

Pastor and People.

NONE OF OUR BUSINESS.

A little girl was heard to finish her evening prayer with these words: "And I saw a poor little girl on the street to-day, cold and barefooted; but it's none of our business, is it, God?"

"None of our business!" wandering and sinful,
All through the streets of the city they go,
Hungry and homeless in the wild weather
"None of our business!" Dare we say so?

"None of our business!" children's wan faces,
Haggard and old with their suffering and sin;
Hold fast your darlings on tender, warm bosoms
Sorrow without, but the home light within

What does it matter that some other woman
Some common mother—in bitter despair,
Wails in a garret, or sits in a cellar,
Too broken hearted for weeping or prayer

"None of our business!" Sinful and fallen,
How they may jostle us close on the street!
Hold back your garment!—scorn? they are used to it.
Pass on the other side, lest you should meet.

"None of our business!" Oh, then, the music:
On with the feasting, though hearts break forlorn
Somebody's hungry, somebody's freezing,
Somebody's soul will be lost ere the morn

Somebody's dying (on with the dancing!)
One for earth's pottage is selling his soul;
One for a bauble has bartered his birthright,
Selling his all for a pitiful dole.

Ah! but One goeth abroad on the mountains,
Over lone deserts, with burning deep sands!
Seeking the lost ones (it is His business!)
Bruised though His feet are, and torn though His hands.

Thorn-crowned His head and His soul sorrow-stricken
(Saving men's souls at such infinite cost),
Broken His heart for the grief of the nations—
It is His business, saving the lost!

CHRISTIAN TRIALS.

All Christians do not have the same trials, nor are they in all cases of equal severity. But no Christian is entirely exempt from them. Some there are who seem to have almost uninterrupted prosperity and happiness. Others go mourning all their days.

Some of our earthly trials are loss of health, friends, property, reputation. There are Christians who hardly ever need to say, "We are sick," and who know but little from experience of the sorrow of bereavement. They are prospered in worldly things. They have but seldom reason to complain of the assaults of the backbiter or slanderer. To others full cups of disappointment, sorrow and suffering are wrung out. The Christian, observing this apparent inequality in the divine dealings with the people of God, and feeling that the hand of God is laid heavily upon himself, is sometimes perplexed and troubled, as though strange things had happened to him.

But there is really nothing strange or inexplicable in the sharpest trials any of God's people are called upon to endure. If they are quite free from them, there is more reason for surprise. The early Christians were subjected to "fiery trials," and yet the Apostle Peter exhorts them not to think it strange when these trials overtake them, as "though some strange thing had happened unto them."

Every Christian ought to expect trial in some form. Christ Jesus, the High Priest of our profession, was "in all points tempted (tried) like as we are." He suffered the trials of poverty; He endured bodily pain; He was persecuted and despised. He felt the pangs of hunger, the weariness of long journeys and exhausting labour. The servant of the "Man of Sorrows" ought not to expect to be free from like hardships.

The trials of Christians do not come upon them accidentally. "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Whatever men of the world may think in regard to afflictive dispensations, Christians "know that we are appointed thereunto." They expect them; they see in them not the hand of an angry God, but of a loving Father who "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Job's friends looked upon his afflictions as expressions of the divine wrath against him, when they should have regarded them as the corrections of a loving Father. "In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer."

The late Albert Barnes said he never knew a Christian that was not benefited by trials. It is natural for us to shrink from them and desire to escape them, and yet if we thought less of present evil and more of future good, they would come to us with a less cheerless aspect than they frequently do. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

A comforting thought in connection with the trials of Christians is this: that when they are born with submission to the divine will they supply the best evidences we can have of our sonship. Peter was unwilling that his Lord should perform the menial service of washing his feet, but when his Master said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with

Me," then Peter begged him to wash not his feet only, but also his hands and head. Knowing that the trials which overtake the Christian are designed for his good, are necessary, and afford proof of his gracious relationship, he "counts it all joy when he falls into manifold trials." *United Presbyterian.*

THE DAY OF REST.

One of the commonest reasons for not attending divine services is this. "I was too tired after my week's work, and wanted rest!" Sunday is a day of rest; but if we are to use it rightfully, we must use it reverently as the day of worship. We should remember that it is a sign of weakness and insincerity to be ever pleading that poverty-stricken plea, "I have no time," when duty calls. If one is a little worn and fatigued, will a day spent in mere loitering be one of the best? To spend a day in doing nothing and accomplishing nothing ought to leave behind such a sense of dissatisfaction with self as would spoil one's rest instead of refreshing one. To a man or woman honestly tired, the best of rest is not dalliance, but a change of occupation. To refresh the soul is the very best way to relieve the body. Sunday is given to us for this refreshment, and he who forgets or refuses to discern this profound truth will find his Sunday stale and unprofitable, if nothing worse. Have not many of us discovered that we can make it a weary day, yet spend no hours in public worship?

The man who is turning a crank rests his right hand by using his left. We who are turning the crank in the labours of the world can rest both mind and body by educating the soul. The main trouble with men's faith to-day arises from the sheer neglect of that education. The best cure for that neglect stands waiting for them in the means of grace, and the first of those is the public services of Sunday.

Bring to the cure of your world-weariness the conscientious and regular use of those services, and soon they will grow up to be to you your highest privilege! As many another has found, you may also find in these quiet, restful hours in church, relief to strained nerves, a better knowledge of Christ's religion, peace of mind, and exaltation of soul!

WORKING THE PARISH.

Some pastors are diligent workers in, while others are skillful workers of, the parish. The labour of the former is often useful and productive of great good, but it lacks comprehensiveness, and therefore fails of the best result; while that of the latter has the advantage of employing all the working force of the charge in united and energetic effort to accomplish a fixed end. Its happy results appear in the general prosperity of the cause, as well as in the greater variety of work performed. So have we seen one gardener, who assiduously cultivated certain favourite plots of ground, beds of plants or flowers, but neglected other parts as rich in promise and as greatly in need of his care; while we have seen another, with no greater resources but with more comprehensive plans, take in at a glance the character, condition and wants of his garden, and as promptly find means near by to accomplish all in it he deems necessary. He sees that the fence is broken, and he has it repaired; that here is a spot still in its native wildness, and he sets about reclaiming it; that yonder is a poor piece of ground and he has it enriched. He also discovers the soil suited to this particular plant, and the plant craving that particular soil, and speedily has them successfully adjusted one to the other. He turns all the forces of nature and all his working force to improve the condition and promote the prosperity of his whole garden. Soon we find not a few spots only, but his whole area clothed with health, beauty and productiveness.

The first consideration with a pastor, who wishes to work well his parish, is not how he may soonest get himself engaged in the work; but how he may best get all the workable and working materials of it utilized and employed. To this end he considers the condition, needs and capabilities of all its elements, and sets not himself alone to do the work, but everyone according to his fitness and ability.

He finds many departments of work, in one or other of which there is room and employment for all. There is the Sabbath school with its doors wide open before him inviting everyone, as teacher or pupil, to the privilege of its work and to a share in its responsibility. So much has been the care and attention given to the organization and operation of this branch of Christian work, that we dare hardly suggest an amendment. We would, however, venture to call attention to what we regard as an evil growing out of the high estimate formed of its value, that is the substitution of attendance upon it for attendance upon the public worship of the sanctuary. We have seen a Sabbath school dismissed a few minutes before the beginning of public worship in the church, and found that most of the children, many of the young people, and some even of the teachers went home and did not return to the morning service. Surely this is training the young in a wrong and dangerous direction, which should promptly be counteracted in the family and in the Sabbath school.

There is also a good work which the pastor might profitably operate, or set in operation, in the shape of Bible classes and Bible readings or studies. These need not be held on the Sabbath day alone, but on afternoons or evenings of week days, and be attended by persons of both sexes, separately or together as may be judged best. The less conventional and

the more free and familiar these meetings are, the better. They prove still more profitable when prayer is combined with these meetings for study, at their beginning or close or at both.

Then, again, there are persons found in every congregation who combine in themselves fine Christian intelligence with tender sympathy. Such qualities are of unspeakable value in parish work, and should have a special sphere of exercise assigned them. A committee of two, three or more such persons, near the pastor's hand, could do precious service in visiting the sick or poor, in calling on strangers or neglected ones in the bounds. In their rounds they might not only give help and comfort to many, but exert a most beneficial influence over young persons, many of whom they might win to the love of God and attendance on His house.

Then in the forefront of all the useful and approved forms of Church work comes the great one of missions, which is the work of the age, of the Church at large, as well as of every live congregation. Plans advancing this work in all its home and foreign interests cannot be held in abeyance, but must be pressed forward in every well-worked charge; which should not only have its monthly concert of prayer, but one or more missionary organizations, working specially and solely in the interests of missions. We have known a boys' and girls' missionary society do good work, both in developing interest and collecting money as auxiliary to the greater one of the congregation. We know no good reason why the young should not in some way be initiated in the work. Is it not from those who are now boys and girls that we are, by and by, to get our best recruits for the missionary field and for missionary work? Why then may they not now begin their training for the work?

In such ways may pastors, who would skilfully work their charges, at once build up the Christian life of their people and strengthen the cause of God. Thus also may they, while obeying the order, "Go work to-day in My vineyard," be agents to assign to many a fellow-servant his proper work, and deepen in both their people and themselves a sense of responsibility to work for God, such as the Master felt, when He said, "I must work the work of Him that sent Me." *J. J. in the Central Presbyterian.*

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

We make a distinction between religious conversation and conversation about religion. We have listened to long interviews in which there was much talk about the Church and the ministry, and many pious remarks on Christian life and experience, interspersed with discussions of Bible doctrines, but from which the spirit of genuine and earnest piety was conspicuously absent. Again, we have heard extended conversations between Christians, both men and women, in which there were no strictly spiritual themes introduced, but which were permeated and controlled by truly Christian sentiments. From this very plain distinction it will be readily understood what we mean by religious conversation; and yet very many seem to have wholly mistaken the nature and value of the duty of engaging in it.

There is no doubt it is a duty binding upon all. Our speech forms an important part of life and its responsibility. It takes up a very large proportion of our time; it is, when intelligently applied, a very sure test of religious character and state, it is a powerful means of imparting and receiving good, and it is often an instrument of extensive mischief. We speak strongly of the power of the press, but that of the tongue is far mightier. For one that reads and writes, there are scores that talk and hear; and there is a vast amount of what may be called conversational ability. The Word of God wisely addresses itself to this talent and invokes its agency in promoting truth and piety, and warns men against perverting it to evil ends.

That word recognizes the excellence and yet rarity of good conversation, and dwells much on the sin of its opposite. "If a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body." The wise man says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Why is it that we hear so little genuine religious conversation even in Christian circles? Many reasons may be given. We mention a few. One is, that even professors of religion are, to a sad extent, more interested in worldly matters. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Their hearts abound in secular desires, and naturally they talk about secular things. Of how many church members is it true that you may spend hours and days in their company and never hear a word that indicates that their affections are set on things above, or that they are governed by the truths and precepts of God's Word. Their whole conversation, and it is generally carried on with zest, relates to money making, temporal promotion, carnal indulgence, social life, with its pleasures and fashions, fashionable people, dress, equipage, furniture and the ten thousand other topics that make up the circle of a worldly life. Their talk reveals an earthly, if not a sordid, sensual, or trivial mind. To introduce a religious subject in such a circle, however justified by circumstances, or in whatever spirit, would be considered a grand impertinence. It would be adjudged wholly out of place, and it would be soon dismissed. *Southern Presbyterian.*

The British House of Commons has rejected the proposal for a religious census next year when an enumeration of the population of the United Kingdom is to be taken.