

Pastor and People.

THE LORD'S APPOINTMENT.

I say it over and over, and yet again to-day,
It rests my heart as surely as it did yesterday,
It is the Lord's appointment ;
Whatever my work may be,
I am sure in my heart of hearts
He has offered it to me.

I must say it over and over, and again to-day,
For my work is different from that of yesterday.
It is the Lord's appointment ;
It quiets my restless will
Like the voice of tender mother,
And my heart and will are still.

I will say it over and over, this and every day,
Whatever the Master orders, come what may,
It is the Lord's appointment ;
For only His love can see
What is wisest, best, and right,
What is truly good for me.

—Selected

TAKE MY HAND.

A tender child of summers three,
Seeking her little bed at night,
Paused on the dark stairs timidly.
"O, mother I take my hand," said she,
"And then the dark will all be light."
We older children group our way
From dark behind to dark before ;
And only when our hands we lay,
Dear Lord, in Thine, the night is day,
And there is darkness never more.

—John G. Whittier.

THE LIFE VERSUS THE CREED.

Rev. Dr. Joseph Parker, of The Temple, London, thinks that both Christianity and the Bible find their strongest support in the lives of those who surrender themselves wholly to their teaching. He says :

"There are two lights in which Christianity may be regarded ; it may be looked at as classified in sectarian dogmas, and as upheld by any particular course of argument : in general terms, it may become a subject of criticism. Treated in this manner, it has been alike the object of ridicule and reverence. On the other hand, Christianity may be tested by its results as a practical religion. Its history is before the world.

"What has Christianity done ? It has greater testimony than the commendation of its deep scholars and eloquent preachers. It has opened prison doors, broken down bad Governments, aided all good causes, lifted up trampled honor and virtue ; it has saved men's souls, given men's lives higher elevation, changed death into a beneficent liberator, and turned the grave into the last step towards heaven ; it has made selfish men benevolent, harsh men gentle, timid men heroic, and sad men happy ; it has blessed the cause of freedom, succored the efforts of charity, upheld the claims of peace ; it demands to be judged by its fruits, and its demand is reasonable and ought to be irresistible.

"We are called to maintain a practical testimony, to give the emphatic and convincing answer of noble living. We have had enough of literary testimonial ; we have done enough in the matter of the evidences ; we are thankful to every author who has spoken one good word for the truth ; now let the truth speak for itself, let the Christian be the best defence of Christianity, let the life of the servant commend the doctrine of the Lord.

"The argument which applies to Christianity applies also with equal effect to the Bible. If the Bible is to be judged by its works, there is, happily, an end of controversy. The Bible must be its own vindicator. Not because our fathers believed in it ; not because it has a romantic history ; but because of its own proved power to enlighten the mind, to bless the heart, to elevate life, and destroy the power of death, must the Bible be held first in our love and highest in our veneration. 'A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. What does the Bible bring forth ? What of manhood ? What of purity ? What of hope ? It must not be judged in detail ; it must be taken in

its entirety ; it must have free scope ; it must be received into the heart—then we abide by the verdict."

GRACE BEFORE MEAT.

The question has recently been raised whether it would not be a wise thing to omit the custom in Christian families of asking "grace" at the table before meals. It is claimed that by this frequency in the majority of cases it has become a mere form, that it supplants true prayer by degenerating to a "vain repetition," that it is out of place when guests who may not be Christian people are present, and that the daily board should be a place of social intercourse and pleasure rather than a place of worship. Certain it is that the practice is less frequent than formerly, but two explanations of its decadence are given : one, that increasing Christian enlightenment and a state of general spirituality are gradually displacing the old form by a pervading life, a life that touches all forms of activity and experience ; the other, that prayer in every form and the spirit of true worship are being quietly crowded aside by various forms of worldliness. A great change in respect to all observances of family worship has taken place in the last ten years, so great that returning missionaries have noted the fact with surprise and pain. While it can be said that family prayers are still common, it is still true, as one eminent missionary has put the case, that the discontinuance of family worship is the most noticeable recent change in American Christian family life. The old evangelists were accustomed to mention the "breaking down of family altars" as one of the signs of religious decline. Were they right or are we learning a better way ?

For various good reasons we wish to enter our plea for a more careful observance of all the traditional forms of family worship. We do not believe that we can omit the custom of asking God's blessing on our daily bread, and of worshipping Him in the reading of His Word and in daily prayers and thanksgivings around the home altars without the most serious loss in vital piety, and the secularization of the minds of the children that go forth from our households to those strifes and responsibilities which are successfully met by those only who have put on the whole armor of God. Religion from the side of man is the love of God ; from the side of God it is the divine response to that love, and implies the bestowment of Himself in forgiveness, fellowship, and life. Prayer is the most interior expression of the fellowship and life between the soul and God, and is the typical evidence of the presence of piety. When it is said, "Behold, he prayeth," it is the same as to say, Behold, he is born anew unto God. In respect to his use of the Lord's Prayer Luther said, "For to this day I look still at the *Pater Noster* like a child ; I eat and drink thereof like a full-grown man, and can never have enough."

And it is no objection to family prayer that the expression of it is periodical. Periodicity is a common characteristic of the expressions of life. We do not say that a tree is dead because it does not put forth buds and leaves and flowers in every month of the year ; nor that a soul is dead because it lifts itself in thankfulness to God at stated times. Rather, in proportion as it has a "life hid with Christ in God," will it have its set times and places of communion. This is the very law of its religious being ; it cannot exist without them, and the associations of these times and places are hallowed and sweet, like the incense of God's altars. David prayed unto God "evening, and morning, and at noonday," when Christ broke bread with His disciples He gave thanks ; Edwards had his *stated* seasons of secret prayer which occurred "three times a day, in his journeys as well as at home." Such expressions from the beginning has pious life had in all the history of the church. That it is in the line of the nature of things

is suggested by the fact that the heathen have "steadily made libations to their gods before their meals, as an acknowledgment of their indebtedness to them for their daily food."

Indeed, it may be given as a general rule, that the omission of stated prayer is the omission of all prayer. We are creatures of habits, methods and forms ; and the more complete our life is, the deeper will the lines be cut that mark our habitual ways. The scholar, the philanthropist, and the mature Christian reveal themselves in weeding out the random and vagrant elements from their current activities. Life will create its own forms, and the forms encourage the life. The man that is haphazard in his devotions has an entirely superficial devotional spirit. We ought, therefore, to encourage ourselves in proper stated ways, and to make sure that we put our best life into them all. To omit the "grace before meat," the daily prayer where the family are gathered, the closet, worship in the sacred time with the household of God—this is to wreck piety and to convert our religion into a mere constitutional sentiment. It is possible to kill a healthy tree by plucking all its leaves as well as by destroying its roots. In the early history of Oberlin there was a college rule forbidding a student to board in any family in which family worship was not observed, and to the present day each recitation or other college exercise is opened by a brief prayer or by the singing of a stanza of a hymn. The rule was rarely criticised, and the usage in the opening of recitations is rarely irksome or an evident formality. Such are the natural expressions of the pious life of the college and the village ; the life and the usage fit naturally together. To abandon the usage and to provide no proper substitute would be a limitation of the life, or else a sign that the life had departed.—*The Advance*.

A SERMON FACTORY.

There is a syndicate in Ohio which has conducted a large traffic in sermons and orations of all kinds for many years. The traffic is carried on in an obscure way. Sermons sell from ten to twenty five dollars each, according to the ornateness of style and the vigour of rhetoric.

The syndicate is conducted by two college graduates, who describe themselves as "journalists, essayists, and authors." They employ several accomplished hack writers besides. They are prepared to undertake anything from a funeral oration to a few choice remarks at a wedding. In their circular they request a trial of their merchandise. Ministers may send their own texts or indicate the general tone of the sermon which is desired. For example, if the preacher sends in an order for a brief, curt, and epigrammatic exhortation to his congregation requesting them to contribute more liberally, one of the staff sermonizers will select some suitable text as "And the copper-smith did us much injury," and rear a light and airy structure thereon. Sermons containing philippics and invectives are the highest priced.

NOBLEMEN WHO ARE FOND OF PREACHING.

Emperor William's taste for preaching, even where there is a duly qualified ecclesiastic within reach, is far more common fancy than most people might be willing to imagine. Under the circumstances, it is difficult to understand the surprise which has been caused by his insistence in delivering the Sunday discourse during the recent yachting trip in the Mediterranean, although he had on board with him the chief of the Court chaplains.

Thus in England there are at least a dozen secular members of the House of Lords who, not content with preaching to their own households and tenants, actually travel about in England and on the Continent preaching wherever they can find either a congregation or a pulpit at their disposal.

Several of them, such as, for instance, Lord Radstock, have incurred the wrath of foreign Governments in consequence of their religious zeal.

The young Earl Beauchamp is another of these lay preachers, but he confines his ministrations to the East End of London. Then there is Lord Bennett, married to an American wife, and heir to the Earl of Tankerville, who has been arrested for street-preaching on several occasions.

The present Duke of Hamilton does a little in the preaching line, chiefly among the poorer classes in London, but none of these peers comes anywhere near the late Earl of Shaftesbury so far as pulpit oratory is concerned, the Earl being known by the nickname of "the lay bishop."

A HAPPY DEATH.

In answering the question, "Is Christianity dying out ?" H. K. Carroll, in the current number of the *Forum*, compares the religious censuses of 1890 and 1895. According to the former there were 20,618,300 communicants in the United States, and up to last year the totals had been increased to 24,646,584—a gain of 4,028,277 in five years. During the same period there was a gain of 23,075 churches, and 21,646 ministers. The gain in new members is not fully represented in the above figures, because the 1,500,000 losses by death had first to be made up before a net increase could be shown. The value of church buildings, lots and furniture in 1890 was about \$680,000,000, and now is thought to be fully \$800,000,000. Yes ; Christianity is alive and active ; if it is dying, it is surely having a happy death.

APPEARANCE OF JOHN KNOX.

The following is a description of the sturdy Scotch Reformer : "In stature he was slightly under the middle height, of well-knit and graceful figure, with shoulders somewhat broad, longish fingers, head of moderate size, hair black, complexion somewhat dark, and general appearance not unpleasing. In his stern and severe countenance there was a natural dignity and majesty not without a certain grace, and in anger there was an air of command on his brow. Under a somewhat narrow forehead his brows stood out in a slight ridge over his ruddy and slightly swelling cheeks, so that his eyes seemed to retreat into his head. The colour of his eyes was bluish grey, their glance keen and animated. His face was rather long ; his nose of more than ordinary length ; the mouth large ; the lips full, the upper a little thicker than the lower ; his beard black, mingled with gray, a span and a half long, and moderately thick.

THE WORLD'S GREAT NEED.

Mrs. Margaret Bottoms, the head of the King's Daughters, regards holy women as the greatest need of the world. In the *Ladies' Home Journal* she says :

The greatest need of the world to-day, the greatest need of our families, of our churches, is holy women—women of God, women of divine power. Oh that we could get thousands of women who would arise and shake off the dust of worldliness, and say "a heavenly race demands my zeal and an immortal crown." Young women into whose hands some of us will, ere long, lay our work, we ask you to carry the banner of the cross. You to whom we look for help in this world, for our King, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, will you not consecrate your young womanhood to Him, to His cause, the salvation of immortal souls ? This will be worthy of your being, and on this line there will be no disappointment. After a few short years you will lay your trophies down and be crowned with victory at His feet, and then an eternity of progress will still be before you ! Try to be so like Him here, that the people will see God in you ! Surely this is worth living for, and while some things are not within our reach, this is."