

Simplicity as a Pulpit Power.

Simplicity is a term which has come to us with various shades of meaning from the naïveté of the French to the clearness and perspicuity proverbial of great minds. In this way Agassiz was simple in his teaching. In this way, it has been remarked by a distinguished litterateur of this country, the great preachers in England are simple; and it was remarked that Dr. Benson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee, preached a sermon which was strong and commanded close attention; yet, instead of being an ambitious effort setting forth the material glories of the British Empire, it was a simple, high pitched, clear call for the dominance of the spiritual man over the material, while the discourse was notable for a simplicity of expression which made it intelligible to a child. And this quality of simplicity is declared on good authority to be more characteristic of the pulpits of England and Scotland than of this country, despite the high intellectual equipment of the preachers of these transatlantic countries.

In this relation it will not be doubted that Charles H. Spurgeon was one of the most gifted, if not the supreme of preachers of the present century. Yet he went confessedly for his models to the Bible and to Bunyan. And we may note right here that when asked for the secret of his pulpit power he said to his theological students: "When a dog is not noticed he doesn't like it. But when a dog is after a fox he doesn't care whether he is noticed or not. If a minister is seeking for souls, he will not think of himself." It did not occur, seemingly, to Mr. Spurgeon that his church people were nearly all converted, and therefore did not need the Gospel. Rather he seems to have felt that there is indeed an irrepressible conflict going on in the human breast, and that there was a strong tendency to backslide; hence the old truths of the Gospel must be unceasingly commended to men whether converted or not; and this we believe is the right view. As illustrative of the power of simple Gospel preaching, we may mention the case of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, who was converted in her early girlhood by a sermon preached by her celebrated father, Dr. Lyman Beecher. She tells us that many of his hair-splitting theological discourses were quite unintelligible to her, but on a certain Sabbath he spoke "in direct, simple and tender language of the great love of Jesus as our friend, and of His care of our souls." After reaching home she went into her father's study, and falling in his arms, she said to him: "Father, I have given myself to Jesus to-day, and he has taken me." He burst into grateful tears, and exclaimed: "Then has a new flower blossomed in the kingdom this day?"

We lay down no hard and fast rule; we inveigh against no great sermons, although the sum of the good achieved by them is, we believe, questionable. We only insist upon the social value of simple—not superficial, not commonplace—Gospel preaching. It isn't the sermon that elicits the remark as the congregation is marching down the aisle, "What a fine sermon," that necessarily does the most good, but the discourse which leads the listener to mend his ways, though his lips may give forth no words of enthusiastic approval over the "effort" of the minister.—Christian Work.

"It is the vocation of the Church, in the burning enthusiasm of love, and by elastic methods of action, to declare that Brotherhood has its root in Sonship, that the character of humanity is contained in the one pregnant phrase of Christ, 'Our Father.'"—John Marshall Lang, D.D.

Christian Service.

The service which Christ requires must be whole-hearted. To become a Christian one must give himself—body, soul, mind and strength, for life and death—to Christ. Christian service does not consist in any single act, but in a continued surrender, day by day, a living dedication of all that we are and all that we possess to Him who has called us into His kingdom. When the heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit, the soul is not only born into the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of God is set up in the soul. To serve Christ is to have Christ enthroned in the mind and heart. It is to have the desires and habits and passions to which all the best energies were sacrificed brought into subjection to the new Master and Lord. That means on His part ruling, and on our part willing and loving obedience.—The Examiner.

"He Maketh Me To Lie Down."

By Charlotte Murray.

"He maketh;" yes, He sees us on the mountains,
Toll-worn and weary, sadly needing rest;
And yet determined to be pressing onward
To gain the sunsets of some distant crest.

Too much intent to listen to His teaching,
Too eager to be gladdened by His smile,—
Too worried, often, to hold close communion,
And then He bids us rest a little while.

And we rebel: we do not wish to tarry;
It is so hard to feel we must lie down
Just at the moment when our hopes were
highest,
And glory waiting our success to crown!

And so He takes us from the hum of voices,
And will most tenderly our souls restore:
'Till we are refreshed, and duly strengthened
—
To walk more watchfully than heretofore.

There Was No Singing.

Doubt never gave birth to music. The newspaper reports of the funeral services of the late Colonel R. G. Ingersoll said, "There was no singing." The fact was deeply significant.

Some kind of music is natural and instinctive among the people of every race. It is a human instinct to be touched by the music power of music. Music is loved for two reasons. First, because it is impressive; second, because it is expressive. Music wakens chords in the being and life of the soul which otherwise would slumber. The consciousness of such wakened life and emotion is profoundly agreeable. Especially pleasing is it because it wakens the sense of oneness, a feeling of sympathy. Under this spell of music one seems to be less alone in the world. Something without is felt to correspond with something within. Somehow and somewhere the subtle impression is made by music that certain sensitive chords in others' being are in unison with and answer to those in our own being. And in this wakened sense of mutuality and responsiveness there is power. Some are of course more sensitive to it than others. With all it is a quality peculiarly susceptible to cultivation. But the impressive charm of music is universal.

Christianity, if not the mother of music, has developed a music and song of its own. There is to be found no such music in any heathen country as is found in all Christian countries. Naturally and historically, Christian experience gives birth to Christian music. This is because the Christian experience awakens into power emotions that are peculiar to itself, and which crave musical expression. For souls uplifted into glorious cheer and triumphing trust and hope mere

word-language is not enough; the words need to be touched into music in order to fit the case. That Paul and Silas, scourged and thrust into jail, despite their bleeding wounds, made their dungeon and the midnight ring with their song of praise, was perfectly natural; natural to men whose souls were stirred into such ecstasy as theirs of glorious and blessed fellowship with the Divine One who was thus revealing Himself within them. The Gospel of Christ has never gone anywhere that music did not go with it. The history of Christianity is traced in the history of Christian song.

There is no living church anywhere without its music and song. The modern hymnology is something which the atheist only makes himself foolish trying to account for. There is nothing in his philosophy to explain it. That there should have been no song or music of any kind at the funeral of Colonel Ingersoll was altogether natural. Music there and then would have seemed a mockery. Mr. Horbert Spencer, who has spent his life and his extraordinary intellectual ability trying to reason out an explanation of the world by reasoning God out of it, and in the strangely unnatural endeavor to put an "unknown" eternal IT in place of the Almighty Father, maker of heaven and earth, was asked not long ago by Mr. Stead to name some hymns that had been of greatest use and comfort to him. His reply was, that he was not aware that any hymn had been of particular use to him. When a boy of seven, he added, he had been forced to commit hymns to memory as a punishment. So cruelly, so horribly, in his case, was his life and his life's philosophy poisoned at the foundation, by a prejudice "deep almost as life."

It is a miracle of Christian testimony to the truth when martyrs go to the stake with triumphal song. It is something as really natural as it is beautiful when dying saints go home on the wings of song. Music at the Christian burial chords perfectly with the fitness and meaning of the occasion. Truly, pity can not be too heartfelt and profound when any one dies under circumstances which make music of any kind seem dissonant and out of place. Christian gratefulness can not be too constant or too exultant in view of the fact that music and the new song are the symbols of the new order of things, as already more and more, day by day, the new heavens and the new earth are seen coming down from God out of heaven.—The Interior.

One Rule for All.

I think there is something of meanness on the part of laymen who seem to believe that because they are laymen they can do things clergymen ought not to do. A woman of my congregation said to me the other day, after describing a performance at a theatre she had visited the night before: "O, I wish you could have seen it! But then, I should have been sorry to have seen you there." A layman has no business in a place where he would blush to see his pastor present.—Dr. Parkhurst.

We often think that, if we had that man's means, or that man's ability, or that man's opportunity, we could do something worth doing, but, as we are, there is no possibility of any great thing. Yet God does not want us to fill any other man's place, or to do any other man's work. God wants us to improve our own opportunity, with the possessions and the powers that He has given us. It is a very great thing for us to do the best we can do, just where and as we are. God asks no one of us to do more than this, nor has any one of us a right to do less.