

THE TRUE IDEAL OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE CLERICAL CONFERENCE IN ST. JOHN, BY THE REV. P. J. FILLUEL, B. A., RURAL DEAN, WEYMOUTH, N. S.

(CONCLUDED).

Fasting.—No one who desires to make progress in the spiritual life will fail to avail himself of the help derived from fasting. We know that when Daniel set himself to seek instruction by *prayer and fasting*, he was, in consequence, favoured with one of the richest views of the Messiah, within the whole range of Scripture. Need we mention the "fastings" recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the "fastings often" of St. Paul. The lives of the early Christians abounded in self-denial, and they were filled with the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and one reason may be why some Christians have comparatively so little joy in God, is through neglect of this duty. Striking and emphatic are the words of Christ. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." There are particular evils, strong propensities, which it may be necessary to overcome by fasting. It is adapted to humble the soul, to wean it from the world, and to subdue the flesh. Will not checking occasionally the natural appetite for food teach the Christian to value more highly "the Bread of Life," and to live more resolutely above the world's enjoyments? And should any one feel any temporary inconvenience, may he not be led to feel more deeply for the necessities of others, who, in the Providence of God, may be as deserving as himself, but who may often be in want of the most ordinary comforts of life? But, then, it may be asked how can we have the fullness and power of the spiritual life in us, and be assured of its quickening presence? We can only retain the life, and develop the life by employing all the powers which Christ has communicated for the benefit of our brethren. Now the fulfilling of the law is *Love*. The faith of the spiritual man will be an *active, operative* faith—not a mere sentiment which dwells upon the lip, but that vital principle which goes down into innermost recesses of the soul. He will often recall to mind the words of St. James: "*Faith without works, is dead being alone*," as well as the injunction of St. Paul, "*This is a faithful saying, and I will that thou constantly affirm that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works*." After the example of his Divine Master he will not "please" himself, but will dispense to the necessities of the poor, instruct the ignorant, reclaim the outcasts, pouring in the oil and grace of the Gospel into wounds which sin has inflicted, and neglect and want of sympathy have deepened. He will, as opportunity offers, search them out in the crowded lanes and streets, where squalor, ignorance, and misery abound,—the men, the women, the very children in whose bodies the seed of the immortal principle has been implanted; yet they are those who have hearts and consciences, not always seared, nor deaf to the tones of kindness and love, and who may yet, through the mercy of God, respond to the invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," encouraged by the blessed assurance that the Son of God came down on this sin-blighted world to save those that were lost. But pious and benevolent efforts for the benefit of others are not so likely to prove effective as when they are systematic and combined. We thank God, therefore, that He has put it into the hearts of some of His handmaids to organize themselves into

Sisterhoods, and they may by this agency aid the clergy by gaining ready access in cases either closed against them, or where they would be only partially successful. Who can fail most thankfully to recognize the labour of love of the sex "last at the cross and first at the sepulchre," and who (many of them) though bred in all the pride and luxury of life, have renounced the world, its gauds, and all its attractions, and have given themselves body, soul, and spirit, to the service of their Lord. God, we know, will own and bless the work of these His servants, and sustain and cheer their

efforts by the gracious promise "inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these ye have done it unto me."

To take interest in the well-being of others, St. John affirms, is evidence that we have ourselves "passed from death unto life." Charity, or Love, is a grace of even higher dignity than Faith or Hope, being a part, and a *most important* part of relieving the body and spiritual woes of our fellow-men. It is impossible that there should be genuine Faith in Christ, whose dispensation was a dispensation of Love, without the active and habitual exercise of it; for if the truths of the Gospel are received into the heart, the practice of Charity will spring from them and establish Love on a sure foundation. It is, indeed, the only grace which will live in the World of Light. *Faith* will then be changed into *Vision*; and *Hope* into *enjoyment*; but "Charity never faileth," for it is the very spirit of the Heavenly State *where all is Love*. This is the very spirit which suits the presence of God. May he pour out upon us all that "most excellent gift of Charity!" Without it *Hope* is groundless, and *Faith* is vain.

We would in closing refer to one of the means by which the spiritual life of the clergy may be promoted and increased, and this will be through retreats. The Divine Master thus addressed his harassed disciples—"Come ye yourselves into a desert place and rest awhile." Man has ever needed and God has required him to use special seasons of rest from bodily and mental toil. But to the servant of Christ, who labours continually in word and doctrine, "there is little, or no rest," and this more especially in positions where pulpit efforts are most exacting, in large measure owing to the altered condition of the age, to say nothing of the amount of purely secular work often thrust upon the clergy, and thus the energies of the mind are often dissipated, the spiritual tone is apt to be lowered, and the physical strength weakened. And let our people bear in mind that they "have this treasure in earthen vessels," liable to be broken. As the clergy, for the most part, work at high pressure, the laws of our physical life, which are the laws of God, indicate the adoption of the practice instituted by Christ, "who knew what was in man," and who is "touching with a feeling of our infirmities." Here, by a period of seclusion, the clergy may "rest awhile," engaging in prayer, holding sweet intercourse together; realizing the blessedness of closer communion with their Lord, and entering more deeply into union with His life; conferring on the adoption of such means as are conducive to the advancement of the spiritual life in their own souls, and in their people's likewise: *their people?* Yes; for retreats being thus turned to the best account will have a reflex benefit on them. And thus "strengthened in the spirit" with enlarged conceptions of the duties they owe those "over whom the Holy Spirit hath made them overseers," can we doubt that "retreats" will be helpful to pastors and people, enabling them to go onward with more vigorous step, and more chastened spiritual aims to the glorious "Rest which remaineth to the people of God."

BOOK NOTICES, REVIEWS, &c.

We are indebted to Thomas Whittaker, 2 & 3 Bible House, N. Y., through their agents in Halifax, Messrs. MacGregor & Knight, for the following publications:—

HINTS FOR WORSHIPPERS, By Melville M. Moore. Price 2cts. This is a card of instruction in reverent and becoming behaviour during Divine Service. The clergy might well circulate it with advantage.

"Decently and in Order, or Hints for Worshippers," with Reasons and Comments, by the Rev. M. M. Moore, Rector of St. Peter's Parish, Oxford, Miss.

This is an extension of the card referred to above, and which has been in use for two or three years. Its usefulness will no doubt be increased by this amplification.

"The Sower," Six Lectures delivered in Christ Church, Easton, Ind., in Lent, 1882, by Rev. Robert Wilson, M. D. Price 35 cts.

Of these lectures the writer says that if they

"prove suggestive of earnest thought to others, and of a deeper significance in Holy Scripture than that which lies upon the surface, the whole object of their publication will have been accomplished." They are expressive of deep reverence and thought, and in style are clear and attractive.

"Four Lectures on Confirmation for the Instruction of Classes," by Rev. Robert Wilson, author of the "Sower." Price 6 cts.

These lectures are full of sound and distinct teaching, and will be found most useful.

"The Snatcham Choir," by an Organist. Price 10 cts.

This is a most amusing little sketch of the troubles of a country Rector and his choir. It has had, the publisher tells us, a large circulation in England, and in the interest of harmony is now republished in America. It is the story of the Snatcham Choir from the Rector's point of view.

"Hymn Writers of the Church," by the Rev. Robert S. Barrett. Price 15 cts.

Our only regret in reading this suggestive and beautiful pamphlet is that it is not extended far beyond its small compass, better knowledge of the beautiful and noble hymns of our Church could not fail to draw to her many Christian hearts outside her pale, and the history of those who have written these soul-stirring words must surely be interesting to all.

"Some Plain Words for busy people about the [Protestant Episcopal] Church," by Charles Seymour, A. M., Rector of Grace Church, New York.

This is a most useful and instructive little book. The writer has aimed at treating the several subjects in the manner in which they are frequently presented to pastors in the course of their visiting, and so presents them that persons having but little time at their disposal can readily view them. These "PLAIN WORDS" should be of very great value in making the Church better known even to her own members.

Thomas Whittaker is preparing a fourth edition of his "Fifty Volume Library for the Children of the Church." The popularity of this set shows how successful has been the publisher's venture to issue really good books at an uniformly low price.

"Electra," No. 1, Vol. 1. A Belles Lettres Monthly for Young People. Edited by Annie E. Wilson and Isabella M. Leyburn. Published by Isabella M. Leyburn, 734 Fourth Avenue, Louisville, Ky. Terms two dollars in advance.

This is a most laudable undertaking, and one to which we wish every success. In these days, when the minds of the young are too frequently exposed to the temptations of a class of literature which is simply pernicious, we should thankfully hail every honest effort to supply our youth with reading which will at once attract and interest, while it instructs and raises the tone of their minds. "Electra" will, we trust, meet with every encouragement.

Another periodical with the same aims in view, and which, to boys especially, may be even more attractive, is one entitled "Mastery." Useful pastimes for young people. Illustrated. A weekly magazine. Price \$3 per year. Address "Mastery," 842 Broadway, New York.

"The Early Days of Christianity," by F. W. Farrar, D.D. F. R. S., &c., &c., Author's edition. Funk & Wagnalls, New York. S. F. Heustis, Halifax. Price 75 cents.

We reviewed this great work of Canon Farrar's a few weeks ago, and it seems to be growing in favor with all classes of Christians. It is written in so charming and eloquent a style, and is of such absorbing interest, and displays so vast a fund of knowledge, that at the low price asked for it there should be an enormous sale for the work. Mr. Heustis, Granville Street, Halifax, has been appointed Messrs. Funk & Wagnalls' agent for all their publications, which are numerous, and in many cases standard works. When ordering, our readers will please bear this fact in mind.