find it impossible to go to the social prayer-meeting when it is clear—who never have any money when money is needed for the Church and her benevolent agencies and who so far as labour for Zion is concerned, scarcely know what the term means.

Strangest and saddest of all, however, are the unperformed duties we owe to Christ. Obligation is the invariable accompaniment of service rendered. And since the Son of God has suffered and done so much in our behalf, the duties we owe to Him are more than sufficient to employ all our powers, duties of adoration, of affection, of obedience, of consecration, of untiring activity and zeal. But it is useless to deny that the great mass of these duties are wilfully neglected by many who profess to serve the Saviour. When men rarely mention the name of Jesus, and seldom do ought to promote His glory—when the most obvious requirements of Christian service are habitually ignored—when especially the world and the things of the world absorb the affections and engross the energies of the whole being, there is sufficient reason to suspect that not all the duties enjoined by Christ are faithfully performed.

It is fitting that as Christian men and women we look these facts in the face. Called of God to be His spiritual servants, our condition is most critical if the duties devolved upon us are undischarged. Even in this world no Christian can have perfect peace who is recreant to the trusts committed to his keeping. And in the future world there can be no substantial satisfaction if we enter upon its realities with our obligations still uncancelled. Overwhelming, therefore, is the importance of discharging every duty which may possibly devolve upon us. Be it a duty to our families, to society, to the Church, or to Christ, it must be promptly appreciated and performed.

"Not many lives, but only one have we, One, only one. How sacred should that one life ever be, That narrow span! Day after day, filled up with blessed toil, Hour after hour, still bringing in new spoil."—John McO. Holmes, D.D., in N. Y. Christian Intelligencer.

The great secret of popularity is to make every one satisfied with himself first, and afterwards satisfied with you.—Josh Billings (translated.)

Faith's Victory.

The records of a boastful infidelity can not furnish such a beautiful example of patience, fortitude and heroism as this serenity has witnessed in the life and death of Mrs. M.—. Hers was a Christian heroism worthy the martyr age. More than nine years she has walked under the shadow of a strange malady that has baffled the skill of the most eminent physicians in this and other countries; yet none about her have been more cheerful, useful and happy. All that medical science, affection and wealth could bring to her relief were of no avail. Hoping that her life might be spared to her family, she unhesitatingly consented to submit to the only alternative—the skill of surgery. The day and hour were fixed—March 28, 11 a.m. Three long and anxious weeks of waiting and preparation followed the announcement; weeks in which her family were drawing closer about her in loving communion, weeks which she had a reason to fear would be her last in an earthly home, so beautiful and happy. Yet she was the happiest of the happy. On the morning of the 28th she moved through the beautiful grounds that surrounded the house, with as much cheerfulness as the birds that on that spring day sang in the trees above her, and with her mental and physical faculties unimpaired.

When the surgeon—a stranger from an Eastern city—came, she received him and other members of the profession with queenly grace, as though welcoming them to a banquet. She bade her family adieu, and, having with her own hands assisted in preparing the operating table, she placed her hand on the surgeon, and said, "Now, doctor, help me up." That hour of awful suspense! Rushed in prayer were the inmates of that home, and of many homes in which she was held dear. The anguish of that hour Heaven only knows. And when it was announced that the operation could not be continued without immediate death ensuing, the bitter disappointment of friends was inexpressible. When, returning to consciousness, her pastor broke the news to her that even surgical skill could not save her life she said, with composure, "I lay down on this operating table with my head pillowed upon my Father's promises: 'I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.' He has not failed me nor forsaken me. Now he will take me to himself, and will take me soon." In her preparation for that ordeal, she had turned the leaves of her "Silent Comforter" to the passages in Isaiah xliii. 2, 3, and Joshua 1. 5. With those promises before her eyes, and in her heart, she yielded her life. Here was the source of her heroism, the secret of her matchless grace. It was faith's victory. Friday morning, the 30th, she passed to glory to receive the crown. From a home, which art and wealth had adorned with many charms, and affection had made doubly precious, she passed to our Father's house, where all these mysteries shall be explained.

Praying in the Night-Watches.

I am not surprised at David's praying to God in the night-watches; at his rising from his bed, and ascending to the roof of his house, and when the mighty heart of the city was still, and the mountains round about Jerusalem were sleeping in the calm brilliancy of an eastern night, that he should gaze with rapture on the sky, and pour forth such a beautiful psalm of praise as "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers," etc. The night is more suited to prayer than the day. I never wake in the middle of the night without feeling induced to commune with God. One feels brought more into contact with Him. The whole world around us, we think, is asleep. But the great Shepherd of Israel slumbers not, nor sleeps. He is awake, and so are we! We feel, in the solemn and silent night, alone with God. And then there is every thing in the circumstances to lead one to pray. The past is often vividly recalled. The voices of the day are heard, and their forms crowd around you. No sleep can bind them. The night seems the time in which they should hold spiritual communion with man. The future, too, throws its dark shadow over you—the night of the grave, the certain death-bed, the night in which no man can work. And then every thing makes such an impression on the mind at night, when the brain is nervous and susceptible. The low sough of the wind among the trees; the roaring, or eerie whish of some neighboring stream; the bark, or low howl of the dog; the general impressive silence, all tend to sober and solemnize the mind, and to force it from the world and its vanities, which then seem asleep, to God, who alone can uphold and defend it.—Norman Macleod.

Helpfulness of Christianity.

Piety is expansion. It does not cramp and fetter the nature. It enlarges and liberalizes it; shoots it out in all manner of new activities and widens it with a thousand generous impulses. A small, mean man cannot represent Christianity any more than a thorn tree can represent a forest. The Church is not a treadmill, as some seem to regard it, where sad featured men and women toil and tramp continually between set limits, longing to break loose and dash out, but are unable. The religion of Christ teaches a man that it is better to fly than to crawl, that virtue is sweeter than vice; that restraint is nobler than license; and that man, we care not how poor, weak and erring he may be, may, by the grace of God, yet recover himself and go to the grave with a hope in him that shall cause the portals of it to glow like the illuminated gateway of a palace when the king returns from battle, preceded by news of a glorious victory.—Golden Rule.

It is a great misfortune to have a fretful disposition. It takes the fragrance out of one's life, and leaves only weeds where a cheerful disposition would cause flowers to bloom. The habit of fretting is one that grows rapidly unless it is sternly repressed; and the best way to overcome it is to try always to look on the cheerful side of things.

Revived Memories.

When I beheld the pictured home, The home of joyous childhood, The roof-tree dear, the shaded walks, The dim and dreamy twilight,— Memories long silent as the sea In summer twilight sleeping, Awake, and o'er my spirit came, In waves restless sweeping. Amid the green, embowering shades, Forms of old seemed moving, Eyes closed for aye, once more met mine, With looks benign and loving; Looks in their silent eloquence Upon the heart descending As healing dew falls on the flower, When day and night are blending— And voices in low cadences, Through the hushed air were stealing— Such as unsoil the fount of tears, The sacred wells of feeling; Such as bring with their low, weird tones, A deep but gentle sadness, Sweeter than when the heart beats high To choral notes of gladness. While memory thus with magic spell Her thrall was round me weaving, There came no thought how time had still Pressed onward still bereaving— No thought that in the hush of death Stilled were those voices o'er: That eyes so full of loving light Now darkened were forever. One low breathed word—the spell was broken; The star of home shone o'er me, A home as sacred and as dear, As pictured haunts before me. O, ever may the dove of peace Wave here its snowy pinion— The power that lies in kindly hearts Here ever hold dominion.

Unselfishness Hereafter.

Hope is shining somewhat now in the distance. The outlook grows fairer. Some of us have lost much in these hard times. And some of us feel that pretty much all we have saved has been what we have given to God. But if we are forgetting that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and that we are not, and cannot become, owners but simply tenants at will of God's land, and stewards of the good things he pleases to put in our hands—if we are hoping and praying for the revival of business and larger incomes, simply with a view to our own gratification, that we may live more freely and have more comforts—then it is evident that we are not in such a spiritual condition that God can consistently bless us with what we desire. We may get what we desire, but it can hardly prove a blessing.

In order that it may be such, we should cherish a strong and honest purpose to use generously no small share of whatever God may give us in aiding the bodies and souls of men. And if we have such a purpose, we shall not refuse to give away a good fair proportion of what we have now. In other words, the best way to prepare ourselves to receive is to give.

We should have a supreme desire for spiritual blessings. We often lose the good things of this life by our very eagerness to possess them. We want them so much that God withholds them until we can form a better judgment, and estimate them at their proper value. He would have us know that the greatest earthly advantages are utterly inferior to these spiritual treasures which belong to eternity. He would have us choose the unseen blessings rather than the seen. When we have learned this lesson, and can look with comparative indifference upon wealth and comfort and pleasures, then, and not till then, are we in a condition to receive them without injury to our souls.

Now if our graces of humility and unselfishness and unworldliness have been cultivated in us by the discomforts of poverty, then we shall not need the discipline much longer, and we may hope soon to see better days. And if we have not acquired them as yet, then we still need the discipline, and we should be content, nay thankful, that our Father is answering our prayers for spiritual growth, and training us to be better children.—N. Y. Christian Weekly.

Weak Points.

This is a world of imperfections. No such thing as perfection is attained in it—perfection is not of mortals. The person who keeps these facts in his mind, will not only be the more guarded in respect to his own actions, but will at the same time be the better prepared to make the necessary allowances for the actions of others. All mankind have their weak points. It is true, the weakness of some is much greater than that of others, and of a very different nature, but there are none entirely exempt. We are very apt to expect too much, or to require too much, of our fellow-men. We fail to make needed and necessary allowances for their failings. We forget that even those whom we look upon as foremost Christians are by no means infallible, and that all that are human are liable to err, and do err.

We expect too much of weak mortals. It is true there are those of whom we have a right to expect much, and who above all others, it appears, have learned of the Great Teacher. But even these have their failings, and though not perhaps as great and as serious as ours, they are still failings. And as there are none of us exempt from our weak points, does it not become us to study well what these weak points are, that we may watch and guard against them? Here is where Satan, with whom we have to war, attacks us. How necessary, then, does it become that we search out these besetting sins, as it were, and with God's help, endeavor earnestly to overcome them!

And let us no longer look upon the faults of others without a proper degree of allowance, and instead of holding them up to the inspection of the world, let us help those in whom we see them to discover and put them away. Let us look more at the motives and good intentions of our fellow-men, and less at those errors that come from natural failings, or from the head and not from the heart. If we will do this, we shall be much happier, our love for erring humanity greater, and our labor in the vineyard of the Lord much more effective.—Review.

Defective Prayers.

I. Those which embody no desire. They are formal and lifeless. The soul will not be easily pacified when it has a great desire which cries out for something God alone can give. II. Such as are not in earnest. Prayer is real work for life, while yet disclaiming all personal power to secure it or merit it. III. Such as are without faith. There are three grounds for faith in approach to God. 1. His Covenant. 2. His Promises. 3. His attributes. Surely upon one or the other the confidence of the petitioner may rest unshaken. IV. Such as are made with wrath. The heart which scours favor from God must love mankind. It must put away all wrath and malice and evil speaking. It must forgive and bless as it would—be forgiven and blessed. V. Such as are connected with a disposition to live in sin. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear me." VI. An unwillingness to do the will of God. Many a man dares not ask for the coming in of the Holy Spirit, lest it reprove him for some long neglected duty. If we pray for light, we must accept its revelations; for strength, the duties it imposes. VII. The lack of praise to God. Thanklessness shuts God out, is a non-conductor of mercy. We do not praise God half enough. VIII. Praying to be seen and heard of men. Prayers for human ears have little audience in Divine ones.

Boldness.

Back of bold preaching is bold praying. There is too little of both. Boldness in prayer is not necessarily irreverence. It is what is to be expected, if we are sons; more, if we are not only sons but servants. It is not forwardness in a servant to inquire often and freely of his Master about his work. Oneness of purpose is given by Christ himself as the one condition of acceptable prayer: "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." It pleases God to see the boldness with which Elijah said to Him before the people, "Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word."

No minister ought to have a reputation above his brethren, on the ground simply of being bold in either praying or preaching. "Come boldly to the throne of grace" expresses a fact in Christian experience, not a doubtful possibility or an unrealized aspiration. And if to be bold in preaching is simply to be outspoken in the utterance of what one believes to be Bible truth, why should not every gospel preacher be bold? Fearfulness, hesitancy, suppression of the truth, are sins which Paul begged his brethren to pray that he might not be guilty of: "That therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." And in answer to a like prayer by the persecuted apostles, "The place was shaken where they were assembled; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." This all-spokenness (such is the Greek) is the gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed in answer to bold and earnest prayer.

There is far too common an impression that many ministers accept and believe certain doctrines which they lack courage to preach: "I believe this, but if I preach it squarely, how shall I fare with the people?" Is it not more important to ask, "How will it fare with God's truth if I do not preach it? How will it fare with the people if I withhold it? And how will it fare with me, when called by the Master to give an account of my stewardship?"

Indian Summer of Life.

In the life of the good man there is an Indian Summer more beautiful than that of the seasons; richer, sunnier, and more sublime than the most glorious Indian summer the world ever knew—it is the Indian summer of the soul. When the glow of youth has departed, when the warmth of middle age is gone, and the buds and blossoms of spring are changing to the sere and yellow leaf; when the mind of the good man, still and vigorous, relaxes its labors, and the memories of a well-spent life gush forth from their secret fountains, enriching, rejoicing and fertilizing; then the trustful resignation of the Christian sheds around a sweet and holy warmth, and the soul, assuming a heavenly lustre, is no longer restricted to the narrow confines of business, but soars far beyond the winter of hoary age, and dwells peacefully and happily upon that bright spring and summer which await him within the gates of Paradise evermore. Let us strive for and look trustingly forward to an Indian summer like this.

The Face.

How much there is in the human face! What a volume, nay, what a library may be found there! All thoughts, all passions, all that can stir or move this mortal frame, may be read in its expression. There is what may be designated as the home face, and which often differs much from the face that is seen in public or society. The real face is worn at home—the artificial abroad. There is no single thing in any home, high or low, worth more than a bright, cheerful, hopeful, sympathetic face. It soothes little irritations, it encourages the faint, it brightens even the ray of care, and throws light which may be more precious at times than the light of day. The beauty of a face is in its expression. Whether it be Greek, Roman or Saxon, its power to attract or repel lies in the combined speech of its several features. A homely face may be most comely and winsome when the high qualities of the soul are regnant there. Close observers always try to read beneath the surface, and beyond the mere title-page of the external face; and still it is most true that universally the human countenance is taken as an index of character. A heart full of gracious sentiments and emotions will transform the plainest face into one of great loveliness.

Random Readings.

"If I had strength enough to hold a pen, I would write how easy and delightful it is to die."—William Hunter.

"I am now in a state in which nothing in this world can disturb me more. I am comfortably coming to my end."—Col. Lingwood.

Preach Christ crucified, and, said Philip Henry in addition, in a crucified style: Hold up Christ, and get behind Him so as not to be seen.

You turn the Gospel upside down when you tell a wicked person to get quit of his wickedness first, by his own effort, in order that thereby he may obtain the favour of God.—Rev. Dr. Arnot.

It is a proof of our natural bias to evil, that gain is slower and harder than loss, in all things good; but in all things bad, getting is quicker and easier than getting rid of.—Augustus Hare.

I do not revere any love of God that has never known any fear of God. Show me that kind of love of God which has not felt what the fear of God is, and I will show you not principle, but sentiment—not religion, but religiosity.—Rev. Joseph Cook.

There cannot be a secret Christian. Grace is like ointment hid in the hand; it betrayeth itself. If you truly feel the sweetness of the cross of Christ, you will be constrained to confess Christ before men.—McOheyne.

SPURGEON says to a Bible student, "Sell your coat, and buy Henry's Commentary, if you cannot get it without." Whitfield, when asked when he studied theology, replied, "On my knees, reading my Bible and Henry's Commentary."

In a recent conversation, a gentleman who is a disciple of Darwin, and an enthusiastic geologist, made this remark:—"Geology and Genesis agree so perfectly in the great outlines of creation that I am at a loss to know where Moses got that information."

The setting of a great hope is like the setting of the sun. The brightness of our life is gone, shadows of the evening fall behind us, and the world seems but a dim reflection itself—a broader shadow. We look forward into the lonely night, the soul withdraws itself. Then stars arise, and the night is holy.—Longfellow.

In order to render men benevolent, they must first be made tender; for benevolent affections are not the offspring of reasoning; they result from that culture of the heart, from those early impressions of tenderness, gratitude and sympathy, which the endowments of domestic life are sure to supply, and for the formation of which it is the best possible school.—Robert Hall.

Almost sweet is unsavory; almost hot is lukewarm. Almost a Christian is like Micah, who thought himself religious because he had gotten a priest into his house. Almost a Christian is like the Ephraimites who could not pronounce Shibboleth, but Sibboleth. Almost a Christian is like Ananias, who brought a part but left a part behind. Almost a Christian is like Eli's sons, who polled the sacrifices; like the fig-tree which deceived Christ with leaves; like the virgins, who carried lamps without oil; like the willing-unwilling son, who said he would come and would not.—Henry Smith.

All the events of life are precious to him who sees in every thing the hand of his Heavenly Father. No wind can blow wrong; no event be mistimed; no result be disastrous. If God but cares for our inward and eternal life, and if, by all our earthly experiences, He is unfolding it, and preparing for its full and perfect disclosure above, then nothing can befall us but prosperity.—Matthew Henry.

A MAN may want liberty and yet be happy, as Joseph was; a man may want peace, and yet be happy, as David was; a man may want children and yet be blessed, as Job was; a man may want plenty and yet be full of comfort, as Micaiah was; but he that wants the Gospel wants everything that should do him good. A throne without the Gospel is but the devil's dungeon. Wealth without the Gospel is fuel for hell. Advancement without the Gospel is but a going high to have the greater fall.—Owen.

If we would at once see in brief what a true and saving faith is, we may take the sum of it in this description. It is when a sinner, being on the one hand thoroughly convinced of his sins, of the wrath of God due to him for them, of his utter inability either to escape or bear this wrath; and, on the other hand, being likewise convinced of the insufficiency, willingness, and designation of Christ to satisfy justice, and to reconcile and save sinners, doth hereupon yield a firm assent unto these truths revealed in the Scripture, and also accepts and receives Jesus and Christ in all his offices; as his Prophet, resolving to attend unto his teaching; as his Lord and King, resolving to obey his commands; and as his Priest, resolving to rely upon his sacrifice alone; and doth accordingly submit to Him, and confide in Him sincerely and perseveringly. This is that faith which doth justify; and will certainly save all those in whom it is wrought.—Bishop Hopkins.

Do not keep the alabaster boxes of your love and tenderness sealed up until your friends are dead. Fill their lives with sweetness. Speak approving, cheering words while their ears can hear them, and while their hearts can be thrilled by them. The things you mean to say when they are gone, say before they go. The flowers you mean to send for their coffins, send to brighten and sweeten their homes before they leave them. If my friends have alabaster boxes laid away, full of perfumes of sympathy and affection, which they intend to break over my dead body, I would rather they would bring them out in my weary hours, and open them, that I may be refreshed and cheered by them while I need them. I would rather have a bare coffin without a flower, and a funeral without an eulogy, than a lie without the sweetness of love and sympathy. Let us learn to anoint our friends beforehand for their burial. Post-mortem kindnesses do not cheer the burdened spirit. Flowers on the coffin cast no fragrance backward over the weary days.—N. Y. Evangelist.