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THE WESLEYAN

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1878.

OUR YOUNG MEN.

NO. III.

FORCE OF CHARACTER.

One has beautifully said:— "Our little lives are kept in equipoise By opposite attractions and desires, The struggle of the instinct that enjoys And the more noble instinct that aspires"

To control this equipoise so as to ensure the ascendancy of our nobler nature is a work demanding patient effort and severe discipline, and therefore worthy the special attention of our young men. The abject slave, whose only law is the lash, and whose life is a miserable servitude, is infinitely superior to the man who is in bondage to himself, being ruled with the iron despotism of his own passions, and drifting helplessly on the rushing tide of habit and custom and temptation, like a straw floating down a stream. The true royalty of manhood is self-governance, for "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Now force of will—energy of spirit—an indomitable, titanic character—is that which crowns a man a king, giving him a moral sovereignty over himself. Strength of character is the true Prometheus, stealing by venturesome effort, fire from heaven, which infuses vitality into the ideal creations of his own mind. The fabled Atlas himself, with a world upon his shoulders, is but a crude incarnation of a mighty soul, whose thoughts are thews and whose purposes are like the inward motions of volcanic fires, heaving and tossing until they find vent in grand and noble deeds. The virtue of a man has its type set in the willow that bends to the wind, but in the steadfast cliff that frowns defiance to the waves. Temptations assail him in vain. The charmer has no spell for him. Reproaches fall upon him as harmlessly as snow flakes on a river, while he shakes them off as easily as a lion shakes the dew of morning from his flowing mane. Like Samson he is crested with strength, and being careful to keep "clean hands," he shall not only "hold on his way," but he shall "wax stronger and stronger," or as the margin reads, he shall "add strength to strength."

Is not strength the glory of character? And does it not determine its capability? A tiny rill that a pebble can turn out of its course is utterly incapable of tides and tempests and knows no mountainous swell; but the ocean with its mighty waste of waters is little less than omnipotent. So a puny soul is incapable of strong emotions or of gigantic deeds. Great conceptions can come only of great minds, and noble achievements are possible only to noble natures. A labouring mountain bringing forth a mouse is only a fable. Whatever the fact may be in the physical world, the moral sphere is a total stranger to such a monstrosity. A great soul, by the sheer force of its greatness gives worth and moment to all its touches. This is the character we covet for our young men. Surely there are more than enough of dwarfed and craven spirits. Too many of our young men are sadly lacking in a sturdy stalwart strength of character. They are too easily led, and carried away by the forces that assail them. Strong men are needed. Fierce currents require strong arms to stem them, and mighty temptations can only be overcome by vigorous souls.

But the main advantage secured by force of character is, that it presses everything into its service. Our very follies and failures and even our vices are made to contribute their quota to the general result. Under its magic touch the rock on which we have straddled, heaves into a light house whose beacon-blaze reveals our folly and warns us against future danger. More than this: "Men may rise on stepping stones Of their dead selves to higher things." Temyson has borrowed this sentiment from Longfellow who elaborates the same thought in the lines:

"All common things, each day's events, That with the hour begin and end, Our pleasures and our discontents Are rounds by which we may ascend."

And perhaps Longfellow is indebted to St. Augustine who says something to this effect: "That we may make a ladder of our vices, if we will only tread them under our feet, by which to rise to something higher and better and more God-like." Let a man possess this latent power within himself, and from the self that is subdued, there shall sprout out, as in a vegetable organism, a new life upon the old. The "earthly, sensual, devilish," of which the apostle speaks, shall give place to "the divine nature," which is renewed in "righteousness and true holiness."

Will our young men seriously consider this matter? What is gold to this might of spirit? What are all the gilded trappings of intellectual attainments, and social position and personal attractions, compared to a character whose strength defies attack, and whose vital forces are the motive-power of life? Amidst the prevailing scepticism of these times, and in the face of the many seductions that imperil our youth, let our young men cultivate force of character. "I have written to you young men," says the apostle of love, "Because ye are strong." Covet this character, and the structure you rear shall not be like an unsightly pyramid covering a crumbling mummy, but it shall be a gorgeous temple enshrining the deity of a man.

A HOMILY ON SLEEPING IN CHURCH.

There are three characters to whom this subject might apply:—The Tramp, who, finding the church-door invitingly ajar, steals comfort as he steals anything else, by appropriating the softest cushion for an hour; the traditional Esthetic, usually a quiet bachelor advanced in life, who follows the fair organist as she proceeds to practice in the gloaming, and subsides into a paradise of dreams under the magic strains of music, and the mellow, many-tinted rays of the setting sun falling from stained windows; and the worshipper who rarely misses a Sabbath service, and a nap, between the second hymn and the collection. The first is a vagrant and an outcast—God help him! The second is apt to be a coward; having lost the last opportunity of bringing music and beauty to his own home, it remains for him only to worship both in sacred places;—for him we have no consolation. The third is a sinner or a sufferer; and to his case we intend to apply this discourse.

"These are spots in your feasts," said the Apostle—blotches on the fair, wrinkled page of the church's epistles, "Known and read of all men." We will divide our subject—to be true to homiletics—under two heads—the cause and the cure of Sabbath sleeping.

Every congregation has its marked men—and women, too, in some cases—whose nods and starts disfigure the services of the House of God. There are four causes for this,—Habit, weariness, Disease, and Pulpit soporifics.

It is difficult to find any plausible apology for the somnolency, for instance, of a man in good health, having a measure of worldly prosperity, and so preserved from over-anxiety and work, professing godliness withal, who yet sleeps through one-half of every other sermon, and so disregards the Truth himself which he insists is a message from God to others. There is but one cure for this evil habit:—either the sleeper must bring himself under discipline, from a consciousness that his example is pernicious, and his profession of Christian self-denial but a sham,

or some Latimer—if there be one remaining in the ministry—must, at the risk of offending a respectable worshipper, and so losing a handsome subscription, take means to "wipe off this blemish from the assembly of God's people, Latimer sometimes reproved the king!

For weary worshippers we have all sympathy. How bravely they smother a yawn, subject themselves to little concealed tortures of the flesh, assume airs of deep attention, only to be beguiled again into forgetfulness; what tension of nerve and desperate purpose of mind have been called into action, to preserve "tired nature" from wooing the "sweet restorer, balmy sleep," will never be fully written. There is but one thought which can be whispered against such martyrdom;—Sabbath weariness is too often the result of a selfish and really worldly ambition. The Lord's day is a bank of rest and comfort for those who too many Christians draw far beyond the limits of their due credit as intended by the Creator. With the prospect of twenty-four hours of a clear break in business, the merchant and the mechanic linger longer at their toil, and the house-wife later at her duties on Saturday night. Thus, nature over-taxed, is in rebellion on the Sabbath. With a body protesting in every joint, and a temper soured hopelessly, there is a hurried preparation for church, a confused entrance perhaps during the opening prayer, to be followed by numbness and insensibility with the first relaxation of the nervous system. Then comes sleep. Do such worshippers ever meditate upon the awful words—"Yet ye have robbed me, saith the Lord!" For the mean advantage of adding another hour or two to the week, they steal from God and their own souls the precious strength necessary for Sabbath communion. Do preachers preach on the sin of Saturday night robbery among Christians?

Physicians assure us there is a form of brain disease which, though not perhaps fatal in every instance, is sure to superinduce drowsiness. They declare that these patients are not to be judged by ordinary rules. It has been noticed by almost every one that, at a period when old age is drawing near its close, nature anticipates the grave, and God "giveth his beloved sleep." Whether in youth or middle age the sleeper yields to the mastery of a relentless physical law, bringing the body into subjection with all its boasted powers; or whether, as the harbinger of death, sleep mercifully enfolds the aged in its downy mantle—we can but imitate our Heavenly Father,—look on with pity and anticipate the time when these "new rising from the tomb" shall sing and joy with the best of worshippers.

And now, finally, my brethren—for this is a preacher's, not a sleeper's paragraph—there is a sin of the pulpit in relation to Sabbath slumber! Here come in several subdivisions. Long sermons are under the first heading—particularly if not animated. There is but one condition under which a discourse may be permitted to exceed thirty minutes, namely, that it shall grow in intensity of thought and enthusiasm to the close. The second subdivision would bring in monotony. Do you remember the master shipbuilder's comment upon George Whitfield's preaching? "Under my own rector I can lay the keel, raise the timbers, pluck the hull, and launch a splendid ship, during every sermon; but under this man's preaching I cannot strike a blow." Yet Whitfield's sermons, as read in books, were not marvels of eloquence. He had a matchless voice, which he used in all its varied, wonderful cadences. And he had a fervid imagination, that magic wand by which he swayed such influence over the multitude. The rector may not have possessed either one or the other to a marked degree; but at least he might have been natural. For we maintain that it is natural to rise and fall in voice and eloquence with the changing warmth and sombreness of the theme. No man is natural who draws through a repetition of sentences which every one has heard, perhaps a little differently constructed, a thousand times. A gentleman of our acquaintance holds to, or yields, his sermon- nap, as he declares, at the option of the preacher. He avers the pulpit,

and not the pew, must take the blame if he nods unconscious assent to the discourse. And we are inclined to believe him, in part, at least. The son of a prophet, a good judge, and a diligent hearer of sermons all his life, he sees an ordinary preacher fairly into his subject, satisfies himself that there is to be nothing new, takes his bearings, and launches out on the sea of oblivion. Yet it is dangerous to challenge his knowledge of the sermon, for, ten to one, he will put the wakeful hearer to the blush by correcting his memory here and there as to the tenor of the discourse. The fact is that nine sermons out of ten on a given text are so wondrously similar that a shrewd hearer can anticipate, as one has said, "when he sees a preacher going in, pretty fairly where he will come out."

Then there is a monotony of manner as well as of voice and thoughts, which completes the preacher's spell in producing somnolency. In every country, in all ages, the protest of the people against this defect in the pulpit has been heard, in private circles at least. The most expressive, perhaps, is found in the animated conversation of the Ettrick Shepherd, in Christopher North's graphic *Noctes Ambrosianae*.—"The verra attitude o' leanin back, and stretching out your legs, and fixing your e'en in ae direction, is a maist dangerous attitude; and then, gin the minister has ony action,—say, jokin down his head, or see-awin wi his hands, or leanin over, as if he wanted to speak wi' the precentor, or keepin his e'en fixed on the roof, as if there was a hole int' lettin' in the licht o' heaven,—or turnin' first to the ae side and then to the ither, that the congregation may hae an equal share o' his front physiognomy as weel's his side face,—or stannin' bolt upright in the middle o' the pulpit, without sene movin' ony mair than gin he were a corp set up on end by some cantrip (magic spell) and lettin' out the dry, dusty moral apothegms wi' ae continuous and monotonous ginn,—Oh, Mr. North, Mr. North, could e'en an evil conscience keep awake under such soporifics, ony mair than the honestest o' men, were the bauns cried for the third time, and he gaun to be married on the Monday mornin'?"

Here is a good man—good in his way—in a country where the Sabbath and the sermon have ever sustained a first place as the day and the word of the Lord Jehovah, charging directly home upon the preachers much of the blame for this miserable church-sleeping habit—a habit peculiar, we imagine, to Christian worshippers, inasmuch as under any other dispensation or creed than ours, people disposed to sleep would sleep at home, and not among a multitude convened for a most sacred duty. Manifestly, the first exhortation in remedy of the evil, should, therefore, begin in the study, on bended knees, by the man of God to his own conscience. Is a man who cannot keep an audience awake called to preach? If so, does he meet his awful obligations? Euty-chus slept while Paul preached—the only hearer who ever slept under Paul's preaching, so far as we know; but Paul had then "continued his speech until midnight." For this instance there is an apology; there is none for the fashionable sleep in the broad midday of a glorious Sabbath. Let us put away this evil from among us!

THE MORRIS STREET SCHOOL DIFFICULTY.

At the close of an article on this subject in last week's *Presbyterian Witness*, we are sorry to find the following expressions:

"Since the foregoing was written we fear we must modify our remarks so far as to admit that the defenders of the young woman in this case have made the matter denominational. We are very sorry that such has been the case. It was and is surely needless. In any matter of this sort we would as readily place as full confidence in a Roman Catholic or Presbyterian, as a Methodist or Baptist; and it is simply humiliating to mention denominational names in such a connection. It is becoming more and more obvious that the Board is not fit to discharge its functions. It is too bad that a woman must be defended at the School Board on the ground that she belongs to a certain church. Are justice and manhood so rare that our respected contemporary the *Wesleyan* is called upon "in behalf of the entire population, especially the Methodists of Halifax," to "tender sincere thanks to those members of the Board who gave their opinions and votes with so much decision in the case?" Surely it is time the Board were so constituted as to be worthy of confidence irrespective of church connections.

Our cotemporary is a little unreasonable. The only sentence in our article having a denominational colouring, is that quoted by the *Witness*. We still feel that the Methodists of Halifax owe something to the members of the Board who sustained Miss McCulloch, for the

reason that the agitation had been proceeding on denominational grounds before we wrote on the subject at all, Mr. Jack is a Presbyterian. His special advocate at the Board, who threw imputations so unjust and ungentlemanly on both Miss McCulloch and Mrs. Manning, is a Presbyterian. The *Presbyterian Witness* itself, so vigilant and able usually in defence of our school interests, said but few words upon this difficulty, and those in a very obscure place, until Mr. Jack was deposed: and now it calls for the reconstruction of the Board, on the ground that "it is not fit to discharge its functions." It had been asserted, moreover, that all the animus of the affair could be traced to Methodist sources;—this was said by Mr. Jack's friends. The denominational bias was given to this subject by others; on our part there is merely the expression of gratitude for an act of justice and mercy to the Methodists as a denomination, acquitting them of originating a scandal.

As to the fitness of the Board. We had no sympathy with any feature of legislation which gave to the School Board of Halifax a denominational character not accordant with our general School Law. But everyone knows that its origin had something of a denominational appearance. We confess that of the qualifications of the Board we have but a limited knowledge. Its members are of Government selection in part, and in part appointed by the City Council. It so happens that some of the members are Methodists, gentlemen of more or less culture, who have succeeded in serving well the public in other respects, and are quite qualified to administer affairs of city education. If the *Witness* knows of members who are really incapable, let it insist upon the fact, for it is a serious one.

But we must remind the *Witness* that the case in point is not one of education, but of morals. The question—as shaped, not by us but by those who called in the "denominational difference"—is, whether a Principal has forfeited his place, or whether two ladies have conspired to ruin his character. And to affirm, in this connection, that "the Board is not fit to discharge its functions," is simply to impugn their common sense and their integrity. Our jurors are selected from among the ordinary populations to decide questions of life and death; and to affirm that the eleven gentlemen composing the School Board of Halifax are not suited to consider evidence in a case of common assault, is to pronounce them incapable of serving on a common jury. Our cotemporary, we know, would not accept this as the outcome of his article, yet we see no other logical inference to be deduced from his reasoning.

Surpassing in zeal if possible for the right in this case the Methodist body, are people of every denomination, who have regard to morality and the efficiency of our public schools. It would be an attitude so unnatural upon the part of the Methodists to refrain from speaking out their views, that the *Witness* might rather condemn them if that attitude were taken. As to the *Wesleyan* espousing Methodist interests, what else can our cotemporary expect? Is not that the purpose mainly for which the paper exists? Our respect for the *Witness* is abiding; but we are astonished to receive a rebuke from it in a case which any one can see is of general no less than denominational importance.

It seems a very remarkable thing that a Committee of the Methodist Conference should recommend the removal—the casting out—of some of Wesley's Hymns, because of the Calvinism they contain! We have often been struck with the essential Calvinism and Scripturalness of many of Wesley's Hymns; but we did not imagine that they were offensive to our dear brethren in whose Bibles are to be found the Gospel of John, and the Epistles of Paul. We do not, of course, dispute the right of our Methodist brethren to reject any Hymns written by Wesley; we only take the liberty of expressing our surprise at the phenomenon, and especially at the reason given. We have yet to see any hymn book that is without Calvinism; and our excellent brethren will find, after their closest scrutiny, that the thing will be there. You cannot get rid of it.—*Presb. Witness*.

It is something new to us that Wesley wrote Calvinistic Hymns, or that his successors now sit in judgment upon Wesley's Calvinistic tendencies. We had always thought him sufficiently pro-

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Look out on the arri General. H 14th Novem the passage, between the steamers of party at sea harbor. It those fond spend a day that time. "Subscrib Yarmou, th Hebron, and is astray o make clea name—in t the publicati