

SERMONS IN SHOES.

BY THEOLOGOR L. CUYLER, D.D.

"Go then and preach!" This was Christ's first commission to the first company of workers he ever sent into his vineyard. He did not stop to organize them into councils, conferences, or synods. Each one who had the Gospel in his heart was to utter it with his tongue. Each one who could heal a sick man or mend a cripple's broken limb was to exert the power. Each one who had a "lamp" of love was to let it shine. Every good man and every good woman was commanded to glorify God their Saviour by "bearing much fruit." They introduced into the world a new style of human life. Such characters and such careers as Paul and John and Stephen and Peter and Dorcas furnished were a novelty in this wicked world. Such sermons in sandals had not been seen before—"going about doing good." There was a mighty power in the preaching of men and women whose lives were Christ-ain discourses, because each one of them was a living manifestation of Jesus Christ to the world. Scoffers might ridicule the apostles' strange doctrines; but they could not ridicule the beauty of the apostles' unselfish, sublime, and holy lives. There laid one great secret of the apostles' power in winning converts to Christ. The sermons were shoes.

Now the question is often asked in our day, "Why are not more persons converted to Christianity?" It is not a sufficient answer to reply that God's purpose is to save only a portion of mankind. God's purpose is to save every one who believes on Jesus Christ and follows him. This only pushes the question further back. "Why do not more persons believe in Christ and follow him?" It is not a sufficient answer to affirm that all sinners are by nature "dead in sin," and that none but the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit can rouse them to spiritual life. These facts were as true in Paul's day as in our own day.

I honestly believe that one chief reason for the fewness of conversions to Christ is that there is so little preaching for Christ in the daily lives of his professed disciples, and such a fearful amount of direct preaching against him. Actions speak louder than words. The bad sermons of the life are an overmatch for the best sermons on Sunday from the lips. The most faithful and eloquent preaching in the pulpit fails to win those who are disgusted and repelled by the unworthy, inconsistent conduct of those who claim to be Christ's representatives. Who supposes, that, if all the Gospel proclaimed on the Sabbath was re-enforced by the eloquence of beautiful and exemplary and useful and holy lives, so few souls would be converted in our congregations?

The simple fact is that every professor of Christianity, every churchmember is a preacher, whether he knows it or not. Every life is a sermon. Some churchmembers find their texts in the shop or the stock-market, and they preach (by their practice) that the chief end of life is to make money. They make more converts to Mammon than to Christ. Others preach the gospel of fashion and self-indulgence; and they attract more to the pleasure party and frolic than they do to the prayer-meeting. What matters it that the eighth commandment is solemnly enforced from the pulpit on the Lord's Day, if those who represent Christ to the world are overreaching their unconvered neighbors in business during the week? For it is the combined weight of the sermons through the week that carries more influence than the one or two discourses spoken on the Sabbath. What Christians do when outside of the sanctuary influences more character and moulds more eternal destinies than what any one Christian can say when inside of the sanctuary, even though he were a Paul in eloquence. Nor would Paul himself have made any converts to the Gospel of the Cross if he had not proved to the world that "Christ liveth in me." His own heroic and holy life was one of the grandest he ever produced. One great reason for the sad lack of conversions to Christ in our days is that so many of the sermons in shoes lead the wrong way.

For remember, my brother-preacher, that a Christ-like life is the mightiest human influence to attract human souls to God. The most unanswerable argument against the subtle skepticism of the day is the living Christian, Jesus commissions every one of his followers to be a winner of souls. He says: "Go, then, and preach!" Go, then, and shine! Go live like me! Bear fruit! Follow me! My grace is sufficient for you! And when our Lord bestows this spiritual gift of a likeness unto himself, he gives a higher boom and a grander power than if he had bestowed the eloquence of a seraph.

It is often said that there are not preachers enough to meet the demands of the land and of the world. That may be true. But every living Christian is a preacher. Every prayerful, earnest, godly life is a sermon. There are a hundred ways of preaching Jesus without choosing a Bible text or standing in a pulpit. A Wilberforce could proclaim the Gospel of love on the floor of the British Parliament, even though he were no seraph and never had a bishop's hand laid upon his honored head. George H. Stuart was an apostle of the cross when he organized the Christian Commission for soldiers' tents; and John Macgregor was another when he organized the "Shoe black Brigades" in the streets of London. Hannah More preached Christ in the drawing-room, and Elizabeth Fry in prison-cells, and Florence Nightingale in the hospitals, and Sarah F. Smiley among the negro freedmen of the South. Our Master scatters his commissions very widely. Harlan Page dropping the tract and the kind word through the city workshops; John Wanamaker, the Christian merchant, mustering poor children into his "Deaf and Dumb" mission-house; James Leavelle, giving his gold to build churches and hospitals; the Dairyman's Daughter, naming the name of Jesus with her faint, dying voice; George Muller, housing and feeding God's orphans—all these were effective and powerful preachers of the glorious Gospel of the son of God. There is a poor needle woman in my congregation whose unselfish, cheerful, holy life impresses me as much as any pulpit message of mine can possibly impress her. A true and noble life is the mightiest of discourses. It is the sermons in shoes that must convert the world to Jesus, if it is ever to be converted.

To-day this world's sorest want is more Christ-like men and women. The preaching it needs is not only the precept, but the practice of a pure, heaven-born piety. A worldly, fashion-loving, covetous, "outwardly church" will never save men from Hell. But a church of living disciples, whose hearts have been cleansed by atoning blood, and whose hearts have been cleansed by atoning blood and whose lives are made beautiful by inward conflict and secret prayer, and made eloquent by noble, holy deeds—these are the preachers who shall win this wicked world to Jesus. Their voice is a trumpet. Their influence is a salt. Their example is a light. Their lives are the sermons that shall wake the dead. But to be such preachers of Christ, we all need the ordination and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

CONSCIENCE AND COURTESY IN CRITICISM.

The lack of sound value in current literary criticism, both in this country and Europe, is notorious. It is so much the work of cliques and schools, or so much the office of men who have chronic habit of finding fault, or so coarse in its personalities, or so incompetent in its judgments through haste and insufficient examination, that it is rarely instructive either to the authors reviewed or to the public. The average column of book notices in a daily paper is quite valueless, by necessity. It is impossible that the reviewer read the books he is expected by the publisher to notice, and so he gives his crude and unconsidered dicta concerning them, going through his pile in a single morning, and helping to make or mar the reputation of their authors, apparently without dreaming how tender the interests are which he handles so carelessly. He seems to forget that all the influence of the journal for which he works stands behind his hastily-written words, and that sensitive men and women are to be warmed or withered by them. Just a little more conscience, or a more candid consultation of such as he may have, would teach him that he has no moral right to give publicly an opinion of a book of which knows nothing. In so small a matter as noticing a book before a competent examination of it, the chances are that he will mislead the public and do injustice to those who nearly always have some claim to the good opinion of the reading world. Publishers expect impossibilities of the daily press, and are largely responsible for what is known as the "book notice"; but the daily press ought to declare its independence, and absolutely refuse to notice any book which has not been thoroughly read. The best and richest of the city press has already done this; but the country press still keeps up its column of book notices every week, written by editors who never have time to look beyond the preface.

In England, criticism is probably more the work of partisanship than it is here. The interests of parties in church and state, and of cliques and schools of literary art, seem to determine everything. It appears to be perfectly understood that everything written by the members of a certain clique will be condemned, and if possible killed, by the combined efforts of another clique, and vice versa. Criticism is simply a mode of fighting. Mr. Blank, belonging to a certain literary clique, writes a volume of verses and prints it. He sends advance copies to his friends, who write their laudations of it, and communicate them to sympathetic journals and magazines. So when it is published, the critiques appear almost simultaneously, and the public is captured by the stratagem. The condemnations come too late to kill the book, and the clever intriguers have their laugh over the result. It is not harsh to say that all criticism born of this spirit is not only intrinsically valueless, but without conscience. The supreme wish to do right and to mete out simple justice to authorship is wanting. The praise is as valueless as the blame.

The old and fierce personalities of English criticism, which so aroused the ire of Byron, and crushed the spirit of some of his less pugnacious contemporaries, have, in a measure, passed away; but really nothing better in the grand result has taken their place. Men stand together for mutual protection, fully aware that they have nothing to expect of justice and fair dealing by any other means. We do not know why it is that the ordinary courtesies of life are denied to authors more than to painters or sculptors or architects, except, perhaps, that painters and sculptors and architects are not judged by their own co-laborers in art. We presume that these, and that singers and actors would fare badly, if all the criticisms upon them were written by their professional brethren; and this fact suggests the animus of those who criticize current literature. It seems to be impossible to get a candid and conscientious judgment of a literary man until after he is dead, and out of the way of all envyings and jealousies and competitions. It seems impossible, also, until this event occurs, to separate a man from his works, and to judge them as they stand. There is no good reason, however, for the personal slings dealt out to authors, whose only sin has been a conscientious wish to deserve well of the public, except what is to be found in the meanest qualities of human nature. The lack of personal, gentlemanly courtesy in current criticism is a disgrace to the critical columns of our newspapers and magazines.

The majority of those who write are sensitive to a high degree, and could not possibly be notable writers were they otherwise. They do the best they can, and that which they do is the record of the highest civilization and culture of their country and period. They publish, trembling to think that what they publish is to be pounced upon and picked to pieces like prey. Their best thoughts and best work are not only treated without respect but are malignantly, maliciously characterized or summarily condemned. All this they are obliged to bear in silence, or suffer the reputation of being thin skinned and quarrelsome. There is no redress and no defence. They have published a book, in which they have incorporated the results of a life of labor and thought and suffering; with the hope of doing good, and of adding some-

thing to the literary wealth of their country; and they have in so doing committed a sin which places them at the mercy of every man who holds a periodical press at his command. It is said that the greatest literary woman living fled her country at the conclusion of that which is perhaps her greatest work, in order to be beyond the reading of the criticisms which the book would call forth. The woman was wise. It was not criticism that she feared: it was the malvolence and injustice of its spirit, to which she would not subject her sensibilities.

There is but one atmosphere in which literature can truly thrive, viz.: that of kindness and encouragement. A criticism from which an author may learn anything to make him better, must be courteous and conscientious. All criticism of a different quality angers or discourages and disgusts him. Our literary men and women are our treasures and our glory. They are the fountain of our purest intellectual delights, and deserve to be treated as such. All that is good in them should have abundant recognition, and all that is bad should be pointed out in a spirit of such friendliness and courtesy that they should be glad to read it and grateful for it. If many of them become morbid, sour, resentful, impatient or unpleasantly self-asserting, it ought to be remembered on their behalf that they have been stung by injustice, and badgered by malice, and made contemptuous by discourteous treatment. It is not unjust to say that all criticism which does not bear the front of personal courtesy and kindness and the warrant of a careful conscience is a curse to literature, and to the noble guild upon which we depend for its production. —Dr. F. G. Holland, in Scribner's for June.

THE SCOFFER SILENCED.

In the backwoods of Canada there resided a good minister, who one evening went out to meditate, as Isaac did, in the fields. He soon found himself on the borders of a forest, which he entered, and walked along a track which had been trodden before him, musing, musing still, until at last the shadows of twilight gathered around him, and he began to think how he should spend a night in the forest. He trembled at the idea of remaining there, with the poor shelter of a tree into which he would be compelled to climb.

On a sudden he saw a light in the distance among the trees; and imagining it might be from the window of some cottage, where he would find some hospitable retreat, he hastened to it, and to his surprise saw a space cleared, and trees laid down to make a platform, and upon it a speaker addressing a multitude. He thought to himself, "I have stumbled on a company of people who, in this dark forest, have assembled to worship God, and some minister is preaching to them at this late hour in the evening concerning the kingdom of God and his righteousness." But, to his surprise and horror, when he came nearer, he found a man declaiming against God; during the Almighty to do his worst upon him; speaking terrible things in his wrath against the justice of the Most High, and venturing most bold and awful assertions concerning his own disbelief in a future state. It was altogether a singular scene. The spot was lighted up by pine-knots, which cast a glare here and there, while the thick darkness in other places still reigned. The people were intent on listening to the orator; and when he sat down, thunders of applause were given to him, each one seeking to emulate the other in his praise.

Thought the minister, "I must not let this pass; I must rise and speak. The honor of my God and his cause demand it." He feared to speak, for he knew not what to say, having come there suddenly; but he would have ventured, had not something else occurred. A man of middle age, hale and strong, rose, and leaning on his staff, he said,

"My friends, I have a word to speak to you to-night. I am not about to refute any of the arguments of the orator. I shall not criticize his style. I shall say nothing concerning what I believe to be the blasphemies he has uttered; but I shall simply relate to you a fact, and, after I have done that, you shall draw your own conclusions. Yesterday I walked by the side of yonder river. I saw on its floods a young man in a boat; the boat was unmanageable; it was going fast toward the rapids. He could not use the oars, and I saw that he was not capable of bringing the boat to the shore. I saw that young man wring his hands in agony. By and by he gave up the attempt to save his life, kneeled down and cried with desperate earnestness, 'O God, save my soul! If my body cannot be saved, save my soul!' I heard him confess that he had been a blasphemer. I heard him vow that if his life were spared he would never be such again. I heard him implore the mercy of heaven for Jesus Christ's sake, and earnestly plead that he might be washed in his blood. These arms saved that young man from the flood. I plunged in, brought the boat to shore, and saved his life. That same young man has just now addressed you, and cursed his Maker. What say you to this, sirs?"

The speaker sat down. You may guess what a shudder ran through the young man himself, and how the audience in a moment changed their notes, and saw that, after all, while it was a fine thing to brag and act the bravo against Almighty God on dry land, and when danger was distant, it was not quite so grand to think ill of him when near the verge of the grave. We believe there is enough conscience in every man to convince him that God must punish him for his sin, and that in every heart the words of Scripture will find an echo—"If he turn not He will whet his sword."

When the commonplace, "We must all die, transforms itself suddenly into the acute consciousness, "I must die, and soon;" then death grapples us, and his fingers are cruel; afterward, he may come to fold us in his arms as our mother did, and our last moment of dim earthly discerning may be like the first.—George Eliot.

DR. HODGE ON PRAYER THEORIES.

We find the following fitting sentence under the head of "Prayer" in the third and last volume of Dr. Hodge's "Theology," just issued:—"The man of science has no idea how small he looks when in the presence of Christ he ventures to say that nature has never been crossed by spontaneous action; that Christ's will was not a cause when he healed the sick, or opened the eyes of the blind, or raised the dead by a word; or when He Himself rose by His own power from the grave. To say that the facts never occurred simply because, according to the ephemeral theory of the hour, they could not occur, is the infinite of folly. It is a thousand times more certain that they occurred than that the best authenticated facts of history are true. For such facts we have only ordinary historical evidence; for the truth of Christ's miracles, and especially of His resurrection, we have the evidence of all the facts of history from His day to the present. The actual state of the world and the existence of the Church necessitate the admission of those facts, to which God Himself bore witness of old by signs and wonders and divers miracles, as He does still in a manner absolutely irresistible in the gift of the Holy Ghost. To hear the whole Gospel even constructively pronounced a lie is a sore trial to those who have even a glimmer of the faith of Paul, and who can only say with quivering lips what he said with the fulness of assurance, 'I know whom I have believed.' Scientific men are prone to think that there is no other evidence of truth than the testimony of the senses. But the reason has its institutions, the moral nature its a priori judgments, the religious consciousness its immediate apprehensions, which are absolutely infallible and of paramount authority. A man might as easily free himself from the operation of the laws of nature as from the authority of God. When, therefore, men of science advance theories opposed to these fundamental convictions they are like bats impinging against the everlasting rock."

PAST AND PRESENT CONNECTING LINKS.

About twenty years ago, Lord Macaulay, being at that time Member of Parliament for Edinburgh, was breakfasting one morning with an eminent statesman. The morning newspapers were brought in, and one of the guests read aloud the announcement that on the previous day the venerable President Routh, of Magdalen College, Oxford, had expired in his hundredth year. Lord Macaulay received the intelligence in silence, and sat musing for a few moments upon some train of thought suggested to his mind. "President Routh," he suddenly exclaimed—speaking more as though he were thinking aloud than addressing living hearers—"might have shaken hands as a baby with the illustrious Fontenelle, who himself died, aged one hundred years, in 1757. Within the lives of Fontenelle and Routh, the following events happened." With rapid and unhesitating fluency, the greatest of English essayists then opened the flood-gates of his unrivalled memory to descend upon the changes, material, moral, and intellectual, which civilization had witnessed within the compass of two lives. From England he darted to France, from France to the rest of Europe, from Europe across the Atlantic to North and South America, and then "Dr. Routh," he said, "might have told us that he had seen a man who was present when Charles II. walked with his toy spaniels in the mall; who had shuddered at the scowl of Judge Jeffreys; who had chatted and corresponded with Madame de Sevigne; who had seen La Valliere thrown aside by the Grand Monarque for Madame de Montespan; and Montespan for Madame de Maintenon; who had taken snuff from Louis Bolingbroke's box, and seen Swift cut asparagus in the garden of Sir William Temple." The authors, actors, statesmen, soldiers, astronomers, navigators, inventors, and men and women of note, who had illustrated the close of the Seventeenth and the dawn of the Eighteenth Centuries, lived again under Lord Macaulay's plastic touch as he rehearsed the contemporaries of Fontenelle's youth and early manhood. The Vicar of Perseus has written to one of our contemporaries to say that he has an old parishioner, with memory and faculties unimpaired, who was born in 1792, and remembers his grandmother, who was born in 1697. "It is possible," says the Rev. Mr. Bartlett, "that he might have heard from his grandmother a description of a personal appearance of William III." What is such a reminiscence compared with the possible recollections of Fontenelle? As a child he might have remembered the great storm which shook England and France when Cromwell died on September 3, 1658—might have been in company with Milton and Cowley, and heard the guns thunder across the channel when Charles II. landed at Dover. Fontenelle and Routh are indeed two of the most suggestive lives that within the records of history Lord Macaulay could have taken for his text. Both were born in a sphere of society which made them likely to be witnesses of any remarkable event that happened in France and England during their boyhood. The second was born just at the right moment for him to take what Lucretius calls "the lamp of life" from the hand of his predecessor; nor is it likely that two such successive centenarians will again find such a commentator as Lord Macaulay mustering aloud upon their experiences.—London Telegraph.

There is a great deal we never think of calling religion that is still fruit unto God and garnered by Him in the harvest. The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, patience, goodness. I affirm that if these fruits are found in any form, whether you show your patience as a woman nursing a fretful child, or as a man attending to the vexing details of business, or as a physician following the dark mazes of sickness, or as a mechanic fitting the joints and valves of a locomotive, being honest and true besides, you bring forth fruit unto God.—Robert Collyer.

CARE AND ITS CURE.

We are living in a world full of cares, anxieties, and troubles; yet, thank God, we can in some sense become free from them and obtain their cure. We all know what care is; we all feel it more or less, many times a day. It is an evil, a great evil, a bitter consequence of the fall. Adam at first did not know it; he rested in God as his portion, guide and helper, and so he had constant peace and quiet. But after the fall care came in. As thorns and briars naturally spring up in the curse-blighted earth, so cares and fears naturally spring up in our sinful, corrupt souls. This distracts our minds, makes us unhappy, and hinders our spiritual growth and prosperity. Christ says, "the cares of the world choke the seed, and it becometh unfruitful." Our Father in heaven, who is greatly concerned for the comfort and welfare of all true Christians, wishes them to be free from care. "Be careful for nothing." But how can we help being careful? We are weak, erring, not knowing what a day may bring forth; Satan is ever suggesting dark thoughts and fears—we fancy that all is going wrong, all going to wreck. We soon find by painful experience that we can not keep ourselves from care, that our best friends can not help us, that God only can keep us. He only can supply the cure preservative, and He does it. He is the Physician in this as in other things; let us look at His prescription, and begin constantly to use it. "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Here is the remedy, here is the secret of carelessness. Ever prayerful, and so never careful. When your heart begins to be overwhelmed, run at once to the Rock that is higher than you. When you feel oppressed, cry like Hezekiah, "Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." Like the disciples, tell Jesus everything, great or small, important or insignificant. This is the secret of abiding rest and quiet. This is the fulfilment of that word, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace." Try this from day to day in all your cares and trials, personal, family, spiritual, temporal, public, and private; bring them at once without delay to the Lord, and you will constantly be getting rich, mixed, precious experiences of His love, faithfulness, and power.

BROAD ROAD CHURCH.

The marks of the Broad Road Church are plain. They are "Liberal Christianity," "Broad Church," "No Sectarianism," "No Cant," "Science," and "Educated Intellect." It is easy to call others "bigots," "narrow-minded," "illiberal," "narrow hypocrites," "Pharisees," when you are running the fifty-miles-an-hour express train to heaven, without the little veracious swatches of "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Nowadays a fine house; a Brussels carpet, rosewood furniture, a fine toned piano, broadcloth, silk, lace and furs, with diamonds and gold, are the Bunyan's Gate to the Celestial Road. What's the use of undertaking to subdue men and women of respectable position in life, to cross-bearing and self-denial, when they won't believe in "old-fashioned, exploded ideas of Pharaical days?" Is not all the land alive to the "broad" road "church," and its wonderful progress? See! I have the schools, the learned, the wealthy; you have only the common-place ignorant, comparatively few. All the world is being infused with science and with reason. Of course we know that every generation has its infidel features and views, and that Voltaire, Hume, Bolingbroke, and their allies, led the last generation of sceptics, and men that can be named are endeavouring to lead the present. But as the old sceptics failed so they shall now. But the great idea is to open the door to reason, and let the unknown future world alone that we understand so little about. Let us have a chance, and we will show you a world ruled by reason. Such are the marks of the Broad Road Church. Such a few of the sign-board inscriptions that point out the way to it. Such a few of the set expressions of the travellers on this now-forged form of the old broad road. All who want to find it cannot mistake it or its passwords.

MAGNITUDE OF CREATION.

This earth wanders not alone; but a sweet fellowship of sister-spheres is bound together, cheering each other from afar, and from one telling it to all of a mutual law and indissoluble bond. Within the limits of this small economy burns the sun, so that in the act of creation, from which our abode arose, we necessarily include all the planetary apparatus, knowing that there the centre was fixed, and that each globe was launched in its circling around it. The mundane and subunary form only a little fragment of the work, an inferior department of the great transaction. And what are the few worlds which sweep with us about the same source of life and light? Massive, ponderous in themselves; some of them immensely larger than our own, running wider revolutions, and drawing after them brighter trains. But even this one solar family, recognizing and claiming members in the outskirts of space,—it is as nothing to what the eye can command, nothing to the visible! What constellations are thrown over the firmament in all the profusion of beauty and magnificence! And when the unaided sense has roamed to its utmost ken, and gazed to its utmost strength, it may call the instruments of science to its assistance; and it shall look out on ampler territories, and take hold of larger notices. Now we have our nook. We speak in no terms of exaggeration when we describe what we see as beds and floors, and clouds, of stars. As we pierce the awful altitudes, we ascend to new wonders. Apertures constantly open, and we are just averted a glimpse into them. Heaven spreads above heaven, new arrangements stand revealed, and celestial bodies, in shapes hitherto undeveloped, flame as at the portal of the Eternal Throne, to guard its access and proclaim its terribleness. Yet there are proofs that discovery has not closed its researches; still avenue verges from avenue, and height rises into height. And after all, this is but the outer court of "this high and holy place."