For the Colonial Churchman.

ON GROWTH IN GRACE.

When a man has been awakened by the grace of God, to a sense of his sin and danger, and made to apply to Christ for pardon and peace, this may be called the beginning of a new or spiritual life. 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible;'—old things have passed away with him, or are passing away with him, daily. The old carnal mind and inclinations are wearing off: old habits and the old will are changed, whatever was old and carnal is now become new, and spiritual;—new affections, new inclinations, new dispositions, and a new conversation:—'Behold all things are become new.'

That there is an inward operation of the Holy Spirit which does constantly exert itself in the soul of the believer, but especially in his conversion, is a truth none who have a saving knowledge of the scriptures can deny;—and though in the most advanced state of religion on Earth, we are but infants in comparison of what we hope to be when in Heaven—yet we must be very solicitous to know whether we are growing in grace.

The enquiry, Christian reader, now is, whether you are making any progress in the Christian race. Whether religion be on the advance in your soul; for you must bear in mind, if it be not on the increase, it will be (it is greatly to be feared) on the decrease.—I would therefore entreat you to bring your heart to answer such enquiries as these.

Do you find the love of God and man advancing in your soul? Do you realize a sense of his presence more than you formerly did, and does that sense grow more delightful to you? Do you discern, not only the necessity but the reasonableness, and the pleasure of obedience. Do you find an ardent desire to please God,—and therefore are you doing all the good you can, from a principle of love to Him? Can you maintain a more steady calmness and serenity, when God is striking at your dearest enjoyments in this world? Will you then realize the hand of God, and own that it is just, and that he punishes you less than your sins deserve? Will you then compose yourself and glorify his name, by a patient submission to his will, and view afflictions as chastisements of his love, and think within yourself, 'It is thus that God is making me conformable to his Son--thus he kills my corruptions--thus he strengthens my graces--thus he wisely continues to bring me nearer to himself, and makes me fit for Heaven?

Examine your heart as regards the other evils of life. Have you fewer foreboding fears and disquieting alarms than you once had, as to what may happen? Can you trust the wisdom and goodness of God, to order your affairs for you, with more cheerfulness and resignation than formerly? Examine also, whether you advance in humility. Do you feel your mind more emptied of proud and haughty thoughts; and do you more tenderly observe your daily slips and miscarriages, and find yourself more disposed to mourn over those slips and failings, before the Lord,—that once passed with you as slight matters? Do you feel a deeper apprehension of the infinite Majesty of God—of the glory of his natural and moral perfections, so that you feel yourself as nothing before him? Do you in consequence of those feelings, frequently renew your sincere, steady, and determined application, to the righteousness and blood of Christ;—as being sensible how unworthy you are to appear before a pure and holy God, otherwise than in HIM? Are you more earnest to obtain the influences of the Holy Spirit, to help your infirmities;—and have you such a sense of your own weakness, as to depend entirely in all you do, upon the communications of his grace to assist you in your Christian course?

Do you also advance in zeal for the service of God, and the happiness of mankind? Can you view the sorrows of others, with tender compassion, and not only pray for them, but do all in your power to help and relieve them; and are you more deeply convinced of the vanities of the world? Is your mind more weaned from its allurements, so as to have less relish for any worldly pleasure—'Having your affections set on things in Heaven, instead of things in the Earth?' Do you find yourself willing to leave the world at the shortest notice or warning, so that if God should see fit to summon you away on a sudden, though it should be in the midst of your pursuits and expectations, you would willingly consent to that remove, and be enabled to say--'Behold thy servant, O Lord, is in thine hand, do with me as it seemeth good in thy sight?'

And lastly, do you feel your heart filled with holy gratitude and love to God, when you reflect on the unnumbered blessings and mercies that he has from time to time bestowed upon you?--When you survey the goodness of God and his Fatherly care that commenced with your being—when you look back, I say, upon your past life, and see the many instances of the goodness of God,—but especially his having brought you by his grace, out of a state of darkness and ruin, and made you to taste of his pardoning love—when you seriously reflect upon all this,—if you have made any growth in grace, your soul will overflow with thankfulness and love, and will constrain you to give utterance to your feelings in language such as this—

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys--
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

M.

From the British Critic.

COMPARATIVE EXCELLENCE OF EXTEMPORE AND WRITTEN DISCOURSES—*concluded.*

A long chapter might be written upon the state of preaching in this country at this day. But we have only room for a few words. At no period, probably, has the Church of England possessed a larger proportion of sound, good and effective preachers; but we confess that of the pulpit eloquence which is most popular, at least in towns, our opinion is very low. It is a thing *sui generis*,—it constitutes a peculiar style. It is like the miserable thing which we sometimes see in the streets,—a boy, or girl, gaudy with worn tinsel, tricked out in a smart dress unusually extravagant, and walking upon stilts. There is no simplicity in it, no nature, no depth; little or nothing but a flood of confused metaphors and bombastic exaggerations. It proceeds upon fundamentally wrong principles, fostered by the publications whose business it is to print, week after week, the tumid and declamatory rant, which passes, we fear, with too many for the climax of sublimity. For the taste of the hearers is still, perhaps, generally bad, because the education of the lower division of the middle ranks is still lamentably deficient in masculine and solid instruction. Our criterion is, that preachers who are most followed and extolled, when they step into any other walk of composition, or address themselves to the ear of general readers, become notoriously the laughing-stock of the nation. We must smile and sigh at the same moment, to behold a score of ministers of the Gospel spinning out to a far more inordinate length the gorgeous amplifications of Dr. Chalmers; or fantastically gay in the cast-off finery of Mr. Melvill. We apprehend, indeed, that the tendency of pulpit eloquence is now, more than ever—although it cannot last—to florid declamation, and the clap-traps of a false style. Whether it be, that in an age when serious persons debar themselves—and perhaps most wisely—from other and more worldly kinds of excitation, they sometimes go to a sermon, as to a sort of religious entertainment;—or whether it be, as has been sometimes insinuated, that the female part of the assembly forms a much larger proportion to the whole than in any other meetings, which it is the business of the public speaker to address;--certain, however, it is, that the preacher who is lavish of ornaments, or softens into pathetic tenderness, or melts and flares by turns, or scatters flowers with an unsparing hand, is tolerably sure to carry away the suffrages of the majority of his audience. Here, therefore, is a very sore and perilous temptation, against which a young and aspiring man needs, most particularly, to be put upon his guard.

The modern eloquence of the pulpit too often conveys the impression, not that the words have been used to explain the matter, but that the matter has been dragged forward to introduce the words. The best style, as Coleridge has remarked in speaking of Southey, is that which forces us to think of the subject, without paying attention to the particular phrases in which it is clothed. The true excellence of style is to make us feel that words are absorbed in things; and to leave upon the mind a strong impression of the sense and tenor of reasoning, rather than a broken and piecemeal recollection of particular expressions and images. The result on the contrary, if not the intention, of too much pulpit oratory, is to fill the ear with a multitude of grand terms, and bewilder the fancy with a crowd of tropes; while it is comparatively ineffectual in stamping the general argument or exhortation upon the understanding. It is not the steady prosecution of an important topic, half so much as a collection of fine bits: putting us in mind of Sir Robert Peel's happy description, at the Merchant Tailors' dinner, of what he calls, 'that elaborate concatenation of phrases, which is sometimes called eloquence, in which you have the smallest possible quantity of common sense, enveloped in the greatest multitude of equivocal words.'

In truth, if the distinctive feature of the favorite style could be expressed in one word, that one word should be amplification. We do not mean the amplification like that of Barrow, or Jeremy Taylor, which consists in the multitude of ideas and ingenious illustrations arising from the affluent fertility of an exuberant fancy; but the mere amplification of words and sounds. Thus, the great size of a thing is, 'the gigantic amplitude of its colossal dimensions;' and the whole race of the *Tudor* family of words,—if we may borrow an execrable pun,—such as amplitude, altitude, plenitude, latitude,—and well might we add, *platitude*, is in especial request, together with all others which are grand-loquent and polysyllabic, puffing themselves out like the frog in the fable.

These faults, we conceive, are inevitably aggravated by the custom of extemporaneous preaching, which we have already examined. When a clergyman preaches without notes, or principally if not entirely at the inspiration of the moment, to follow up a logical argument, or to do justice to any particular subject of doctrine or obligation, becomes a task of peculiar difficulty, which only the highest minds can overcome. The obvious resource, therefore, is to run into general declamation; to slip more and more,—unconsciously, perhaps, and by almost imperceptible degrees,—into an eternal iteration of the same ideas, and the same phrases. Then comes, as we have already said, the addition of a turgid swelling kind of eloquence, which seems to increase upon us day by day; while all its drafts upon applause and popularity are duly honored. We mean the measureless expansion of a few obvious and almost threadbear notions. A single example may explain our meaning. A writer, or speaker, with a bald and common style might say, '*No man ever thought so.*' But observe the process of indefinite circumlocution. First it is, 'no man alive;' then, 'no human being under heaven;' then, 'no human being who lives and breathes under the canopy of the skies;' then, 'no sentient, intelligent, rational, accountable immortal being, who inhales the gladsome breath of human existence'—or, perhaps, 'who plods his weary way through this howling wilderness of earth, under the azure vault of the empyreal canopy'—so on '*ad infinitum.*' In the same way, 'has ever thought so,' comes out as, 'has ever entertained the shadow of such an imagination in the caverned chambers and curtained recesses of his inmost mind.' But, really, our specimen is very poor. We are mere tyros in the art. The adepts themselves—those magnificent gold-beaters of language—would hammer out the thought to a far more glittering and prodigious length. For practice makes perfect and appear almost to spin sentences by a receipt; like unfortunate boys at schools, who, when they are at loss for ideas, eke out their Latin verses by culling a very liberal wreath of synonyms, and phrases, and epithets, from the *Gradus ad Parnassum.*

In fact, we might almost produce a specimen of a popular sermon, which should be a fit companion to '*Verses by a Lady of Quality.*' It ought to contain some mellifluous compounds about 'the melodies of the ether regions,' and 'the harp-notes of the angelic squadrons;' and its shortest word ought to be 'incomprehensibility.' Perhaps, indeed, it might begin, 'The incomprehensibility of the apparatus developed in the machinery of a creation-God may be considered a supereminent manifestation of his stupendous majesties. Whether a man stands upon the platform of his own mind, and ponders scrutinizingly on its undecypherable characters; or whether he looks abroad over the magnificent equipments and regalities of nature, surveying its amplitudes in all their scope, and its unfathomabilities in all their profundity,' &c. But we stop; for we may be treading on almost sacred ground, although a school-girl might make such a sermon, 'stans pede in uno;' and the style is really not so difficult, with the help of a dictionary.