

Rev. D. Camp

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS : FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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WHOLE SERIES,
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

To the Doubting Christian.

Never let your heart be troubled,
Neither let it be afraid;
You will surely reach yon heaven
If your hearts on Christ are staid.

Peaceful do your earthly duties,
Strive your God to serve and love;
When that love the Lord hath prov'd,
You will reign with him above.

Think upon that glorious period
When sin shall all have passed away,
We, no longer doubting, fearing,
In the blaze of perfect day.

Myriads there around our Saviour
Singing glory to his name,—
We, a little band and lowly,
Yet He smiles on us the same.

Help, us, Lord, to do our duty,
How'er hard the task may be;
Those who suffer with the Saviour
Thou hast said shall reign with Thee.

Yet we'll see the wondrous beauties
Of the realms of endless bliss;
Wonder why so much we trusted
Such a dying world as this.

Religious.

An Earnest Minister.

"It is a good field, Sir. The population is large enough to support a good interest. And if we could get an earnest man, the cause would soon revive. That is what we want, Sir—an earnest, right-hearted man." The speaker was a worthy deacon of the Baptist church meeting in Bethesda Chapel.

As we looked at his sleek, comfortable appearance, and recalled to memory what we knew of his past life, we wondered if "earnestness" were really in his estimation such a cardinal virtue as his words implied, and how it was that his religious course had been so little distinguished by a quality he valued so highly. And long after we had parted with him, and were being whirled along by the express train towards our home, we found ourselves indulging in the following reflection, which, as his words are in the mouths of so many, we offer no apology for submitting to the notice of our readers.

"An earnest minister!" Yes; that is what we do want. John Angell James, years ago, wrote a volume to tell us that "an earnest minister was the want of the churches." And in a periodical for the present month it is said, "We hold that earnestness is an indispensable element of success—at any rate, in our day. The age has gone by for the toleration of empiricism in the pulpit. An orator such as Henley would now succeed in getting but few listeners. Of all our popular preachers—Punshon, Spurgeon, Guinness, Landels, Martineau, and Dawson—whatever otherwise may be their defects, it may be said that they are men thoroughly in earnest." In all quarters the same opinion as to the importance of earnestness prevails. Widely as men differ in their doctrinal beliefs or their views of ecclesiastical policy, they all agree in this. A heart on fire with love to Christ and the souls of men, is, in the estimation of all, an indispensable qualification for preaching Christ's gospel.

But what means this singular concurrence of sentiment—this general demand for a ministry in earnest? Is it that the churches are only waking up to a just appreciation of the men whose services are in such request? Or is the demand owing to a recognised deficiency in the thing required? The question affords matter for grave consideration. And perhaps an honest answer might suggest the need of improvement in directions and of a nature now little contemplated.

We are loath to believe that the pulpit of the present day is remarkably deficient in this quality, and have reason for thinking that the talk to which we refer must have some other explanation. Admitting that there are those in the ministry who

discharge the most important duties which can be entrusted to mortals in the most listless and slovenly manner, and who throw into their ministrations that minimum of energy which, amid the competition now existing, would ensure disgraceful failure in any secular pursuit, we are nevertheless convinced that never did the pulpits of this country contain a greater number of faithful and devoted men. Our acquaintance with ministers for a number of years has been somewhat extensive, and most happy are we to bear testimony to the conscientious and painstaking manner in which they prosecute the duties of their sacred calling. A more earnest and diligent class of men, we believe, are nowhere to be found, than are many of the humble pastors of Nonconformist churches. Nor have we failed to notice, and to be pained by the fact, that some of the most intensely earnest, owing to a quiet manner, have little reputation for earnestness among those who, from the confidence with which they speak, ought to be the most competent judges.

The fact leads us to suggest that probably the true explanation of the present demand may be, not that an earnest ministry does not exist, but that, owing to the blindness of the Church, it may often exist without recognition. "No man," it has been said, "is a hero to his valet, unless his valet be a hero also." Something of the heroic in us is necessary to our discernment and appreciation of heroism; something of earnestness we must have in order to discover that quality in others. Now, what if, while men have been crying out for earnestness in their ministers, the thing has been close beside them without either being valued or recognised! What if earnestness in the pulpit has toiled on unheeded, until compelled to take its departure from a want of corresponding earnestness in the pew? What if the earnest minister should have been starved out, because a church low in morals, however high in doctrine, could not endure his faithfulness? Sad would be the condition—sad the prospect of such a church! And yet we cannot rid ourselves of the impression that this is no uncommon occurrence.

We hope our friend the deacon at Bethesda will bear with us, if we venture to question whether he would know an earnest minister did he meet with one—whether in case of finding one he would tolerate his preaching. His conception of such a man is, we doubt not, clear and definite enough. It may not be the less inaccurate on that account.

An earnest minister is not always, as he supposes, a man possessed of "brazen throat and adamantine lungs," who can make himself heard by thousands without difficulty, and, if need be, roar with a "forty-parson power." Some we have seen who were endowed with this capacity, and we have felt thankful that the Church possessed such sons of Thunder. But more frequently have we found earnestness allied to a voice whose tones were soft and low, though thrilling withal—such a voice as we are accustomed to associate with a Son of Consolation.

An earnest minister is not always a man of Herculean frame, who can perform an immense amount of work, although his remuneration does not supply him with more than a very scanty subsistence. Intense earnestness is not over favourable to robust health. A mind highly and too constantly strung, as earnest minds are apt to be, proves a sad drain on nervous and physical energy. And though sometimes the earnest minister is big and burly, as was the late Richard Hamilton, of Leeds, he is more frequently thin, and spare, and delicate—and requiring gentle nursing to keep him up to his work—like the late Mr. McCheyne, of Dundee.

An earnest minister is not always loud and boisterous in manner. He cannot be always loud, because he is always natural; and it is not natural to shout when addressing a friend who is close beside you, however momentous the information you may have to communicate,—nay, the more momentous the information, the more natural is it for the voice to fall into low and

solemn tones. He does not necessarily stamp much in the pulpit, or throw himself about, as if he meant to fly out of it. To the man of insight that is often only a simulation of earnestness which awakens his disgust; even in its most genuine form it is more an indication of natural temperament than of earnest feeling. True earnestness will sometimes rise into a loud utterance, and express itself in violent gesticulation, because there are emotions of the soul which require naturally to be thus expressed. But its most ordinary manner is subdued and solemn. Its tones are tremulous and low, as if the soul were oppressed by the momentous themes of which it treats. As deep waters are still, so the deepest feelings are most quiet in their utterance.

An earnest minister is not prone to speak of his earnestness. He is too much intent on his word to say, "See how I do it. If others were only as eager and indefatigable as I!" Earnestness is a feeling which can only exist when its existence is forgotten—when all thought and attention are absorbed in the end which it seeks to gain.

An earnest minister does not necessarily fill his chapel. Earnestness, despite the opinion which prevails, is not always a guarantee for popularity—sometimes, for a reason which we shall notice ere we have done, it renders men unpopular. Paul was not always followed by crowds; a handful of women sometimes formed his congregation. And there are some of the most earnest men of the present day, whose preaching few will bear and fewer still can appreciate.

An earnest minister will endeavour to declare the whole counsel of God, and to apply faithfully the truths of revelation to the various classes of his hearers. He is not always a comfortable preacher. Comfort he has for his distressed souls; but none for idle, self-complacent professors. He has words of encouragement as well as devotion for those who are faithfully struggling with evil: only rebuke and warning for those who wilfully indulge in fashionable sin, and complacently call their evil good. He is not content to denounce such sins as war and slavery, and others with which his hearers have nothing to do, while he is discreetly silent on those to which church members are prone; excusing covetousness and winking at pride, and saying nothing of the self-seeking which prevails. On the contrary, though he may have little to say of the sins of the absent, he denounces with the faithfulness of the Baptist the sins which he witnesses in those who have been intrusted to his charge—albeit his denunciation may render him liable to share the Baptist's doom.

Such are some, and only some, of the characteristics of the earnest preacher. What does the reader think? Would our friend the deacon recognise in such a minister the man whom he seeks? Would he tolerate such a minister were such a minister found?

We trust the demand to which we have referred, blind as in some instances it may be, may lead to the cultivation of a truly earnest spirit. Nothing, however, would we deprecate more than that affectation of earnestness which is no more to be compared with the genuine feeling than pinch-back is comparable to gold. It will be easy for our young ministers to adopt a noisy and boisterous manner, and, selecting for imitation some minister who has reputation for earnestness, produce a very fair copy of their model; but the result will be their own feebleness, and the smiles or the disgust of their hearers. True earnestness is never artificial; it is not even directly the result of our own volition. The only and the sure way of inducing it is prolonged and prayerful meditation on those great and momentous themes of which the ministry treats. Let these be pondered until the mind perceives their solemn import and tremendous relations, and the heart throbs and trembles beneath their power, and let the preacher stand up to give utterance in the most simple and natural manner to that which he sees and feels, and though we may not have that earnest ministry

which answers to the present demand, we shall have that which is the want, and the presence of which would prove the power, of the Church.—London Freeman.

For the Christian Messenger.

To young Female Professors of Religion.

My Dear Sisters,—Are we doing all we can to hasten the time when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ? This is a solemn question. May the Lord make each of us feel more deeply the awful responsibility that rests upon us. Do we make every sacrifice in our power to send the gospel where it is not? and do we

So let our lives and lips express
The holy gospel we profess—
So let our works and virtues shine
To prove the doctrine all divine.

We are said to be the "light of the world and the salt of the earth." How useful, then, should we be. It is high time that we awoke out of sleep; there is a great work for us to do. Though we live in a land filled with Bibles, yet there are many around us in heathenish darkness—children growing up in poverty and sin, who have never heard of a Saviour. Can we not lead one of those lambs to the fold of Christ?—teach it how to read. Here is a field for usefulness, and may we each improve it. Have we each a class in the Sabbath School? If not, let us quickly engage in this glorious means for doing good. Seeking guidance from on high, our labour will not be lost; but while we water the souls of others, our own souls will be watered. Let us be ready to speak a word in season or out of season, to the sinner or to the Christian. We are too apt to be satisfied with a hope of heaven, and seek for no more; but we know not how much of heaven we may enjoy, even while on earth, if we seek to serve and love the Lord with all our heart. Shall we, dear sisters, in the hour of death, think that we have done too much for our Redeemer? I think not. Let us, then, love and fear Him. "The Christian upon earth cannot be too nearly like the Christian in heaven." Let us go forth in the morning of life bearing precious seeds, and doubtless we will return in the evening bringing our sheaves with us.

Yours in Jesus,

March 28th, '59. M. B.

A Chinese Audience.

The following communication from Rev. R. Lowrie gives an interesting account of a missionary audience in Shanghai:—

Among the most hopeful of all our efforts to preach the gospel here is the regular service every Sunday morning in the mission chapel. Perhaps you would like to know what a missionary's most hopeful audience is made up of. You shall hear.

First, then, because foremost, sitting in these two side-seats near the pulpit, and overflowing into the adjoining front seat in the body of the chapel, are the day-school girls, from twelve to twenty, according to the weather. These are mostly from eight to eleven years of age, and they are required to come to church, young as they are, not merely that they may hear the preaching, but that they may learn to join in the worship of God who made them. They are taught by their mothers to worship idols when they are much younger than this, and are taken to the temples for the purpose.

Next comes the teacher, for there he sits on the front bench, with two or three of the youngest girls at his side, looking so serious and grave, keeping the playful little ones in front of him still by a look or a shake of his head. Except the missionary, he considers himself the most important person in the house. Among his own people he passes for a scholar, and he is a man of respectable character, and some influence. Few such come to our chapels. "Have any of the rulers believed on Him?" is their feeling, and they keep away.

Passing over a number of persons on the intervening benches, you cannot help