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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### THE FRIEND OF THE AFFLICTED.

"The heart knoweth its own bitterness."  
Tis true no other heart can know  
Its bitterness of secret woe;  
No other eye can ever see  
The depth of silent misery:  
No tongue hath power to sooth or bless—  
"The heart knows its own bitterness."

The secret tear in anguish shed,  
The sigh that breathes of hope that's fled,  
The beating heart, like some lone bird  
Fluttering to make its sorrows heard;  
Each touching token doth express—  
"The heart knows its own bitterness."

Alone it bears the heavy load;  
Alone endures the galling goad;  
Alone conceals the cankering care;  
Wrestles alone with dark despair;  
Alone from grief it seeks redress  
Alone "knows its own bitterness."

Yet not alone—One Friend is nigh,  
Whose sight can fathom misery,  
Whose heart can sympathize with grief,  
Whose hand can minister relief,  
To Him we turn in our distress,  
For He knows all our "bitterness."

To Him we fainting cry for peace;  
In Him we find a sure release;  
A holy calm dispels despair,  
And hope succeeds to cankering care.  
Then, while a Father's love we bless,  
The heart knows no more "bitterness."

## Religious.

### PULPIT POWER.

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There are many views as to what is meant by Pulpit Power. Still all will readily admit that the Pulpit exercises a mighty influence over the thoughts, feelings, and actions of men. It is true that the preacher's position is somewhat different from what it was in generations past. Then the masses of the people were without those means of education which are now within the reach of all. The consequence is, we have now to appeal to a reading and thinking public. The Press literally teems with papers, magazines, pamphlets, and books, on every conceivable topic. Works of a religious character are circulated in unlimited numbers in every possible direction. Hence every doctrine, every Scriptural statement, and every shade of religious opinion are more or less familiar to the people. The charm of novelty is gone. The preacher, therefore, has to deal with well-known views and principles, and present them as powerfully and attractively as possible, in order to arrest the attention and affect the hearts of his hearers. These efforts, we are glad to know, are attended with a large measure of success. Notwithstanding all opposing influences the Pulpit still exerts a mighty power throughout the land and throughout the world.

#### PULPIT POWER IS DIVERSIFIED IN ITS NATURE.

All who have studied preachers and preaching will come to this conclusion. It is well that it should be so. As there are many roads leading to the metropolis of a mighty empire, so there are many ways of reaching the human heart. Take a common illustration. A preacher with considerable ability occupies a certain pulpit for a certain period. His labors are blessed. Still there are certain characters in his congregation who are not affected by his mode of presenting divine truth. Another preacher comes, preaching in all probability the same doctrines, and through his instrumentality these very persons are brought into the fold of Christ. There is variety in the kingdom of nature, and also in the kingdom of grace. It was so in olden time. Elisha was different from

Elijah, "the prophet of fire." Paul and Peter would preach the same doctrines; but each in his own peculiar way. In the early church there were "sons of thunder"; there was also a "son of consolation." And so it is in modern times. The "seraphic" George Whitefield possessed unusual pulpit power; but it was of a very different kind from that possessed by the "eloquent" Robert Hall. It would be easy to make similar comparisons in reference to celebrated preachers of our own time; but we forbear. Some are noted for their usefulness in the conversion of sinners—the great end of the Gospel ministry. Others again are useful in instructing the people of God; or, in the language of Scripture, "building them up on their most holy faith." It is the work of some to hew out the rugged stones; it is the work of others to fashion them "after the similitude of a palace." According to God's appointment there are some pastors, some teachers, and some evangelists. All preachers are not alike. Some are gentle and pathetic; whilst others are vehement and startling. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." This should lead us to employ to the best advantage those talents which God has been pleased to bestow upon us, and not to envy the gifts of others. It should also teach us to admire the perfection of God's arrangements in carrying out His grand designs. Yea more, it should make us resigned to all His righteous will, even when He sees fit to remove us from some cherished field of labor in order that some one else may come and fill our place; or to be laid aside from active service in the church below; or even to be called away to our rest in heaven.

#### PULPIT POWER IS CONNECTED WITH PERSONAL CHARACTER.

This is only natural. As the man is, so is his work. Being in the company of one of the most successful preachers of the day, we asked him the secret of success in preaching. His reply was this: "The measure of a man's success is the measure of his ability." This is undoubtedly the case, other things being equal. Certain men are adapted to accomplish certain ends; for these they are specially qualified. We are unfaithful to our traditions and to Holy Scripture if we ignore the fact that every faithful preacher of the Gospel is raised up and qualified by the Great Head of the church. In every case true piety is essential. The candle which would light others must first be lighted itself. Whilst urging others to "taste and see that the Lord is good," we must also be able to add: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ." To point out the beauties of Christ to our fellow-men, we must first of all become acquainted with those excellencies ourselves. We must pray, if we would have others pray; we must believe, if we would have others believe. The early preachers could exclaim, "We also believe, and therefore speak." The greatest preachers are men of the greatest faith. Religion must be intensely real to us. "Pray," said an Archbishop to a celebrated actor, "can you inform me what is the reason you actors on the stage, speaking of things imaginary affect your audience as if they were real; while we in the church speak of things real, which our congregations receive only as if they were imaginary?" "Why, really, my lord," answered the actor, "I don't know; unless it is that we actors speak of things imaginary as if they were real, while you in the pulpit speak of things real as if they were imaginary." This clever answer is as applicable now as

when the archbishop put the question. We must feel the truths we preach. True preachers cannot help preaching. They say with those of old, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." They long, ardently and intensely, for the salvation of souls. Few in the stated ministry have been more largely blessed in the work of conversion than the late R. M. McCheyne. His house-keeper would frequently find his pillow wet with the tears he had shed during the night, as he thought of, and yearned over, precious souls. The salvation of souls was the master-passion of his heart. No wonder that his labors were abundantly blessed.

The preacher should possess a large share of sanctified knowledge; for "knowledge is power." He should find out what his talents are, and then seek to improve them. The bravest soldier must not only know what his weapons are, but also how to use them. Dr. Skinner said at the funeral of the well-known commentator, Albert Barnes: "He had eminent facilities, but he possessed one above all others and that was a talent for using his talents." This, we confess, was no small attainment. It is also needful to cultivate the spirit of love. "There is eloquence in love: it lights up the face with its radiant beams, and transmutes the glistening tear into a precious pearl. It magnetizes, enkindles, and subdues." And then, in addition to everything else, there must be holiness of life. We have known some preachers who were not remarkable for their oratorical abilities, but they have been eminently useful, nevertheless. Such has been the power of their godly and devoted lives, that every word they have said has been received as the oracle of God. Example is better than precept. "A minister's life," says an old divine, "is the life of his hearers." Hugh Stowell, of which, through grace, you may be masters; a logic so simple that a child can understand it, so conclusive, that a philosopher can not dispute it—it is the logic of the life." A holy and consistent life gives power to every sermon. If I were asked to give a portrait of a faithful preacher, I would give it in the poet's words:

"He tries each art, reproves each dull delay,  
Allures to brighter worlds, and leads the way."  
Such a pattern is worthy of imitation.

#### PULPIT POWER IS MANIFEST IN ITS EFFECTS.

This is expected. Certain causes necessarily produce certain results. "The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We have the fullest assurance of success. "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The pulpit is a power in society. It raises its moral tone, and disseminates the principles of holiness, righteousness, and truth. The preaching of the Gospel is a blessing to nations. It binds them together in the ties of one common brotherhood. It is an unspeakable blessing to every believing soul. How great is the dignity of the ambassador of Christ! How mighty his influence! Flippant men are awed by the earnestness of his discourse; thinking men are strengthened by his faithful words; and men of education and ability are held, year after year, beneath his pulpit as by an invisible hand. He hath the tongue of the learned; he knoweth how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; and the common people hear him gladly. Souls are converted under his ministrations. Backsliders are reclaimed. Penitents are directed to

the Saviour. The weary are told of rest; the sick are reminded of the Great Physician; and the wicked are warned "of the wrath to come." Such a man is honored of God, and revered of angels. We had rather be a preacher than a prince. The glorious Gospel preached by the servants of Christ is felt by men. They are convicted of sin. They are brought to the Cross of Christ. They are cheered on the way to Zion. They are strengthened for the battles of life, and the last conflict in the hour of death. Indeed it is impossible to show in how many ways the Pulpit of today exerts its influence over all classes of society.

"I say the Pulpit (in the sober use of its legitimate, peculiar powers)  
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,  
The most important and effectual guard,  
Support and ornament of Virtue's cause.  
There stands the messenger of truth: there stands  
The legate of the skies!—His theme Divine,  
His office sacred, his credentials clear.  
By him the violated law speaks out  
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet  
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.  
He 'stablishes the strong, restores the weak,  
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,  
And, armed himself in panoply complete  
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms  
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule  
Of holy discipline, to glorious war  
The sacramental host of God's elect!"

—Cooper.

We find our chief encouragement in the words of Christ: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." The heart will yield to the power of the Cross, when it will yield to nothing else. We are told of an old emblem in the shape of a lock, constructed of rings; on each of which was a letter, and which would unlock only when those rings were so disposed as to spell the word JESUS. Apt emblem of the human heart. It is never known to open except to the precious name of JESUS. Christ and His Cross entered in earnest tones and coming from a loving heart, can never be told in vain.

#### PULPIT POWER IS DIVINE IN ITS ORIGIN.

The message is of God. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." The gospel is not of men; it is of God. The work of the Christian minister is to explain, illustrate, and apply the doctrines of Holy Writ. The Bible is his text-book; and "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." It is no cunningly devised fable, contrived by the ingenuity of man.

"Whence but from Heaven could man unskilled in arts,  
In several ages born, in several parts,  
Weave such agreeing truths? or how or why  
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?  
Unasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,  
Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price."  
Then for the style; majestic and divine,  
It speaks no less than God in every line;  
Commanding words, whose force is still the same,  
As the first fiat that produced our frame."  
—Dryden.

"The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it. Not only is the message from the Lord, but also the strength in which we labor. All true success must come from Him. We may sow the seed, but God alone can send the rain and sunshine. "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." The greatest preachers throughout the world to-day unite in ascribing their success to God Himself. In one glad psalm their voices blend: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." We are glad to have it so. Preaching is overshadowed, in the very conception of it, by the Divine Presence. There lies the hope of our success. Our great dependence must be placed in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Whilst we use every legitimate means within our

reach, we must not depend upon learning, abilities, or anything else. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Much is said in the New Testament of being "full of the Holy Spirit." Some preachers, it is to be feared, do not tarry long enough in the large upper room at Jerusalem; in other words, they are not "endued with power from on high." With earnest supplication and prayer, let us seek a fresh outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Like the patriarch Jacob, we must wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant. Having power with God, we shall also have power with men. Let us "trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Harken to the words of our exalted Saviour: "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The realized presence of Christ will give us Pulpit Power.

### THE RING-FINGER.

The ring-finger, though the weakest in the hand, possesses its peculiar honor and dignity, as ladies will allow. Indeed, it has been held to be typical of their sex. An old writer describes the human hand as representing the life of the universe. The thumb stands for the Deity, without which the whole hand is powerless. The fore finger is likened to the angelic creation, the middle finger to man, the ring-finger to woman, and the little finger to the animal kingdom. These five fingers are quaternary. In many ways the hand has been supposed to be emblematic. The symbolism has penetrated to the nursery. A nurse will make a child put its two palms together, knitting them by closing the two middle fingers. In this position the child is told to separate the two thumbs, which it does with ease, and thereupon is told that "brother and sister may part." It is next asked to separate the forefingers, which also it easily does, and is informed that "father and son may part." Then it is required to separate the two little fingers, and upon doing this is told that "mother and daughter may." It is now told to try and separate the two ring-fingers. This, as the middle fingers are locked together, it cannot do, and is thereupon told that "wife and husband can not part." Many other instances might be given of the way in which the human hand is employed by children, large and small, to symbolize this thing and that. But our present purpose is to draw attention to a curious philological question in connection with the ring-finger. We prefer to call the finger between the middle and little fingers "the ring finger," as that finger is now generally called the "third" finger; whereas, counting the thumb as a finger it used to be called—and notably is now called in the Book of Common Prayer—the "fourth" finger. —Littell's Living Age.

### A CHRISTIAN WEDDING IN CHINA.

The following is a description of a christian wedding among the Chinese, written to the *Methodist* by Rev. S. L. Baldwin, a Missionary:

"After breakfast, we went to the house of a member, where the bridegroom and the bride (who had been brought up in the family of her spouse, in accordance with a prevalent custom among the poor), stood before me, and I married them according to the form of our ritual. The vases on the table were filled with twigs of the banyan-tree. Before the ceremony com-