

WILLIAM DAWSON.

[Having ourselves, about forty years ago listened to the stirring preaching of William Dawson, or "Billy Dawson," as he was commonly called, we were pleased to find a sketch of him in a recent number of the New York Christian Weekly. We have still a very distinct recollection of his vivid dramatic description of the angels binding up the tares in bundles and casting them into the fire. "Here is a bundle of liars, another bundle of thieves, another of profligates," etc., etc., with an increase of the blaze as each bundle were thrown in. The wheat—believers—were taken up into the ear of salvation and taken to the garner, and all joined in singing and shouting "Harvest Home." The following article is far below the reality as a description of this remarkable man, yet we copy it for the gratification of our readers.—Ed. C. M.]

The popularity of Mr. Dawson, the noted English Yorkshire Methodist preacher, may in a measure be attributed to the freshness with which he invested the entire service, the fertility of his imagination, and his aptitude to illustrate the old familiar histories and doctrines of the word read or preached, or the sentiment of the hymn to be sung. He was not content with the orthodox style of the day in conducting the "preliminary services," as the exercises of praying, reading and singing are sometimes contemptuously called. Mr. Dawson, on the contrary, would even dare occasionally to diverge from the accustomed "order" of the service, never being tortured with the fear of disturbing conventionalities when to do so would banish dulness and bespeak attention to earnest truth.

His introductory remarks on the hymns, as well as his observations on particular lines and verses, were often not only very striking, but just and valuable, and showed that they had been chosen for his subject with unusual care. Two or three cases may be noticed. On giving out the 572d hymn, he paused when he came to the first and second lines of the second verse:

"True, 'tis a straight and thorny road,
And more all spirits tire and faint;
and inquired, "Why do they tire? Is it because it is straight and thorny? No—"

"But they forget the mighty God,
That feeds the streets of every saint,"

Thus gliding into the succeeding lines without suffering the congregation to feel any interruption by the break, while he furnished them with a subject for reflection, showing them that they should sing with the understanding.

At Colne, during a period of great commercial distress, when the spirits of the people were depressed, he commenced the service by saying, as he opened the hymn-book, "When I am engaged in preaching occasional sermons, I am often presented with a number of notes containing different announcements. After reading them I put them into my pocket, where they sometimes inconveniently accumulate, till I reach home. Going into the fields, I sometimes take them out and look at them, to see whether any of them are worth preserving. I read one; not being worth anything, I tear it into fragments; up comes a breeze, and away the shreds fly; I look at a second, a third, a fourth, and a fifth—tear them and scatter them in the same way." While he was narrating this little incident, imitating himself, by putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket, as if reading, tearing and scattering, the congregation meanwhile on their feet waiting for the hymn, and wondering what the relation might mean—with the shreds of paper drifting like flakes of snow in the imagination, across the field—suddenly adverted to the depressed state of the trade of the place, directed his hearers to an overruling Providence, exhorted them to exercise confidence in God, gliding into the hymn, announcing with the number of the hymn and page:

"Give to the winds thy fears;
Hope, and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs, and counts thy tears;
God shall lift up thy head."

The effect was overpowering; and the sermon being of an encouraging character, the whole had a permanently soothing influence on the minds of devout persons, who were exhorted, as he had done the flying shreds, to "give to the winds their fears."

He was equally striking when he referred to hymns, as illustrations, in the course of his sermons. Adverting to the fourth verse of hymn 599, he observed that a boy, weak in mind, was asked, while rubbing a brass plate on a door what he was doing; when he replied, "I am rubbing out the name." "Little," said Mr. Dawson, "was the poor boy aware that the more he rubbed the brighter it shone. So it is with Satan, who

wishes to obliterate the word of God from the memory, as well as every impression of its internal evidence from the understanding and from the heart. But," continued he, in holy triumph,

"Engraved as in eternal brass,
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness raise
Those everlasting lines."

Then shouting again, as if the chief fiend of hell were as idiotic as the poor boy, and engaged in the same useful employment, "Rub, devil—rub! but all is vain; the evidence only brightens by the attempt; for of the Lord—yes, of the Lord may it be said:

"His hand hath writ the sacred word
With an immortal pen."

Preaching on the returning prodigal, Mr. Dawson paused, looked at the door, and shouted out, after he had depicted him in his wretchedness, "Yonder he comes, alms-shod! Make way—make way—make way, there!" Such was the approach to reality, that a considerable part of the congregation turned to the door, some rising on their feet, under the momentary impression that some one was entering the chapel in the state described. In the same sermon, paraphrasing the father's reply to the son that was angry and would not go in, he said: "Be not offended; surely a calf may do for a prodigal, shoes for a prodigal, a ring and a robe for a prodigal, but ALL I have is thine." As to the more striking part, when pointing to the door, similar effects were produced when referring to the Witch of Endor. His picture took such hold on the imagination, that on exclaiming, "Stand by—stand by! There she is!" some of the poor people inadvertently directed the eye downward, where his own eye was fixed, and the spot to which he was pointing, as if she were about to rise from beneath their feet, and become visible to the congregation.

On one of his visits to Sheffield, preaching in Carver street chapel, the congregation was large and the feeling intense. He exhorted his hearers, in the course of his sermon, to give their hearts to the Lord, and added, laying his hand upon his own, with a fine gush of feeling, and his eyes lifted up to heaven, "Here's mine," when a voice from the gallery cried out, "Here's mine too, Billy!" Nor was this the only audible token of the effect of his preaching, such exclamations as "That's right!" "True," "Glory be to God!" etc., being frequently repeated during the service. Anything like sober, sedate feeling, through the whole of even a solemn discourse, was very often out of the question; and in his more tempestuous moods he was dangerous as a model, and never to be imitated. He stood alone, and ought to remain alone; but in that individual form, as in all unique cases, he was rather to be prized than diminished in value.

Many who have heard of Mr. Dawson, associate his name and fame with one prominent idea; namely, that his genius was of the "rough and ready" order, and that he was remarkable for the grotesque and humorous or even comic character of his sayings or representations. A very different opinion, however, would be the result of a careful study of his biography; for although there was a keen sense of humor in his composition, and powers of sarcasm and irony were frequently conspicuous, he had the happy art of making these subservient to high and holy purposes; for he was always tender and regardful of the feelings of others. Some use their wit as the schoolboy does his first pocket-knife, trying its edge upon everything that comes in the way; the mahogany table is notched and the favorite rose-tree is mutilated; on all alike he leaves his mark; he cannot help it; he's so full of spirits, and what's the good of having a knife, if one must not use it? But William Dawson knew that only children and fools play with edged tools; and timed his wit so judiciously that, like the skilled surgeon's lancet, "anointed with balm," it wounded but to heal. The following is an instance of the manner in which he reproved and silenced a fault-finder whom he met in Leeds, the day after he had occupied one of the pulpits in that town.

Gentleman.—"I had the pleasure of hearing you preach yesterday."

Mr. Dawson.—"I hope you not only heard, but profited."

Gent.—"Yes, I did; but I don't like those prayer-meetings at the close. They destroy all the good previously received."

Mr. D.—"You should have united with the people in them."

Gent.—"I went into the gallery, where I hung over the front, and saw the whole; but I could get no good; I lost, indeed, all the benefit I had received under the sermon."

Mr. D.—"It is easy to account for that."

Gent.—"How so?"

Mr. D.—"You mounted the top of the house; and, on looking down your neighbor's chimney to see what kind of a fire he kept, you got your eyes filled with smoke. Had you entered by the door—gone into the room—and mingled with the family around the household hearth, you would have enjoyed the benefit of the fire as well as they. Sir, you have got the smoke in your eyes."

He seldom indulged in drollery for its own sake. On the contrary, his words, like the great apostle's letters, were always "weighty and powerful," while, unlike the apostle, his bodily presence was not "weak and contemptible," but congruous to his mental characteristics, stalwart and commanding. Mr. Dawson once said of a preacher he heard, that "he was like a tailor's goose hot and heavy;" to himself the simile was most in appropriate, for he was fervent and weighty, but never heavy—words, which when applied to pulpit style, are far from being synonymous.

Rev. E. Paxton Hood says: "Dawson was a trumpet: the effects he produced when he spoke were amazing; men could not contain themselves; feelings were wrought upon and excited. He was a plain farmer, and had received only the most ordinary education; but there was a bold strong, adventurous imagination in all he said, which, while it enabled his mind to walk steadily in the most difficult paths, and saved him usually from coarseness, vulgarity, and profanity, bore his audacity along with him upward, and compelled them intensively to realize his conceptions and his descriptions. . . . The world needs preachers such as he was."

"He earned his notoriety with hard toil, though he might have flourished a little without it; and candidates for the Christian ministry should be deeply impressed with the fact that the industry which is necessary to raise a man to a high point of elevation is equally necessary to keep him there; for, like a growth in grace, not to proceed is to draw back, and a man often loses the past for want of perseverance. Mr. Dawson's studies and reading could not be called systematic; but still he thought, and thought intensely, too; and he also read to purpose. He was a man in whom the founder of Methodism, himself one of the most laborious men that ever lived, would have gloried."

LONGEVITY OF BAPTIST MINISTERS.

In the Baptist Year Book for 1873 are given the names of 108 Baptist ministers who have died during the year previous. The ages of eighty of these are given. They range as follows:

From 20 to 30 years old,	2
" 30 " 40 " "	10
" 40 " 50 " "	7
" 50 " 60 " "	12
" 60 " 70 " "	23
" 70 " 80 " "	12
" 80 " 90 " "	13
" 90 " 100 " "	1

The average age of these ministers was nearly 64 years (63.86.) This shows that there is nothing peculiarly unfavorable to longevity in the labors of the Baptist minister; neither in his studies, his pulpit efforts nor in his exposure in the administration of baptism. From the city which some of their brethren of other denominations sometimes express, we might naturally suppose that the administration of this ordinance would very much curtail the years of the Baptist minister. But it does not seem to have any such injurious effects. We have lying beside us one of the tables on which life insurances are based. From this it appears that the average expectation of life at 21 years of age is, for men a fraction over 37 years; for women, a fraction over 43 years. The average reached by the men would be 58; by women, 64 years. From this examination of the mortality list for 1872, it appears that the average lives of these eighty Baptist ministers come nearly up to the highest average given by the English table before us. Those, therefore, who have their lives insured, ought to have it done at specially low rates. It would seem to be very evident that, as a class, they are all men of good and regular habits.

The bearing of this subject on the interests of ministerial education is worthy of special notice. Taking a young man at the age of twenty-one years, we may hope that he will have an average of 42 years to spend in his preparation and his subsequent labors. How wise that he be not hurried into the field, but be allowed and encour-

aged to take a thorough course of preparation! Even if it requires, for academic, collegiate, and theological course, nine years, there is still an average expectation of nearly 33 years of active work in the ministry. On such probabilities it were wise to act. If the opportunity for a full preparation for his work be opened to him it can hardly be thought the part of wisdom to hurry the young man into the field with imperfect training. In thirty-three years of ministerial life, with every power developed by patient culture, what a glorious work may be accomplished! How much for the salvation of men, for the enlargement and edification of the church, for the glory of God his Savior!

—National Baptist.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

AN AFFLICTED MINISTER.

The following letter addressed by Rev. Robert S. Morton—who several years ago met with an accident which paralyzed his lower limbs, and rendered him helpless—to the N. S. Western Baptist Association was read at its recent Session. It was ordered that the editor of the Christian Messenger be requested to publish it.

A vote of sympathy was passed by the body, after it had been read.

TO THE MINISTERS AND DELEGATES COMPOSING THE WESTERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

Beloved Brethren,—

I trust you will pardon my boldness in addressing you on this occasion, my object in doing so is, 1st to extol the God of all grace, and 2nd to encourage my brethren to greater faith in Him. Only think! dear brethren, how great, how wise, and how faithful is the Master you are serving, the universe itself hangs upon his word. All power in Heaven, earth and hell belongs to Him, and all who truly trust in Him are assured of his powerful aid, and those who lack wisdom may ask and obtain a large supply from Him, for he is the fountain of all wisdom, and we know his faithfulness can never fail. A great work lies before you, hundreds of millions of precious souls are yet without that blessed hope which cheers and warms your hearts. Even in this highly favored Province how many are thronging the road to perdition. As a body of christians it is our's to lead such into the way of truth, under God's instrumentality to save them from the fearful end to which they are at present hastening. Doubtless something is being done from year to year, but might not much more be accomplished? The blessed Jesus said to his disciples, "According to your faith," &c. It has been my privilege in other days to preach the gospel in many localities, and I have always found that when I went to any certain place, fully expecting that souls would be converted, I was not disappointed. But if I went feeling I will be of no use, I generally found it to be so.

What I wish to say then is this. Have faith in God and in your own efforts. Our greatest want is a want of taking God at his word. It has been said, "Expect great things from God, and attempt great things for God." That is exactly right. True faith will produce zealous effort. And such efforts, and such faith will certainly result in saving souls. Genuine faith will never be doubting the ability of God to furnish both men and money, but it will trust its author for all that may be required, and trusting in Him it cannot be disappointed. I am interested in all our denominational enterprises, but especially in our Missionary operations.

And now dear brethren, as it is more than probable that this will be my last, as it is my first, attempt to thus address you, I wish to say, that it seems to me that the time has come when Baptists should be zealous. If other denominations are zealous in spreading their principles, surely Baptists need not blush to spread theirs.

I am pleased to learn that it is contemplated by the Home Missionary Union to circulate Baptist Literature, I think no Baptist should be ashamed to do that. I mean by Baptist, that which is strictly Bible, and nothing but Bible doctrine.

May the Great Head of the Church be present with you, and may all things be done without strife or vain glory, all for the honor of Christ and the salvation of sinners.

I ask an interest in your prayers because I know the Lord hears his children when they pray in faith. I shall not meet, probably, with you again this side of the river, but I hope through the amazing grace of God, to meet in a purer state with all the redeemed by and by. Which may God grant. Amen.

I am yours in hope of Eternal life,
ROBERT S. MORTON.

For the Christian Messenger

LETTER FROM MISS NORRIS.

The following letter was handed us by Rev. Dr. Tupper for the purpose of making an extract from it concerning Miss DeWolfe. On reading it however, we felt assured that the friends, especially the members of the Women's Missionary Aid Societies, would be pleased to read it all, and we therefore obtained Dr. T's consent to publish the whole:—

TAVOY, April 6th, 1873.

Dr. and Mrs. Tupper:

DEAR FRIENDS,—It is some time since I have allowed myself the pleasure of writing you, there are many to whom I would more frequently write but I cannot command the time. More especially the deep and lifelong interest you have taken in Foreign Missions, and the personal advantage I have reaped from your indefatigable efforts for the advancement of Nova Scotia Missions to the Karens, have claims upon me that I would not if I could set aside. The interest in Missions that you have so constantly agitated and watched over, has already had its results among Burmans and Karens, which will be an ever increasing testimony that "labor is not in vain in the Lord."

But this I trust is but the beginning of what many years and people shall rear into a noble temple of praise to our God. The foundations after many toilsome, dark years of apparently little progress, are I trust rising firmly now—and all the beauty and strength of after years will rest upon the unseen toil that went before.

I have seen Siam and its Karens, and the glamour that distance and imagination lends to every thing has faded away. It is in some respects a harder field than among the Karens of Burmah, something the same difference that there is between upland and intervals cultivation, but God made both for man to till, and either has its peculiar advantages as well. The Siamese Karens are probably a higher type of civilization than Burmese Karens without the Gospel. Therefore they will make the stronger christians, though they may be harder to win. It seems invariably the case that the more men have to leave for the Gospel, the more reluctant they are to come. How forcibly true the words, "Blessed are ye poor."

I see by the Messenger that a growing interest in Foreign Missions is not lessening labor at home. But am sadly pained and grieved at the few laborers there are, and the number of pastorless churches. Where lies the fault? The Master does not forget, nor carelessly make waste the vines he plants with such care. God bless and vivify his work at home.

How does the Woman's Missionary Aid Society prosper in Aylesford. The books so kindly furnished by you in my box, are a constant reminder of the warm hearts among you. Life seems so short, and so many things conspire to rob us of it, that I tremble sometimes that there be nothing to show for the many chances God gave us for "treasuring to ourselves riches that was not old." These things that perish while we use them how many hours they take, and all the eternity that lies just before us, how little we consider it, either for ourselves or those we love, or for those who have nobody to love and care for them. Ah my sisters can we not wake up a little more yet, is there nothing more we can do, for the working time will so soon be over, and where are our gathered sheaves. Let us count up how much we have to show to God for all this beautiful world and the opportunity we had of working for Him. How much have we already done, sisters? how many souls led to Jesus? How many have we comforted? How many have we helped? There is never a day but we can speak a kind word for the Master, never a day but we can do a great deal more than this if we place our hand in the Master's and let Him lead us, as He led his disciples, wherever the poor and the suffering were, to make them glad, and show them the way to everlasting joy. Dear sisters, the night cometh when our work is over and done, and we can add no more of the kind to it forever and forever. "Saved so as by fire," who wishes to "suffer loss" thus on the very threshold of home.

I have been unconsciously led into a message to your Society, for those bands of sisters everywhere are like golden links in the mission chain, and I rejoice over them and remember them as very precious things. Our Mission circle here has been lessened by the departure of one after another, till every one is inquiring what God would say by it. Since I came to Tavoy five Mission-