

The Pastor and People.

The Hidden Will.

(Translated from the Spanish.)

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Across a pleasant field, a rill unseen
Steals from a fountain, nor does ought betray
Its presence, save a tint of livelier green,
And flowers that scent the air along its way.

Thus secretly should charity attend
Those who in want's dim chambers pine and
grieve.
And nought should e'er reveal the aid we lend,
Save the glad looks our kindly visits leave,
—St. Nicholas

Boecher's Yale Lectures on Preaching.

LOVE, THE CENTRAL AND REGNANT FACULTY.

I am not able to trace the slightest effect in the Apostle Paul's writings of his visit among the Greeks. He seems to have felt or received the idea of physical beauty, as developed among the Greeks, only superficially. This may have been because he came of a stock which had not been educated in the science of the beautiful, and exhibited little of the aesthetic faculty; or, as I prefer to believe, it was because all their sense of beauty was drawn up into the moral nature, which found expression in the beauty of holiness. With the exception of some general allusions to the games and similar institutions, he did not take much from the Greeks, except the one figure which I use in this lecture. He speaks of the disciples as being God's building, and himself as architect or master-builder, affirming that he had sketched the ground plan, and laid the foundation, on which other men following him must build. That ground-plan was the delineation of the character of Jesus Christ. Upon that plan what did he build? A church? No, he built each individual man. He built up character and not an organization. Paul had a definite idea of what he was about; he did not work at haphazard, but strove to make new men on the plan of Jesus Christ. Every man who goes into the Christian ministry should ever like definite aim. He should not be satisfied with the performance of mere routine duties; they are at best only means to an end, and are likely to become mechanical and unworthy of one's manhood. It is not enough to get together a large congregation in an out-of-the-way place, and then perform regular parochial duties. They must be something deeper.

On what plan, then, shall men proceed in the ministry? This question brings me to the subject of sanctification or Christian development which I presented in part in a previous lecture. I look upon the subject of sanctification as transcending in importance any that I have ever brought before you. It is that which God manifested on earth in the person of his son. It is the perfection of an inchoate race according to a divine plan. The supreme end of the ministry is the perfection of men according to this design. Religion is in danger of two evils; on the one side of becoming mere enthusiasm—haply a superstition; on the other of becoming a cold and polite naturalism. Escaping either of these, it is in danger of becoming theoretic, technic, pedantic, in short, pharissic. The conception of the Christian character must go so deep as to renew the power of the ministry and meet all the forces now gathering to produce unreligion if not irreligion. We must make man in his religion more noble than the world's ideal. Then we shall gain real victories, reassert the high places of the church which is just now shaking in the wind. At the present, by the great majority of thinking people of Great Britain, not the Archbishop of Canterbury, but Charles Tyndall or Herbert Spencer, is regarded as the noblest type of manhood.

There is a widespread feeling that great and noble men are to be looked for, not in the church, but in schools of science and philosophy. Men are going back from religion as something artificial to nature, as to a supposed truer and higher good. But what is nature? As we carelessly use the word, it means the great material world outside of a man; it means man in his primitive condition, what he is at his birth, untaught. Now, I protest against such use of the word. Man is not by nature what he is when he begins to live. We do not speak so of the vegetable or animal kingdom. That is not the nature of a plant which is seen in the bulb or as it first springs from the ground. We do not look into the acorn to learn the character or nature of the oak, but at the storm-defying tree when a century old. We do not look at the awkward, crawling cub, blind and sucking its dam, but to the lion full grown and clothed with power to learn what is the nature of the king of beasts. We do not look at the unfledged and callow eagle, exhibiting life in little else than opening its mouth to receive food furnished it, but to the fully grown eagle, endowed with power, vision and cruelty to find what the king of birds is. Why should we reverse this process in our search for nature in man? Was it only the seed end, undeveloped and unripened, which God had in view when he made man? A man's nature is not that with which he was born, but that to which he was born, but that to which he may attain under the stimulating influences of the Divine Spirit, as he becomes harmonized with himself and with God. Religion is natural to a man and not artificial, as many think. It is not the state in which he was born, but the state for which he was born by a gradual birth of four score years. It is the business of the Christian ministry to bring men up to the manifestation of their real nature. Religion is not a man's external clothing—something put on. He is religious when every faculty is brought up into its normal condition.

This view of religion gives immense leverage. I have a congregation full of young scientists. I know their process of reasoning, their doubts and difficulties. For years I have been trying to find out a way of presenting Christ to men imbued with the teachings of the schools of modern

thought in a manner that would exhibit the finest form of human development—the development of a man's strength and power around a divine centre. The religion of Christ is such development; the love of God is such a centre. This view will gain the ear of men who are likely to be turned away from the proscriptive forms of theological ministrations.

There is but one centre about which all the faculties of the soul can be harmonized and developed, and that is love. If we take reason as a centre and attempt to harmonize the rest around it, we fail, because the reason is, comparatively speaking, an external guide. It cannot interpret to man his truest manhood. The man himself, his emotional and heart nature, is underneath and greater than the reason, just as the ocean is underneath and bears up the vessel which navigates it. If a man says he will be religious because his reason tells him to be so, he has yet to ask leave of his passions, which reason cannot control.

The same is true of conscience. Conscience should be the foundation of all character, just as the oak sills are under the nursery. But I would just as soon lay my children down on the bare hard timbers and tell them to grow as to undertake to make a great and lustreous character out of conscience alone, which is cold, hard and condemnatory. Its affinities are toward the bottom and not at the top of the brain. Neither can fear, veneration nor superstition be the centre of a full and harmonious development of one's nature. These are restrictive rather than inspiring or creative elements of being. In religion the restrictive element is strongest in those natures nearest the animal. It is merely negative; the fruit of the spirit is always positive. To do no wrong is the lowest style of piety, but many men work no higher than that.

How royal a thing is love in the estimation of Paul! "Though I speak with the tongues of men and have the language of angels, and have no love, I am as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." If Paul were living now he would say bass drum, empty and noisy. In his estimation, the best there is in man, benevolence and liberality, would be of no avail without love. Then what a fruit-tree is love according to this apostle. It beareth, hopeth, endureth all things, and never faileth. It must be the centre. It is the Christ element. "Now abideth," while prophecy and knowledge pass away, "faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love." Look at the Apostle's delineation of that Christian grace, and tell me if I am not warranted in saying that the only possible centre of the faculties is love. It sits a regnant power, and all else in man submits to it. The reason submits to it, is colored by it, and sees by it. Under its influence, reason, weakened by semi-knowledge or controlled by passion, emerges like one from a fever or fit of insanity. To love veneration yields; so does selfishness.

In your ministry you are to be the builders of men, constructors of character. If any one imagine he can do this work without the aid of divine influence I pity his ignorance. I know what is in man, for I have studied and felt and seen and wrestled with them. An influx of the divine spirit is necessary to their reconstruction. Society, good laws, institutions, &c., are but the ministers of God.

The harmony of science and religion is this; that both are seeking to bring man up to his high and real nature, to disclose his manhood and develop every faculty into a harmonious whole. It is the province of the Christian ministry to convince men that the centre around which the perfected manhood is to be built is love. When I look at perfect folks I often wish I could feel as happy over being perfect as they do. But when I come to apply some test, and ask if these are really more lovely than others, I can't find any perfect people. Many think they are so because they don't commit faults, when the reason is they are perfect because they don't spill over, when in fact there is nothing in them to spill. If you should put a pint of milk into a bucket, it would be a fool that should spill it over. The difficulty is in carrying the full bucket without spilling. These perfect people walking in a dream. I have had just such dreams, not waking ones though. I have splendid times often when I am asleep. I hate to wake such people up. They have mutilated the appetites and passions after the old ascetic method, seeking perfection in that way. They say they have given up their entirely to God. Well, I agree with God when His will agrees with mine. When things go about as I want to have them, I am perfectly satisfied. But if they do in all cases give up their wills to God, it is because they have no wills. It is as if you should cut off a thief's hands and then say he is honest because he picks no one's pockets. My conception of a perfect man is of one full of power and life, moral sentiment and imagination; but with all these subordinates of a central summer of love, and that subordinate to God. I have not yet seen that man, and never expect to in this world, but it is my business to lead men up toward that point of excellence.

In these days it is no little thing to be the servant of souls and a Christian educator—to attempt to do for men every day what Christ is doing for you—to know their sins and sorrow for them. It requires industry, self-denial, and an intensity of living which no other profession demands. If you do not feel strong enough, go back and take up something else.

Logicians may reason about abstractions, but the great mass of mankind can never feel an interest in them. They must have images. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers; a philosopher might adore so noble a conception; but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the pride of the parlor, and faces of the lions, and the swords of thirty legions were humbled in the dust.—*Messingly.*

Behind Mr. Spurgeon.

A SKETCH FROM THE DEACON'S SEATS.

A correspondent of the *Christian World* describes the oft-described scene of Mr. Spurgeon's chapel, in London, from a new point of view, and his letter is quite worthy perusal. We give an extract:

"On a recent Sabbath morning I dispensed with each of the popular methods of entering that institution of modern London, the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and by special favor occupied a seat on the platform behind the preacher. These seats, twelve in number, are provided for the deacons, and are padded, lined with crimson velvet, and have arms after the manner of a first class railway carriage—luxurious seats without question, but the occupants of the same are reputed as worthy of the accommodation they receive.

"It is half past ten, or thereabouts, when I take possession of a seat in the favored precincts referred to, and commence studying the extraordinary scene. Though the spring sun is already high in the heavens, the gas is alight, and a thin mist hangs about the building in sympathy with the fog without. The immense sea, which appears to be already nearly filled, is in reality merely undergoing the process of filling, and the movements of the people exactly resemble the motion of a swarm of insects, eager and impatient. At 10.40 the scene undergoes a transformation. Hitherto people had entered by side doors leisurely to secure their places; now all the main front entrances are opened, and broad, living streams of people pour in to cover the standing room of what appears to be an already crowded building, and until you can only just distinguish which are aisles and which are pews. The new comers are manifestly a little excited, because all are anxious to find seats, and the bustle strikes the stranger as being a novelty of its kind. The coughing, talking, and shifting about with the feet produce a peculiar compound sound, and a sound peculiar to the Tabernacle, which, however, is instantly hushed when Mr. Spurgeon appears on the platform.

"Now the multitude of faces are all turned in one direction, and the service commences. Those who sit close to the preacher's table will perhaps have observed that his tones of voice apparently adapt themselves to the circumstances of those who are near as well as to those who are farther away. To persons near at hand they are not unpleasantly loud, while to those in the distance they are loud enough—not that the vast concourse are made to hear without an effort even by the most powerful lungs, and the necessary strain is visible only to those who are in proximity to the preacher. As seen from the platform, it is also interesting to note how the levitation congregation allows itself to be managed. It is subject to influence as if it were one levitation instead of 6,000 atoms. It has its coughing times; in response to a touch of humor, it smiles like one vast sensitive creature. Then it sings 'faster' or 'softer,' according to instructions, and is in all respects most admirably managed.

"While reading the concluding verse of 'Rock of Ages,' the pastor is visibly affected, just as a few minutes ago he admirably entered into the spirit of that wonderful gospel chapter, Isaiah lv. Anon, the flaming earnestness thrown into the sermon seems to diffuse itself throughout the whole space of the building, until the rapt attention of the host, as they listen to appeals founded on the words, 'Without money and without price,' is sufficient to inspire one with awe. To handle what are called hackneyed texts in a striking and original manner, is the mark of a great man, and the ability to do this is certainly a characteristic of Mr. Spurgeon.

"It is a very unusual thing for any preacher who discourses before a large multitude, to fix his eyes on one particular individual, and a spectator who views the scene from the deacons' seat in the Metropolitan Tabernacle is liable to do the same kind of thing. There are 'characters' enough before you if you can single them out. There sits one in the middle of the area; he is middle-aged, full-faced, and looks like a person who makes some pretensions to self-culture. Though he uses no notebook his brains are probably at work, taking in what he sees. Let us suppose he is the reporter of a London 'daily,' who will be certain to let the public hear all about it, should anything special attract his attention. Single out another, and perhaps you will mark him as an American editor, on the look-out for something piquant wherewith to regale his readers on his return home. Can you be mistaken, or do not his features and wearing apparel, when put together, spell 'Jonathan' as completely as can be done by eight letters? Country pastors are also present. Find a Baptist, and he will be found in a genial humor, for when so great a multitude gathers in a Baptist chapel he thinks his principles are in the ascendant. Select an Independent, and his looks will tell that he has not much to complain about; for, after all, the cause of Nonconformity is flourishing. Besides these the Anglican must needs 'hear Spurgeon,' and be like the rest of the world. If an Evangelical, he will be edified; if he sides with the Ritualists, he will look pitiful and ill at ease; and if he glories in being 'Broad,' he will be charitable, content to take things as they come. As I view the broad area from my comfortably-padded 'deacons' pew, I know that it is a common meeting-ground for all the characters referred to, and for hundreds of others left unmentioned.

"It is now time to confess, however, that to sit 'Behind Mr. Spurgeon' is to hear him to disadvantage. He is not a preacher to listen to with closed eyes. His features speak as well as his tongue, and this part of his sermon was lost to me while sitting with the deacons on the platform. As viewed from the vulgar pews, these church officers appear to be so comfortably accommodated, and to be in themselves such models of decorum, that I shall be pardoned if I have a dozen times envied them both their state and position. Now I know that, like good men, they are content to sacrifice much for their office seats.

"In conclusion, I add a word about the weekly-offering collection. The total amount collected at the morning service was brought into one of the vestries after the crowd had dispersed. How much there was nobody knows, for as Sunday is a day of rest with the officials, the money would not be counted until Monday morning. Gold, silver, and copper pieces, together with little packets neatly tied round with thread, made up a motley mass; and one of these miniature parcels enclosed fifteen shillings from 'A Working Man.' When the whole was emptied into a large black bag, I ventured to test its weight.

"It's pretty heavy," remarked the affable deacon in charge.

"I anticipated as much as that, and now found that this 'heaviest' collection I had ever known weighed as much as one could well raise from the table with one arm."

I Must Have a Religious Newspaper.

So says a subscriber of the *Congregationalist*. And he gives us the following reasons:

1. Because such a paper, rightly conducted, is a public institution of great value, exerting a happy influence upon all the varied important interests of society, and I am bound to do my part in sustaining such an institution.

2. Because my own religious growth as a Christian, is materially promoted by such a paper. My religion waxes or wanes in life and power in proportion to the clear or dim views I have of the great things of the kingdom of God. Next to my Bible, my paper increases the clearness and extent of my spiritual vision, giving light and expelling darkness by its never-ceasing supply of facts and appeals, which are sunshine and shower to the spiritual verdure of my soul.

3. Because I want a good commentary on the Bible. My religious paper furnishes it, often by direct expositions, by items of religious biography, strikingly illustrative of Bible truth, by constantly recurring events of divine providence equally illustrative, by narratives of revivals, conversions, progress of missions at home and abroad, all showing the power of the Gospel, and explanatory of God's word.

4. Because I want to be a strong man, armed for defending truth and destroying error. Political partisans about me are familiar with all the facts and arguments which sustain their distinctive views, and are ever ready and able to assault or defend. I want a similar kind of ability and facility in sustaining the truth and in advocating the cause of my Master. My religious paper furnishes me with a power of offence which is invaluable. It is as if a new arsenal of spiritual weapons was opened and offered to me every week.

5. My family needs to have just such a fountain of religious instruction and influence as is opened in it every week, by such a periodical. The variety I find there, meets the cases and wants of old and young, male and female, ministering to the welfare of the entire circle.

6. My neighbor needs my paper. He will not take one for himself, as he ought to. But he shall not escape. He shall have a look at mine. For when it has walked into my dwelling and stayed long enough to scatter blessings on all sides, it walks up street or down street, or over the way, to scatter them further, or take wings, by the mail, and does good a thousand miles away.

Therefore, Mr. Editor, if you find a paper of mine returned with the word "stop" upon it, you may infer that I have gone to the poor-house, or the mad-house, or the narrow-house appointed for all the living.

Baby-Talk.

Arthur Helps makes "a hit, a very palpable hit," when he asks if dogs "know our language well, would any dog sit out a public dinner?" But he misses the mark in inquiring, "Would any dog remain in the nursery, listening to the foolish talk of nurses and mothers?" Mr. Helps evidently has not studied the philosophy of "baby-talk," and therefore does not know how much wiser is the instinct of the mother than the sarcasm of the essayist. It is not the sense but the sound of words, which interests and soothes the infant. Its brain does not take in the meanings, but its ear drinks in the rhythm. An experiment can easily be made to illustrate the truth of the statement. Let a person talk baby-talk to a child and then repeat the same in good sensible English, and note the difference or the effect upon the child. We should like to read an essay by Mr. Helps on "Mother Goose," and then listen to the criticisms of an intelligent mother on the essay.—*Congregationalist.*

Come!

If you have led a sinful life, and are now ashamed and weary of it—if you arise and go to God, He will receive you graciously, and will abundantly pardon. All His assurances are to the same affecting tenor. "He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way." And here He is represented as the merciful Father, whose pity survives the longest protraction, and whose love is such that when the prodigal at last returns, He presses him to His bosom. Such is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, and if you are wise, you will let no cold suspicion or subtle casuistry cheat you out of the strong consolation. You can not err in believing what the Lord Jesus says: you can not err in doing as He directs. Be assured that God is as kindly disposed as in the parable of the Prodigal Son He is represented to be. The calls, invitations, promises which He has given us in the gospel mean the utmost of what they express; and God is as earnestly desirous that sinners should return unto Him, and as much pleased when they actually return, as the strongest language of the gospel declares.—*James Hamilton, D.D.*

A Startling Question.

A poor child, straying into a Sunday-school one day, asked simply: "Is this the way to heaven?" The superintendent was for a moment startled. Was his school, indeed, the way to heaven? Was he trying to make it so? Were his teachers intent upon the same object? The artless question struck home. From desk to class the question went around with a thrill. What were they all doing? Whither were they all tending. The question was like an angel suddenly come into their midst to make a record of all that transpired in that school. Oh! superintendents, teachers, make sure of this one thing: With all your efforts to impart knowledge, make the salvation of the soul of paramount interest. Whether your school be a model, or be struggling up to perfection, be sure that every scholar shall feel that it is the road to heaven.—*S. S. Times.*

True Worth.

A really modest and meritorious person will never make pretensions of any kind. His manner and expressions will always have a tendency to underrate his ability not because he will pretend to be less capable than he really is, because so many men have become pretensions in their manners and expressions, he fears he may be considered as such. We are, in consequence, too apt to consider the extent of the capacity of those whom we meet a little below the standard indicated by their acts and expressions. Therefore, true merit is seldom properly appreciated, and its cultivation is never greatly encouraged. On the contrary, pretence is almost always successful. He who is pretentious affects the interest of society in the same manner as the swindler. He induces men to doubt the capacity of others, and often to refuse aid and employment, because they measure the merits of all by those of the pretentious, and for, and concealed ignorance. Many an honest and skilful man, and many a valuable improvement, have been refused support and adoption because the pretentious swindler has previously misled the people, and imposed upon them outrageously. Pretensions of every kind are the true indications of a weak mind or a would-be swindler.

Not Mine.

In one of the wars in Germany, a captain of cavalry was ordered out on a foraging party. He put himself at the head of his troops, and marched to the quarter assigned him. It was a solitary valley, in which hardly anything but woods could be seen. In the midst of it stood a little cottage, on perceiving which he went up to it and knocked at the door. An old man with a white beard came out.

"Father," said the officer, "show me a field where I can set my troops a-foraging."

"Presently," replied the peasant. He walked before, and conducted them out of the valley. After a quarter of an hour's search, they found a fine field of barley.

"This is the very thing we want," said the captain.

"Have patience for a few minutes," replied the guide; "you shall be satisfied."

They went on, and at the distance of about a quarter of a league further they arrived at another field of barley. The troops immediately dismounted, cut down the grain, trussed it up, and remounted. The officer then said to his conductor:

"Father, you have given to yourself and us unnecessary trouble; the first field was much better than this."

"Very true, sir," replied the good old man, "but it was not mine."

Plain Talk on Usury.

Dr. William Anderson, for more than fifty years pastor of a church in Glasgow, had a somewhat pointed way of "putting things," as the following incident related in the *Weekly Review* will show:—

He was once expounding the fifteenth psalm, and had come to the word usury.—"He that putteth not out his money to usury." "Does that mean," he asked, "taking ten per cent. or more?" Not entirely. It means also the spirit in which the ten per cent. is taken. There was once in this church a poor widow, and she wanted twenty pounds to begin a small shop. Having no friends, she came to me, her minister. And I happened to know a man—not of this church—who could advance the money to the poor widow. So we went to this man—the widow and I—and the man said he would be happy to help the widow. And he drew out a bill for £20, and the widow signed it, and I signed it, too. Then he put the signed paper in his desk and took out the money and gave it to the widow. But the widow counting it, said: "Sir, there are only £15 here." "It is all right," said the man, "that is the interest I charge." And as we had no redress, we came away. But the widow prospered. And she brought the £20 to me, and I took it myself to the office of the man who lent it, and I said to him, "Sir, there is the £20 from the widow." And he said, "Here is the paper you signed, and if you knew any other poor widow, I will be happy to help her in the same way." I said to him: "You help the widow! Sir, you have robbed this widow, and you will be damned! And, my friends, I kept my eye upon that man. And before six months were over God smote him and he died." We can still recall, after many years, the crisp of soul with which we listened to the closing sentences, and the vivid glimpse we got of a divine retribution falling suddenly on a bad man.

Sabbaths, coming to quiet for a little while all the week-day toil, noise and strife of life, are like islands, green, fruitful and flower-laden, smiling at one from the midst of wild ocean and storm-tossed waves—oases in the sand deserts, with cooling shades and pure water springs for the weary travellers.