

New England Letter.

BY REV. WILLIAM ASHMORE, D. D.

Two Funerals.

I. The Agnostic. He was a brilliant orator. He had had great crowds to hear him. People willingly paid a dollar to hear him roll off his rhythmical sentences for an hour. His themes were not such as were helpful to public good. He devoted himself to pulling down faith in the Bible and faith in Christianity. He never furnished a substitute. He never built up anybody who was trying to do well. His end came, as it comes to all men—it came suddenly. He was not to be buried, but to be burned—the heathen and not the Christian mode. The New York and Brooklyn papers tell the story.

The crematory, built of yellow brick, on a hill "separate from a cemetery in which there are few handsome monuments to soften the unpleasant prospect." "On one side of the crematory grounds stands a saloon facing towards the road, and just below it is an unpretentious hostelry, with the sign 'Crematory Hotel' figuring on the wall facing the crematory, while the sign 'Mt. Olivet Hotel' catches the eye of him who approaches it from the rear. A beer garden is behind it." "After entering the hall called the Columbarian, which is a place for the storage of urns, as well as a reception room, the body was carried to the incineration room, wrapped in an alum-soaked sheet, and then placed on an iron cradle, which was rolled on wheels to the door of the middle retort." "The iron cradle was covered with rust, and looked as if the ashes of a hundred bodies might be clinging to its rough surface." The furnace was "heated to a temperature of 2,075 degrees." "Two men with long iron poles pushed the cradle, head foremost, into the retort." A dense black smoke at once arose, and continued for about fifteen minutes, which showed how rapidly destruction was taking place.

No services were held over the dead. There is an organ and an organist provided, but it was silent, by request of the family. There were sobs and heart-rending groans; but nobody had a word of hope to offer. Beyond this and the movements and some little noise made by the furnace men who had handled the iron pitchforks, all was still as death itself. No hope, utter black despair, and the seething of the burning fiery furnace, with no unbound form within like unto that of the Son of God.

It had been the intention of the family to remain in the reception hall until the body should be consumed and the cradle drawn out and sufficiently cooled to allow the ashes to be gathered up, which would be in three long mortal hours; but now the plan had to be broken up. There was another body at the door. So the first family had to get out of the way and make room for the second. Besides, the second family wanted the organ to play while their body was burning in another retort. This the first family could not endure; so out they themselves wanted to go? "The only place they had to go to was the beer garden in the rear of the hotel. The hostelry was partly filled with lounging drinkers and consumers of ham and sandwiches, and they might look in vain for a reception room. So they formed a little black-garbed group at the far end of the garden, and there they waited. The sun beat fiercely upon the road outside, and little air was stirring. A ragged fence, the rear of an uninviting hostelry, with a sight of a piece of cemetery beyond; across the way, the grim crematory, with its thin stream of silent visitors, coming and going: these were the details in a sordid picture which obtrusively offended the vision of the delicate women who were waiting." "The view of the village of Fresh Pond was sufficiently unpleasant to make the mourners stay in the beer garden, and there at least they got shade and comparative quiet."

The party reached the crematory at 11:30; the body was consumed by 2 o'clock; at five o'clock they received the ashes in an urn, and went their sorrowful way. And will they ever meet again? Not so far as he knew. And will those ashes ever live again? Not according to his belief. And is there no hope? None that he possessed. "No hope, and without God in the world." "Silence and pathetic dust" the end of it all.

II. The Christian. He was a plain man, not conspicuous in public life; but he had been an active and earnest follower of Christ. For many long years he had been a pillar in his church and a burning and a shining light in the community. People of all denominations and of no denomination honored him for his upright and faithful Christian character. His illness was long, but he endured it with great resignation and with bright hopefulness. When the end came he was full of serene joy. He bade all his family and his weeping friends to be cheerful. "We shall meet again. We shall all meet again, and that before long; we shall meet at Jesus' feet, and shall never part again. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life. My work is done. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Be each one of you also faithful unto death." A sweet good-by, "God be with you till we meet again," and then he closed his eyes and was gone.

The funeral took place from the family residence. The house could not contain the half of those who came,

and they had to go to the church, and soon that was filled. The pastor announced a favorite hymn of the departed brother, "How firm a foundation." Then he read the portion of 1 Cor. xv. which bore on the resurrection. His text was John vi. 40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up again at the last day." As the preacher went on to tell of the blessedness of those who die in the Lord, and of the certainty of the resurrection unto life eternal, the whole audience was tranquilized with radiant joy. The people followed in procession to the grave. They closed up round the open place of burial. With low sweet voices they united in singing, "I know he liveth, my Redeemer." Again, in a few tender words, did the pastor speak of the resurrection and of our gathering together unto him. They lowered the coffin gently to its place. Many flowers were dropped in upon the lid. After the custom, friends and visitors dropped each a handful of earth into the grave, and then drew back, leaving the sexton and one other free to fill up quietly and decorously. Then once more they sang, "My Jesus, as thou wilt." Some went away then, but others lingered in tenderness around the sacred spot till the sexton had rounded over the top and placed on it a layer of sod, to be ready for the coming shower, while one loving hand had already provided a rose to be planted at the head. "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Behold he cometh and every eye shall see him." "I will come again and receive you unto myself."

Let me not die as the godless dieth. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."—Journal and Messenger.

Four Visits: Four Types

BY J. W. WEDDILL, D. D.

The pulpit needs the pastorate. You get help for the sacred desk from the sacred door-step, and a knowledge of human nature that makes the Sabbath utterance count. Have you ever been out in the good old apostolic fashion, two by two? It richly pays a pastor occasionally to take his deacon with him in a partial round of the parish, or seeking out particular cases that need attention. The visit is given an added significance; lips are open on innermost things that otherwise would be dumb.

Four homes were entered in one such itinerary of pastor and deacon—sympathetic spirits—and four hearts approached. And now out of it all as we look back there emerge four types of character with whom we oft have to deal in the Christian life. Of course, it is to be seen, that these are all in the department of gospel therapeutics; these are all sick calls. But, alas, what parish without its patients and its hospital!

1. Non-membership. "Sister A, you and your husband profess to have given your hearts to the Lord. Why have you not connected yourself with his people?" "Well, we have thought about it and talked about it a good deal, but there are so many people in the church that ought not to be there and so many things are said to us about the church, that we scarcely know what to do." "Sister, do you believe that the Lord loves the church; in spite of the weaknesses and faults still loves it?" "Yes, indeed." "And do you believe that he loves you?" "Oh, yes." "Now do you think it would make him to love the church less if you joined it? Or do you think he would love you less? Settle the question there on your own personal relations to Christ and his church." Then prayer and a kind good-bye.

2. Non-fellowship. "Sister B, you were an active member once, before moving to this place. Indeed your letter has been sent to us. Why have you not come to the Lord's supper and received the hand of fellowship?" "I don't know. I don't seem to have the interest and ambition I once had; and somehow I don't exactly feel at home yet." "No, and to tell the truth, when will you ever feel at home till you get back where you belong among God's people, and how will you ever get your heart warm again save by coming close up to the fire and enjoying the communion of the saints." "It may be so." "It is so. Next Lord's day at communion, test it and see."

3. Non-Confession. "Mr. C, why are you not a Christian?"—it is best to come directly to the point. "Well, I haven't anything against being a Christian, but I don't care to be one myself until I can live right up to it." "That is right; we want that sort of Christians in the church; but in the meantime, how can you expect to live up to it and yet stay outside of it?" "But all God asks of us is that we do the best that we know how." "No, there you are mistaken. It is not our best but God's best, and it takes two to live that kind of a life." "And yet cannot a man honor God by being true to himself?" "True to himself and God's record of himself. For how can a man be honest with himself and leave out of account God's commands God's ways of fulfilling these commands. No man liveth unto himself alone." "But how is a man going to do all that?" "He cannot by himself, but God has provided a way. No man who thinks or strives religiously is fair to God or to

himself who leaves the divine conditions out of the account. He that will do his will shall know of the doctrine."

4. Non-belief. "Mr. D, we have come to ask you a straight and simple question. Why are you not a Christian? Others of your family belong with us. Why not you?" "Well, I'm trying to live a right life." "And have you succeeded?" "Oh, I suppose as well as the most of people." "But is that all God asks? What do you mean by living 'a right life'?" "To live honestly and justly with all men." "Yes, that at least God requires, but suppose you fail in any wise." "Well, we do the best we can." "But does that make it all right? Does that fill the divine requirement? The trouble, Mr. D, with you as it is with many others, is that you are trying to have the morality of the Old Testament without the grace of the New. That is too large an undertaking for you or for any man. God never intended that we should be put to such odds. Take Christ."

There we leave it, breathing a silent prayer. We can do no better. And, after all, it is the way God works through, humble witnesses. Some time in the silent hours the Spirit will call up the word spoken. Leave it then with the Spirit, and the Word, and prayer. Christ will have his own.—Standard.

Art Thou Rock?

BY CHARLES R. JEFFERSON, D. D.

To those who know best the problems of our cities it is becoming increasingly apparent that if the cities of our republic are to be one and held for Christ we must have a higher type of church member than the average Christian now in the field. And from this it must be not inferred that the average city Christian is a heathen man or a publican. Those who know him best know that he is a social, warm-hearted, honest, sensible man. The worst thing that can be said about him is that he is not strong enough to stand the strain of city life. He is not wicked, but limp. The city, like a giant, moulds him to its will. It pushes the newspaper under his eyes on Sunday morning, and he is not strong enough of will to turn his eyes away. A friend drops in to see him Sunday evening, and he remains away from evening worship. There is a dinner on prayer-meeting evening, and his seat is vacant at the prayer-meeting.

The most sacred covenant any man on earth can make is that which a Christian makes with Christ's church, when he identifies himself with it, and yet people of spotless social reputation and a high sense of honor will trample on their church covenant without a twinge of compunction. They do not do it maliciously, but from weakness and lack of thought. They are caught in the swirl of city life and carried hither and thither by the swift-flowing currents, and before they are aware of it their church life is reduced to a precarious and desultory attendance on divine worship on bright Sunday mornings. Right there lies the secret of the failure of Christianity to master our cities. Church members with numerous and beautiful exceptions are not made of the stuff of which heroes are made. They abhor crucifixion. There is a painful lack of the grit which made the Partians invincible.

We have fallen on easy times. Life is luxurious. Ours is an age of cushions and rose water. But there is arduous work to do. The trumpet has sounded, calling us to battle. Our cities are so many battle-fields on which resolute and flint-willed men must wrestle in terrific struggle with the forces of the devil. We have a Gospel equal to the world's needs. All we lack is men. Never will Christianity subdue our American cities until there is brought into the field an army of Christians of firmer texture and sterner temper than that possessed by the cohorts now engaged. Some plead for endowments, and others advocate a change of methods, but what we want is men. It is significant that the one thing which Christ first looked for in the men on whose shoulders he wished to roll the world was something which he designated as rock. As soon as a man whose temperament had in it ingredients capable of being fused into granite came under his eye, he gave him a new name—"Rock." Later on, when the tides of the world were flowing away from Jesus, this man with the new name stood erect and declared that notwithstanding all learned men were saying one thing, and all the people another, he still was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. It was then that the Lord declared that he would build his church on rock. It is the only rock which can withstand the assaults of the empire of death.

Our cities are crying for rock-Christians. Of gentle Christians and affable Christians and kind-hearted Christians we have abundance. The church-to-day lacks the one quality for which the Lord looks and waits. City Christians should stand like rock amid the seas which surge and roar, and beneath whose billows with alarming frequency honored churches disappear. Like rock they should stand around the Lord's day, beating back the social and industrial forces which are rolling in like a flood. Nothing but rock will save New York and Chicago, Boston and San Francisco from the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. The only Christians who can save our cities from their sins are Christians who have the heroic temper and the undaunted will of Him whom we love to call Rock of Ages.—Independent.

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