

Pastor and People.

"RETURN UNTO THY REST."

Return I return I the Shepherd's voice is calling
From breezy heights and pastures fresh and
sweet;
O'er the fair landscape are the shadows falling,
And earth and sky in dim embraces meet.

Like fleecy clouds, in soft and woolly tumult,
The cherished flocks, with bleatings oft, ascend,
And on the quiet air the tinkling sheep-bells
With evening lullabies their music blend.

And thus they rest, in green and pleasant pastures,
And thus at eve for quiet folds they yearn
O soul of man, so weary of thy wandering,
Unto thy resting place return, return!

Unto the ark the dove returned at evening,
Weary and baffled, by the flood distressed;
He who was rest, the wanderer receiving,
Folding her pinions on His tender breast.

Weary thy pinions, baffled, restless spirit,
Made for the Infinite, for Him we yearn;
O'er land and sea His voice is ever calling—
"Unto thy rest, O wanderer, return!"

—Clara Twiss, *Sunday Magazine*.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA.

These saints of God are two of the grandest characters in Old Testament history—which was the greater it is hard to say. The life of Elisha was emphatically a busy one; of the ninety years he lived, sixty were spent in the school of the prophets and in public acts for the good of the nation. His miracles unlike those of Elijah, were for the most part of a merciful character, and though he did not enter into rest, in the same manner as he did, for no chariot of fire received his body—he was honoured in a manner never put upon any other man—the one was honoured in his departure, the other after it. He died, and they buried him. Whatever be the occupation of the life, the grave is the last resting-place. When Elisha died, the country was in a state of commotion, resulting from continued attacks of the Syrians against Israel. That Israel should be victorious the prophet predicted before he died, but these were probably faint hearted ones, who thought that when the prophet died their cause was lost. To show them that their fears were foolish, and that God would not forsake His people the miracle recorded in the text was wrought. A dead body, cast hastily into the prophet's tomb to hide it from a band of Moabite brigands, on touching the bones of the prophet, started into life. The prophet is dead, but he still has power. His spirit lives to infuse hope and courage into the hearts of his countrymen. Jehovah will come to their deliverance. The God of Elisha shall interfere, and free the land from the hand of the spoiler. This was more than Elisha had done in his life; when he could not without many prayers, and stretching himself upon the body of the Shunamite's child, raise it to life; whereas now, upon touching of his dead body God restored a man in an instant to perfect health. "He did wonders in his life, but after his death his works were marvellous."

The incident teaches that the influence of a good man's life is deathless, continuing from age to age. We do not believe in the worship of relics, nor that pilgrimages to the graves of martyrs can obtain for us absolution from sin. And yet occasional visits to the graves of departed worth are not useless. Those who stand reading the inscriptions on our monuments, or walk over our graves, may feel the ennobling effects of our lives. For

To live in hearts we leave behind
Is not to die.

The passage teaches the continuous and increasing posthumous inference of a godly and useful life, and that the influence exerted after death is in proportion to the character of the life. A man, through his life and works and moral worth, may thus live after death to greater purpose than when in the body. Like the winged seeds, borne by the wind hither and thither, but eventually taking root and adding to the trees of the forest, such are the impressions that good men make upon society. They may be all unconscious of the influence

they wield, shrinking from public notoriety while they live, and expecting nothing after death, saying in all sincerity—

Thus let me live unseen, unknown,
Thus unlamented, let me die,
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

But none the less do they exert mighty forces upon the generations of men who succeed them. Such was John Calvin's wish, but although the spot where his dust is laid is but a matter of conjecture, his life and writings are the admiration of millions, next, indeed, to the volume of inspiration itself!

Illustrations of this truth are seen in the lives of Matthew Henry, Robert Murray, McCheyne, Whitfield, Wesley, Edwards, Chalmers, Duff, Guthrie, John Bunyan, and such men of God, who, being dead, yet speak as they never did before; and continued, it matters not whether the body is buried with honours, or in the potter's field, cast into the deep, or burned at the stake—the man lives. Rome imagined, when ordering the body of Wickliffe to be disinterred and burnt to ashes, and these ashes to be cast into the stream, that his memory would be blotted out. But that act was the kindling of a mighty conflagration, that spread over the continent of Europe and back again to England. As Thomas Fuller says:—"The Swift carried his ashes to the Avon, the Avon into the Severn, the Severn into the narrow seas, and they to the main ocean; and thus they are emblems of his doctrine, which now is dispensed all the world over." The Parliament of the Restoration after Charles II., ordered the body of Oliver Cromwell to be taken from the grave, dragged to Tyburn, hanged on a gallows, then buried like a felon, and the head set upon a pole in Westminster. Did that act strangle the spirit of liberty, or lessen the world's opinion of Cromwell's heroic deeds? No, verily, his name and deeds are still the terror of tyrants in every age. The flames in which Patrick Hamilton and other Scottish martyrs expired, consumed with avenging fury within a generation the Papal and prelatic power. Samuel Rutherford spake truly when he said, "Till doomsday shall come, they shall never see the kirk of Scotland and her covenant burnt to ashes, or if it should be thrown into the fire, yet it cannot be so burnt or buried as not to have a resurrection."

They may scatter their dust to the winds of heaven,
To the bounds of the utmost sea;
But her covenants burned, reviled and riven
Shall yet her reviving be.
—Rev. Wm. Cochrane, D.D., from the
Presbyterian, London, England.

POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE.

"The evil which men do lives after them." That I believe, and 'tis an awful thought. "The good which men do is oft interred with their bones." That I don't believe. I believe that the influence of a good man's life continues when his bones, like Elisha's, are mouldering in the grave. Many of our poets have attained to great posthumous influence, such as Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and last, but not least, Burns. I do not say that all Burns's poems are purifying and elevating in their tone and sentiment; some of them are polluting and degrading. But what is the chaff to the wheat? What is the polluting dross to the pure gold? I look upon "The Cottar's Saturday Night" as one of the finest poems ever written, a poem fitted to convince every man in whose soul there is a spark of Christian charity that, despite Burns's faults and failings, there was in his heart "some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." I don't believe he could have written such a glorious poem had he been entirely destitute of the grace of God. If the grace of God in his heart was only a "feeble spark," a spark invisible to the jaundiced eyes of the censorious and self-righteous, have we not the assurance of the gracious Father, "who knows our frame and remembers that we are but dust," that

The feeble spark to flames He'll raise;
The weak will not despise.

"The banks and braes o' bonnie Doon" are singing Burns's praises, and I believe that

• From a lecture by Rev. John Dobie, D.D., Glasgow, in *Christian Leader*.

year after year, and generation after generation, their singing will become louder and louder, and more and more rapturous.

There is one man who by his prose and poetry wields a posthumous influence in Scotland which I believe to be unsurpassed. I refer to the great Sir Walter Scott—"the Wizard of the North." I believe Sir Walter Scott to have been a good man, else I would not have mentioned his name in this lecture. Love for our native land is a natural affection and has been implanted within us by our great and gracious Father. There are thousands of Scotchmen whose hearts are glowing with warmest affection for their native land,

Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood.

And what writer has done more to intensify their affectionate patriotism than Sir Walter Scott? Though many years have elapsed since, amidst Scotia's tears and lamentations, his bones were laid to rest in the silence and solitude of Dryburgh Abbey, yet his life is a living power, influencing for good the hearts and lives of thousands, especially the hearts and lives of loyal and loyal Scotchmen. He needed not that magnificent monument which adorns our Scottish metropolis to perpetuate his name and fame. The grand old Highland mountains and hills are his monuments. Sir Walter's name is emblazoned by the sun,

In the beacon red
He kindles on Ben Vorlick's head.

His name is sounding through

Lone Glenartney's hazel shades,

and resounding o'er the heathery heights of Uam-var. His name is echoing from the rocky summit of Ben Venue, and re-echoing

Through the Trossachs' loneliest nooks.

His name is written in legible and lasting letters on "the silver strand of Ellen's Isle." Whilst Sir Walter was a great man, he was also, as I have said, a good man, his goodness joined with his genius have given him amongst his fellow-countrymen a posthumous influence which is unsurpassed, and which I believe to be unsurpassable.

I pass on to mention the names of one or two of our divines. Is Thomas Chalmers dead? Many years have elapsed since, one summer morning, he was found by his daughter lying dead upon his bed. She supposed him to be sleeping, but, alas! it was "the sleep of death." Though literally dead, yet he is virtually living. His life is a visible life; the Free church is his body; it is his life which is pulsating with unceasing energy through its congregations and organizations. Chalmers was greatly honored of God in life, and he is still being honored, though his bones are mouldering in the dust.

Last, but not least, Dr. Norman Macleod. Though dead and lying wrapped in his Highland plaid in a lonely churchyard, yet he is still living. His interesting writings are influencing the hearts and lives of thousands in this and other lands, and will continue to do so for many generations. His little work, the *Starling*, is one of the most beautiful and touching stories which was ever written. Norman Macleod's *Starling* will sing his praises to generations yet unborn. Chalmers and Macleod, though literally dead and silent, are virtually living and speaking. Their books, like Elisha's bones, are being made the medium of quickening power, not to one dead man, but to thousands and tens of thousands.

LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN.

Let your light shine—not you. It is this which has often given the gravest handle to the world—men have too frequently made use of God's light to show up their own gifts or graces. There are lamps so loaded with painted figures and ornamentation that the light does little more than display these, and there are people who are for ever speaking about God, but it is not difficult to see that their God is made strictly in their own image, and so they darken with self the light that should speak for the Light of Lights. Michael Angelo was accustomed to stick a candle on his paste board cap, so that he might not fling the shadow of himself on the work he was doing.

This is a great, a covetable grace in things spiritual, which we all need to seek after. "Let your light shine before men"—not upon them, like a policeman's lantern flashed suddenly before a detected and frightened criminal—but before them with steady winsomeness that cannot fail in the end to attract their thoughts and hearts.

I knew a rich and godly merchant who was solicited for a subscription for a philanthropic object. He was busy, but at once said he would give £5. On the sheet being presented to him on which to sign his name and gift, he saw that a neighbouring merchant had subscribed £50. "What's this? what's this?" he asked; "this matter must be more important than I thought. Tell me more about it," and in the end he subscribed £50 also. By the first merchant letting his light shine, the second one saw his good works, and so he also glorified the Father whose Spirit was in them both, "but," as he said, "if I had not seen that man's light I would not have known the importance of this work."

How many good works languish alone for want of a little light cast upon them!—not that we, but that our Father may be glorified. How differently all things look when light is cast upon them! How the dullest country lane becomes as a bit of Paradise in the bright sunshine! Even so may the self-evident light of love for God shed such a beauty on the commonest deed done for His sake as to lift men's thoughts unconsciously to the great Fount of all goodness and gladness. So let your light shine.—C. in the *London Presbyterian*.

WHAT IS YOUR ATMOSPHERE?

There is an earthly and also a heavenly atmosphere. No true life abounds in the earthly atmosphere; the highest, purest, sweetest, and strongest life thrives and throbs in the heavenly. But we do not need to go to heaven to find and enjoy the heavenly atmosphere. It has been brought down to us by the soul of Christ and the breath of the Holy Spirit. God's atmosphere is created where ever His presence finds abiding place, and wherever a Christian soul will hold communion with Him. True, God is everywhere, in the sense that He sees all things, and that all things are upheld by His power; but there are certain places where He is especially present, where He has promised to meet His loving and loved people. It is in the prayer-room, in the consecrated closet, in the hallowed sanctuary, and even in the solitary by-places where the devout heart yearns to pour out its ardent adorations into the ear of a listening Father. There is a peculiar atmosphere in such places. It is the atmosphere of God. Doctor Arnold, of Rugby, said, "We too much live, as it were, out of God's atmosphere." Indeed we do! And it often betrays itself in our speech, our lack of spirituality, and our leanness of life. Let us get into it, and keep there.—*Zion's Herald*.

CONSCIENCE.

It is a strange and solemn power which conscience wields. In your secret soul you commit a sin. It is a mere passing thought, perhaps. No human eye has seen it, no tongue will ever speak of, yet even in the dark you blush at it. You are degraded in your own eyes. You feel guilty and wretched. And this guilty wretchedness does not pass away. It may at any time revive. Conscience comes to us in lonely hours. It wakens us in the night. It stands at the side of our bed, and says, "Come, wake up and listen to me!" And there it holds us with its remorseless eye and buried sins rise out of the grave of the past. They march by in melancholy procession, and we lie in terror looking at them. No body knows but ourselves. Next morning we go forth to business with a smiling face, but conscience has had its revenge.—*Th. Rev. James Stalker*.

I believe that remorse is the least active of all men's moral senses.—*Thackeray*.

Scrupulous people are not suited to great affairs.—*Turgot*.