

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

POOR PREACHING.

It would be hazardous to deny that there is some such preaching. And we will not hold a shield over the head of that man whose feeble faith, sloth or worldliness makes his preaching poor. But there are some causes of poor preaching not found in the preacher.

1. *A poor place of worship* is apt to make poor preaching. You cannot look round in some of the churches without suffering a chill morally, and a chill physically, if you enter them between November and April. Broken panes of glass or bad ventilation admit the wind, and the conflict that ensues between that and the generators of caloric, if there are any, is like that of him that cometh against ten thousand with an army of twenty thousand. Some of these places of worship are enormously large in proportion to the congregation. The preacher must encounter a frightful number of empty pews in search of a hearer. Then there are large tracts of uninhabited territory in the galleries. Cheerless wastes they are to a preacher. The exterior of the house never had an acquaintance with the paint brush, and looks dark and gloomy, as if frowning at such neglect. What wonder if you have poor preaching in such a sanctuary? This is but putting like and like together. The unhappy preacher studies his sermon with all the undesirableness of his forlorn place of worship stalking like gloomy ghosts before him. What wonder if their footprints are seen all over the sermon?

2. *Poor hearers* make poor preaching. Some come lingering and late, as if it were a drudgery to come at all. Numbers stop about the church door to chat about everything in the creation but religion, till the preacher's voice, commencing service, wakes them up to the fact that they are at the house of prayer. Some seek the most comfortable place in pews studiously accommodated for repose, and in the very face and eyes of the preacher take their leave of him in the total unconsciousness of deep sleep. Some not disposed of as the last named, examine with curious eyes every visible object but the speaker, and shew vast interest in every passing wheel, and the costume of every new comer. Now is there not some tendency in such things to make poor preaching; and would not a prompt and thorough-going reform, that should reach every one in the congregation, have some influence in giving a new inspiration to the preacher?

3. *Poorly paid* preaching is likely to be poor preaching. It shrivels a man up terribly to be straitened about his temporal support. If he must move in the hamper of all sorts of shifts and expedients to make the ends of the year meet he cannot sail free and joyously on the great sea of truth. He can only play the puny part of creeping along shore. With this kind of care upon his shoulders he cannot rise up to the stature and vigour of a giant. He is crippled and becomes a dwarf. His poor pay makes him feel poor. And it is in poverty of spirit that he undertakes a sermon. His thoughts will have a hue of poverty about them, and then he feels poorly prepared for the pulpit, and what can the result be but poor preaching? Take the lead from his wings, the care from his heart, by promptly paying and meeting all his wants. Give him the chance thus to spread his pinions, and see if his joyful and animated enterprise in his work does not stop the cry about poor preaching.

4. *The spiritual poverty* of the church is a fruitful source of poor preaching. Mind acts on mind. The glowing and animated minds of the saints are so many agents of powerful excitement to the preacher. Their prayerfulness, zeal, unity and fidelity lift his soul upward as on a rising and powerful tide. Their devotedness to God cheers his mind, and rouses thoughts that breathe, and puts upon his lips words that burn. He must preach good sermons, for the goodness of the saints, enkindling his own, sets his soul on fire, and the sacred flame will be seen as he delivers the messages of the Lord.

The opposite course will be likely to secure an opposite result. A slothful, worldly, stupid church breaks down the spirit of a pastor. It fetters his ardent mind. It chills and cramps his enterprising spirit. A grand inspiration of preaching is gone. Great responsibility rests on those unfaithful saints. Such fallen disciples, moreover, are often the first to raise the cry of poor preaching. The preaching may be

spiritual, and searching, and sanctifying, but their moral sensibilities have been benumbed by their worldliness. They are too insensible to divine things to discern the value of the ministrations they enjoy. They grope, and stumble, and cry "darkness," though it is mid-day. The poverty is all in their own souls, and had they the spiritual and heavenly mind, the true meekness and docility of the Gospel, their despised pastor's doctrine would "drop as the rain, and distil like the dew." —*London Weekly Review.*

CONFLICT AND VICTORY.

Oh! Refuge of men worn and weary,
With suffering and sin oft distressed,
Could'st Thou leave 'mid surroundings so dreary
Thy peace as a dying bequest?

To Thine ear comes the cry of sharp sorrow
That rings through this pitiless world;
And know'st Thou how oft for the morrow
To a deeper despair we are hurled?

For the dawn brings no light that can lead us,
The birds sing no songs that can cheer,
Nor does the harvest give food that can feed us,
And the winter's gloom reigns through the year.

We've felt strange 'mid our kindred and neighbours,
Been lonely in thick haunts of men,
Had to rest on a stone from our labours,
And no visions to comfort us then.

We've been lured by the voice of the siren
And caught in her cruel embrace,
Have found that the heart may be iron,
Tho' beauty may shine in the face.

We are weary with chasing the shadows,
And bearing our burdens of care,
For our way has not lain through the meadows,
We have chosen the dust and the glare.

Yet, Saviour, on Thee in our anguish
We'll pillow our sore stricken head,
For in sorrow of soul Thou did'st vanquish
The foes that fill life with such dread.

We have lived for ourselves 'stead of others,
Sought in temples of pleasure our shrine,
Held no cups to the lips of our brothers,
Or with gall often mingled our wine.

We bless Thee who cam'st down in glory
To suffer, to succour, to save,
By Thy cross to make brighter life's story
And triumph o'er death and the grave.

We'll fret with the world then no longer;
It can bring to us nothing but bliss,
Were love in our heart only stronger
To God and to man than it is.

—*Good Words.*

THE CHRIST? OR THE WHAT?

His meekness and gentleness were only equalled by His honesty and benevolence. There was about Him a conscientious thoroughness which was carried out at every sacrifice; and so far from having that love of ostentation which might be expected in One so marvellously endowed, there was a disposition to shun the applause of popularity and the blaze of earthly glory. His Sermon on the Mount evinces that, above and beyond all other things in religion, He delighted in "truth in the inward parts," and held in utter abhorrence that cold and hollow ritualism which is content with the form of godliness while denying its power. Never was there such an equipose of moral attributes as we find in Him. To an all-embracing benevolence He joined a sternness of principle which exposed wrong wherever He found it, and insisted on faithfulness in that which was least. But most of all, pervading his other qualities and adding its own bright halo round them all was his self-sacrificing and devoted love, manifest in the price He paid and the zeal He shewed for the redemption and regeneration of men. Unlike that Socrates "whom well inspired, the oracle pronounced wisest of men," but who went to the house of the strange woman and gave her advice on the best means of prosecuting her vile business, and of winning and keeping her friends, Jesus restored to the woman of the city "the piece which she had lost" and sent her away to live a life of purity and holiness. No dishonour darkens His name; no scandal fastened itself on His renown. Before the portrait which these evangelists have painted, men of every age have stood in rooted admiration; and, as we have seen in the case of men like Lecky and Mill, even by those who, however inconsistently, deny His deity, He is held in estimation as the noblest of men. For centuries His life has been the object of the keenest investigation;

"through all this tract of years" men have looked at Him

"In that fierce light which beats upon a throne
And blackens every blot."

But still they have seen in Him, and that too in a far higher sense than the poet has employed the words: only "the white flower of a blameless life."

Now, how shall we account for the existence of such a character as a literary portrait but from its historical reality? Even Mr. Mill himself has made this acknowledgment in these words: "It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical." . . .

But if it were real and historical, could it have been merely human? He was no development of his age; but instead, everything true and noble and loving and godlike in succeeding generations has been developed out of Him. What then?—*Dr. W. M. Taylor.*

"A CUP OF COLD WATER ONLY."

The cup of water at the end of the tenth chapter of Matthew stands for the *appreciations* of Christ in the service of His disciples. As the multitude thronged His path, borne on by a great enthusiasm, our Saviour turned to give them the honest warning that the cross lies in front of true discipleship. He did not hide the stern aspect of His service for the sake of winning converts. He even put the test in the extreme form of losing one's life for His sake. The seed-corn must consent to go down into the clay, that it may live again. Man must give up self and the best of human merits, and make room, by this sacrifice, for the incoming Christ,

But this once done, the yoke being put on, the new principle of life being established, there comes a great surprise. The cross becomes transfigured in the glory of love. The yoke, so hard to take, is found easy. The burden, once avoided, is light. Nature in her pride and selfishness could do nothing to win heaven.

All her service and toil were only the operation of self—merely a bartering of human righteousness for the righteousness of Christ. But now, when everything is changed as to its spirit and inspiring motive, a new estimate comes in. New values accrue to the very things which were valueless as works before. Whereas pride and Phariseeism could do nothing worthy to be counted in the Christian inventory, now love can do nothing so small as to be overlooked. All is now done, not as once in the name of self, but simply in the name of a disciple. The most commonplace life is at once lifted to a higher plane. There may be little room for such marked changes as shall surprise the looker-on. The course of life may flow on much as before. But Christ knows, and the new life of the Christian knows that a marvellous secret has been created.

We have seen a flower not unlike a million others, but that one blossom was worth the whole million. It held a charm of association. It enfolded a secret of love. And this love was something which perhaps only two hearts could find in the symbol; only these two could measure it. So when we do in Christ's name, and for His love, any service however small, even the giving of a cup of water, we lift the poor endeavour into sublime valuation. What in self, and for self, is the meanest pebble, becomes a pearl, a diamond in the service of loving discipleship.

No encouragement could go beyond this. No motive could be stronger to take us out of the barrenness of self into the fruitfulness of doing all to the glory of Christ.—*G. Clark, D.D.*

WHAT NOT TO DO FOR SICK PEOPLE.

Don't make a fuss. Don't bustle, don't fidget, don't prognosticate. Don't hold consultations in or about the patient's room, recounting all your own and your neighbour's experiences in what you suppose to have been like cases. Don't meddle and advise and experiment. We all need a great deal more letting alone than we get, and when we are sick it is one of our prime needs. If mortuary lists were honestly tabulated we should find that more people have been bored to death than have died from neglect. The pest of the sick-room is the inevitable friend who drops in to "cheer up" the patient, the glistening eyes and flushed cheeks which such ministrations evoke being hailed as evidences of success by the well-meaning persecutor.

Don't tease the patient with questions about food or drink, but present the proper quantity at suitable in-