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Poetry.

Dr. Donne,—his "Hymn to God the Father."

DR. DONNE, one of whose poetical pieces is here transcribed, was a preacher and a poet of the age of James I., and one of the chaplains of that monarch. The following hymn was written during a severe fit of sickness. On his recovery it was set to music, and often sung to the organ in his own hearing by the choristers of St. Paul's. He is the subject of one of Isaac Walton's famous biographies. On his death-bed he expressed himself thus:—"Though of myself I have nothing to present to Him but sin and misery, yet I know He looks not upon me now as I am of myself, but as I am in my Saviour, and hath given me even at this present time some testimonies by His Holy Spirit that I am of the number of the elect. I am therefore full of inexpressible joy, and shall die in peace." His hymn is in the same evangelical style of thought. We add, before we give it, a beautiful reflection from Walton, over the sepulchre in St. Paul's:—"He was earnest and unwearied in the search for knowledge, with which his vigorous soul is now satisfied, and employed in a continual praise of that God who first breathed it into his active body; that body which once was a temple of the Holy Ghost, and is now become a small quantity of Christian dust. But I shall see it reanimated." Now for the hymn.

"Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

"Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in a sore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

"I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by Thyself that, at my death, thy Son
Shall shine, as he shines now, and heretofore.
And having done that thou hast done,
I fear no more."

P. E. I.

J. D.

A Near View of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

BY THE REV. HENRY M. FIELD.

No preacher in England, since Edward Irving, has had such a popularity as Mr. Spurgeon. He is one of the lions of London—a rather young lion, to be sure; but one who, since his appearance in the field, has roared so loudly as to make all the nation hear—and every stranger who wishes to "do" the sights of Babylon, must for once, at least, see and hear him. Accordingly we set apart the first Sabbath for this purpose. We took a carriage early, as Surrey-hall is on the other side of the Thames, full three miles from the West End, where we had our quarters. We arrived before the gates were opened, but found the crowd already beginning to collect. I had a letter to Mr. Spurgeon, which I gave to one of the officers of the church, who immediately admitted us and invited us to sit on the platform, but we preferred a seat in the front of the gallery, from which we could overlook the audience, which was almost as much a matter of curiosity as the preacher. Soon we knew that the gates were opened by the hurrying of those who had tickets to secure good places. It was interesting to observe the audience assembling—to mark the hurried step and eager look of the multitude. The Music-hall, as it is named, is situated in the centre of Surrey Gardens, a place of resort and amusement during the week. The hall was designed, as its name indicates, for monster concerts, such as those given by Jullien. It is built with three or four galleries, like the Academy of Music in New York, though, from its greater length, it can hold a much larger audience—it is said that it will contain eight or ten thousand people. But, vast as was this amphitheatre, it was soon filled. Tier above tier rose the dense array of heads. The admission is by tickets, though the price is so small that it is but a trifle to those who wish to attend. Thus, a shilling buys a ticket which is good for a month; and five shillings for the same time secures reserved seats. At half-past ten the doors were opened to those without tickets. Then came a second rush, which choked up every aisle and passage with persons stand-

ing. But at length the trampling ceased, for the building could hold no more; the audience hushed to quietness, and the preacher ascended the pulpit.

Never had a public speaker a more unpromising exterior than Mr. Spurgeon. He is very short and very fat, and altogether what we should call *chubby*; and as he ascends the stairs, he looks more like an overgrown boy than a fully developed man. Nor does his countenance betoken superior intellect. His forehead is low, and his upper lip is so short that it shows his teeth, which gives his mouth the appearance of a simper or grin. Surely, I thought, eloquence cannot come out of such a mouth as that.

But the impression which a physiognomist might form from these dull and heavy features is dispelled as soon as he begins to speak. Then his countenance lights up with animation. His voice is full and clear, and rings through the hall like a clarion, filling the ear with the melodious sound.

The text was Ecclesiastes viii. 10—"And so I saw the wicked buried, which had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity." The subject was THE WICKED MAN'S LIFE, FUNERAL, AND EPITAPH. The introduction struck me as beautifully simple and apposite, as neither far-fetched nor common-place. See how naturally he introduces his solemn reflections upon death:

It is quite certain that there are immense benefits attending our present mode of burial in extramural cemeteries. It was high time that the dead should be removed from the midst of the living—that we should not worship in the midst of corpses, and sit in the Lord's house on the Sabbath, breathing the noxious effluvia of decaying bodies. But when we have said this, we must remember that there are some advantages which we have lost by the removal of the dead, and more especially by the wholesale mode of burial which now seems very likely to become general. We are not so often met by the array of death. In the midst of our crowded cities we sometimes see the sable hearse bearing the relics of men to their last homes, but the funeral ceremonies are now mostly confined to those sweet sleeping-places beyond our walks, where rest the bodies of those who are very dear to us. Now, I believe the sight of a funeral is a very healthful thing for the soul. Whatever harm may come to the body by walking through the vault and the catacomb, the soul can there find much food for contemplation, and much excitement for thought. In the quiet villages, where some of us were wont to dwell, we remember how, when the funeral came now and then, the tolling of the bell preached to all the villagers a better sermon than they had heard in the church for many a day; and we recollect how, as children, we used to cluster around the grave, and look at that which was not so frequent an occurrence in the midst of a rare and spare population; and we remember the solemn thoughts which used to arise even in our young hearts when we heard the words uttered, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The solemn falling of the few grains of ashes upon the coffin-lid was the sowing of good seed in our hearts. And afterwards, when in our childish play we have climbed over those nettle-bound graves, and seated ourselves upon those moss-grown tombstones, we have had many a lesson preached to us by the dull, cold tongue of death, more eloquent than aught we have heard from the lip of living man, and more likely to abide with us in after years. But now we see little of death. We have fulfilled Abraham's wish beyond what he desired—we "bury the dead out of our sight;" it is rarely that we see them, and a stranger passing through our streets might say, "Do these men live always? for I see no funerals amongst the millions of this city; I see no signs of death."

Having thus conducted us to the borders of the grave, the preacher made a simple division of his subject into three parts, and asked us first, to mark the living man, "as he came and went from the place of

the holy; next, to attend his funeral; and finally, to write his epitaph.

"The place of the holy," he said, in the original probably referred to the seat of judgment held by the civil magistrate, but the term might also be applied to the house of God, and with a still stronger emphasis to the sacred pulpit; and he therefore proceeded to consider all of these positions as sometimes occupied and profaned by the presence of wicked men.

The same rigid inquisition did he apply to the worshippers in the sanctuary. After speaking of the goodly sight presented by the vast audience, he said:—

Your pleasure must leave a great deal of alloy if you stop for a moment and dissect the congregation. Pull the goodly mass in sunder—in a heap it sparkles like gold; pull aside the threads, and, alas! you will see that there are some not made of the precious metal, for "we have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy." Little do we know when we look here from the pulpit—it looks like one great field of flowers, fair to look upon—how many a root of deadly henbane and noxious nightshade growth here; and though you all look fair and godly, yet "I have seen the wicked come and go from the place of the holy."

After giving descriptions of a guilty life, we were brought to see its fearful end. We had seen the wicked in his power, we were yet to see him laid low in the grave. "Now," said the preacher, "WE ARE GOING TO HIS FUNERAL. I shall want you to attend it." He added with a sarcasm that often flashed out in his discourse:—

You need not be particular about having on a hat-band, or being arrayed in garments of mourning. It does not signify for the wretch we are going to bury. There is no need for any very great outward signs of mourning, for he will be forgotten even in the city where he hath done this: therefore we need not particularly mourn for him.

He then drew the picture of a pompous funeral ceremony made over the body of a wicked man:—

There is a man who has been a county magistrate. Do you see what a stir is made about his poor bones? There is the hearse covered with plumes, and there follows a long string of carriages. The country people stare to see such a long train of carriages coming to follow one poor worm to its resting-place. What pomp! what grandeur! See how the place of worship is hung with black. There seems to be intense mourning made over this man. Will you just think of it for a minute, and who are they mourning for? A hypocrite! Whom is all this pomp for? For one who was a wicked man; a man who made a pretension of religion; a man who judged others, and who ought to have been condemned himself. Oh! if we judged rightly, when a hypocrite died, we should do him no honour. If men could but see a little deeper than the skin, and read the thoughts of the heart, they would not patronize this great, black lie, and lead a long string of carriages through the streets; they would say, "No, the man was good for nothing; he was the outward skin without the life; he professed to be what he was not; he lived the scornful life of a deceiver; let him have the burial of Jeconiah; let him not have a funeral at all; let him be cast away as loathsome carrion, for that is all he is." When a godly man dies ye may make lamentation over him; ye may well carry him with solemn pomp to the grave, for there is an odour in his bones; there is a sweet savor about him that even God delighteth in, for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." But the gilded hypocrite, the varnished deceiver, the well-accounted wolf in sheep's clothing—away with pomp for him! Why should men bewail him? They do not do it; why should they pretend to do so, and give the outward semblance of a grief where they feel none?

And then as if to lighten by contrast the effect of the dark picture he had drawn, he thus portrayed the burial of the righteous:—

I remember the funeral of one pastor—I

attended it. Many ministers of the Gospel walked behind the coffin to attend their brother and pay honour to him; and then came a long string of members of the Church, every one of whom wept as if they had lost a father. And I remember the solemn sermon that was preached in the chapel, all hung with black, when all of us wept because a great man had fallen that day in Israel. We felt that a prince had been taken from us, and we all said, like Elijah's servant, "My father, my father, the horses of Israel and the chariots thereof."

But he went still farther:—

There is a sad thing yet to come. We must look a little deeper than the mere ceremonial of the burial, and we shall see that there is a great deal more in some people's coffins besides their corpses. When old Robert Flockart was buried a few weeks ago in Edinburgh, he was buried as I think a Christian minister should be, for his old Bible and hymn book were placed upon the top of the coffin. Had he been a soldier, I suppose he would have had his sword put there; but he had been a Christian soldier, so they buried him with his Bible and hymn book as his trophies. It was well that such a trophy should be on that coffin; but there is a great deal, as I have said, *inside* some people's coffins. If we had eyes to see invisible things, and we could break the lid of the hypocrite's coffin, we should see a great deal there. There lies all his hopes, and they are to be buried with him. Of all the frightful things that a man can look upon, the face of a dead hope is the most horrible. A dead child is a pang indeed to a mother's heart; a dead wife or a dead husband, to the heart of the bereaved, must be sorrowful indeed; but a coffin full of dead hopes—did you ever see such a load of misery carried to the grave as that?

Wrapt in the same shroud, there lies all his dead pretensions. When he was here he made a pretension of being respectable; there lies his respect, he shall be a hissing and a reproach for ever. He made a pretension of being sanctified, but the mask is off now, and he stands in all his native blackness. And so he sleeps.

But there is one thing that sleeps with him in his coffin that he had set his heart upon. He had set his heart upon being known after he was gone. He thought surely after he had departed this life he would be handed down to posterity and be remembered. Now read the text—"And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done." There is his hope of fame.

But with the wicked man it is all in vain; he shall be forgotten. He has done nothing to make anybody remember him. Ask the poor, "do you remember so-and-so?" "Hard master, sir, very. He always cut us down to the last sixpence; and we do not wish to recollect him." Their children won't hear his name; they will forget him entirely. Ask the Church, "do you remember so-and-so?" he was a member." "Well," says one, "I remember him certainly, his name was on the books, but we never had his heart. He used to come and go, but I never could talk with him. There was nothing spiritual in him. There was a great deal of sounding bell-metal and brass, but no gold. I never could discover that he had the 'root of the matter in him.'" No one thinks of him, and he will soon be forgotten. The chapel grows old, there comes up another congregation, and somehow or other they talk about the old deacons that used to be there, who were good and holy men, and about the old lady that used to be so eminently useful in visiting the sick; about the young man who rose out of that church, who was so useful in the cause of God; but you never hear mention made of his name; he is quite forgotten. When he died his name was struck out of the books; he was reported as being dead, and all remembrance of him died with him. I have often noticed how soon wicked things die when the man dies who originated them. Look at Voltaire's philosophy, with all the noise it made in his time—where is it now? There is just a little of it lingering, but it seems to have gone. And there was Tom