

Church Observer

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"ONE FAITH,—ONE LORD,—ONE BAPTISM."

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Poetry.

THANKFULNESS.

Some murmur, when the sky is clear,
And wholly bright to view,
If one small spark of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue.

And some with thankful love are fill'd
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy gild
The darkness of their night.

In palaces are hearts that ask,
In discontent and pride,
Why life is such a dreary task,
And all good things denied?

And hearts in poorest huts admire,
How love has in their aid
(Love that not even seems to tire)
Such rich provision made.

TWO SONGS.

BY REV. I. N. TARBOK, D. D.

Two songs go up for ever from the earth,
One the full choral swell of joy and gladness;
The other is a strain unknown to mirth,
The low, sad wail of mortal grief and sadness.

Turn where we may, in land or air or near,
These songs of joy and woe are still ascending;
Voices of love, and hope, and gladness cheer,
With notes of sorrow are for ever blending.

Here ruddy health goes singing on its way,
There the pale sufferer on his couch is lying;
Here the glad shout of children at their play,
There the sharp farewell cries about the dying;

Here a proud mother walking in the light,
Because her darling son has come to honour,
And there another sobbing out the night,
Whose darling son has brought disgrace upon her.

Hark! the glad music on the morning air,
When the sweet summer day is just awaking;
And hark afar, those accents of despair,
On the wild shores where stormy waves are breaking.

Here rings aloud some merry marriage bell,
And some fair bride goes with her aids attended;
And here is tolling the sad funeral knell,
As some young happy mother's life is ended.

And so moves on the pilgrimage of earth,
Our pathway now is light, now dark and dreary;
The hours of grief press close the hours of mirth,
And happy days give place to days awary;

But in those habitations of the blest,
In that far land beyond the gloomy river,
The tired soul shall find its long-sought rest,
And the glad songs of joy shall flow for ever!

The Congregationalist.

Family Circle.

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

BY JOHN S. HART, LL.D.

No writings, if well read, are so impressive, none are so capable of high elocutionary effect as the Holy Scriptures. Yet of all books that are publicly read for the edification of the people, none ordinarily is read so badly as the Bible. It is not merely that public readers fail to give to the words the fulness of power and beauty that is in them. It is not merely that the reading lacks rhetorical elegance and finish, and that Holy Writ as uttered by such persons ceases to charm and captivate. The bare meaning even is not rendered. The Scriptures are often read as one would read a formula in an unknown tongue, whose alphabet and pronunciation he had mastered, but without having a slightest idea of what the words meant, or whether they had any meaning. They are often read with an entire perversion of the meaning.

It is no part of my present purpose to lay down rules for reading. Yet I do wish to say to superintendents, and to all who are required to lead the devotions of others, Give earnest heed to this matter. You may never learn to give to the Scriptures the melting power which they had when coming from the lips of Dr. Mason or Elizabeth Fry. You may not have the natural gifts of voice and intellect, or the opportunities of culture, which those eminent persons had. But there is a certain degree of excellence which you may attain. There are certain faults of manner which you may avoid, and which you surely will avoid if you desire earnestly to give effectiveness to this part of your public duties.

Study beforehand the passage which you intend to read at the opening. It is no easy matter to find out exactly what is meant, and all that is meant, by the written words of another. We are accustomed in every-day intercourse to

leave a great deal of our meaning to be expressed and supplemented by the tone of the voice, and by significant gestures and looks. When only the voiceless, inanimate words are before us, it requires for their full comprehension not merely practiced skill in verbal and grammatical analysis, but often such historical knowledge, and always a vigorous imagination to bring the original circumstances full and vividly before the mind. In the passage, John xx. 16, for instance, when Jesus turns and says "Mary!" it is evidently in that voice of familiar tenderness which says, by its very tone, "Do you not know me?" Mary's "Rabboni!" is in like manner an expression of surprised, joyful recognition. A mere string of the words does not bring out the meaning. Imagination must work. The scenes must stand clearly out before the mind. Then only will the voice do its office as a true interpreter of this most beautiful passage. Who that ever heard the almost despairing wail with which the venerable Dr. Archibald Alexander used to utter the cry, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani!" but felt that he had received a new revelation of the meaning of that mysterious utterance? It was not that Dr. Alexander understood Hebrew better than thousands of others have done. It was because he had meditated upon the subject until he had the whole dreadful scene fully before him.

SILENCE.

The Tower of Babel is as significant an emblem of our heritage of woe as the lost Paradise; the masterful dominion of one, as well as in the confusion of many tongues, individuality, freedom, and progress are over-laid or thwarted; speech becomes an echo, a wearisome refrain, instead of an original utterance; glib reason is mistaken for personal thought, and life in the less highly endowed instead of being an intellectual experience is reduced to a mechanical exchange of words. "A man full of words," says the Psalmist, "shall not prosper upon the earth"; and it is by musing, and not talking, by that the heart is kindled into worship, and the mind illuminated by truth. Sydney Smith enjoyed even Macaulay's "flashes of silence." I remember one of those placid women, neat, calm, and kindly of mien, whose expression as well as garb denotes a member of the Society of Friends, who came into the apartment of a neighbour, seated herself, smoothed the white kerchief over her gentle bosom, and with a deep sigh of relief, exclaimed, "What safety there is in silence!" She then related, with a kind of plaintive indignation, the experiments of a trader in whom she confided, and with whom she had long had transactions, to defraud her. When the intention became apparent, her wrath rose, but, in accordance with the principles of her sect, she restrained its utterance, and left his presence. "It was hard," she confessed, "to keep the old Adam down," but it appeared the doing so was a rebuke keenly felt. Indeed, no protest is so effective as silence. We felt this on one occasion when, at a table encircled by courteous gentlemen, an underbred man made an inquiry which all present but the interlocutor felt to be indelicate and presuming. The person addressed made no reply; the query was repeated, and one of the guests asked if it was heard. "I never answer impertinent questions," said the insulted gentleman, quietly. The aggressor quailed as no reproaches could have made him. How effective, in certain cases, is what has been aptly called "the conspiracy of silence!" It is the most eloquent form of remonstrance and contempt. Calumny is thus deprived of its sting; injustice is lived down. Even will is weakened by over-expression. "I have always found," says Ruskin, "that the less we speak of our intentions the more chance there is of our realizing them." If any living writer of the English tongue owes his influence and fame to an eloquent and audacious

fluency whereby the reader is carried away on a glowing sea of words, it is John Ruskin; and yet note his recent protest and confession: "I have had what, in many respects, I boldly call the *misfortune* to set my words somewhat prettily together; not without a foolish vanity in the poor knack that I had of doing so, until I was leavily punished for this pride by finding that many people thought of the words only, and not of their meaning." And elsewhere in the same treatise he remarks: "No true painter ever speaks or ever has spoken much of his art; the greatest speak nothing. The moment a man can really do his work, he becomes speechless about it. All words become idle to him."—*Atlantic Monthly.*

DOOLITTLE'S HENS.

Here is a fair illustration of "quick temper." A person in a passion very frequently jumps at conclusions so suddenly as to jerk his own head off, as they say,— "I say, neighbour Snobs, if you don't keep your hens out of my garden, I will shoot them."

"Very well, Doolittle, shoot away; only if you kill any of my hens, throw them into my yard."

Crack went the fowling-piece, morning after morning, and the large, fat hens were pitched into neighbour Snobs' yard. They cooked well. After a fortnight or more, Doolittle discovered Snobs never had any hens, and that he had been shooting his own, they having broken out of his own coop.

FAITH.—The following story well illustrates the assurance of faith:—

One day when Bonaparte was reviewing some troops, the bridle of his horse slipped from his hand, and the horse galloped off. A common soldier ran, and laying hold of the bridle, brought back the horse to the Emperor's hand, when he said to the man, "Well done, captain." The soldier inquired, "Of what regiment, sire?" "Of the Guards," answered Napoleon, pleased with his instant belief in his word. The Emperor rode off; the soldier threw down his musket, and, though he had no epaulets on his shoulders, no sword by his side, nor any other mark of advancement, he ran and joined the staff of commanding officers. They laughed at him and said, "What have you to do here?" He replied, "I am captain of the Guards." They were amazed, but he said, "The Emperor has said so, and therefore I am." In like manner, though the word of God, "He that believeth hath everlasting life," is not confirmed by the feelings of the believer, he ought to take the word of God as true because He has said it, and thus honour Him as a God of truth, and rejoice with joy unspeakable.

WHAT IS THINE AGE?—"Father," said a Persian monarch to an old man, who, according to Oriental usage, bowed before the sovereign's throne, "pray be seated; I cannot receive homage from one bent with years, and whose head is white with the frosts of age."

"And now, father," said the monarch, when the old man had taken the proffered seat, "tell me thine age; how many of the sun's revolutions hast thou counted?"

"Sire," answered the old man, "I am but four years old."

"What?" interrupted the king, "fearest thou not to answer me falsely, or dost thou jest on the very brink of the tomb?"

"I speak not falsely, sire," replied the aged man, "neither would I offer a foolish jest on a subject so solemn. Eighty years I have wasted in sinful pleasures, and in amassing wealth, none of which I can take with me when I leave this world. Four years only have I spent in doing good to my fellowmen; and shall I count those that have been utterly wasted? Are they not worse than a blank? And is not that portion only worthy to be reckoned as a part of my life, which has truly answered life's best end?"

Ecclesiastical News.

CANADIAN.

DIOCESE OF MONTREAL.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES IN THE MONTREAL CHURCHES.—A contemporary records as an extraordinary fact that most of the preachers in the city churches last Sunday admitted that it was doubted by some whether the birth of Christ actually occurred on the day now observed in commemoration of that event. It is, perhaps, a pity to disturb the satisfaction with which our enterprising friend chronicles this strange coincidence, but we must assure him that we never yet heard a "Christmas sermon" in which the doubt was not raised, and dismissed as a matter of not the slightest consequence. Very few of our people, we believe, are so foolish as to suppose that it is possible to fix with any certainty the date of the nativity, and we believe that most churchmen agree with us in thinking that the Church has the right to set apart any day that may be deemed most suitable for the commemoration of the birth of Christ. Most of the city churches last Sunday were more or less elaborately decorated, and the services were throughout appropriate to the sacred season. The congregation in the cathedral at morning prayer was unusually large, and the service was of a most interesting character. The prayers were read by the Rev. Canon Baldwin, M.A., and His Lordship the Metropolitan preached from Col. iii. 11,— "Christ is all." The discourse was listened to with profound attention.

The Holy Communion was afterwards administered by His Lordship, assisted by Ven. Archdeacon Leach. In the evening the Rev. Canon Baldwin preached an excellent sermon from Haggai ii. 7. The musical service, both morning and evening, was everything that could be desired. The anthems, which were effectively rendered, were most appropriate, that in the morning being Hopkins' "Let us now go," &c., (Luke ii. 10. 11,) and that in the afternoon, Handel's "There were shepherds," &c., with "For unto us a child is born." Among the ladies and gentlemen who rendered valuable service in the choir were Miss Easty, Miss Bethune, Miss Idler, Mrs. Bethune, Mrs. Grassett, Mr. Bethune, and Mr. Maltby.

The beauty of the new St. George's church was enhanced by decorations of a very tasteful character. At the morning service the prayers were read by the Ven. Archdeacon Bond, the sermon being preached by the Rev. J. Carmichael, from Luke ii. 13, 14. In the evening the Rev. Mr. Carmichael read prayers, and Dr. Bond preached from the words "Of His fulness have all ye received." The sermon, in which the fulness of pardon and grace, of which Christ as the Mediator is the dispenser, was shown, was most solemn and searching, and could not fail to produce an impression on all whose consciences were not hopelessly seared. In Trinity church there was an average congregation at the morning service, when the sermon was preached by the Rev. Canon Bancroft, D. D., from the Gospel according to St. Luke, ii. 13, 14. The evening sermon was preached by the Rev. E. Waters, Heb. i. 1. We are unable, from an unusual press of matter, to particularize the services in the other churches; it must suffice to say that they will be long remembered by those who were privileged to take part in them.

VISITATION.—Our beloved Metropolitan, in the discharge of his official duties, has already had some experience of the rigour, and, we trust, also of the comforts of a Canadian winter. We have before us some notes of an interesting visit recently paid by his Lordship to some of the parishes in the Eastern Townships.

His Lordship, accompanied by the Ven. Archdeacon Bond, left Montreal on the morning of the 14th, arriving at Waterloo at 7 o'clock. The night, like two or three succeeding it, was very bleak and wintry. A more unpropitious day for a church