

therefore, can be shown to exist either for the addition of one single new dogma to our creed, or for modification in the statement, much less for the entire setting aside, of one single article of our Faith. In the strongest terms then that language can supply we desire to deprecate any application of the pruning knife to our grand old Confession, earnestly urging that our Church in the exercise of a sanctified conservatism shall transmit it to those that are to come after us in the same unbroken fulness in which our forefathers transmitted it to us.

Woodman, spare that tree;  
Touch not a single bough.

### A Sunday Evening in England.

[This account of a sabbath evening service in the Sefton Park Presbyterian Church, Liverpool, appeared in the PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW of Aug. 18th, 1887. The preacher was Rev. Dr. John MacLaren Watson ("Ian MacLaren"), the minister of the congregation.]

The long pleasant twilight of an English evening has not commenced yet. It is still broad daylight that shines through the church windows and lights up the faces of as fine a congregation as you will see in the world. Lights them up almost too vividly, for as the sun sinks and the rays become embarrassingly bright, someone outside lowers a screen over the western windows and the dazzling light is excluded. But the church is filling up. There is scarcely a vacant seat now, though it is still three minutes to the hour of evening service. Very quiet. What an atmosphere of repose and peace seems to surround you.

But the pulpit is no longer empty. The reverent silence deepens and before any word is spoken, all are in the attitude of prayer. After the invocation follows the hymn, "Lord of our Life and Strength of our Salvation." Was it not strange that the same hymn should have closed the service just two weeks ago to-night in All Saints' Church? It seemed like an echo across the Atlantic, and the words of the oboe seemed to say—that God's people on earth as well as in Heaven are one.

The Old Testament lesson was taken from Genesis, chap. xvi. 6-33. Afterwards the congregation chanted Psalm 81; and there followed such a prayer as might well fill a stranger's heart with a sense of the presence of God, and of the power of united prayer. What a precious gift it is to be able truly to express the desires and petitions of a congregation, so that they can feel that the things that have been dimly and uncertainly in their minds have been more clearly set forth, and that they have been enabled, by the good hand of our God, to pray with and for others.

The next hymn was a very beautiful one, in sentiment somewhat like "Thy Will be Done," but dwelling more on the comfort of submitting our wills to the will of God. The number, I think, was 271 (in the collection used by the Presbyterian Church of England). The New Testament lesson was 1 Corinthians, chap. 12. The intimations were concerning the prayer-meeting, the celebration of the Lord's Supper on the ensuing Sabbath, the Preparatory Sacramental Service, and the visiting of a certain part of the parish on three afternoons of the week. It did not need this last to make one think that this man was diligent in his work. His face, earnest and clever, bore unmistakable signs of hard work. It was such a face as one only sees among those professional men whose work is their life.

If the sermon had been rather a poor one, you would have gone home delighted with the service and the spirit of reverence and worship. But it was not a poor one. Nor was it a fairly good one. Nor a good one. It was one to remember for a year and a day. It was a sermon to wake you up, and make you feel as if you wanted to do something and to trust in God more. It was a sermon to make you feel that you, poor affair that you might be, were God's workmanship, and that the Lord Jesus Christ had said to you, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

The text was in the Old Testament lesson, "And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham; and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them." The subject was, "Isaac—a man without individuality." It was shown in various ways that this was his character; that if there were taken out of his life the acts which must be to the credit of Abraham, to the discredit of Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau, there was really nothing left except his birth and death; that in the matter of choosing a wife, he made no move for himself, never seems to have thought of marrying until he was told, and then was content to take a wife chosen for him by his father's man of business; that he received but one direct revelation from God, in these words—"I am the God of thy father Abraham"; that even in his sin he followed exactly the sin of Abraham, in calling his wife his sister. In short, he was a type of that kind of person who does as other people do and says as other people say; who never has an opinion or an idea of his own; whose utterances, if you ever hear him utter anything, can immediately be traced to someone else—or perhaps to the newspaper he read this morning. Or if it were not in your newspaper, then you know he takes the other paper, and there you will find that idea or opinion if you look. And the text and the history in the chapter furnish a characteristic instance of this. Now, instead of finding new wells, he tried to clear out the old ones, and instead of calling them names of his own, called them by the names his father had called them, and gave them up at once, when the Philistines came and took them—and did it again—and yet again, until the Philistines were kind enough to leave the third well to him in peace, and he kept that one.

Let us be thankful, continued the preacher, when God sends to us a man with ideas of his own, and be very kind to him. Do not say "His ideas are strange." Be thankful that he has ideas. Do

not say, "He is so narrow and one-sided." Be thankful that he does see one side. Do you know how many people there are who never see any side at all? Sympathize with these men—help them to do the work that God meant them to do and be thankful. Oh! be unspeakably thankful that he has given them ideas to carry out. Why was Isaac almost without a mind or an existence of his own? Perhaps because he was overshadowed by his father Abraham. Abraham was so grand a character that Isaac was like a small tree trying to grow up between two large ones, and miserably failing in the attempt. For when he married, he was again overshadowed by the influence of his clever wife, Rebekah. It is not unusual to see such things happen in families. It is particularly sad when a gentle, retiring woman is overwhelmed by a too managing husband. She very willingly gives up the contest, and early retires from the struggle, and is scarcely allowed afterwards to have an idea of her own. Her glory consists in sinking her individuality in his. Nor is the case much better when a man is overshadowed by a clever wife, so that he dare not take a course of action for himself, and so that nothing he does is done without first being submitted for permission. It is often said, as an explanation of the fact, that clever men very seldom have clever sons, that nature has exhausted herself, and is resting after the supreme effort of producing a great man. Very beautiful, no doubt. But is it not rather that the sons have been overshadowed by the father, that he has kept them too much by his side, that his influence has been so all-powerful that their lives were only a reflection of his, and that they never received sunlight enough to enable them to grow strong themselves? These things are not right. No man or woman has a right to take away from another his individual life. In many old streets in Liverpool there are houses, on the windows of which you may see a placard with the words, "Ancient Lights," and though that house is old and poor and tumble-down, no man may build a great house beside it whose walls may overshadow it, and keep God's sunlight from these ancient lights. Even so each of us should live in the light of the Lord, and none of us should force those around us to live by our ideas, and do the will of God in our narrow way, rather than in their own way as God has made them.

The parting hymn was "O Saviour Bless Us Ere We Go." After the benediction there was a pause, and when the worshipers began to leave the crowded church, they went so quietly. There was room for everybody—nobody pushed you. Toronto church goes would have walked a quarter of a mile, and met the people from the Methodist Church, and the Baptist Church and the other Church, and had a firm and undignified contest with them for the exclusive right to the sidewalk by this time, and yet we are only at the church door and go slowly down the steps feasting eyes and heart upon the beauty of the still summer evening, so different from the restless billows and the reeling decks of last Sabbath. Before us stretch nearly four hundred acres of public land—the treasure of rich and poor alike—Sefton Park. Look how the great field at your feet stretches away and away. Nothing but grass and a great flock of sheep, and boys and girls and men and women taking their pleasure there in the evening air. Poor flock of sheep—their fate comes with the dawn, but to night they are content. I wonder if, among the hundreds and hundreds of the Good Shepherd's sheep that are here in these free acres, the unseen angels look not down to-night on some to whom to-morrow's sun will bring grim death. God knows.

The open field is past now, and drives and walks open before us, leading down to a beautiful little stream which feeds a miniature lake, where ducks and stately white swans and black swans disport themselves. See, the white swans drive their black neighbours out of the water, and they are obliged to be content to smooth their ruffled feathers on the shore. See the little men and maidens that watch them in childish glee, while the proud parents look on and watch their children, in turn, with a joy that is as pure, if somewhat sadder. And see, more than all, how many of these faces are the faces of the poor and the hard wrought. Is it not enough to make you glad to see these hundreds and hundreds happy in the possession of the blessings that our Father meant us all to share alike.

It is nine o'clock and after, and still the twilight lasts, but it grows fainter. *Sic itur ad astra.*

### Preaching that Tells.

REV. PRINCIPAL MACVICAR in an article on this subject in the current Presbyterian College Journal says: The sermon that tells must be delivered in the right spirit. What is it? The spirit of love. The spirit of the Master who "beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke xix., 41). It is a fact that the dominant feeling in the mind of the speaker spreads more or less in the audience. If he is in a magisterial scolding mood, hearers will speedily get into a similar temper. And if while he delivers his message his heart rises to God in strong desire for the salvation of those addressed, they will be moved in the same direction. This may seem to put very much in the power of the minister, and to lay heavy responsibility upon him; and is not this the Pauline view of the matter? That apostle says, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are being saved and in them that are perishing; to the one we are the savour from death unto death, and to the other the savour from life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii., 15-16).

Finally, the preaching which is effectual is accompanied by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. It was so when Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and so in the house of Cornelius. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word."