

**REPRINT.**

# Pulpit Criticism:

A WEEKLY SHEET.

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## ST. JAMES' CATHEDRAL.

The pulpit of *St. James' Cathedral* was occupied by the Rev. W. S. Rainsford, on the 1st of January.

The antediluvian practice of preaching, as conducted in churches, is so hedged around by traditional reticence, that nothing is more remote from the mind of an average hearer than to interrogate the minister as to the subject matter of his discourse; it can scarcely be said to be a subject on which the mind of either preacher or hearer has been greatly exercised. Indifference on the part of the hearer would appear to be a natural consequence of such a condition of things. If they who "formerly were disobedient, in the days of Noah," could step into a church of the present era, it is to be feared they would be apt to exclaim, on listening to the disquisition from the pulpit, "How are the mighty fallen!" The entire lack of opportunity on the part of those who are supposed to listen to sermons, to make enquiry or comment on the subject of them has led the writer to conclude that what is denied to hearers *in vivo*, may be supplied in some measure through the press, hence his promised round of visits to the churches. One would wish to deal tenderly with a man whose testimony, there

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is reason to believe, the Almighty has deigned to honour, but no sooner had the preacher on the present occasion delivered his text (Prov. xx. 27) than one was struck with the illustration it afforded of the lack of "comprehensive study," on which the *Globe* commented a short time ago. Instead of the passage being rendered as it is, the correct rendering of the verse is the following—"A lamp of Jehovah (a title largely applied to Christ in Scripture) is the spirit of man, searching all the secret chambers of the inner man." Although the preacher referred to the Hebrew in connection with the word "lamp," if he be acquainted with it, otherwise than through the medium of another, his knowledge of the language must be an acquisition of the last few months, as prior to that time he "could not find time" to study it. He was understood to refer to the Shechinah, (the visible presence of the Messiah in the Temple), as having, up to the time of his withdrawal, acted as a manifested lamp of the Lord; and he worked out the thought of believers reflecting the light of the Sun of Righteousness, in a manner which might be styled eloquent, but it did not occur to him that Solomon was not acquainted with wax candles. He reminded

his hearers that a candle represents both concentrated and latent power, which idea will apply to a lamp. An unduly rapid utterance at times, and a habit of turning towards one of the galleries, render his voice quite inaudible under such circumstances. Appeals for the aid of the Spirit of God appear to be relied on in many cases, (indispensable as such aid is), as if He who feeds the fowls did not expect them to peck their food: the sermon in question afforded an illustration of the appeal on the one hand, and the need of pecking on the other. It was calculated to excite a smile, when the preacher dilated on "the haggling and quarrelling" of certain persons, owing to their ignorant misunderstanding of the Athanasian Creed, and the more so, as it was manifest from the mode in which he himself had read the Nicene Creed, that he did not understand that document. The particular truth to which the writer refers is that conveyed in the words "God of God," "Light of Light," where it is necessary to emphasize the word "of" in order to convey the meaning of the passage. The truth conveyed by the passage is precisely that which is recorded in Heb. i. 3, which should be read thus: "Who, being the off-shining of his glory," and has been mutilated, both by the authorized and the revised version. By way of supplement to the foregoing remarks, it may be permissible to comment on the contrast presented by the preacher's advocacy of Epiphany Sunday as a day pre-eminently suitable for the purpose of a collection for the Divinity School, and the "large assortment of lovely dolls" which had so recently been placarded as for sale within the Cathedral precincts, for the support of the same institution.

## ST. LUKE'S CHURCH.

### No. 2.

The pulpit of St. Luke's Church was occupied by the Rev. John Langtry on the 8th of January.

Three centuries ago, the Church of Rome was delivered of twin daughters,

which at the present day are designated High and Low Church. Recalcitrant have these daughters ever been towards their venerable parent, the younger of them more especially; even going the length of hurling such epithets as "scarlet" at the ancient lady. Scarcely less hostile have these twin daughters been in their demeanour towards each other. Although "tied and bound" to each other by a "Book of Common prayer," each sister interprets such portions of the book as are distasteful to her in what ecclesiastical sophists style, "a non-natural sense." In my first comment on a pulpit essay, I glanced at a representative of the younger twin, and on the present occasion, we shall be occupied with a representative of the elder.

Mr. Langtry selected his text from that Gospel which portrays the Lord in His character of King (Matt. ii. 1, 2.) The amount of coughing which prevailed during the delivery of the sermon would have been of less importance had the matter thereof been of the ordinary quality, but inasmuch as it was far above the average, one could but wish the coughers had stayed at home, both on account of the clergyman and on one's own. The writer, however, has through the courtesy of the preacher, been enabled to convey a connected account of the subject-matter of the discourse from another source.

The word "Epiphany," said Mr. L., means manifesting, and the festival which bears this name is kept in commemoration of the manifesting of Christ to the Gentiles, by the guiding of a star. The name "Magi," meant originally a sect of Median and Persian scholars; it was afterwards applied, (as in Acts xiii. 6), to pretended astrologers or soothsayers. The tradition which represents the Magi as kings, may have been based on an ascertained fact of their history, and the fancy that they were Arabians, may have arisen from the fact that myrrh and frankincense are Arabian products, coupled with the prayer-book version of Ps. lxxii. 10. "The kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts." Augustine and Chrysostom state that they were

twelve in number. The venerable Bede gives their names, their country, and their personal appearance. Melchior is said by him to have been an old man, with white hair and long beard; Caspar, a ruddy and beardless youth; and Balthasar, swarthy, and in the prime of life. Melchior is related to have descended from Shem, Caspar from Ham, and Balthasar from Japheth. If they came from Chaldea as there is reason to suppose they did, there may have been an historical basis for the statement, as three races, the original Chaldean, a Turanian race, the Assyrian, a Semitic race, and a mixture of the Iranian or Aryan race did constitute the inhabitants of that country. This combination has been regarded as representing all the families of the earth, and all ages, at the feet of the infant Jesus. We are informed by Tacitus, by Suetonius, and by Josephus, that there prevailed throughout the entire East, at this time, an intense conviction, derived from ancient prophecies, that, ere long, a powerful monarch would arise in Judea, and gain dominion over the world. There is proof also, both in Jewish and Pagan writings, that a guilty world was expecting the advent of its deliverer. The age, as Niebuhr says, was effete with the drunkenness of crime. If the Magi were disciples of Zoroaster, they would recognize in the person of the Infant King, the future conqueror of Ahriman (the devil), and the destined heir of the world. With regard to the appearance of an evanescent star, it has been scientifically proved that within a few years of what must, on any calculation, have been the period of the Lord's birth, there appeared a phenomenon in the heavens so remarkable that it could not have escaped the observation of an astrological people. The discovery of this fact has been made in recent times in the following manner: There occurred in September, 1604, a conjunction of Saturn, Jupiter and Mars; between Mars and Saturn a new star of the first magnitude appeared, which, after being visible for a year gradually waned in March 1606, and ultimately disappeared. Brunowski, a pupil of Kep-

ler, who first discovered it, describes it as shining with an interchange of colours, like a diamond, and as not being nebulous like a comet. Kepler, by means of calculation, found that an exactly similar conjunction and appearance occurred about four years before the commonly received period of the Lord's birth. That period has subsequently been ascertained to be the true date. This conjunction took place in the constellation of Pisces,\* which was supposed by astrologers to be immediately connected with the fortunes of Judea. In the astronomical tables of the Chinese, a record has been preserved that a new star appeared at this epoch. Lovers of the symbolic regard the star which directed the Magi to the manger of Bethlehem as the symbol of the Church, which aspires to guide men to Jesus now. By way of comment on the passage selected as the subject of the foregoing discourse, it may not be superfluous to observe that the whole tone of the inquiry recorded in the second verse would appear to sustain the tradition, that the "wise men" were Gentiles. It would have been possible to enter on a large field in relation to the Almighty's past and future dealings in regard to "the East," had such passages as the following been unfolded by one who knew how "rightly to divide" the word of God. Matt. xxiv. 27-30; Psalms l. 2; lxxx. 1; xciv. 1, marg; Is. lix. 19; Ez. xi. 23 and xliii. 2; and Zech. ix. 14. The sermon was suitably concluded by directing the hearers to the "dayspring from on high," who hath visited us—"the bright and Morning Star."

\* It is worthy of note that in Ecclesiastical language, Christ is described as "the fish," owing to the Greek letters which compose the word, for "fish" being the initials of the following sentence—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour. "Pisces" is the Latin for "fishes."—Ed.

## ST. MICHAEL'S CATHEDRAL.

### No. 3.

The pulpit of St. Michael's Cathedral was occupied by the Rev. Father Fell on the 15th of January.

They who have accompanied us from

the outset of our peregrinations will be aware that we set out on our journey, on what may be termed the *low road*, we then advanced to a *higher level*, and consequently we are able to say with the Apostle, with regard to our present visit, "and so we went toward Rome." That institution which may be supposed to correspond to "The Three Taverns," in the immediate vicinity of Rome, may probably be visited on the ensuing Lord's Day.

The text selected as the basis of the preacher's discourse was that contained in Matt. vi. 24, "No man can serve two masters," and as the sermon was preached in the presence of the Archbishop, it may be presumed to have been considered orthodox. One of the listeners, however, reserved to himself the right of private judgment in relation to it, and although he could assent to the general statement that "the world is divided into two camps, two hostile armies, &c.," he was constrained to take exception to many subsequent statements, such, for instance, as the application of a title of Antichrist (Lucifer, Is. xiv. 12) to Satan. Regarding the oration simply from a social point of view, and knowing that one of the apparent warrants for the hackneyed terrorism which characterized the discourse is reducible to "age-lasting pruning" (Matt. xxv. 46.) it becomes impossible to believe that any view of the Almighty but that which dishonors Him can result from such preaching. The gift "to see ourse's as

others see us" is not one possessed by this spiritual pastor, otherwise he could hardly have urged the grace of humility on us all in the presence of such an array of purple and fine linen as is not even to be seen in any secular court. Denunciations of idolatry and of the stage, in the midst of a scene which the uninitiated would describe as illustrative of each, sounded oddly enough. We were told that we had become Christ's soldiers by baptism; that if we belonged to the serried Catholic host, we were secure; and yet that many of us were to be seen "flaunting on the devil's parade-ground"—a delicate allusion to King and Yonge streets, as one may suppose. "Grog shops," designated as such by the preacher, were said to be places to which "bad Christians" resort; and such of us as were supposed to be "in the army of the evil one," were said to have wrought so effectually, that if we had worked as hard for the Almighty, we should have done *more than enough* to constitute us saints. She whom "all generations shall call blessed" was said to have trampled on Satan, and we were informed of a short and easy method by which children could conquer him, namely, by making the sign of the cross whenever they should find themselves the objects of his assaults. It can scarcely be necessary to make further comment on the foregoing deliverance, than that it was presumably listened to by a large congregation.