

Portry.

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THE THREE PREACHERS.

There are three preachers, ever preaching,
Each with eloquence and power :
One is old, with locks of white,
Skinny as an anchorite ;
And he preaches every hour
With a shrill fanatic voice,
And a Bigot's fiery scorn :—
" Backwards, ye presumptuous nations :
Man to misery is born !
Born to drudge, and sweat, and suffer—
Born to labor, and to pray :
Priests and Kings are God's Vicegerents,
Man must worship and obey.
Backwards, ye presumptuous nations—
Back !—be humble and obey !"

The second is a milder preacher ;
Soft he talks as if he sung :
Sleek and slothful is his look,
And his words, as from a book,
Issue glibly from the tongue,
With an air of self-content,
High he lifts his fair white hands :—
" Stand ye still, ye restless nations ;
And be happy, all ye lands !
Earth was made by One Almighty,
And to meddle is to mar ;
Change is rash, and ever was so ;
We are happy as we are ;
Stand ye still, ye restless nations,
And be happy as ye are."

Mightier is the younger preacher ;
Genius flashes from his eyes ;
And the crowds who hear his voice,
Give him, while their souls rejoice,
Throbbing bosoms for replies.
Awed they listen, yet elated,
While his stirring accents fall.—
" Forward, ye deluded nations,
Progress is the rule of all !—
Man was made for heartfelt effort ;
Tyranny has crushed him long :
He shall march from good to better,
Nor be patient under wrong !
Forward ! ye awakened nations,
And do battle with the wrong."

" Standing still is childish folly ;
Going backward is a crime ;—
None should patiently endure
Any ill that he can cure ;
Onward ! keep the march of time ;
Onward while a wrong remains
To be conquered by the right ;
While Oppression lifts a finger
To affront us by his might ;
While an error clouds the reason ;
While a sorrow gnaws the heart ;
While a slave awaits his freedom,
Action is the wise man's part—
Forward ! ye awakened nations !
Action is the people's part."

" Onward ! there are ills to conquer,—
Ils that on yourselves you've brought ;
There is wisdom to discern,
There is temperance to learn,
And enfranchisement for thought.
Hopeless Poverty and Toil
May be conquered, if you try ;
Vice, and Wretchedness, and Famine
Give Beneficence the lie.
Onward ! onward ! and subdue them !
Root them out ; their day has passed :
Goodness is alone immortal ;
Evil was not made to last.
Forward, ye awakened people,
And your sorrow shall not last."

And the preaching of this preacher
Stirs the pulses of the world.
Tyranny has curbed its pride ;
Errors that were deified
Into darkness have been hurl'd ;
Slavery and Liberty,
And the Wrong and Right have met,
To decide their ancient quarrel.
Onward ! preacher ; onward yet !
There are pens to tell your progress,
There are eyes that pine to read,
There are hearts that burn to aid you,
There are arms in hour of need.
Onward, preacher ! Onward, nations !—
Will must ripen into Deed.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO STATE POLITICS.

At the last Anniversary Meeting of the AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, Geo. S. Hillard, Esq., of Boston, rose and said :

" Mr. President,—I purpose to speak upon some topics rather suggested by the resolutions than directly embraced by the terms of any one of them. The moral and religious world presents different aspects, according to the point of view from which it is contemplated. As I am a layman and a lawyer, I am led to look more at the conduct of Christians than their creeds. Christianity is made up of doctrines and precepts. Respecting the former, there are and always will be diversities of opinion among men, and these diversities are independent of the will. Respecting the latter, there can be no substantial difference among men of sound minds. Many may differ widely, for instance, as to the essential nature of Christ, his relation to God and to the human soul ; but there can be no doubt as to the inestimable value of the rules of conduct which he prescribed. These rules are sufficient for the guidance of man in every possible relation in which he may be placed. Their application was first limited to individuals. In the early ages of the church, there were men and women whose lives were crowned and embellished with all the Christian virtues ; but these were bright points in the general moral darkness. It was long before Christianity began to be felt in masses, societies, and communities. Its progress has been always from the smaller to the larger circles of humanity. At this moment, whatever honourably distinguishes this age from those that have gone before it—the movements in favour of peace, temperance, and prison discipline, the provision made for poverty and insanity, reforms in criminal law, the interest felt by the more favoured in the less favoured classes—are all the slowly-gained triumphs of Christianity over the natural hardness and selfishness of the human heart.

The most comprehensive relation is that which man sustains to the State. For this, the last and highest triumph of Christianity is reserved. When this is accomplished, Christianity and politics will be identical. That we are far, very far from this standard, will not be denied. The conduct of nations, especially in their external relations, falls below, not merely the Christian standard of duty, but even below that which may be drawn from the writings of virtuous pagans, such as Confucius or Plato. They seem as yet to be wholly swayed by the selfish passions of the natural man. To prove this, I need not go back to former times, nor yet cross over to another hemisphere. I can find proofs and illustrations in rank profusion, upon our own soil. And here you will indulge me in some plainness of speech, doing me the justice to believe that my point of view is not that of a party politician.

We have been for some time, and are now, in interesting and critical relations with two States, England and Mexico. Our dispute with England turns upon a question of territory ; of more or less land. Now the Christian rule or sentiment expressed by the words " In honour preferring one another," would suffice to settle such a question in twenty-four hours. Yet in the debates of Congress on this subject, what elevated Christian sentiment has been uttered ? who has ventured to suggest that some respect was due to the precepts of Jesus of Nazareth, in international relations ? On the contrary, we have heard sometimes sentiments of the most odious ferocity, and sometimes of the most sordid rapacity. We have heard men avowing sometimes the motives of pirates and sometimes those of pedlars, but never those of Christian statesmen and legislators. Of course, I do not say that all the debates were of so low a tone, but I do say that the highest tone of sentiment uttered was not high enough.

Then look at Mexico, and how we have stood, and are standing, towards her. I am not going to unfold the record of our shame. It would be a long tale, and a sad one. I contend that our course towards Mexico is not warranted even by that inferior and selfish code which is laid down by writers on public law, and it is as far below the Christian standard as the earth is below the heavens. We have happily blended therein the robber, the tyrant, and the bully. Yet is there any public man that gives utterance to a sentiment of Christian reprobation of our conduct ? Is there any one who sounds out with a voice of power the noble word, duty, in the ears of our people ? In a moment, Congress votes millions of money to carry on this wicked and most unchristian war ; but how slowly does a measure which has for its object the diffusion of truth among men, toil and lag through that body ? With how feeble and languid a grasp does it seize upon their attention ! How often are its friends doomed to disappointment and defeat ! How cold and sluggish are the movements of our virtues ! how vivid and intense those of our passions ! The one is the feeble pecking of the dove ; the other, the fierce rending of the eagle.

I am told that there is a portion of the public press which openly proclaims and exacts that no public man dares oppose this war because of the obloquy and political proscription which followed the opponents of the last war with England. If this be true, (" O shame, where is thy blush ?") on what feeble reeds and trembling butshes does the fabric of our national glory rest !

I call upon the moral and religious portion of our community to rebuke the detestable sentiment that our country is to be supported, whether right or wrong. Would that the breath of a true and calm courage could be breathed into our public men, that they might lift themselves above the shows and shadows that are around them, and take council of considerations above and beyond " the flight of time." Man's essential dignity is derived only from those elements which are unseen and eternal. What is his mortal life ? A brief spark, glowing for a moment, and soon swallowed up in the jaws of darkness. But this " our bank and shoal of time" is over-arched and encompassed by majestic and eternal truths which, from afar, pour round our darkling path the light of heaven. To see a man unconscious of these mighty spiritual realities, and swayed only by those motives which are of the perishing brood of earth, anxious about this man's smile and that man's vote, smitten by dread of popular obloquy, paralyzed by the miserable fear of a miserable press, is a mournful spectacle. A sadder sight the earth can hardly show. I am struck with the low tone of moral sentiment among our politicians and public men. Intellectually speaking, they may be superior to the people at large, their constituents ; but in a moral point of view, they are inferior. We are better than our rulers. The race of public men is sadly degenerated. We must introduce a nobler stock. I wish to see men in office who will turn towards the tyranny of a majority the same resolute countenance with which Paul met the embodied majesty of Rome at Cesarea, and so reasoned of " righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," that Felix trembled ; who will meet the roar of popular madness with the calm soul of George Fox, who records of himself, that when placed in the dock to be tried as a felon, the spirit of the Lord so came upon him, that when he arose the judge and jury became as dead men under his feet ; who will see a scoffing, hissing majority as so many dead men under their feet, if the path of duty should be through them and over them.

I would hold up no visionary and fantastic standard of conduct. I have no respect for what Milton calls a " fugitive and cloistered virtue." The work of the world must be done, and a morbid and over-sensitive conscience, which only doubts and dreams, is hardly to be commended, certainly not to be imitated. I would strengthen my positions by the great authority of Mr. Burke, whose golden pen dropped truth and wisdom in its most careless movements. In one of his recently-published letters, he says, " the principles of true politics are merely those of morality enlarged." And where are the purest principles of morality to be found ? I need not answer, in the New Testament.

The great problem for the Christian world now to accomplish is to effect a closer union between religion and politics. They have too long been estranged and at variance. There is a sort of division of labour in society, which is anything but satisfactory or encouraging. We have one class of men to carry on government, another to transact the common business of life, and another to do our religion and our morality. Hence, our wise men are not good, and our good men are not wise. I make this as a general remark, subject, of course, to exceptions and qualifications. The wise men of our country are not spiritually minded. They are engaged in the pursuit of wealth, of professional and political success ; they are developing the industrial resources of the country, and adding to its material wealth. The ends they pursue are not high, but they shew an admirable sagacity in the means they use to accomplish them. On the other hand, the good men are not conspicuous for wisdom or sagacity. They pursue high aims, but do not choose the best means. Their goodness is visionary, unpractical, and fanatical. They awaken the scarce-suppressed contempt of the hard, shrewd, sagacious man of the world. These latter hardly pay them the compliment of sincerity. They do not go to them if they want advice in any doubtful matter,—as the investment of property, the purchase of an estate, the marriage of a son or daughter. We instinctively associate eminent goodness with want of force of character, and feebleness of intellectual fibre. Thus the children of darkness are wiser in their generation than the children of light. We give our poor tithes to heaven, while the world, the flesh, and the devil, exact the other nine parts of our efforts, our energies, and our thoughts.

Brethren, this is a fearful mistake ; and fearfully shall we answer it, if it be not amended. Let it ever be borne in mind that the foundations of material prosperity are

moral, and that there can be no soundness in the body politic, unless the principles of Christian morality flow and circulate through it, like the blood in the natural body. If we leave the moral and religious interests of the country in the hands of clergymen, of women, and of a few visionary and fanatical laymen ; if the shrewdness and sagacity of the country are to be absorbed in the accumulation of property ; if the politics of the country are given over to reckless demagogues, venal office-seekers, and unprincipled editors ; our wealth and material prosperity will rest upon foundations as uncertain as those of a palace built upon the crater of a volcano. The politics of the country—using that word in its most comprehensive sense—are matters of deep concern to all of us. We cannot dodge them aside, and let them pass if we would ; and we ought not to do so, if we could. They include our highest temporal interests ; they form the frame-work which encloses and gives support to all the rest. We must elevate and exalt them. We must entrust the work of government to cleaner hands and purer hearts. We must rebuke the doctrine, whether directly maintained or indirectly sanctioned, that the morality of the gospel is too fine for use. We must bring about a union between wisdom and goodness. We must dedicate the most vigorous faculties of man to the highest ends. We must enlist the passions in the cause of truth and virtue. We must make men do good and be good with that energy and intensity they now pursue wealth or political distinction, or make love, or seek revenge. We must have men to rule over us who will " hate the cowardice of doing wrong."

My thoughts are haunted with the vision of a Christian Commonwealth, in which every man, whatever be his function or office, shall feel himself to be an anointed priest of the Lord, and infuse into his daily life the spirit of purity and devotion ; in which the different sections of the Christian world shall lay aside their theological wrangling, and enter into a noble strife to see who shall most resemble in life and spirit him after whose name they are called ; in which the severed fragments of Christ's garment shall be woven again into a web of wholeness and beauty. Then the earth will become a temple, and the roar and hum of daily life will go up like a chorus of praise and thanksgiving. Brethren, is this a dream, and no more ? Are the tares ever to grow in the field of the lord ? Are the faint and bleeding hosts of truth never to forego their warring conflict, and are the meek never to inherit the land that is promised them ? The end is afar, and cannot be discovered. Some see it gilded with hope, and some darkened with gloom. But motives to effort are to be drawn from sources over which the changing moods of our own mind have no power. The past we cannot recal ; the future we cannot command ; the " fleet angel" of the present we can seize and hold. The passing hour we can crowd with heroic action and generous sacrifice. Brethren, the night cometh, in which no man can work : let us so live and work while it is day, that we may lie down to our repose with no unavailing regrets, no stings of self-reproach."

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.—Such is the infirmity of men's minds, that if it were not for one perfect example, we might almost have doubted the possibility of that complete harmony of opposite qualities in the character, for which I have contended. But in Him, who is set forth as pattern, prince, and lord in the moral creation, there was nothing wanting, and there was nothing in excess. There was no conflict, no clashing in the qualities of his perfect character. I say not that he was grave, but cheerful. I conceive of a more perfect union. He was grave and cheerful at the same moment, and in the same act. The thought, the affection, the act of the soul, that was serious, that very act was cheerful. This was the tenor, the habit, the harmony, of his perfect mind. Perfect in himself, patient with others ; sublime in purpose, simple in manners ; superior to all, the servant of all ; he dwelt among his disciples as Master, Teacher, Counsellor, Companion, Friend. Courageous to meet opposition, meek to endure injury ; immovable in his design, gentle in the fulfilment of it ; glorious, as the Son of God,—humble, as the Son of Man ; he walked among the degraded, the blaspheming, the captious, and the hostile, to blame, yet to pity them ; to resist, yet to raise them ; to sacrifice to them his life, to overcome them by his death. He was not courageous at one time, and meek at another ; but his very courage was meek ; his very inflexibility was gentle ; his very glory and loftiness was that of an humble and filial reverence to his Father. Wonderful Being ! worthy to be the Saviour of men ! When shall the world understand thee ? when shall it admire, love, follow thee, as it ought ? Christian ! this is your perfection—far off from us, as yet, but it is for this that you must strive.