

Pastor and People.

THE TWO ANGELS.

Two princely angels clad in white and gold,
Who, strong and beautiful, before God's throne,
Reflecting His great glory, long had shone,
Once left seraphic hierarchies old
To serve poor man and trust with him to hold.
Through lacerant airs they gladly floated down,
Surcharged with joy that they could make God known,
And pledges sure of His dear love unfold.
Soft as the brooding of a seraph's wing,
And fresh as breezes blow from climes unseen,
So sweet and strong their gracious ministering!
Mild Tender Mercy one, of blessed mien,
And Loving Kindness, with deep eyes serene,
And great good-will, benignant like a king.
—Mrs. M. E. Gates, in S. S. Times.

THE ONE CONDITION OF TRUE PREACHING*

In the sculpture gallery in the capitol at Rome, there is a collection of busts complete, or nearly complete, of all the Roman emperors, from the earliest to the latest. The busts are, for the most part, the work of contemporary artists. It is a fine study to trace the decay of the art from which the noble Greek marbles of the early Caesars, through the gradual decline in the silver age of the Antonines, to the relapse into barbarism, in the days of the Gothic emperors. The singular relection occurs, that the sculptor who chiselled this latest effigy, a work little better than the crude wooden doll of a child, a caricature of a human head, had before him there in Rome, those consummate examples from the great period. The heir of all the ages—he produced this! In the presence of master-pieces, this was his handiwork. The explanation of such a decline and a degradation, is found when we observe the condition of true productivity in art. Lifeless imitation is decay. The copy of the best models passes by insensible gradations into the production of the worst. Art comes from life. Invention is, as it were, of the soil. A great period of art occurs when men get back to Nature, and a few men of genius, generally men from the fresh-turned furrows and the bare ribs of the earth, lay hands, ungloved by convention, on the reality of things; they must be men possessed of great energy and will, for it is always difficult to keep pressing closely on the contour and form of fact. The miserable declension of art illustrated in that gallery of the capitol, was due to the gradual drifting of its ministers from the sources of truth and inspiration, into the servile adoption of routine.

And so in the matter of preaching, the great models are always before us, and the lasting principles of it are known and admitted, but the secret of it may very easily be lost. It may become—often has become—a dull mechanic exercise, which seems to the wise, childish and trivial, and the more childish and trivial because it affects, with the pompous make-believe of childishness, to be something so much greater, something even divine.

Every living preacher must receive his message in a communication direct from God, and the constant purpose of his life must be, to receive it uncorrupted, and to deliver it without addition or subtraction.

It is a truism, but I think you will all agree, a neglected truism. If in our brief better moments, we see it, we constantly are tempted to recede from it. Not without some suspicion of what may be involved in unflinchingly accepting it as true, we are apt to take refuge in modifications, compromises, denials. Flesh shrinks, and the heart cries out. Let some one else go up the rugged steep of the mountain and see him face to face. Let some one else stand awestruck in the passing of the Almighty. I will do some

* From Verbum Dei by the Rev. R. F. Horton, M. A. Yale Lecturer on Preaching, 1893.

humbler task. Let me read the lessons, or let me recite the creed, or let me be a priest, clad in the robes of office, which are a discharge from personal fitness. On many grounds, and in many ways, we disclaim our calling. The truth remains as a truism, but we dare not grasp it ourselves. The world notices our disclaimer, and accepts us on the level of our own elected degradation.

It is a truism; but are we ready, in face of what is involved, to grant that it is true? The message must be received from God in a direct communication! The preacher is indeed a prophet. The full meaning of this dawns upon us as we look at the alternatives. He is a prophet; that is, he is not merely a reciter or rhetorician; he is not merely a lecturer or philosopher; he is not, above all he is not, merely a priest.

We have to face the truism, the neglected truism, that every living preacher must receive a communication direct from God. This is, in the last resort, the only justification of preaching at all. The man is set apart to address his fellow-men, sometimes men who are his equals or superiors in knowledge and ability, perhaps even in speaking power and copiousness of language. Why should they listen to him? There is no reason why they should unless he has been in the secret cell of the oracle and has heard God speak. And, indeed, practically they will not, unless the authentic note is in him, and thus saith the Lord, tacitly introduces all that he teaches. Has he never heard the voice? Is he not repeating a message? Then assuredly he will fail. No man taketh this honour to himself. To be God's mouthpiece, when God is not speaking through him, is a fraud of the palpable kind which men will not away with. Over many an unfaithful preacher we are obliged to say what Keble said of the disobedient man of God in the old Testament (1 Kings, 13:26)—

Alas my brother, round thy tomb
In sorrow kneeling, and in fear,
We read the pastor's doom
Who speaks and will not hear.

All manner of sins may be forgiven a preacher—a harsh voice, a clumsy delivery, a bad pronounciation, an insufficient scholarship, a crude doctrine, an ignorance of men; but there is one defect which cannot be forgiven, for it is a kind of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; it cannot be forgiven him if he preaches when he has not received a message from God to deliver. Woe unto those prophets whom the Lord hath not sent!

Before utterance is obligatory, the word must be burning within like the seething lava fountains in the heart of a volcano, and demanding outlet by a divine compulsion. When God bids a man speak, it often chances that the man has few truths to utter, and those in a chaotic condition; not infrequently his Nabi, or seer, is one with a poor range of thought, and many big lacunae in his knowledge; such a man as no earthly sovereign would select as an ambassador, and no university would pass as a graduate, but the Spirit of the Lord comes upon him; he speaks the poor and halting word, but it goes like a "boiled breath," and is wedged in a gnarled heart that no erudition or eloquence could touch.

The preacher is called upon to go direct to God, to receive God's word into his heart, and to utter it, it alone, with all the power that is in him. If the word is not God's, if it is not received from Him, received in that shape, and for that occasion, he were better silent; his message will fall to the ground; and he, unfaithful one, will have a weary circle in the purging fires to tread, that he may repent and learn wisdom.

But if this is so, who can adequately describe the preacher's responsibility? Or how can we sufficiently emphasize the essential conditions of rightly discharging the high office?

He must get a word from God before he speaks it—that is the requirement. Even at this point it is possible to see what that will demand from him in the bent of his mind, and in the initial set of his life.

Clearly he has a task which will need an undivided attention, and a complete absorption in its fulfilment. He is to climb Sinai with its ring-fence of death, and on the summit speak face to face with Him whom no one can see and yet live. He is to push through the wilderness, eating angels' meat or nothing, and scale the crags of Horeb, where, in a great hollow, shadowed by a hand, he may, through earthquake, wind and fire discern the still small voice. What a venture it is for him! No sphere of human activity is to be compared with the exigencies of this endeavour. Men who are set on making money give their whole being to it, their time is freely sacrificed; for the one dear end they do not hesitate to barter the sweets of life, and the beauty of the earth,

Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.
Not only do they surrender the charms of ease and spiritual development here, but they very readily forego the life to come, give their souls to the god of this world, and tread with restless eagerness the descensus Averni. And all this that they may make money!

The preacher must cast the die with a similar absoluteness. For the descent to Avernus is easy compared with the ascent to the mount of God, and the entrance to the place of the Oracle.

So has the preacher to wait at the portal of God, and to receive into himself the solemn utterance from the Holy Place. He has time for no inattention; he can admit of no distractions. There is much to hear, and he can spare no syllable.

Though he is in the world and moving with the life of men, full of sympathies and interests, full of the world's thought and its passion, he is necessarily detached from the world, not admitting its principles, not dazzled by its attractions, nor flattered by its favours. When it praises or blames, his ear is preoccupied with the voice of God. Its jargon, its claims, its philosophy, its science, the cry of its markets, and the tumult of its havens, the giddy rush of its pleasures, and the acclamation of its ambitions, come to him, not as unreal—they are, in a sense, too real—but dwarfed into a certain insignificance of transitoriness by the presence of a truer reality and the authoritative sound of a more commanding speech which issues from the mouth of God.

A SERIOUS PROBLEM.

One of the greatest of all mysteries is pain. A thing so universal must, one would think, have a purpose in it. Pain may have several purposes. One, at least, is very evident; pain acts as a spur, and sometimes an extraordinary sharp one. Ten thousand necessary things are done every day, both by men and animals, which would not be done if there were no pains to follow the neglect of them. We do not quarrel with pain the spur; our conflict is with pain the tormentor, pain the disabler. Hospitals are the civilized man's protest against disabling, unbearable pain; his defensive army which he employs to make war upon physical injury and disablement. Pain will never be eliminated from human experience so long as we are endowed with a present nervous system, but it may be reduced to a minimum. Injuries also may be reduced to a minimum. The amount and severity of the pains experienced and witnessed in hospitals is almost overwhelming. The accidents counted by hundreds of thousands in London yearly; the reverses reckoned by tens of thousands; the chronic diseases, such as cancer, demanding its thousands of victims annually, and consumption demanding its thousands more; the destructive and agonizing diseases which attack children by tens of thousands, with an infinite number of other unnamed ills, constitute an aggregate of distress and anguish that paralyzes the imagination and makes realization impossible. All these ills afflict the civilized man more sharply than the savage. They threaten the progress of civilization itself. One of the problems of the immediate future is: Can we stand up with physical force and resisting power

sufficient to bear the strain which the intensifying struggle for survival will speedily put upon us? This question must be answered in the hospital; it must be answered by medical science. If medical science cannot answer it in the affirmative, it cannot be answered in the affirmative at all. Hospital and medical science stand between civilized man and destructive pains and ills, like a strong army defending the fatherland. Is the army strong enough? If not, let us promptly make it stronger.—Hospital.

READING FOR CHILDREN.

The man who refuses to give to foreign missions on the ground that there are heathen enough at home, gives evidence of being very much in love with at least one of the heathen at home.

The sort of "vengeance" God takes for the most part is that which softens and saves. If thine enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst give him to drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head: Be good, patient, overwhelmingly kind, and then thou shalt be so far like the Lord Himself. Love is the all-conquering "avenger."

Take good care of disagreeable duties. Attend to these first. Never select the things that you want to do, and shirk upon others the things that you do not want to do. Wherever you are, choose the disagreeable things. You will get your pay in your mas hood. You cannot grow in any other way so fast. You may be angry with some shiftless man who is willing to put on your work that he ought to do, you may feel that there is injustice in it, but you cannot afford to be unfaithful because somebody else is.—Henry Ward Beecher.

People often sling "Where is my wandering boy-to-night?" but the truth is when the parents went to church or the temperance meeting this "wandering boy" also left home and joined his associates on the street corners. The parents are singing this song and shouting "Down with the saloon," while they are giving their boy full liberty to do as he pleases. And he generally lives up to his privileges. This is one phase of a large subject, and it is a phase which should be looked squarely in the face. However ardent parents may be in supporting the cause of temperance, they may by their very neglect, by their shortcomings in home training, help to foster the liquor traffic. Their plain and manifest duty is to nip the evil in the bud by wise and careful training of their boys in all that is excellent and lovely and of good report. In the work of temperance reform everyone must build over against his own house.—The Mid-Continent.

The wise mother will teach her children without their suspecting that they are learning lessons, writes Elizabeth Robinson Scovil in an article on "The Best Reading for Children," in the Ladies' Home Journal. The charm of "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Three Bears" may be equalled by true stories of the wonders that lie all about us. These have revealed themselves to many patient, sympathetic observers, who have recorded their observations for our benefit, so that we have only to profit by their labours. The fairyland of science has domains as fascinating as anything in the realm of fiction. Why not make the children free of it? Tell them of the habits of birds and plants and animals; of the wonderful snow crystals and the black diamonds of the coal. It is not difficult to begin, it is only difficult to know where to stop; the supply of subjects is inexhaustible. As we watch the development of the active, intelligent minds, we feel the importance of supplying them with food that shall nourish as well as amuse them. It seems a pity that the retentive memories, on which it is now so easy to make an indelible impression, should not have imprinted upon them facts of real interest and value. These may be told at first in the simplest language, and illustrated by reference to familiar things. Children are full of curiosity; all their surroundings are new and strange. They are constantly asking questions and inquiring into the reason of everything that strikes them as being unusual. They should receive intelligent answers; explanations that will satisfy them as far as possible, when the subject is really beyond their grasp. Nothing is more exasperating to the inquiring mind than to be told, "You cannot understand that now, you must wait till you are older"; or given one of the other time-honored excuses that serve to conceal the ignorance of the elders.