

The Christian Messenger.

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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

HE KNOWS.

I know not what may befall me,
God spreads a mist before mine eyes;
At every step on my onward path
He maketh new scenes to rise,
And every joy He sends me
Comes with a sudden and strange surprise.

I see not a step before me
As I tread in another year;
But the past is still in God's keeping,
The future His mercy will clear;
And what looks dark in the distance
May brighten as it grows near.

It may be, the bitter future
Is less bitter than I think;
The Lord may sweeten the waters
Before I come to drink;
Or if Marah must be Marah,
He will stand Himself by the brink.

It may be, He is keeping
For the coming of my feet,
Some gift of such rare blessedness,
Some joy so strangely sweet;
But my lips will only tremble
T'he thanks they cannot speak.

Oh blessed, happy ignorance,
'Tis better not now to know;
It keeps me so still in the tender arms
That will not let me go;
It hushes my soul to rest
On the bosom that loves me so.

And so I go on, not knowing,
I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God,
Than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk with him by faith
Than go alone by sight.

My heart shrinks back from the trials
The future may disclose,
But I never had a sorrow
But what the dear Lord chose;
So I force back the coming tears,
With the whispering word, "He knows."

Religious.

A WORD FOR PERFECTIONISTS.

BY OLD MASTER BROOKS.

"For there is not a just man upon earth,
that doeth good, and sinneth not."

These words, in their absolute sense, are a full testimony of the imperfection of our inherent righteousness in this life, and that even justified persons come very short of that exact and perfect obedience which the law requireth: James iii. 2, "For in many things we offend all"; or, as the Greek hath it, "we stumble all." It is a metaphor taken from travellers walking on stony or slippery ground, who are very apt to stumble or slide. The apostle was worthily called James the Just, and yet he numbers himself among the rest of the sanctified ones, that in many cases offend all. The apostle does not say, in many things they offend all, but in many things we offend all. We that have more gifts than others, we that have more grace than others, we that have more assurance than others, we that have more experiences than others, we that have more preservatives to keep us from sin than others, even we in many things offend all. The apostle doth not say in some things we offend all, but in many things we offend all; the apostle speaking not of the singular individual acts of sin, but of the divers sorts of sin. And the apostle does not say, in many things we may offend all, but in many things we do offend all: 1 John i. 8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The apostle doth not say, if thou sayest thou hast no sin, thou deceivest thyself, as if he spake to some particular person only; but if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Nor does the apostle say, if ye say ye have no sin, ye deceive yourselves, as if he intended weak or ordinary Christians alone, but if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves; we apostles, we that in all grace, and in all holiness, and in all spiritual enjoyments exceed and excel all others, even we sin as well as

others. He that is so ignorant and so impudent, so saucy and so silly, as to say he has no sin, sins in saying so, and has no sincerity, no integrity, and no ingenuousness in him: ver. 10, "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." As much as in us lies we make God a liar, if we say we have not sinned. He that says he has no sin, or does no sin, he does by consequence charge God with falsehood, who hath frequently told us in that word of grace, which cannot deceive us, that all men are sinners, and that they have all gone astray, and that they all need pardoning and purging grace, and that upon these very accounts he sent his beloved Son to lay down his dearest life, and to make himself an offering for sin, Isaiah liii. 3, Rom. x. 23 and v. 12, &c. From these scriptures these two things are most evident: first, that sinful qualities do remain in the most sanctified persons; secondly, that these sinful qualities are sometimes very prevalent over the most sanctified persons.—*Sword & Trowel.*

LECTURES ON PREACHING

BY JOHN HALL, D. D.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD SERMON.

What may we expect in a good sermon? To-morrow we shall ask what may be looked for in good continuous preaching. We can only draw broad, clear lines. Each man will fill in details for himself. If anything comes up to which reference has already been made, it comes in a new connection and for a new purpose.

First of all it is requisite that the sermon be true. Lies enough can be had without going to church. By lies the devil rules the world. Nor is it enough that it be true as a piece of human thought. It is to be true as on Divine authority. "I think," says the rev. gentleman, and his hearers must set about considering who he is, for as he is so is his thought. So they are occupied with two things—the man and his message. But when he declares, "The Lord says," it is a different matter. Now, he is out of the question, and the hearer has to do with the Lord. Ethical writers have done good; all credit to the moralists; no wise man disregards them; but, when they have shown up the evil of fraud and lying, they have carried their readers no farther than a Christian congregation has gone when the eighth and ninth commandments or their equivalent truths are read. A sermon announces religious truth on Divine authority. Hence the commanding elevation of the preacher. Our presence may be weak and speech contemptible, but we are not in question. Let us tell Divine truth as it is to be shown afterward, and if any one quarrel with it "the battle is the Lord's."

2. It must be appropriate truth, having the right relation to the condition and circumstances of the people. Where is the use of refuting heresies they do not hold and would not know of but for you? or of perplexing plain people with hard questions, like the tripartite nature of man or the uses of Hades? Why on a communion Sabbath occupy the people with something a thousand miles away from the communion? They do not then want a discussion of the law of tithes. Some public loss has made their hearts tender. The sermon ought to meet that state of feeling. A nice instinct, the product of thought, observation, and prayer, should guide a man in his selection, and when he has succeeded the very announcement conciliates. "He understands our position," they say. A remote and unappropriate theme doubles your toil. You row against the stream. Your sermon is a kind of impertinence, secretly resented. Next time you preach some will be absent, in body or in mind.

Here comes in the collateral benefit of a minister knowing his people, feeling their hearts throb, as it were,

against his own bosom. He knows what they want, finds the Scripture that will suit them, and brings to them its message. Rhetoricians have rules for this case made and provided. His aims secure compliance with them without thought. They want to know certain things. He teaches them. He is instructive. He is driving at one thing. His discourse has unity. He is bent on carrying God's message in the word. He is, therefore, textually faithful.

3. It must be truth taught for the purposes of truth—not to beat down an ecclesiastical foe, or magnify one's position; but for the enlightening and saving of men. He unfolds law for legal purposes—to convict; and gospel for evangelical purposes—to bring men to reconciliation with God. This rule banishes self, with its subtle, arrogant, and misleading influences. The preacher's topic is taken, not because he can speak well upon it and will make a figure, but because the people require it, and he wishes to do them spiritual good. On this he can honestly look for God's blessing.

It is to put the same thing in another form, to say that the preacher must speak in a right spirit. He may proclaim the doom of the wicked in the temper of a market-scoold, and with a bawling fluency make the impression that he is indignant principally because his advice has not been taken. The sanctions of God's law are to be preached in the proportion given them in the Bible. If any omit them, I am sorry for them and for their people. But the first place on which the words of the Lord are to make impression is on the preacher's own mind. Then he impresses the hearers. Let these awful truths be as fully in our sermons as in the Scriptures. Such tenderness and indescribable pity as He felt who wept over Jerusalem.

4. The sermon should sustain the attention. Profit ends with commencing weariness. Nay, more, when hearers become weary they become "cross" and angry with the preacher.

Many combined and harmoniously working forces secure attention—as voice, not in a whisper, or a shout, or a grotesque alternation between the two; not in a monotone, nor with the slowness of minute-guns at sea. Composition has something to do here, with its vivacity of incident, anecdote, and freshness of style. The example of Him who subsidized flowers, birds, seeds, trees, and even little children to the purposes of instruction is to be followed. You need not imitate Harvey among the tombs, or the stately affectation of Edward Irving, or the prose-poetry of Jeremy Taylor; but you may copy them all in the effort to speak agreeably and put your things pleasantly. Manliness has much to do with securing attention, with its lofty superiority to stage tricks, its thorough-going honesty, its straight-forward purpose, and its simplicity. Gravity—such as is born of grave business—is required. Nothing is gained by the preacher who creates laughter. All that is won on one side is lost on the other. To be sure, we have facial muscles for laughing, a proof that we were meant to laugh sometimes. But we have many muscles not employed in hearing sermons. Vehemence not out of proportion to the topic, clear enunciation, obvious high purpose, and distinct ideas are among the best means for securing attention.

5. Preaching should be conciliatory and persuasive. It should not make men obstinate, put them on their pride, or remind them that their arguments are being beaten down. All the pleas, arguments, and appeals should be adapted to move men in the direction of God in Christ. Tone, look, attitude—all should express deference, regard. A defiant scowl, as who should say, "I mean to tear your miserable notions to tatters," is not in order. Remorseless logic will not carry everything. Indignation, scorn, and sarcasm have their place. Elijah employed them. So may we, when we are on Carmel and grappling with the

priests of Baal; but not when we are addressing our "dearly beloved brethren." Paul's example is to be studied—at Athens and elsewhere. Dry light will not effect everything. Let there be also the glow of affectionate interest; that gives persuasive power.

6. A good sermon is evangelical throughout. Seneca and Epictetus have written many good things, but put all their best together, and they would not make a good sermon. Why, my brethren, we are Christian ministers, and Christ is to flavour our teaching through and through. He sent us. We are to speak in His name. Strange if we should be ostensibly delivering His message, and our hearers for an hour should not be made to know it. Love, gratitude, hope, joy, patience, temperance, self-denial—all have their source and spring in Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega in heaven above. So He should be in the Church below. The Father honoureth the Son. So should we. The Holy Ghost testifies of the Son, not of Himself. Such is to be our course too. Not in rhapsody, not in bigotry, but in intelligent love, "five words with the understanding" concerning the Lord Jesus Christ amount to more than an hour of mere human learning, poetry, or eloquence.

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., MAY 26, 1875.

THE LONDON MAY MEETINGS.

The last week of April and the month of May have for many years been set apart for the observance of the Anniversaries of the Missionary and other religious Societies of the various denominations of Evangelical Christians. Our papers by the last English mail give us some account of Baptist gatherings—they being by general consent the first to be observed.

The first in the order of time was on Friday the 23rd, when the Welsh Annual Missionary Meeting was held at the Baptist Mission House.

On the same evening Dr. Culross preached the Annual Sermon on behalf of

BRITISH AND IRISH HOME MISSIONS.

The text will suggest the character of the sermon John i. 41, 42. . . . "And he brought him to Jesus."

The Annual Meeting of this Society was held on the 28th at Bloomsbury Chapel. It was greatly enlivened by some of speakers who had lately returned from the visit to Rome to join in the opening services of the Baptist Chapel there, relating what they had seen in the great centre of Romish superstition. The Home Mission work in Britain is about the same as in our own country. A brief extract from one of the speeches concerning the work in Ireland must suffice. The Chairman, Mr. Alderman Barran, of Leeds, said:

I find from the report, which is to be read to you, that success has attended the efforts of our missionaries. At no time in connection with the history of the Irish Missionary Society has the work altogether been going on more successfully than during the past year. Our friends there are labouring in the outlying districts with very great success. They are holding but meetings and cabin meetings, and other meetings, and they are getting assemblies of people of 20, 30, 50, 200, 300, and up to a thousand, some of them coming several miles to hear the Word of God. Well, those circumstances are exceedingly cheering, and when we consider that these people, if they are anything like the Italians, are nothing more nor less than idolaters, we must feel that the claim that they have upon us is very great. It was latterly my privilege to be in Rome during the holy week. I saw there as many as sixty people on their knees climbing the Santa Scala; that is, the sacred steps. When they get to the top, they kiss a small Maltese cross which is let into the floor, and then they go and kiss a dead Christ on the cross; and then they go farther and they put their peace in at a window, and they look in and offer their prayers and their sacrifices there. I have gone into the churches of Rome, and there have been large

numbers of people kneeling down in the same way to a small dead Christ on the cross. My friends, if that is not idolatry I do not know what is; and if that sort of thing is done in Rome can we expect anything better in Ireland? It has not been my privilege to see Roman Catholicism in Ireland, but I am quite sure that the child will not be much better than its parent. Well, then, what did I see in another church in Rome? In the Church of the Bambino I saw a doll—and anything but a nice looking doll. It was kept in a shrine on the altar. I asked to see it, and it was brought out and shown to me. I saw in that church a large number of crude water-colour and oil paintings representing the various miracles that this doll had performed. One picture represented a man thrown up by a bull, another was a man thrown off a hay-cart; and there were all kinds of accidents that had been prevented, or whose effects had been cured by the intervention of this doll. My friends, if Ireland has any of that kind of idolatry her claims are great upon us, and I am quite sure that she has some idolatry of that kind. I happened to meet with two Irish ladies in Genoa, and we got into conversation. I said, "Have you been to Rome?" "Yes." "Have you seen the Bambino?" "Yes." "Well," I said, "I was very much astonished at that." "Oh," said one of the ladies, "God can work through instruments." "Yes," I said, "but God does not take dolls as His instruments." "Oh, yes," she said, "if God likes to work in that way He can; and I believe the Church." And she did believe it, and believed it thoroughly. Well, then, again, when I was in Rome, I took the pains to count no fewer than seventy people, in five minutes, kissing the toe of a bronze statue of St. Peter. There were men and women going up to it—not the poor, not the illiterate, not the ragged, not the outcast; but I saw men and women, well dressed, intelligent-looking, going there, and taking their children and lifting them up to the toe to kiss it. My friends, this is idolatry; and if Ireland is suffering from that kind of idolatry, is it not our duty to seek to enlighten the people on the question, and bring them to Christ, the new and living Way? Well, we have great obligations resting upon us as a nation in connection with Ireland. Ireland has not been well ruled. She has been subject to very great tyranny and oppression. She now enjoys greater freedom than she has ever enjoyed since her connection with England; and I am quite sure that she will enjoy, and will be fit to enjoy, much greater freedom and much greater liberty in proportion as the light of the gospel spreads in that land. In Italy, in France, and in Ireland, women do not take their true position; and whenever you find woman suffering, degraded, doing, I was going to say, man's work, but really doing the work of beasts, carrying loads that are too heavy to be borne by men, and whenever you find that woman is neglected, ignorant, debased, and downtrodden, there is no hope for that nation. What the mother is, that the offspring must be. Therefore I say that directly the spirit of Christianity gets into such nations, the women will enjoy their rights and privileges, and will be educated and fitted to discharge their duties and obligations as women and as mothers; and if they discharge their duties as women and as mothers, we may hope that the result will be that their offspring will be a great deal in advance of what we find at the present day. My friends, let us do what we can for Ireland."

We might go on to any extent with extracts from the speeches, but must proceed to that which stands first, with regard to the general interest by which it is surrounded—

THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

To some extent the Union combines in its work all other organizations of the body. Its Annual Session commenced on Monday morning April 26th. This meeting was full of interest on many accounts. It is the practice of the Union to elect its President a year in advance—so that he may prepare his Address beforehand. The Rev. Dr. Landels was elected to be the President of 1876. The fact that the venerable president of the past year, Rev. Charles Stovel, was to be succeeded by the popular and comparatively young preacher the Rev. Alexander McLaren, of Manchester—who would give the Inaugural Address—attracted a large congregation, in addition to the Delegates to the Union. The Baptist says, "The committee of management had wisely relieved the monotony of such an assembly of black coats by a judicious ar-