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Religious

Aloes in the King's Garden.

BY JOHN TODD, D. D.

Old Mr. Ben Growler was a representative man; not that he was ever sent to Congress, or even to the State Legislature, but he was like a class in the church not small. He lived in the old red house a little below the turnpike-gate, and few could remember when he did not live there. Nobody knew when, or how, or why he got into the church; but there he was. Perhaps he didn't know himself.

Now some come into the church because, though they may have little piety, they have much conscience, and they feel a little safer to be there than to be out in the world, as the old false prophet felt safer to have his bones lie beside those of the man of God. Some come because it adds to their respectability and influence, and it is expected of them. They are too respectable to have any curtailment of their privileges from what others enjoy. Some come, we trust, because they want to honor the Master, be his servants openly, be soldiers in his army, and be the living epistles of Christ known and read of all men. They want to do his will.

Mr. Growler represented neither of these classes. But he did represent a class who seem to be spiritual nettles, to wound every hand that touches them. I will not say that Ben's church or neighbors were any worse than others; but he had great trials, and felt bound to make the most of his afflictions. There was nothing right about his position with his brethren. In the first place, he had to pay a small amount to support his minister, and that was a great grief. He held that they ought to have a "free gospel"—so that it would cost him nothing; the minister ought to preach and pray and attend funerals without pay, though no one was more discontented with an unstudied, off-hand sermon than Ben. How he made it out that his minister ought to have all the self-denial and liberality in the church, I don't know. But I do know that he never paid his tax without loud grumbling, and a threat to withdraw from the society.

In the next place, it was a grief to him that they should have so much singing in the church—five or six times during every Sabbath! "Why," said he, "it's all done just to make it easier for the minister! I know them—they are singers have to work as hard as men at mowing! And when we have to hire a man to preach, why not let him preach, and not spend the time in singing, to ease him of labor?" What his ideas of worship and of praise were, it would be difficult to say. But surely, he had not one just conception of public worship. I have known him to spend half the intermission between services, in thus berating the fact of singing in the house of God!

Then he was greatly exercised at having so many week-day meetings. The minister used to attend one prayer-meeting in the village, and preach in some outer school-house once every week; and with this he found fault. "Six days," he used to say, "are given us in which to do our work, and it is just as wrong to take the week-day to do the Sabbath work, as to take the Sabbath to do the week-day work." Not that he himself ever went to a week-day meeting, or that he was so industrious that he worked all the time; but it gave him something to find fault with, and he could hang a growl on a very small peg. A prayer-meeting, and especially the monthly concert of prayer, were enormities that he could not away with.

In those days collections and contributions were very frequent, but when a collection was taken up, heyday! Ben Growler waxed wrathful. He had read somewhere that Calcutta and Rangoon were great cities, and that there were heathen who were actually rich! and the idea of collecting money to send the gospel to such was preposterous! What did men, who knew enough to get rich and build great cities, want of the gospel? And then, who knew where the money went to—and who knew how many secretaries and treasurers stood ready to cope the money? As he said; and besides, had we not heathen

enough at home, and was not his own church poor?—and what right had his minister thus "to sponge money out of people to send off to heathen?" To be sure, he was never known to give a cent for Home Missions, but he gave his complaints and his doubts and difficulties. These would have sunk a frigate, had they been gold instead of growls. It seemed that the only advantage he derived from being a church member was, that it was to him what a high bank is to a dog—something to bark from to great advantage. A wolf is said to howl better in a bright moonlight evening. He talked about Providence, but when riding down hill to sell a damaged horse, the beast stumbled and broke the wagon, and when the purchaser was taken sick and could not come to complete the bargain, he fretted and fumed as if there was no Providence in the world—nothing but stumbling horses and sick purchasers. In practice, he never saw any hand of Providence in anything.

The probability is that Mr. Ben Growler had no idea that he was not one of the best members of the church. He would have been shocked to have seen himself as others saw him. He had no thought that he was a drag to the whole concern, and that the church had to live in spite of him. He was the body of death, which in ancient times they used to chain to a living man. If he saw the Sabbath-school assembling, it was to set up the Superintendent and a few others, and was ruinous to family instruction. If he saw a revival of religion, he was "always afraid of excitement," and they were "carrying the thing much too far!" If a new-born soul had his lips opened, so that he could tell what the Lord had done for him, he was greatly scandalized that "young converts should be thrust forward, only to fill them with spiritual pride." If the sisters formed a Missionary Society, they were squandering away the hard earnings of their husbands or fathers. In short, the mission of this man was to find fault with everything that was done in that church. How large the class is of which he is the representative, I do not know but larger, I fear than is generally supposed. One of the "perils" of the great Apostle was "perils among false brethren," and one of the perils of the church is, that such men represent the gospel before the world. I have never heard of old Mr. Growler's death but I presume he is dead; and I hope, through mercy, he has gone to Paradise, and I hope he won't girdle the trees when he gets there.

The portrait I have drawn is no caricature. The original of it I have known; and very likely every church groans, being burdened thus. Well, we must reflect that in the garden of the King there is "calamus," and "cassia," and "spikenard," and "aloes" too. Such men are sent to try the patience of the saints, and most effectually do they do that. The only consolation is that their influence is small; they don't block the wheels much; they don't do near the amount of hurt that they would be glad to do. But I can think of few judgments heavier than to be allowed to go into the church of Christ, under the light of his Word and Spirit, and spend life in finding fault and growling at my brethren. And if these lines fall under the eye of any such professed disciple, I will not exhort him to commit suicide, but I will entreat him to make up his mind that there will be but little mourning when he leaves this world, and I fear not great joy at his coming into the next.

A Call to the Ministry.

It cannot be expected that any person, in the present day, should receive so remarkable a call to the work of the ministry as did the apostles and first preachers of the gospel; yet, doubtless, the same Divine Spirit, by whom they were raised up and qualified, still furnishes chosen vessels, with suitable gifts; and powerfully influences them to desire this sacred office. As, however, they who are thus designated by the Spirit of God, are not usually certified of it by any extraordinary discovery of the Divine will, and may, for a time, remain in much perplexity as to their call—it becomes an interesting inquiry, How may such a call be known to the subject of it? The following may be considered as satisfactory evidences:

1. True devotedness of heart to God—a desire to live, not for the purpose of self-gratification, but of honoring and glorifying God in every possible way.

2. A deep concern for the immortal interests of men; heartfelt grief on observing the indifference of the greater part of mankind, with respect to their eternal interests; and an earnest desire to be instrumental in rousing them to a sense of their danger, and directing them to Christ, the Saviour of sinners!

3. Great delight in reading and studying the sacred Scriptures, with a disposition to apply diligently to those pursuits which tend to qualify for the arduous engagement of instructing others.

4. A public spirit in religion; a lively concern for the advancement and prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world at large.

5. A steady, earnest desire to be engaged in the Christian ministry, in preference to every other employment, accompanied with a deep sense of unworthiness of the honor, and inability for the discharge of the duties of it, without Divine assistance.

6. A sincere endeavor to know the will of God respecting it, making it the matter of earnest prayer, and practising close and repeated self-examination.

7. The approbation of pious and judicious friends, who are competent judges of ministerial talents, and who encourage the person to devote himself to the work—especially the countenance of experienced ministers.—*Can. Rep.*

Culture of Eloquence—Pitt's Oratory.

It well known that the most eminent orators the world has ever seen have not attained to their distinction but by persevering and well-regulated labors. Pitt had the benefit of his father's tuition on this subject in his earliest years. Lord Chatham is said to have bestowed immense pains in cultivating his son, whom he required to speak off-hand upon all sorts of subjects in his own library, correcting him and making appropriate suggestions. It is a curious circumstance, likewise, that Lord Holland took the same pains with his son, Charles Fox, Pitt's illustrious rival, and the exercise was attended with equal success. We nowhere read of two such men thus preparing two such sons, and sending into the senate two such orators. The facts are quite unique. Those who have read the life of the celebrated Irish orator, Curran, by his son, will recollect that his father, when a very young man, and studying for the law, spent much of his time in extempore speaking in his own room; and for that purpose his chosen model was Bolingbroke's volume entitled the "Patriot King," which he justly deemed one of the best specimens of popular oratory in the English language, an opinion in which Lord Brougham has since expressed concurrence in one of his essays. Curran would read a few pages, and then, starting to his feet, harangue what he had read, the language so far as he could recover it, and filling up the gaps with his own. By this means he ultimately acquired an extraordinary command of oral eloquence. He never wrote a speech in his life, neither could he whatever might have depended upon it. It is a fact that the illustrious Pitt had recourse to the same habit. Respecting the character of the oratory of Pitt, and some of the qualities of his mind, Mr. Wilberforce, in his "Recollections," just published, remarks:—

His memory was wonderfully accurate and retentive, and when he indulged in a classical quotation in his speeches it was always most happily introduced. When Fox was speaking, Pitt usually made notes of what fell from him; but on rising to reply I never saw him refer to those notes. He excelled every person I have ever known in the faculty of steadily fixing before the eye of his mind all the parts of a complex question, and of accurately weighing their respective bearings, giving due force to each in forming his conclusion. A beautiful part of his character was his perfect fairness in argument. When you reasoned with him he listened

with patience to all that could be urged against his opinion, and never manifested a disposition to undervalue a single word that you urged in opposition to him. Mr. Pitt was the wittiest man I have ever known, but his wit was of a very peculiar cast. Wit in most men consists in brilliant flashes of fancy, or in suddenly striking out in the heat of conversation unexpected coincidences between dissimilar objects and ideas. In Pitt it appeared to be a pure operation of the intellect. It seemed as though the forms of all objects were so present to the view of his comprehensive and cultivated mind that he could combine, oppose, or compare them in such a manner as to excite at his will unlooked-for coincidences, surprise, and pleasure. His powers of recollection were very great, but always under the restraint of good humor. His love of truth was remarkable. I have known instances of it in cases where nothing but the motive of high and unbending principle could have ensured his tenacious adherence to it. His failing as a wise man was an over-sanguine estimate of the chances of success under contingent circumstances—disposing him to believe what he wished—and in the case of foreigners too easily to confide in statements on which it was important for him, as a statesman, to obtain the most accurate information. His great ambition was to be a peace Minister. The French war he considered as forced upon him, and it deserves to be recorded as an instance of the short-sightedness of the wisest statesman, that on entering upon it he said it would be over in a twelvemonth. Burke took a different view. He, Pitt, Dundas and myself were together one day just before the Revolutionary War broke out. Dundas said, There is no avoiding war; to war we must go, but it will only be a short bout of it. Pitt replied nothing, but Burke said: "Mr. Dundas, I fear you make a very mistaken estimate of the probable duration of the war, which I am persuaded will not only be long, but will require England to put forth all her energies in the course of it." I remember another mistaken anticipation of his. It seems to me but yesterday that he said in my hearing—Windham, I recollect, was standing near him at the time—that although it might be presumption in him to point out the very day on which it would be impossible for the French Government (begged as he knew them to be in their resources) to go on, yet he would almost venture to name the week. He made his remarkable statement only just a fortnight before the battle of Marengo.

He came into Parliament a finished orator. We all expected great things from him. He had belonged to a club of lawyers in town, and had occasionally given proofs at their meetings of his great powers. I had not heard him. But we were none of us prepared for the extraordinary superiority in debate which he manifested from the first. I might almost say his first speeches were equal to his last. I do not, of course, mean in comprehension, or in those qualities which are the results of mature experience; but in those which constitute an accomplished and powerful orator. I have sometimes thought that Canning, in his finest speeches, reached the elevation and dignity of Pitt, while it is unquestionable that his powers as a speaker were more diversified; yet there was always this great difference; you never forgot it was Canning while he was speaking, but Pitt often made you forget the orator in his subject, and hurried you along with the full tide of his majestic eloquence. I am old enough to recollect some few members of the House who were amongst his father's contemporaries, and they agreed in pronouncing his son to be his superior as an orator. The style of Lord Chatham's speaking was, however, very different. It was in its ordinary fabric conversational—then it would rise into lofty bursts of eloquence; but much of its effect is to be attributed to that astonishing degree of personal ascendancy which he had acquired, and which at times positively made the House quail, as it were, before him. There was a great deal of the theatrical in Lord Chatham's character. The fault of Pitt's speaking was its being too uniformly dignified and stately. It wanted breaks to give full effect to the finer passages. On the whole, I would say the intellectual powers of Pitt were superior to those of any other man I have known.—*W. G. R.*