

PULPIT PRAYER.

BY REV. W. W. SMITH.

Prayer is worship and homage of the creature offered to the Creator; communion with God by the redeemed soul; drawing near to the Divine Helper in distress; asking through the Mediator for the blessings His mediatorship is intended to bring us; and includes adoration, thanksgiving, confession and petition.

Public prayer is where one is spokesman for the rest; and the prayer is not therefore his but theirs. And being theirs, he should seek to express their wants, rather than his own. But, the sense of want, with the worshipper, may be vague and shadowy—a longing for something undescribed and unknown—and therefore the public prayer should be able, as it were, to give shape and form, and voice, to these longings, and unformed desires.

Pulpit prayer is public prayer; but it has some limitations and characteristics of its own.

Some things the preacher, in his pulpit prayer, must avoid:—

1. Vanity; or sense of merit, either in the matter of prayer, or the manner of its performance. God is present, to hear; and a number of poor sinners are present to pray; and he is speaking for them, and for himself.

2. He must avoid a tiresome length, and an uncomfortable brevity. For the former, leave out much direct address, and many familiar quotations, and merely diverse ways of wording the same petition. And remember that *standing* is tiresome in a country where there is so little walking—and kneeling is unsuited to our pews in general; (and even where they are more roomy, the people's backs are to the preacher).

3. He must avoid ornate rhetoric in prayer.

4. He must avoid "hitting" anyone in public prayer. What cannot be done by private reasoning and entreaty, or in private prayer, must not be done in pulpit prayer.

What should be aimed at, and cultivated in pulpit prayer:—

1. An acquaintance with the real needs of the worshippers. It was said of David Dickson, of Scotland, that in prayer "he showed men their whole heart." The minister should aim to express to God in prayer, and in the hearing of the people, what is in the people's hearts to desire. And he must know them all the week, if he would speak *for them* on the Lord's Day.

2. He must aim at simplicity. The newspaper report of "the most eloquent prayer ever offered in the hearing of a New York audience," offers, by contrast, an excellent illustration of the present point. A man, pleading for his life, would think of moving arguments; and present earnest appeals; but the *rhetoric* of his petition would be a small thing in his eyes.

3. He must aim at raising the dormant desires and feelings of the worshippers. We will never gain and rouse others' attention so much as in hitting exactly on their own feelings: this we can only do by cultivating a perpetual and rigorous introspection. The more we know of our own thoughts and feelings, the more we will know of the thoughts and feelings of others;—for men are wondrously alike. And by putting the thoughts and feelings of others—and which they will acknowledge as such—in such a way as to lead to some unreached (though pertinent) conclusion—as for instance, our instant need of atoning blood—we often obtain a new hold upon our congregations, and dispel all wandering thoughts.

4. In pulpit prayer the speaker should imitate the manner of the holy men of old, whose prayers are recorded in the Bible, and who always gave *good reasons* for everything they asked. If there are no reasons why our prayer should be heard and granted, let us not offer the unreasonable petition. If there is a good reason, let us urge it. And herein lies one of the great advantages of public prayer. It suggests and makes plain to the worshipper the *reasons* pertaining to the petition uneasily present to his mind.

[The rest of this article will be given in our next issue.—ED. C. I.]

FRAGMENTS ON GIVING.

Wanted to know whether, with all our prayers and efforts, the Churches can prosper continuously, until they give God His due.—Whether anything less than what was given to all dispensations previous to the Christian will be satisfactory to God:—Whether the Christian Church is going to set aside the prophet Malachi, with his demands in the name of God for payment of His dues:—Whether revivals and conversions that do not reach this point can be genuine. If any one can give an affirmative reply, the reasons would be thankfully accepted. Please do not mutter objections to yourself, but let us all have the benefit of them. Give your reply first to God; and when you think you have satisfied Him, please try to satisfy the readers of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT that your position is correct. If you have such reasons, we have not heard them, and would like much to know them.

Among all the reasons assigned for the present *hard times*, has any one referred to that mentioned in Mal. iii. 2? Or among the many remedies proposed, would it be of any use to try the one recommended here? Agriculturalists, politicians, commercial men, manufacturers,—all have their schemes, but all seem to fail. Suppose we should try the prophet's plan—"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground. neither shall your vine cast her fruit before her time in the field, saith the Lord of Hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Some will say:—"If the Lord of Hosts will give us better times, we will give Him more." But He says:—"You give me the proportion *now* that you owe me, and then I shall send better times." "Return unto me and I shall return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts."

What a loop-hole of escape it is to many that the command for the tithe is not repeated in the New Testament! But are they sure that a law existing with "the fathers" before Moses, being simply repeated to him like the law of the Sabbath, requires special injunction again under the new dispensation? Was it so in the case of any other law, for instance, the Sabbath? And when our Saviour told the Pharisees that they should not leave the payment of their tithes undone, did He mean that this was to continue till His death only? Who says:—"Yes?" And because Paul said:—"Let every one lay by in store *as God has prospered him*," does that exclude the tithe any more than when Moses said:—"They shall not appear before the Lord empty. every man shall give as he is able: according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee." Does it mean any more than that the tithe is not to be one *outside* limit, while other injunctions prove that it is to be the *inside* one? It evident, however, that if the law of the tithe has been *superseded*, it has never been *abrogated* in any other way. ANON.

PRESIDENT HAYES has called an extra session of Congress for the 18th of March. And for the first time since the anti-secession days the Democrats will have a majority in both Houses. We fear that now the battle will be hot between the legislative and executive departments of the Government. The Democrats are bent on repealing the Federal laws for the protection of the ballot; the Republicans are determined on upholding them. The Democrats in the last House of Representatives tacked a Bill repealing those laws to the Appropriation Bill; the Republican Senate refused to concur, and so no appropriations were made for the carrying on of the Government. It is likely that the Democratic majority in both Houses will now adopt the same tactics—they will strive to force the President to accede to their wishes. There is some talk even of trying to take away the veto power from the President. One good thing has arisen out of this—President Hayes and the Republican party have come closer together now than they have been for many days. There is hot work ahead in American political circles.

A PRAYER-MEETING WITH A NUB TO IT.

[The evil which the prayer-meeting described below attempted to lessen is just as prevalent and just as damaging in many Canadian cities, towns and villages, as among our American cousins. The pernicious influence of the worse than trashy "boys' papers," offered for sale at the counter of nearly every news-dealer in the Dominion cannot be over-estimated; and the sooner parents, guardians, and teachers earnestly set about remedying the evil the better for the future of our country.—ED. C. I.]

It was our Friday evening union meeting in the Week of Prayer, and a very good meeting it was. Every one present, men and women, especially the women, I think, felt the importance of the subject of our supplications—that the sources and channels of the influence of the press might be purified. There had been some things to set us thinking on the subject.

An awful outbreak of crime in our part of the State, that could not be traced to drink, nor to avarice, nor to lust, nor to ignorance, nor to false religious teaching, nor to immigration, had made many people wonder whether illustrated journals of crime, depicting in full detail the methods used by eminent and successful criminals to accomplish and conceal their work, might not perhaps have had an unfavourable influence on the public morals. And some remarks of a brother connected with the School Board, to the effect that the moral tone, and even the scholarship of the public schools were suffering from the circulation of a certain class of "boys' papers," were listened to with hushed attention, as if there were great searchings of heart in many a father's and mother's bosom in the meeting. But there was not much speech-making, and there was a good deal of very serious, earnest praying to God to interfere and set this matter right.

It was not till toward the end of the hour—about the time the brother who presides generally remarks: "Brethren we have only a few minutes more; do not let the time be wasted"—that the new minister, who has just come to preach at the church over on the North side, rose and made one of the strangest prayer-meeting addresses I have ever heard.

"My friends, I am a new-comer in Littleton, and I confess that I do not understand you. You do seem to be very much in earnest, to feel the greatness of this evil, and to be praying sincerely for the Lord to remove it. The question that puzzles me is why you don't remove it yourselves. I have observed that these papers you so justly complain of are openly exhibited and sold on your best business street at shops where you all have dealings, and which pass for respectable shops. The trade only exists by your tolerance. If you will stand by each other and agree to shun any shop that refuses to pledge itself to conform to reasonable demands in this matter, you can have your own way about it. At least, you can put a mark on any place where papers confessedly pernicious are openly sold, as a disreputable place, to be shunned by decent people as they shun a common dram-shop. But there won't be any such place, for this town is not large enough to support a news-office from which the support of respectable people is withdrawn. I merely suggest if you really are in earnest you do something about the matter, and do it *now*!"

And when he said "now," the new minister brought his hand down on the seat in front of him with a thump that made us all start. Well, I assure you that there was no need that evening to exhort the brethren to "occupy the time." Col. Harkins (he is a deacon now, but we call him colonel still) jumped up and said, "That's right! I am ready for action." And Elder Wilson shouted "Amen!" from the back seat, and the teacher of our High School—But I need not try to tell you what we said; what we *did* was more to the purpose.

The minister of the old stone church, who presided, asked that after the benediction the men who were willing to take hold and do something stay just long enough to appoint a committee. And then he was just lifting up his hands to give the benediction, when the new minister came skurrying up to the platform, and said: