

ABOUT PREACHING.

A WRITER in one of the Church papers gives the following, which will apply to people in other latitudes as well as that in which it was first published:—

"If there's ever a morning I say, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' with special urgency, it's Sunday. And most times it isn't answered."

Miss Jane was just home from church, and spoke to her invalid sister, who had stayed at home mourning over her Bible and hymn-book and "Invitation," that she could not worship in the great congregation.

"It's, perhaps, because other days I provide for myself, but Sundays I go to church to be fed, and I come home, generally, with my appetite spoiled and my hunger unsatisfied. The reading is good, of course, but the music! It's 'artistic,' and done by a quartette whose performances often remind one of the minister who said, by a witty mistake, 'The worship of God will now be suspended while the choir sing.' Or it's Sunday-school warblings—the gospel of gush set to music. I suppose, for the real good some of them have done in revival meetings and the like, we must be tender of them, and we have Wesley's hymns for private reading. But how any one with a reasonable amount of religion and culture can deliberately prefer them, puzzles me. Perhaps the chorus of thousands put a soul into them. It needs to be put in; it's not there to begin with, though good people wrote them.

"But the sermons. It's an advantage, certainly, to have their subjects in the paper the day before; you can glance over the list at breakfast, and choose, as in a lecture or concert course. But listen to these I cut from a paper yesterday: 'Modern Shibboleths,' 'Husks,' 'Compensations,' 'A Month among the White Hills,' 'Life in Cities,' and 'Political Corruption.'

"I have a preference myself for the subject of religion. Instead, we have politics, with just enough salt of Gospel to save it, or Church history, or poor modern science. There are flowers on the altar, and music at both ends, a great deal of poetry and sentiment, but it's stale bread after all, and the hungry sheep look up and are not fed."

"There's a text you've forgotten sister," said the other quietly, "and you may preach yourself a sermon from it. 'Take heed how ye hear.'"

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

WHEN I was a lad, in my native town, I knew a painter there whose favourite works were all portraits of himself, taken in different costumes; and one of England's most famous poets produced a series of writings in which his lonely, misanthropic self was ever the central figure. So there are Christians among us who, while letting their light shine, contrive to paint themselves upon the glass of the lamp in which it is enclosed. They are for ever speaking of themselves. They tell of the many meetings which they have addressed, and of the great amount of good that they have done. Their song, like that of a cuckoo, is a constant repetition of their own name, and the listener is wearied with its iteration. Let it not be so with us. Let Christ be all and in all. It was Michael Angelo, who, according to the beautiful illustration of a Boston preacher, placed his candle so in his pasteboard cap, that his own shadow might not fall upon his work. Thus let us keep self ever in the background. Let Christ be all and in all. Let us be content to decrease if only He may increase. Let the shout of Paul animate us, so that our highest wish shall be that Christ shall be magnified in our bodies, whether it be by life or by death. Let our song be like that of the skylark, as he rises with dewy breast from his lowly earth-couch, singing as he soars, until, unseen in the deep blue above, he rains a shower of melody on the listening earth. It matters not though we be unseen, if but the light be clear; for then we are fulfilling the command, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.—Dr. Taylor.

The room for individuality in religion is immense. It is necessary that the soul love God and man—these are the banks within which the ocean of religion must lie content, but within these banks there may be many shadings of light and cloud and many tones of sea music.—David Swing.

PRAYING FOR FRIENDS.

"The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."

THE great interest of this prayer is in the fact that Paul sees "that day" approaching to his friend and to himself—the great day of account, when good and evil must stand before the bar of God. He does not think of it in the light and almost flippant spirit which some of our modern believers affect, as if judgment had nothing to do with them. He trusts that he is safe in Christ, and that his friend is also, safe. Yet to pass the dread ordeal, and come forth unconquered, forgiven, saved for ever, what a wonder of grace will be there! What should one pray for so earnestly as for that: "May Onesiphorus, stretching forth his hands in that day for mercy, find mercy, even as diligently seeking he found me." The Lord grant that he whom I so joyfully embraced in my poor prison may be clasped in the everlasting arms, and received into the heavenly home!

Nor is it Onesiphorus alone for whom Paul would pray. Let his household too be saved. Those sweet children, to whom he had so often spoken of the love of Jesus; those faithful servants, who had their Master's example to guide them; the kinsfolk who came to visit him; may they all be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord their God! See how great the blessing is of belonging to a godly home. A child is not saved because he has a Christian father, nor a servant because he has a Christian master; but how the influence of such a man, and his prayers, and the prayers of others on his behalf, flow out upon his family! How much love and sympathy, how much wise counsel and kindly warning, how many friends of the best stamp, are mine, because the Father of all mercies cast my lot in a home where He was honoured, and whither good men were wont to come! Take heed, ye children of the gully; ye for whom many a prayer, fervent as Paul's own prayers, has been offered for your parents' sake; to households like that of Onesiphorus much has been given, and of them much will be required.

What choicer blessing can we have than the prayers of Christian people? That bedridden saint cannot give you payment for your visits, but when you are gone she will breathe blessings on you and on yours into ears that are never closed to her. Those native Christians far across the sea are poor, and may have to throw themselves still upon the English churches for support in time of need; but the obligation is not all on one side, while such brethren pray for our prosperity. The loved ones in heaven, whom we tenderly carried down to the river's brink, cannot repay us with words of encouragement, or guide us with their long and ripe experience. But have they ceased to pray? Surely they are now our good angels, beholding the face of God, and adding their intercessions to those of the great Advocate. They may be suffered to see something of our mortal sufferings and struggles. They cannot be forbidden to think of us. And if they think of us, and still more if they see us, the incense of their adoration before the throne is mingled with urgent entreaties on our behalf, which will surely prevail. Think of us, ye departed saints, now that it is well with you, and make mention of us in the ears of your King!

Onesiphorus has been abundantly recompensed in time and in eternity for all that he had done and dared for Paul. Need we fear to be overlooked? We have the servants' prayers. We have the Master's promise, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."—From "The Minor Characters of the New Testament," by Rev. W. Brock.

DON'T DESPOND.—The most perilous hour of a person's life is when he is tempted to despond. The man who loses his courage loses all; there is no more hope of him than of a dead man; but it matters not how poor he may be, how much pushed by circumstances, how much deserted by friends, how much lost by the world; if he only keeps his courage, holds up his head, works on with his hands, and in his unconquerable will determines to be and to do what becomes a man, all will be well. It is nothing outside of him that kills; but what is within—that makes or unmakes.