CANON GAL

OLD THOUGHTS ON AN OLD THEME.

meetings. His problem and his complaint are both old; and our counsel must be as old as the question he asks. it; only old truths to be reiterated.

The first condition of a good prayermeeting is to have something to say. and then to say it. The underlying cause of poor prayer-meetings is that sinners. the pastor has nothing in his head and the people have nothing in their a good prayer-meeting by dragooning hearts. You cannt bring chaff to the Lord and pass it off as wheat. If the people are empty, more reason why the pastor must come full. If they have will not keep it up for a year. Give nothing to say to each other he must them something to come for and they have something to say to them. If they come cold he must come warm. You cannot make a tropical meeting by gathering together a hundred ice-berg Christians. He must be a gulf stream to melt them.

The next thing is to get rid of formality. Pews and benches are murder, ers of prayer-meetings. Meet in a par- live as long as the Anglo-Saxon race, lor if you can. How often do you see a or the English language. In reviewdull prayer-meeting break up, and then | ing the English soldiers at Gibraltar. after the meeting is all over, the people gather about the stove in one corner and spend half an hour over a subject seen most of the soldiers of the conof real live interest, and the best part tinent. That he liked the German of the prayer meeting is after the prayer-meeting is dismissed. The story is told, we believe it is authentic, of an eccentric but successful pastor who opened his prayer-meeting as usual with a hymn, a Scripture-reading and a could be improved. "There is someprayer, and then called on the brethren for remarks. No one stirred. Would any brother lead in prayer? No one did. "Well then," said the pastor, "if | quest." no one wants to speak and no one wants to pray we had better go home; receive the benediction;" and he dismissed them. They gathered around the stove and discussed their prayer-meetings, and made a new beginning that night. The method might fail in other hands, but the principle was sound. Anything to break the dreadful formality of a prayer meeting that is as stiff as a brook in January because it is as cold. In the third place, how can we expect

to make good prayer-meetings when we cut off the help of the best religious element in the church, that of the women? That is as if you were to turn out the clarionets and flutes and instruments of melody from a band, and leave | New York and printed in the Tribune :nothing but bassoons and base viols to make music with. They can rumble away down in the bass, but who cares for such music? A woman is sentimental, and a prayer-meeting, is a place for sentiment and feeling, and as long as we do not get that in our meetings, and have a leader who knows only the bass and tenor in spiritual things, we cannot carry our meetings very high. Better call our meetings conference meetings, but do away with the name religious meetings, than to put on the bellows and blow up the coals when there is no wood, or when the wood is as green as red oak.

And it is not impossible to get women

to take a part in the meeting if they are wanted. But they are sensitive and if they are not wanted. In morning prayer-meetings in times of revival we had no difficulty in getting women to take part. A woman, in answer to a call for requests, says, "I wish prayer for my husband;" and we ask "Where was he born?" to which she is very ready to reply; a second question brings a second reply, and so on; and before she knows it she has given us the inspiration of a real experience. A mother asks prayer for her absent child. "Where is he?" "At sea." "Was this child consecrated in prayer?" "Yes." What have you done yourself for your child?" "I have been in the habit of daily prayer for him and with him." Pretty soon we get the whole history of the child, those things that no one can say but a mother, and she does she not feel as though she were making a speech at all.

We get letters from women continually that are full of a devoutly inquisitive spirit in regard to the most vital points in religious life; and women naturally search out those things, and feel the fine lines a great deal more than men do. They are the ones who are naturally interested in spiritual topics. and their interest ought to be not merely passive; it ought to be actively exer-

Another condition is promtness and vigor of movement. The minister must, at every hazard, keep the meeting going. It never ought to last more than three quarters of an hour, and ought to begin at the stroke of the clock, and end with equal promptness. "Whatever you have to do you have got to do it quickly, for this meeting is going on:" that ought to be the spirit of the lead er. And in one way or other we must get rid of the spiritual parrots who get up and repeat what has been said

not make a strong prayer-meeting. Do you say, "I have no adaptation to any such work as that?" Well then, you have no adaptation to carry on a prayer meeting. If a man can only drive a half-blind horse that is so lame that he cannot run away, he would better not A reader of the Christian Union, the drive any kind of horse. Ministers are pastor of a smallcountry church, desires | continually telling sinuers they must to know how to make good prayer | change their habits, must reform their lives, must ré-cast their characters; that by God's grace they can do it and ought to do it; and when you tell them For there is nothing new to be said upon to go into this kind of work they will say, "Oh, my nature is not adapted to anything of that sort;" just as if ministers' natures are not capable of being changed as well as those of any other

One other thing: you can never make or coaxing people to come out to a Barmacide feast. The hungry man may take the joke for a single night but he will come. The only way to make a good prayer-meeting is to make the prayer-meeting good .- Chris. Union. .

"SWING OF CONQUEST."

From the rocks of Gibraltar comes Gen. Grant gave his opinion of the soldiers of Europe. He said he had soldiers; that the Spanish soldiers only superior soldiers; but that he had seen nothing to compare with the English. That he did not see how their discipline thing about them not found in any other soldiers-it may be in their Anglo-Saxon blood-they have the swing of con-

This is history condensed. There is also in it a prophecy. This swing of conquet imposes its duties as well as brings its glory. Swinging through the centuries, and over the continents, it must bear up and forward the religion of the Bible and the freedom of Protestantism. The man who drives a swift horse must hold a steady rein. The Churches that ride behind this swinging, conquring race must keep faith with God, as well as step with events.

THE LIGHT ON THE WAVES.

The following is the eloquent conclusion of Dean Stanley's sermon preached in

" May I close these remarks by an illus-Biscay? As soon as those who had escaped from the sinking vessel found themselves in a small boat in which they had taken refuge, in the midst of the raging sea they found their chief danger came not from the solid massive sweep of waters, but from the angry breaking waves which, from time to time, descended upon them, and against which every eye and hand had to watch with unsbated attention. As the shades of evening drew on. so the survivor told me, their hearts sank shrinking, and they will not take part at the thought that in the darkness of the night it would be impossible to see those insidious breakers, and that sooner or later they would be caught and engulfed by them. But with the darkness there came a corresponding safety. Every one of these dangerous waves as it rolled toward them was crested with a phosphorescent light which showed its coming afar off, and enabled the scaman to guard against it as carefully as if they had been in the full light of day. The spirits of the little crew revived, and those from time to time-the cowards and desperadoes among them-were for turning back to the ship, were guided by these corrus. cations through the night, and in the earby dawn they caught view of a distant vessel by which they were at last saved.

"Mark that crest of phosphorescent light. On the top of those breaking bil. lows is the light of Divine grace, the compensating force of Providence. In the darkness of this mortal life, and on the wave of this troublesome world our perplexities and dangers and griefs bring with them or may bring with them their own remedy. On each bursting wave of disap pointment and vexation there may be the grace of heavenly light which reveals the peril, and shows the wave and guides us through the roaring storm. Out of doubt may come faith, out of the grief may come hope, and to the upright and godly disposed there rises light from darkness. With each new temptation there may come a way to escape, with each new diffi culty there may come some new explana tion. As life advances it does indeed sometimes seem to us as a vessel going to pieces as though we were broken fragments of a ship or a solitary skiff on thewide waste of waters; but so long as our mortal over and over for forty years. A weak existence lasts we must never give up the that ye stole into the box yonder, fornint lending them either a "Discipline or duty of hoping. The sense that keeps us the post.' And I must do it, missis, jist the "Probationer's Manual." He is a strong men, spiritual heroes.

ness-that same good instinct forbids un- so; or I go home wid a lie to the priest; profitable sadness. We must persevere unwhich we will shape our course. Forward not backward, must we steer. The speck becomes a mass, and the mass becomes a ship. Have patience and perseverance. and believe that there is still a future before every one, and so we shall at last reach the haven where we should meet."

THE BRAVERY OF BRITISH SEAMEN.

Glorious proof of the gallantry and discipline of British seamen is furnished, says a writer in the Daily Telegraph, by the narratives which have reached us from her Majesty's ship "Thunderer." We know at length how that huge iron clad was cleared for action at a signal from the admiral; how the water-tight compartments into which the vessel is divided were closed, the men at their stations, and the guns loaded. We learn how. following one broadside fired at an imaginary enemy, there came "a strong report,' with a sound "altogether different another ringing sentence destined to from that which a broadside makes," and after what fashion the ship's company became aware that something was wrong. Then comes the story of how the men remained, each little party in its own com partment, with the lights all out by reason of the concussion, and the knowledge that whatever had happened they, must lacked good officers to make them very prepare to die, if need be, without opening the partition doors, in order to save the ship. One who is at the bottom of the ladder which leads to the batterydeck is sent to sound the wells, and as he tries to pass along the deck he finds the man hatch way choked with a torpedo, and filled with smoke and flame, himself and his comrades "like rats-in a trap." When eventually he succeeded in his mission the sight which meets his eyes is terrible in the extreme. Men who but a moment before were hale and well are lying blackened and disfigured so as not to be recognizable; others are striving to lead away those more injured than themselves; while from seme of the dying comes a cry that comrades " who are even worse than they, should be attended to first." There is no unseemly fright manifested, although at this dreadful moment no one can tell the cause or the extent of the catastrophe. For aught that any man on board knows, the hold of some other accident have occurred seri- thief." tration which I once heard from the lips ously imperilling the safety of the ship of a rough seafaring man-one of few and the lives of the crew. Yet ne survivors of a great shipwreck which took one quits his post, the dead are reverently place some ten years ago in the Buy of taken up, the wounded carefully removed, the debris of the broken gun and turret is cleared away, and then the ship's company "set to work coffin making," while those whose number will hereafter be missing from the mess are prepared for interment. It is, with all its lamentable accompaniments, a grand and instructive scene. Not a word is heard of irregularity; for though as many men have been killed and wounded in a single moment as would have suffered from a general action, and by a cause altogether unknown at the time, yet that good ship's crew stands at general quarters, and despite the alarm and the carnage, bears itself as English sailors alone know how to do. In the annals of our navy there is many a brave record, and the tale of how our seamen have done their duty is known in every land; but, from the foundering of the "Birkenhead" until to-day, has no story been related in which these marvellous qualities have been more plainly set forth than on the occasion of the explosion on board the "Thunderer."

THE CASUISTRY OF THE CON-FESSIONAL.

The mistress and the Irish cook are in

"Indade, missus, and what for should I stale from ye? I must go and tell it all to the priest. I kneel down to confess me sins; and he asks me so many questions; there's nothing in me that he doesn't find out. I daren't tell him a lie. I must tell him just what I took from ye and all about it; the tay, the sugar, the coffee, and all unbeknownst to ye. asks me just what it was all worth; and I must tell him to a penny; for I mustn't tell a lie to him, ye know. 'Is that all?' he says, says he. 'Ye stop and think, and tell me ivery thing;', and his eves look into me very sowl. And I takes care to put it high enough, to be sure of me sowl. Then he says to me, says he : Have ye got the money wid ye?' I says, Yes, Father B.' Ye know ye must have the money about ye when ye go to confess. And thin he points up to the poorbox, hanging there before me eyes; and he says, says he: 'See that ye dont lave this house till ye've put ivry penny of

and then what's the good of confessing, til the morning breaks. That speck on and what becomes of me sowl? So the distant horizon may be a vessel by what's the good to me, if I stales your sugar ?"

The above was a veritable occurrence in the city of Boston, not long ago. It carries internal evidence of truth, so far as this-that an Irish servant would not be likely to eriginate the adroit casuistry of giving to the poor the proceeds of her pilfering. Some shrewder mind than hers started the idea. But is that the casuistry of the confessional? A certain old Book declares of the Almighty : "I hate robbery for burnt-offering."-Congrega-

QUICKFOOT.

An Indian who had been out hunting had killed a deer, from which he cut off a joint of venison, and hung it up as high as he could in his wigwam. He then went off into the forest to look at his traps He was not long gone: but when he came back, to his surprise and anger, he found that his fine joint had disappeared and no trace of the thief was to be found-at least neither you nor I could have noticed any, however carefully we might have looked. However, the Indian snatched up his tomahawk, and off he went in hot pursuit of the culprit, straight through the forest.

He had not gene far before he met a friendly white man, a trapper, who, seeing him going along with his eyes fixed upon the ground, asked him what trail he was pursuing.

"I seek," said Quickfoot. " a little old white man, with a small gun, who has got with him a little dog with a stumpy, bushy tail. He is a robber, for he has entered my wigwam and stolen my venison. I will kill both him and his dog."

" My brother, I saw not far from here just such a man. But how dost thou know him so well? For you have not yet seen him.".

"I am in haste, but if thou wilt know listen: "I found a pile of stones under the place where my venison was hanging. Had the robber not been short he would not have required these to stand on. He was old, for his foot steps Were close together. He was white, for his toes turned in, which an Indian's never do. If the gun had been long, it would not have left a mark on the bark of the tree, as it did when ft leaned against it. So, thou seest the vessel may have been rent, or it was easy, having eyes, to detect the

" Of what use would the eyes of Quickfoot be, if they had not shown him the dog's feet were close together, as he walked on the sand; and that the short bushy tail measured itself as he sat wagging it. while his master was belping himself to my dinner? But farewell, I must hurry or I shall not get back my venison from that white thief."

With these words Quickfoot hurried away, and was lost amid the deep foliage of a Western forest.

FAMILY READING.

HOW A SUCCESSFUL LEADER LEADS HIS CLASS.

I know a class-leader who has had for three years a class of about fifty members, ranging from ten years old to eighty. It includes various grades of society and intelligence. The average attendance is about thirty members weekly. The following are his rules, which he carries out systematically :-

1. He visits at their homes all the members of his class; knows them and their families: never fails to make the children of the family glad to see him.

2. He is careful to speak to his members on the street; chats sociably with them, and tries to leave a good religious impression on their minds. He never fails to let the "stay-aways" know they are missed. He opens class on the minute; after the prayer and second hymn, he reads a few verses with especial reference to some topic which he has previously selected for the evening, and all the members, when called, are expected to speak upon the topic, though they are at liberty to add to it anything else they may desire to talk about. He only speaks to the members in reply when something seems to him to demand it, frequently passing ten or twelve with only a single sentence or a line of Scripture, or if an appropriate verse has been sung. saying nothing. The evening before any especial service, such as love-feast, communion, missionary day, baptism, reception of members, he selects a topic appropriate to the coming occasion, and always instructs his probationers in the questions and answers that will be put to them the following Sabbath, restrain himself and forgive-these are

back in youth from all intemperate glad- as he tells me, wid his eyes looking at me bright, active and cheerful business man, and endeavours to make his classroom a cheerful, social gathering, without in the least degree lowering the tone of its religious character. He calls his members more according to their Christian experience than by position in the class, so as to give variety, try-ing to alternate the disheartened with the bright, the young with the old None are required to speak, and it is so understood in the class-freedom in this as in other things. Reproof he leaves for private application. This no fancy sketch, but a truthful des cription of every-day life.

He believes the topical plan to be a good one, as it breaks up uniformity in giving experience from week to week By viewing a topic from all sides it impresses it very much on the memory. All his memhers like it. If it be com. munion week, he reads about it, im. presses its importance upon the mem. bers, and then asks of each one, "De you partake of it? If so, why do you? If not, why don't you?" It it be love. feast week, similar questions are asked

At one meeting he read Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, and request ed the members to relate their conversion. At another meeting he read I Perer iii. 15, and dwelt especially upon the words, "Be ye ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you," and every member spoke clearly upon the ' reason' of his hope.

Another night he read the incident of the ten lepers, and dwelt upon their unquestioning obedience, and drew the lesson for the class, in giving their ex. perience, of the advantages of obedience to the commands of God and the church, and the results of disobedience. with such particular incidents as they deemed best. Another time he dwelt upon rest in heaven, and the necessity for effort; and inquired of the members their chief hindrances, and how they overcame them.

And thus, week after week, varying the programme, frequently drawing a lesson from the Sabbath school lesson. The class look forward with desire for class night, expect to enjoy themselves and to be profited, and are not disappointed.

PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD IMMEDIATELY."

Robers Annan, the Christian here, put up an iron plate near his house, in Dundee, with the words boldly painted on it, " Prepard to meet thy God." I frequently pass the place, and my attenion was called to it by a friend as being much effaced. I went to the agent for the property on which it was fixed, and got permission from him to renew the paint and the inscription. I then employed a painter to have it done, but he was a long time in get-ting it finished. I went to his shop several times and spoke about it; but one day, as it was still unfinished. I requested him to enter it in his books to be done immediately. I looked over his shoulder afterward, and saw the words written, "Prepare to meet thy God—immediately." I called his attention to it, and said, "That is just what we have to do, for we know not the moment we must pass away into eternity. What awfully solemn examples we have had of tales of death coming to crowds of our fellow-creatures in a moment!" Then, reader, " be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. (Matt. xxiv. 44.) And I desire that Christian friends would pray that this repainted board might be greatly blessed to souls by the Holy Spirit of God; and, also, that many readers of this sketch might seriously now obey the friendly warning: "Prepare to meet thy God-immediately."

COMPOSURE THE TEST OF STRENGTH.

(Observer.)

We mistake strong feelings for strong

character. A man who bears all before him-before whose frown domestics tremble, and whose bursts of fury make the children of the house quake because he has his will obeyed, and his own way in all things, we call him a strong man. The truth is, that is the weak man; it is his passions that are strong; he, mastered by them, is weak. You must measure the strength of a man by the power of the feelings he subdues, not by the power of those which subdue him. And hence, composure is very often the highest result of strength. Did we never see a man receive a flagrant insult, and only grow a little pale, and then reply quietly? That was a man spiritually strong. Or did we never see a man in anguish stand as if carved out of solid rock, mastering himself? or one bearing a hopeless daily trial remain silent, and never tell the world what it was that cankered his home-peace? That is strength. He who, with strong passions, remains chaste—he who, keenly sensitive, with manly power of indignation in him, can be provoked, yet can

A man grows into h or sinks with them. most familiar facts of and holds good in eve tion. Take the arti the poet, what is their shape and form, hefor ear, to the ideal exist imagination? The his own work never it not notorious that skill the more critic please, and sees det which, perhaps, year ed with complace Whence this sensiti Has he lost his ski his sense of beauty or harmony? Not has simply grown, a his conceptions have one compare his we his work as a child.

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