

For Love's Sake.

(A. B. Bryant, in the 'Christian Age.')

O be kind! O be kind!
Love is dull and life is blind;
Only death is open-eyed.
O how bitter by the side
Of an open grave to say
'Give me back my yesterday'!

O be kind! O be kind!
Touch the harp, and you may find
That your fingers, rude, unskilled,
Have the soul of music killed.
Hearts are harps—O gently sweep
All their sweet strings, lest you weep.

O be kind! O be kind!
Soon the tangle will unwind;
We are all so near to go
Through the grassy door, and low;
Speak them soft and tenderly,
These who fare that road with thee.

Beautifying the Church Lawn

(The Rev. Edwin R. Smith, Farmington, Me.,
in the 'Congregationalist and Christian
World.')

How often one sees a church with a beautiful interior but with grounds utterly unkempt. Thousands of dollars have been spent for stained glass, but practically nothing for green grass. Cut flowers lavishly adorn the altar—lovely but dying things—while not a single living flower invites one to enter and worship the Author of all life. Is the beauty of holiness, in which we are exhorted to worship, merely interior and dead beauty? Why, then, are church grounds so frequently and sorely neglected?

Of course the city church has scanty scope for the gardener's art. Even in the down-town district, however, he can hide cold gray walls with living green, while up-town churches often have space for a little grass.

Suburban and the larger village churches have no reason for neglecting their grounds; yet this striking contrast is often seen. While homes are surrounded by shrubbery, flowers and lawns of wondrous softness, the church grounds are unimproved save for a bit of indifferent lawn, tended by the sexton at odd minutes. The contrast between David's own house and the houseless estate of the ark led him to plan a worthy temple. The contrast between the church lawn and private grounds ought to lead us to devise for God's house a worthier setting.

Isaiah has suggested the way: 'The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary.' Two Japanese maples, given our own church several years ago, have thriven and afford us great delight. Nor will spiraea, Thumbergii or Van Houtii, the Prunifolia or Bridal Wreath, be forgotten in improving the church lawn. These and similar flowering shrubs should be selected according to latitude and such other conditions as will be suggested. Foliage plants are also acceptable.

If the sexton be unsuited to the work, secure a competent gardener. Better in most cases, and needful too, will be volunteer work. The young men, under responsible leadership, ought to help. Pushing a lawn mower is no less acceptable to God than passing the contribution box; and certainly it is a more strenuous service. An evening once a week spent with the flowers about one's church may be a means of grace.

There is more reason for neglect in the case

of the rural church. Little money is available for flowers after paying for preaching. The younger people suffer constant diminishment by withdrawal to the city. There is little leisure in the country. But neglect is none the less pitiable.

The location of the rural church is sometimes unfortunate—this, too, with all outdoors from which to choose a site. We remember more than one meeting house placed on a hill-lock devoid of thrifty vegetation. Its approaches were littered with weeds and loose stones. The scanty soil was scarred by carriage wheels. Only in spring was there any semblance of green grass. Does memory deal more gently with you? Do you recall some little meeting house set amid maples which rivalled in height its immaculate white steeple? But, oh, the horsesheds! Who ever thought to screen their ugliness with evergreens or vines?

In suburb or country one may enlist the boys and girls in making flower beds. In April have the boys prepare the beds. The girls can sow the seed. They can take turns watering and weeding.

One church went in for the culture of sweet peas. One who saw these flowers could not forget the sight. They blossomed far into September, protected nightly, through the minister's loving care, from the frosts of an Aroostook autumn. They glorified the little wooden church. Their welcome enhanced the spiritual anticipation of the worshipper.

Another church with which I am acquainted has made a beginning in this work. Close to its brick walls a long, narrow bed of nasturtiums was planted. One year poppies and marigolds were added. Waving ferns lurked in shady corners. Last autumn many bulbs were planted. Hyacinths, daffodils, tulips will thus arise in apostolic succession and witness to God's loving power.

Because the northern latitude of this church precluded the use of English ivy for its walls, woodbine has been cultivated with success. Three years have sufficed to carry this vigorous climber halfway up the tower. One cannot tell which is the more lovely, its glistening green in June or its October scarlet.

The children who help make the church flower bed receive more than they give. For one thing they learn to say, 'Our church.' When the flowers are picked invalids and the aged will be remembered. The gift may be made sacramental. And surely the Gospel of the Resurrection loses none of its power by the life of grass and tree and flower.

Labrador Mission.

The publishers of the 'Northern Messenger' will be glad to receive at their office and forward to Dr. Grenfell any sums sent in by subscribers or readers of this paper for the general work of this worthy mission. Send by money order, postal note or registered letter, addressed as follows:—'Northern Messenger,' John Dougall and Son, 'Witness' Building, Montreal. All amounts will be acknowledged on this page. Sums under fifty cents may be sent in two-cent stamps. Subscriptions to the 'Messenger' Cot may be similarly addressed, and will be acknowledged on the Correspondence Page.

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What is a Holiday?

A holiday, in the popular acceptance, says Dr. J. Robertson Wallace, in the 'Young Man,' does not consist so much in a 'change of air' as in a complete change of surroundings and habits.

Mere change of air is of comparatively little benefit, unless the change is to the seaside, where there is more ozone available for respiration. It is the change of scene, of occupation, and of food that recreates the jaded mind and body.

When country folk want a real change of air they go, if they can, to the town, and to all appearance benefit by their visit. Yet no one will venture to argue that the air of the towns is more exhilarating than that of the country.

I know of persons who think they are hardly dealt with by Providence because they have to work the best part of the year in open heather and pine-clad country, and when they snatch a week's holidays in the summer will flee their rural solitudes to recuperate in the wilds of Hackney or Hoxton! True it is that as one man's meat is another man's poison, one man's holiday is another man's purgatory.

The Sick-chamber a Temple.

I can say with truth that many a sick-bed has been to me as a house of worship, and many a sick-chamber as a holy temple. As I lay in silence and inquired of the Lord, 'What dost thou say?' I obtained an answer and always such a one as showed that, however terrible his frowns, there was a loving heart concealed behind. Usually it was some vain imagination, some high thought, which the heavenly husbandman had in his eye; and so I was enabled to hold a sacred colloquy with him, and my soul was at peace. In truth, a sick-bed is generally the place where the blessing of the Christian faith becomes specially manifest. While in the heart of a child of the world sickness breeds obstinacy, pride and discontent, and so eventually, when it has passed away, leaves no fruit, the contrary happens with the child of God. In hours of languishing the mysteries of God's love and the unsearchable depths of his wisdom are properly disclosed. Such a silent sick-room sets a man once more loose from the world and its attachments, and from all courtship of human favor and human praise, and sends him back into life with a new and single eye.

Alas! I am conscious to myself how suddenly and deceitfully self-love can creep back into a heart which has been sanctified by faith; therefore it is that I fervently pray, 'Keep me in safety, O Lord, and let not my last state be worse than my first. Behold I myself implore of thee to humble me.'—Prof. A. Tholuck.

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