

Pastor and People.

PROVIDENCE.

How oft, O God, when we have wept in vain
O'er Thy decrees, and blurred with fretful tears
The heavenward window of the soul, appears
Thy purpose sweet and wise, in after years,
Like sunshine streaming through the veils of rain!

If we had had our way—if thou had'st given
The lesser good into our pleading hands
Withholding larger; if the small demands
Of human choice, that sees nor understands
Life's broader issues, had prevailed with heaven;

If we had never wept, nor known the keen,
Pure, cleansing pain of sorrow's sacred fire—
The broken tie, the unfulfilled desire—
Our sluggish lives had never risen higher,
But, fixed in self, had ever selfish been.

But Thou hast led us out of self, hast shown
How love's great circle rounds from soul to soul,
How sorrow makes up quick to others' dole,
And binds each unit in the larger whole
Of life and love, complete in Thee alone.

O God, Thy thoughts enfold us all! The days
E'en of this brief, imperfect life attest,
Ere they are spent, Thy will is ever best.

Oh, may we in Thy love and wisdom rest,
For Thou dost know the end of all our ways!

—James Buckman, in the Congregationalist.

THE USE OF THE BIBLE.

The study of the Bible to find possible flaws, seemingly contradictory statements, evidence of the infirmities of human transcribers or something that can be twisted into an objectionable representation of the nature of God, is unprofitable. It has had full trial, and the results are not inviting or encouraging. From the day when the Gospel was acknowledged to be foolishness to the Greek and a stumbling block to the Jew, this kind of study has been going on. Nothing of value has come out of it. The great mass of the outcome has proved absolutely worthless. The alleged flaws, contradictions, misrepresentations of Divine attributes and methods, have pretty much all been proved unfounded. The blunders that have been made by the objectors to the Bible have been very numerous and have been exposed. This kind of study has scalped itself rational, scholarly and claimed admiration for its sincere endeavour to get at the truth. In practice it has generally reached a lie, that is, the results vociferously declared to be attained, have proved untrue and have been abandoned necessarily.

Deplorable results have also followed this manner of Biblical research. REGARD for the authority of God has been reduced in the minds and consciences of men, and a decline of morality has followed. The connection between morality and intelligence is so close that as men in the mass have declined in morals by substituting a human for the revealed standard, they have become also less intelligent. Crime has increased; philanthropy has languished, domestic and social life have become corrupt, political life has degenerated, as this kind of study of the Bible has flourished.

But there is another use of the Bible. It is illustrated in the habit of Boerhaave, the famous Dutch physician, one of the fathers of modern medical practice, of whom it is said that his "celebrity has scarcely been equalled by that of any physician in modern times." His biographers say that it was his custom to select every morning a verse or passage of Scripture for prayerful meditation during the day, to attain spiritual profit. He accepted it in simple, perfect faith as the Word of God, and received it into his heart

with supplication for the help of the Holy Spirit to enable him to understand it and to obtain from it the benefit it was intended to bestow. He is a specimen of the profitable study of the Bible. There have been many like him in this. It made him unusually intelligent, benevolent, pure and strong, remarkably successful in his profession, peaceful, hopeful and happy in life and in death, and the benefactor of mankind. Before his death, in about the year 1740, his fame had extended not only throughout Christendom, but even to the empire of China.

What this use of the Bible in simple, filial faith did for the great Dutch physician, it has done for centuries for thousands of men and women and children. They have been made the children of God, the followers of Christ, partaking of His nature, the saints of the Most High God, and heirs of everlasting life. They have been the fountains of intelligence, examples in morals, patterns of benevolence, the mainstay of truth and goodness in the communities in which they have lived. Superstitions have vanished, useful discoveries and inventions have multiplied, philanthropic endeavours to relieve human want and woe have flourished in their presence and by their example and influence. No other book has done as much for men as individuals or for communities and nations. It has proved itself adapted to the intellectual, moral and religious wants of men as are sunlight, moonlight and starlight, and air, and water to physical needs. Nothing like it has ever existed among men.

This is the proper use of the Bible now. One of the best of men, on whom other men leaned, to whom they looked for counsel, whose co-operation they sought in their commercial enterprises, and who had a large part in the financial and commercial endeavours to promote invention, transportation and trade forty years ago, said to his pastor, "I have found that I must have an hour to myself, free from interruption, every morning for the study of the Bible and for prayer, to prepare me for the duties of the day." That hour made him what he was. He was not only distinguished in trade, but also eminent in philanthropy. Such an hour will yield like fruit to other men.

Another use of the Bible is to preach it, or to sustain the preaching of it. There is no substitute for it. What is called "worship," does not and cannot take the place of the preaching of the Word of God. The Bible has been entrusted to the Church with the Divine command, "Go, teach it," "Go, preach it," to every man everywhere. It is the Bible which is to be preached, to be made known, to be applied to human consciences and conduct, to be furnished as mental, moral and spiritual food, refreshment and comfort. The power of the Church of God resides in declaring the whole counsel of God, and illustrating and enforcing it by example.

Such preaching since Christ died has never been in vain. It has made bad men good, cruel men kind, ignorant men intelligent, indolent men industrious, despondent and despairing men hopeful, and filled perishing men with the power of an endless life. It has reformed communities, enlightened and elevated the world. Since the world began there have been many philosophies, many religions, many methods of instruction, but never anything worthy to be compared with the preaching of the Bible.

It is a great thing to be a preacher of the Bible. Young men who have recently graduated from college ought to consider seriously whether they shall not devote themselves to preaching the Word of the Lord. Parents, also, should consider whether their sons can be dedicated to any occupation superior to the preaching of the truth revealed by God.—N. Y. Christian Intelligencer.

EXPERIENCE AND LIFE.

It is a truth which we have all learned from some experience through which we have been led, that any great experience, seriously and greatly met and passed through, makes the man who has passed through it always afterwards a purer me-

dium through which the highest truth may shine on other men. Have you not seen it? Here is some man whom you have known long. You have seemed to have reached the end of all that it is possible for you to get from him, all that it is possible for him to do for you. Nothing has come through him from behind to you. You have seen a sort of glint or glimmer of reflection of God's light upon the surface of his life, as the sun might be reflected on a plate of steel; but nothing of God or God's truth has come through him to you, as the sun shines through a lens of glass, pouring its increased intensity upon the wood it sets in flame.

But some day you meet that man, and he is altered. Tenderer, warmer, richer, he seems to be full of truths and revelations, which he easily pours out to you. Now you not merely see him; you see through him to things behind. As you talk with him, as you look into his face, you see with new, surprising clearness what God is, what man is; what a great thing it is to live, what a great thing it is to die, how mysterious and pathetic are sorrow and happiness, and fear and hope. You cannot begin to tell the change by merely thinking that the man has learned some new facts, and is telling them to you as a book might tell them from its printed page. The very substance of the man is altered, so that he stands between the eternal truths and you, no longer as a screen, which shuts them from your sight, but as an atmosphere through which they come to you all radiant. You ask what has come to him, and you hear (if you are near enough for him to tell you his most sacred history) of some profound experience. He has passed through an overwhelming sorrow. He has stood upon the brink of some tremendous danger. He has spent a day and a night in the deep of some bewildering doubt. He has been overmastered by some sudden joy. It may have been one of these or another. The result has been in such a change of the very substance of the nature, that, whereas it was before all thick and muddy, so that whatever light fell upon it was either cast aside, or else absorbed into it, and lost, now it makes truth first visible, and then clear and convincing to the fellow-men who see truth through it.

And when you try to analyze this change, do you not find that it consists in an impregnation of the nature which has had this new experience with two forces—one a love for truth, the other a love for man? and it is in the perfect combination of these two in any life, that the clarifying of that life into a power of transmission and irradiation truly lies. What man goes worthily through sorrow and does not come out hating shams and pretences, hungering for truth; and also full of sympathy for his fellow-man, whose capacity for suffering has been revealed to him by his own? It is the perfect blending of these two constituents in the new nature of your tried and patient friend, which has given him this wondrous power of showing God, and the truth to you.

What man goes bravely and faithfully through doubt, and does not bring out a soul to which truth seems to be infinitely precious, and the human soul the most mysterious, sacred thing in all the world? Out of the union of those two persuasions has come the prophethood of this life, which now you cannot look at without seeing the infinite behind it, made clear by it.

Surely if we can believe this, then the way in which God lets His children encounter great, and sometimes terrible experiences, is not entirely inexplicable. Surely, if these souls which now are deep in sorrow, or are being cast up and down, and back and forth in doubt, are being thus annealed and purified, that they may come to be, revealers, mediators between God and their fellow-men, then into our wonder at the existence of doubt and sorrow in God's world, there comes a little ray of light. Who could not bear anything that could refine his life into fitness for such a privilege as that?—Philips Brooks.

HE SHOWED THEM SAMPLES.

A Christian worker was holding a preaching service in the open air, when a well-dressed man drew near, and at a pause in the service asked permission to address the meeting. Permission being given, he denounced religion as a humbug and a sham, and advised men to go to the socialist meetings, which, he said, would do more good.

While he was speaking, the leader of the meeting learned from one of the men there, that he was a drummer for a dry goods house, and a noted infidel. As he closed, the Christian man said to him, "I hear you are a drummer, and go from town to town with samples of the goods manufactured by your firm. Now, you are engaged in another business, I ask you to show your samples. I will show you what we are doing."

Beckoning to two men to stand up beside him, he continued, "Here are two brothers. You see them now. Five years ago they were the biggest scamps and drunkards in the district. They were wife-beaters, and even a terror in the saloon. But five years ago they went to a little gospel meeting, and there they gave their hearts to Jesus. Now they and their wives are well dressed, and their homes comfortably furnished, yet they are earning just the same wages as they were before their conversion, and in their homes all is happiness. That is the work of the Gospel.

"They are the samples of what it can do. Now show me the samples of socialism. Show me one drunkard made sober, one dishonest man made honest, one immoral man reclaimed, and then we will listen to you. If socialism is better than Christianity, show your samples."

There was a general laugh at the confusion which sat visibly on the face of the socialist, and amid the roar of derision, he slunk away.—Exchange.

NOTHING HIDDEN.

"In China a 'private house' is unknown. Anyone can go anywhere, and if there is the least provocation, he will do so." So says the Rev. A. H. Smith, after many years of missionary service in that country. To shut the door is a bad sign. "What is going on within, that he dare not admit his fellow-townsmen?" people are likely to say. There are no newspapers, no objects of general and human interest to attract attention, and, as men and women must be interested in something, it is natural that they should be fond of neighbourly gossip. From Mr. Smith's account of the matter, it is plain how very little Chinese and Yankees have in common. Every Chinese has relatives beyond all count or remembrance. His wife has as many more. His married children add to the ever-widening circle. By the time he is sixty years of age, a man is related to hundreds upon hundreds of individuals, each of whom is entirely conscious of the relationship, and does not forget or ignore it. Not only do all the members of this army of relatives feel themselves entitled to know all the details of one's affairs, but the relatives of the relatives—a swarm branching into infinity—will, perhaps, do the same. If the man is rich, or a magistrate, they certainly will do it. One cannot make a business trip to sell watermelons, to buy mules, to collect a debt, of which everyone will not speedily know all that is to be known. Chinese memories are treasure-houses of everything relative to cash and to dates. How much land each man owns, when it was acquired, when pawned, and when redeemed, how much was expended at the funeral of his mother, and at the wedding of his son, how the daughter-in-law is liked at the village into which she has married, the amount of her dowry, what bargain was made with the firm that let the bridal chair—all these items and a thousand more, everybody knows and never forgets. Though two men at a fair may do their bargaining with their fingers concealed in their capacious sleeves, it will go hard if the neighbours do not discover the terms at last. There are no secrets in China. Everybody crowds in everywhere—if not in sight, then "behind the arras." Everyone reads every despatch he can get at. He reads "private" letters in the same way. "What!" he exclaims, "not let me see?" No wonder Chinese have an adage, "If you would not have it known that you do it, do not do it."