

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

ENTERTAINMENTS.

If there is a threadbare word it is this. Two years ago we all were sick of "Centennial," as applied to everything under the heavens, from soap and shoe strings, up to halls and churches. But that epithet finally died with 1876. The word of late years which seems expressive of the aim of church and of church activity—the word which will not die, though it bids fair to kill its author, is "Entertainment." The great end of the Church, particularly in our cities, seems to be merry-making. All winter long we were treated to entertainments. The ticket-seller met us everywhere. His hand-bills were scattered in the streets, fastened to horse-cars, and thrust in our pews on Sunday. His transparencies disfigured the lamp-posts, and his posters our fence. But, then, the winter is given to frolic, and we hoped with the summer to be rid of this religious nuisance—a device of the Devil to divert God's people from their proper work. No, we still are visited with the scourge.

Recently we heard a solemn sermon that left a deep solemnity on the audience. As soon as the benediction was pronounced, the voice of the senior deacon shouted, "Entertainment committee please remain!" At once little groups gathered, chatting over and planning for their "sacred" church fun and jolity. In the evening I attended another, and hoped there to have the hour to God. Alas, another disappointment! After a sermon of unusual and tearful interest, closing with an affecting appeal to prepare for judgment, notice of an "entertainment" was thrust into the preacher's hand, and as soon as the benediction was spoken, ticket-sellers were pressing their merchandise on the people. The spiritual influence of that hour seemed at once quenched, and the toilful work of the preacher thwarted. "Entertainments!" Is this the great work of the Church? Shall strength, and thought, and interest, and money, be swallowed up in the work of providing sports, and feasts, and hilarity, while the prayer-meetings are dying out and the lawful obligations incurred in church work remain uncancelled? Is not Christ again crucified among thieves? Pleasure-seeking on the one hand, and a money-grasping spirit on the other, stifle the life of such churches. We are not unfriendly to healthful out-door recreations and other legitimate diversion, but claim that Christ's Church is not an amusement bureau, and the all-absorbing aim of the professed Christian is not merry-making and frivolity. Has the world grown so giddy and heedful of eternal realities that the Church must tickle it with fun and frolic? Is it the chief end of man to be "entertained," and life a butterfly dream? O, for a new outpouring of Pentecostal fire, with illuminating and consuming power to convert the unconverted in the Church, and bring back to her appropriate work those who are "the lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."—*Church Union.*

THE MINISTRY OF SICKNESS.

Can we afford to do without the illness which God permits?

We are very busy. The most pious and thoughtful are apt to neglect the tender offices of affection in the family. How seldom does the careworn father take his children on his knee, and divert his energy from business to paternal ministry! The united head of the household—emphatically the husband and father—should see to it, that the soul of the child becomes knit to the soul of the parent. How the Father of all doth draw us to His breast! The energy of Omnipotence seems almost absorbed in the task. The schemes of providence and grace, the numberless details of God's complicated government seem, in one point of view, but agencies in winning the hearts of men and knitting them to Himself. Here is the pattern for the human family. The parental relation was designed to have eternal fruitage. The truth of God is to reach the heart of the child through the character of the father and mother impressed upon the little one by loving contact. Yet how little of this spiritual contact there is in the average household!

Sickness comes. Behold the change! The father takes up the long neglected child. The little one has a rare vision of that parent's heart. At last the lad learns that his father genuinely and deeply loves him. The concealed character of the father, obscured so

long and so completely by the rubbish of earthly care and by harsh routine, emerges in bold relief.

Although perhaps stupified by fever or medicine, yet the heart of the child is touched, his judgment convinced. Not seldom more progress is made in one day of illness toward the high ends of parentage, than in a year of ordinary living.

Besides, the watcher by the bedside is himself profited. The care of the child, long marked more by the friction of government and the worry of annoyance than by delight, becomes a ministry of anxious affection. Worse annoyance than, in health, exasperated the harassed parent, now becomes but an agency of comfort. The hours of unrest, the interruption of chosen pursuits, are a willing sacrifice on the altar of paternal love. The heart reflects: suppose I were to lose my child? The reflection becomes a retrospection: how could I have suffered myself to be annoyed by my child's obtrusiveness, the very mark of its health? The fountains of affection are unsealed. The streams enlarge and flow more freely. Conscience is awakened. The judgment is moved. Resolves are made. There are prayers of penitence by the bedside. The child of God has experienced the blessed ministry of sickness! Think you that parent is not a better parent, a better Christian; think you that entire household has not caught a shower of grace, because of the cloud that is passing over?

Suppose it is the parent who is sick, who does not know that everything wears a new face at such a time? True, impressions may wear away. Possibly the excitement of fever may vitiate them by brilliant fancies which must vanish, as they should, being so unreal and false. It is true that illness offers poor opportunity for just reflection, and the determination of momentous matters. Yet, when one comes to convalescence, and even earlier, in many cases, permanent impressions of value are made upon the heart. The unreality of earthly things becomes strikingly apparent. The fitness of the highest style of life urges itself on the judgment. The false hurry of our common habit stands exposed as an imposture, and an imposition on the soul. Surely the heart is enlarged; the vision grows clearer, the judgment more accurate, the resolve more distinct.

Were this little all, yet who shall say that we could afford to spare the ministry of sickness! Surely illness is the minister of God for good, with a mission of high value to His children and to their households. Since we are frail, since the bustle of outward life so absorbs us in minor things, we need this gentle agency of correction. The words are as true as they are mild: "Before I was afflicted I went astray." Happy are we if we can add, "but now have I kept Thy word."—*W. W. F., in the Louisville Presbyterian.*

THE SUM OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

The Rev. J. A. Debaun, D.D., preaching a sermon on "Benevolence" before the General Synod of the Reformed Church, gives this as the sum of the whole matter, in general principles:

1. We belong, entirely and absolutely, to God our Saviour; all that we are belongs to God; all that we can do belongs to God; all that we have belongs to God; all that we get belongs to God. "We are not our own, for we are bought with a price."
2. It is our duty to be diligent in business, serving the Lord, that he may have his own with usury; we are to glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are God's.
3. According to the divinely wise advice of the Apostle, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him," that we may know how much of our Lord's money he has entrusted to our care.
4. Let each one of us order his personal and family expenses conscientiously, with the distinct understanding that we are using our Lord's money, and are entitled to it only so far as it is honestly used for his sake.
5. Let us keep ourselves informed by every means in our power of the progress and necessities of our fellow-men, and especially of them that are of the household of faith, that we may know where, and in what proportion, our help is needed.
6. Let us pay due, and only due, regard to our personal sympathies and preferences; for these are a part of ourselves which belong, with all the rest, to the Lord.
7. Let us pay special attention to our denomina-

tional share in the Lord's work, for this is the part of His vineyard in which He has placed us.

8. When we see what is needed, let us conscientiously and gladly give the Lord His own.

9. Let us sedulously beware of the character and fate of Judas, who was a thief, and kept the bag.

"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

"THE NINETY-AND-NINE."

A writer describes a scene which he once saw that brought our Lord's parable of the "ninety-and-nine" before his eyes.

"On the Aletusch glacier I saw a strange, a beautiful sight—the parable of the 'ninety-and-nine' reacted to the letter. One day we were making our way with ice-axe and alpenstock down the glacier, when we observed a flock of sheep following their shepherd over the intricate windings between crevasses, and so passing from the pastures on one side of the glacier to the pastures on the other. The flock had numbered two hundred, all told. But on the way one sheep had got lost. One of the shepherds, in his German patois, appealed to us if we had seen it. Fortunately, one of the party had a field-glass. With its aid we discovered the lost sheep far up amid a tangle of brushwood on the rocky mountain side. It was beautiful to see how the shepherd, without a word, left his hundred and ninety-nine sheep out on the glacier waste, (knowing they would stand there perfectly still and safe,) and went clambering back after the lost sheep until he found it. And he actually put it on his shoulder and 'returned rejoicing.'"

IRREVERENCE.

The irreverence which so sadly characterizes the age, intrudes itself into our public worship. There is need of attendance in some quarters to the injunction of St. Paul, "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the church of God." It is not reverent, on entering the church, to think no thought of Him whose house it is, to lounge in carelessly and settle in your seat at ease, without petitioning a blessing on yourself, your pastor, and your fellow-worshippers.

It is not reverent to come in late, thereby conveying the idea that church attendance is a privilege that may be just as well abridged, and that you care not for the opening services; nor is it fit when needfully detained, to pass up to your seat during prayer.

It is not reverent to gaze about, to criticise your neighbor's dress, to act in any way which indicates your mind is rather busied with your fellow-worshippers than with the business of the place.

It is not reverent to settle in unseemly attitudes and lounge at ease, forgetting you should worship God with both "your body and your spirit which are His."

It is not reverent to make the last Amen the signal for a hasty exit, or worse, to have made previous preparation that no time might elapse in securing overcoat or hat before a start.

But it is reverent to act as though your heart and mind were occupied with worship, as though, in short, you realized "The Lord is in this place; this is no other than the House of God; this is the Gate of Heaven."—*Our Church Work.*

BE not affronted at a jest. If one throw salt at thee, thou wilt receive no harm, unless thou hast sore places.

MEN sometimes object to the doctrine of the depravity of mankind. But the strongest teachings of the Bible and of the pulpit are more than confirmed by their own actions—by the conduct of the world itself. Every bolt and bar and lock and key; every receipt and check and note of hand, every law book and court of justice, every chain and dungeon and gallows, proclaim that the world is a fallen world, and that our race is a depraved and sinful race.

HE who ascends into the hill of God must have a pure heart, but he must also have clean hands. The hands soiled and stained with vice and crime are not such as will be grasped by those who are in waiting on the shining shore. But if the heart be pure, washed by the blood of Christ, and visited by the influences of the Holy Ghost, the hands—the outward lives—will also be pure, and there will be a double assurance of a right to enter the holy place.