

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

DIVINE RETICENCE.

"I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now."—John xvi. 12.

There is a time for everything—a time to speak, and a time to be silent. Everything is beautiful in its season, and there are times when silence is an inspiration. It means so much, and it often is the best service that we can render to a dear friend. There are people who can't be silent; they must say out what is on their minds. They know that it is not a suitable time, and that their friends are in no mood to listen to them, and they are sure to do more harm than good, and yet they must talk, though they may not know what they are talking about. It takes great tact to know what to say and what not to say, and there is so much tactless talk going, the wonder is that society is not more by the ears than it is. When we are dealing with serious and sacred subjects, there are so many things that have to be considered, and especially we must think of other people, their circumstances, and how to break the news—the sad news—that one has for them. When we have some sorrowful message to deliver to a dear friend, we feel so reluctant to give it, and in our difficulty we often have to get the help of the minister. There is a vulgarity of soul that loves to run with evil tidings, and the very sight of such people is a disturbing factor in one's life. We are fortunate when we can keep clear of them.

The sympathy and patience of Jesus here are wonderful. He saw how sorrowful the disciples had become by what He had already said to them. It gave them a great shock. The news had come like a bolt from the blue, when He told them plainly that He must needs die. They could not associate a violent death with the Messiah, and they were now quite sure that He was the Messiah. They were pained and bewildered, and they could not read the situation with any degree of intelligence. Burdened with his own great trouble, Jesus only thought of them and what was best for them. It would have been such a relief to Him to unburden Himself to His disciples, for there is no greater solace to the lonely and desolate life than to be able to tell its sorrow to a sympathetic heart, and this comfort was practically denied to Christ. There was so much that He wished to say, and if He could only say it, it would give Him strength and refreshment of soul. He had to give up the attempt to communicate the great thoughts and ideals and hopes that were in His heart, though He was in a great mood of revelation. It is a painful thing to stand by the bedside of the dying, and watch them trying to speak, when through physical suffering and weakness they are unable to do so; but perhaps it is even a more painful scene to find them forced to be silent through their surroundings. Jesus saw that there was nothing to be gained, but much to be lost, by continuing His revelations to them, for premature disclosures are always a mistake. We only irritate people, stir up the lower elements of their character and beat down their intelligence and faith, when we force opinions and teaching on them that they are not fit for, and to which they can make no response in their inner life. Nature does not so deal with the products of her soil—she gives them the nourishment suitable to their age and growth; so does the schoolmaster deal with his pupils, placing them in the school, and giving to them the books and instruc-

tion that will develop their minds, and that they can assimilate in their mental digestion; so, too, does the mother feed her children with the food that suits their age and constitution. It is this principle of adaptability that Jesus uses in His revelations, and this secures their progressive character.

There are good people, and they shudder at the thought of progressive revelations. We have them in nature and Providence, history and science, industrial life and spiritual experience; but when it comes to the Scriptures, they "must not be thought of!" Yet where is there a book so progressive in its teaching as the Bible? It is ever moving from the lower planes to the higher planes of revelation, from the temporal to the permanent, from the physical to the spiritual, from the raw and undeveloped ideas about Divine things, to the profound and enlarged and matured conceptions of them that we find in the closing books of the New Testament. The Bible from first to last is a book of movement—the movement of life, thought, ideas, work, and realized programmes. Had it not been a book—the Book—of movement, it had perished in the dust heaps of progressive civilization; but where is there a book to compare with it to-day, for life and power and progressiveness in its teaching and inference? No matter at what point of civilization, knowledge, discovery, and the arts of life we are, it is even in front of us, waving its flag onward and upward. It is the one permanently progressive Book in the world, Macaulay, in his masterful way, has told us that "All Divine truth is according to the doctrine of the Protestant Churches recorded in certain books. It is equally open to all who in any age can read those books; nor can all the discoveries of all the philosophers in the world add a single verse to any of those books. It is plain, therefore, that in Divinity there cannot be a progress analogous to that which is constantly taking place in pharmacy, geology, and navigation." But this is to misconceive the nature of revelation. It is quite true that the authoritative, inspired record of revelation is only found in the Bible, but revelation does not cease when the Bible is closed. There is a final page to the Scriptures, but none to revelation. It is continuous and unbroken through all ages, and it is so because through all cycles of time and centuries of history, Jesus has said, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work;" "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." There is no cessation of the Divine work, and there is no cessation of the Divine communications. The Divine work goes on in the fields of the universe and nature, and the Divine communications in the sphere of human life and experience. Macaulay is right from the standpoint of the letter—the written letter—of revelation, but he is wrong from the standpoint of its spirit; and revelation, within the boards of the Bible and outside of them, is the manifestation and work of the Spirit—the Holy Spirit.

Why could not Jesus Christ make a full disclosure of His mind and purposes to His disciples? Because they had not the spiritual capacity to receive it, the atmosphere in which they could live with it, the concentration of thought that would enable them to assimilate it, and the experience that would interpret it for them; so the deepest things in His life and purposes had to lie over for the present. It is so sad to think how God has to wait before we are fit

to receive His message and His agencies. It was so in the coming of Christ, and it has been so in the expansion of His kingdom. We are blocking the way of the Divine advancement and communications. Jesus had still so much to say about His death, the coming of the Holy Spirit, His union with the Father, and their union with both of them and the evangelisation of the world, but with a deep sigh of regret He had to say, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

INDIFFERENCE TO UNFORTUNATE
ONES.

By C. H. Wetherbe.

We have a striking example of this kind, in the case of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. The relatives and friends of the other invalids were quite indifferent to the condition of that poor paralytic, who was daily among them.

We can not excuse them by saying that it was a chronic case, which they had no power to cure, nor to temporarily relieve. Granting that they could not do this, we must charge them with great indifference to him, because none of them took the trouble to assist him in getting down into that pool.

This was the complaint which the man made to Christ concerning the people there. He said: "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." And more than this, and as an increased aggravation of the case, he was repeatedly baffled in every attempt at getting the desired benefit, for he said: "While I am coming, another steppeth down before me." While the old and withered man was making every possible effort, little by little, to get into the pool, some one, aided by a relative or friend, got down into the pool ahead of him, and monopolized the benefit. No one volunteered to help this man, and, if he asked any one to assist him, it was of no avail. Perhaps they all thought that he had got so old that it did not matter whether he was cured or not. At any rate each one was looking out for himself, and they meant to push to the front, and get their own selves served first, whether any one else was cared for or not. And this is too true, in a large majority of cases, today. Of course, it depends very much upon the social standing of the unfortunate ones. If they have relatives and friends, and especially if they have plenty of money, they are more apt to be looked after and assisted. But, if, like the man at the pool, they be without relatives and friends, and are very poor, the great majority of people will look upon them with cold indifference. But it should not be so in any Christian community. We should extend a helping hand to such ones.

The Fatherhood of God we would not surrender for any other truth. Jesus came all the way from heaven to reveal it, but His sovereignty is equally important. If the fathers went too far in one direction we are liable to go too far in another. Sentimentality should never usurp the place of law. When the Prodigal returned home he was met by a father, and a father who was just. The farm had been divided once and could not be divided again. There was a reclamation and nothing more.—Philadelphia Westminster.