

## The Modern Sermon.

## By a Minister.

During a recent period of rest I heard twenty sermons. They were preached by different ministers, one of whom was a student from a London college. Each sermon had been carefully prepared by the preacher. Most of them were read from manuscript. The themes were well thought out, and all were useful, interesting, and Christian. But I was greatly pained by the fact that in not more than three of these twenty sermons was there any attempt at, or any approach to, a clear statement of the Gospel way of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor was there any reference to the necessity of conversion, nor to the work of the Holy Spirit, so that if a sinner had come to listen to any or all of these seventeen sermons, desiring to know how he could be saved, he would not have been instructed.

Is this a state of things that justifies optimistic views of our ministry? Does it not rather call for misgiving and serious inquiry? Should our sermons be of this character? Are they not on this account shorn of their real power? Can we expect conversions while this is the case?

John Angell James, in his most earnest and spiritual introduction to "A Pastor's Sketches" of the late Dr. Spencer, says: "In all preaching there should be a prevalence of the converting element—i. e., of truths and the manner of treating them, which are likely to rouse the hearer to the state of his soul; to show him his state as a sinner; to awaken a deep solicitude for his eternal welfare by convincing him of his danger; to make him feel the necessity of repentance and faith, and to urge him to flee without delay to Christ for salvation. Almost any truth of the Bible may be so handled as to lead to this." Is not this true? Why then are our sermons so often destitute of this element? That this is their character is readily confessed by our best friends.

I was one of a group of ministers a short time since. We were speaking about the present-day pulpit. One of our company said, "How is it that there is scarcely ever any earnest pleading with sinners for conversion now? One seldom hears it." There was silence; all felt it was so. There is very little in the sermons we now hear to convince of sin and to lead to genuine repentance and conversion. Yet that should be the prominent aim of our sermons. I think it is William Law who says: "Nothing can do good, or should be used by us in preaching or worship, that has not in it a redeeming virtue." There is need for earnest prayer that our ministers may get back to more rousing, convincing, converting Gospel preaching.

J. A. M. B.

## General Gordon's Bible.

The Pall Mall Magazine says: There is one article in the corridor that never loses its interest for Her Majesty—indeed, she rarely fails to point it out to an infrequent visitor. This is the Bible of the late General Gordon. It is of the plainest, being bound in a much-worn limp, leather cover, and lies on a satin cushion, open at the Gospel according to St. John. The Bible is enclosed in a splendid casket of seventeenth century Italian work, with frame of silver gilt and enamel, and sides of engraved rock crystal. This is surmounted by a figure of St. George and the Dragon. The casket stands on an ebony pedestal containing a clock with ornate mounts, and bears a small plate with inscription recording the fact that the Bible was presented to Her Majesty by his sister after the death of General Gordon.

## Learning is Easy.

One, two, three!  
Now please listen to me;  
A minute is sixty seconds long;  
Sixty minutes to an hour belong.  
One, two three!  
Learning is easy, you see.

Four, five six!  
'Tis easy as picking up sticks.  
Twenty-four hours make one long day;  
Seven days in a week we say.  
One, two three!  
Learning is easy, you see.

Seven, eight, nine!  
Never cry or whine  
The years are only twelve months long;  
There is no time for doing wrong.  
One, two three!  
Learning is easy, you see.

Tick, tack, tock!  
Only look at the clock.  
He works away the whole day long,  
And every hour he sings a song.  
Ding, dong, ding!  
So we'll work and sing.

A. E. L.

## Diet in Health.

In health, as a rule, to live generously is to live wisely. A diet which includes a variety of fairly digestible articles of food supplies a reserve fund which enables the system to meet emergencies, and to avoid the possibility of "physiological bankruptcy." Hippocrates observes that "a very slender and restricted diet is dangerous to persons in health, because they bear transgressions of it with more difficulty." A sound digestion seems to possess, within certain limits, a capacity for adapting itself to circumstances—at any rate, for the time being. When taxed beyond endurance, like the "whirligig of time," it "works its revenges."

Another fallacy is that we should eat what we do not like; or, as many unhappy children are taught, "we must eat what is good for us, whether we like it or not." In other words, we must disobey the instinct whereby nature protects our idiosyncrasies. Even Poor Richard, who is generally so sensible—and who is by no means as ascetic—enjoins his reader: "Wouldst thou enjoy a long life, a healthy body and a vigorous mind, and be acquainted also with the wonderful works of God, labor in the first place to bring thy appetite to reason" (as if the physical laws of life are to be ignored), and bids them "eat for necessity not pleasure."

A healthy appetite craves and digests the food material which the system requires. If we know that in infancy milk is essential to the human organism, because before the age of six months, or thereabouts, the "physiological machinery" is not prepared for the digestion of starchy foods; that in childhood sugar and starch and fat are required to supply the elements especially needed for growth; that in youth bread and meat in abundance are necessary to meet the increasing demands which development imposes on the constitution; that in mature life, when the brain is most exercised, digestible phosphatic salts are needed to repair the wasted tissue; that in old age less food is required, and bread, as the monogenarian Sir Isaac Holden asserted, renders the arteries "like furred boilers"—if we find, in brief, that every period and condition of life has certain exigencies in which reason must take instinct for her guide—we should listen to the voice of instinct, realizing that the appetite is subject to a "law of its own." This law does not involve the fallacy that instinct

is not to be trained or disciplined; it only requires that the function of instinct be given due recognition. In the words of Shakespeare we should let "good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both."—Harper's Bazar.

## Sparks from Other Anvils.

North and West: The Independent admits a poem, which places a Brahmin seeking Nirvana as on the way to salvation and heaven. We fear that the recent change in its conduct by which it finds its Bible by selection from the Bible is leading it, as is commonly the case, to seek its Bible also outside of the Bible.

Christian Observer: It is to be hoped that the Alaska boundary question will soon be settled. That it should be is important in itself, and its settlement will prepare the way for an understanding between this country and Canada in regard to several other irritating questions. Recent utterances in the Canadian Parliament have been variously understood. There is no reason to believe that any of the speakers dreamed of war, as even a possibility. The Canadians seem to insist on arbitration, before an impartial tribunal, of all the questions involved. In the light of our demand touching the Venezuelan dispute, we ought to be willing to submit the whole question to similar arbitration. The good feeling and Christian sentiment of the two countries give good hope of a speedy settlement.

Presbyterian Journal: Religion is a question of faith. No one who believes in God should hesitate to submit his life to His control.

Presbyterian Witness: Is it too much to hope that in a short time—a shorter time than most of us suppose—the prohibition question also shall be out of politics and cease to give trouble? We think the hope is warranted. Everything (under God) depends on the earnestness and honesty of the temperance host. If they adhere to their professions and principles in the face of all temptations, victory is certain—an early and brilliant victory. . . . National prohibition is the best battle cry. Encourage all that tends in this direction. Public men will be ready enough by and by to give their aid to a great popular movement.

Religious Telescope: Dr. Briggs having been ordained a priest in the Protestant Episcopal Church, Dr. Buckley, of the Christian Advocate, is reported as asking whether Dr. Briggs, when he was a Presbyterian minister, believed that he had no proper ordination, and if so, why he performed the functions of a minister when he knew that he had no title to them. He then inquires: "How did your suspension on doctrinal grounds convince you that besides the order of presbyter there is an order of bishops, who have descended without a break from the apostles, and who alone have the power to make a layman first a deacon and then an elder?" These questions must be rather embarrassing to the distinguished apostle of the destructive higher criticism. They remind us of an anecdote we once heard. A colored preacher was dilating eloquently on the creation of man, and, among other things said: "De Lo'd made man out ob clay an' stood him up ag'in de fence to dry." Just then a voice from the pew cried out: "Who made de fence?" To this, after a short pause, the preacher solemnly remarked: "Brudder Sam, jee stop right dar. A few mo' such questions as dat will spoil all de theology in de wo'ld."

"Be but faithful, that is all."—Arthur Hugh Clough.