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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

'Twas only a Word.

BY REV. JOHN CLARKE.

'Twas only a word, and spoken in haste,
Yet it made her own heart sad;
And it shaded the brow, and darkened
the soul
Of the dearest friend she had.

'Twas only a word, a snatch of song,
Which one in weakness sang;
But far and wide, like a clarion's notes,
The gladdening echoes rang.

'Twas only a word, but it fell on the ear
Of an eager, listening youth;
And, swift as an arrow, it wrought its
work,
And turned him aside from the truth.

'Twas only a word, a word of cheer,
But it made a hero strong;
And battling hard, without thought of
reward,
He vanquished many a wrong.

'Twas only a word, but it nerved afresh
The heart of a faithful band;
And they laboured on till their power
for good
Was felt through all the land.

'Twas only a word, breathed forth with
prayer,
And uttered with faltering breath;
But a life was changed, and heaven
rejoiced
O'er a soul redeemed from death.
Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.
—London Baptist.

Religious.

Pastors and Missions.

A very important influence belongs to the pastoral office and work. That pastors should greatly influence their churches in all their religious relations and work, is both natural and proper. Hence the importance that they should wield that influence rightly and effectively.

The attitude of pastors towards missions and missionary work decides in a very great degree what shall be the missionary spirit, and what the contributions of their churches. If the pastor is interested in missions and informed in regard to them, his church will possess the missionary spirit and be active in the aid of missionary work. If he leads his church on in the spirit of sacrifice for the evangelization of our own country and the world, the membership will catch the same spirit, and their contributions will be generous and continuous. But if the pastor is indifferent, selfish or timid, the church will care and do little for missions. The ambition that centres alone in and spends its strength upon one's own church is a selfish ambition and pernicious in its effects. Selfishness is varied in its forms, and manifests itself through different channels—but it is selfishness still.

If pastors generally did but rightly wield the influence that is in their hands, the treasures of our missionary societies would be very largely replenished. Few, very few indeed, would be the churches that would fail to contribute to the different departments of our great missionary work. Frequently the membership of a church are in advance of the pastor, in the missionary spirit and work.

The responsibility for missionary contributions from the churches is mainly with the pastors. If such contributions fail, or are lean and irregular, the fault lies at the door of the pastors. The churches will give, if the pastors will intelligently, regularly and persistently press our great missionary work and its claims upon their attention. It is as truly a part of a pastor's legitimate duty to attend to this work in aid of missions, as it is to preach the gospel to his people. Indeed, he will not truly and fully preach the gospel to them, unless he does this. No man should be retained in the ministry who does not recognize this as a part of his duty as a pastor. In this time of great and pressing

Christian work for the evangelization of our own country and the world, let pastors think of these things. S.
—Examiner & Chronicle.

Withheld Statistics.

How it would startle some of our congregations to have the pastor follow the reading of the annual report of his church with a few of the withheld statistics, somewhat after this sort: "Of the thirty-two who have joined our church the past year, I find that five of those who came in on profession have unmistakably fallen into former evil ways, while of those who were received by letter, three were certainly lacking in good character in the churches they left, although by the record they were in 'good and regular standing.' One of our elders is popularly reported to have swindled a neighbor outrageously in a notorious business transaction. We have lost one of our more prominent members by his transfer to the county jail on conviction of crime. A careful examination of our record has convinced me that fully one-third of our members can be counted on the 'dead-head' list. They do nothing in the line of Christian activity. As to their example, they are not bad enough to be a warning to the outside world; nor good enough to be taken as an example by any body—in or out. Our benevolent contributions look pretty well for our numbers, but I learn that nearly one-third of their full amount has been given by four persons; and that of the other members of the church, more than one half gave less to religious causes than they pay toward public amusements, while there are not a few families which gave mere for peanuts during the year than they put in the contribution-box. A fair estimate of the tobacco bills of the congregation is twice and three-eighths the amount given by the church to home and foreign missions combined." Such a supplement as this, in kind and in degree according to the particular community, could be truthfully made in many a church where the annual report last presented is spoken of as "every way encouraging."—S. S. Times.

Announcing Topics of Sermons.

Dr. Pendleton in reply to an enquiry gives the following grounds of objection to this practice:

REPLY.

The object in announcing topics is, I suppose, to induce some persons to go to church who would not otherwise go. That is to say, they do not go to every service, but may be influenced to go, if special subjects are to be discussed. I deny that such persons should be accommodated, or, I may say, humored. It is their business to worship God, and to hear the discussion of whatever topic the minister may present. They should not be encouraged to give the preference to some subjects, and ignore others equally important. In short, their curiosity ought not to be gratified.

Another objection to announcing topics, except on very special occasions, is that it seems to indicate vanity on the part of preachers who pursue this course. For the reason already intimated, all the members of a congregation should be regularly in attendance on public worship. Very well. Then when a preacher, in a Saturday paper, announces his topics for the next day, he must wish to draw persons from other congregations. If so, his newspaper announcement is equivalent to this: "I can tell you, on to-morrow, something more interesting than you will hear from your pastor, and therefore I invite you to leave him and hear me." Just here, as it seems to me, the vanity comes in, or rather comes out. I do not know, however, that my old-fashioned notions are entitled to any consideration. If the object in announcing topics is to secure the attendance of persons who would not otherwise go to church at all, there is probably no valid objection to it.

Indifferentism.

Rev. Dr. Lerimer, of Chicago, recently delivered a series of Lectures on "ISMS, OLD AND NEW."

The following are the choice portions of the last one of these lectures, on the above subject, having for its text, Acts xviii. 17, "And Gallio cared for none of these things."

Volney, in his "Ruins," overlooking the relation of religion to human happiness, would have the nations treat it with unconcern and disdain. Having displayed, with great pomp and elegance of diction, the widely divergent historical creeds, having also exaggerated their conflicting jargon, and having taken no pains to discriminate between the true and the false, he concludes with the opinion, "that, to live in harmony and peace, we must agree never to decide on such subjects, and to attach to them no importance."

Gallio was the adopted son of a rhetorician and the brother of Seneca, the philosopher. From his earliest years he had enjoyed every educational advantage which the Roman world could afford, and if we may judge, from what Tacitus and Statius have recorded, he was a man genial and sensitive, upright and kind. Familiar with the thought of his times, intimate with Seneca, and in constant contact with the leaders of public sentiment, it is reasonable to conclude that he sympathized with its drift and spirit. Prominently he was a courtier, though of a better class, and was mainly concerned with his own political preferment and social advancement, considerations which point to his acquiescence in the views of others rather than to independent effort in developing views of his own. In his day sages and philosophers were utterly dissatisfied with the pagan religion, and had not turned their attention to the claims of the Christians. Whatever may be the precise force of the text, this brilliant pro-consul stands a conspicuous example of that indifferentism which is a blighting curse to every individual on whom it rests.

Widely prevalent is this evil in our times. Not a few of the scientists, undertaking to instruct the world on grave subjects that lie beyond the sphere of their specialties, and rivaling the ancient sophists in the arts of mystification, pronounce religion to be too nebulous and remote for it to be made out by any telescope of human thought. It can not be reached, can not be defined or verified; and, therefore, while it may be true, ought to be dealt with as sound minds deal with questions concerning the inhabitants of the moon or the revolutions in lunar politics. The more cultivated of this class are not disposed to denounce Christianity, or to work themselves into a frenzy of hostility, but rather to smile compassionately on those good people who submit to its authority and who believe in its inspiration. They are simply neutral and inert, bland and benignant in their manners, but apathetic and listless. They are decided that the super-sensuous and supernatural are unworthy of thought, and consequently they decline to give earnest heed to their claims, and are unwilling to encourage others in doing what they regard as idle in themselves. Whether attributable to the influence of these speculative scientists or not, a considerable portion of every nominal Christian community practically sympathizes with their attitude. The church suffers more from neglect than from violence and aggression. Her solicitude for the welfare of the world meets with no adequate response. Her tears, prayers, and exhortations are comparatively powerless, and the tendency grows to judge her more and more from an artistic standpoint than from the devotional and useful.

The people around her are not infidel, save in a vague, indeterminate sense, and would hesitate to vote for her banishment or destruction. They incline to the faith of their sires; they are mildly indignant with the radicals who denounce it, are not unwilling to

pay a little that it may be supported; but they are personally lukewarm in its defense, and positively adverse to being compromised on its side. They prefer neither to be absolutely for, nor against Christianity; to be counted with its friends, nor numbered with its enemies. Neutrality expresses their condition. They try to be of those who neither gather with Christ nor scatter abroad. The church, they occasionally visit, are respectfully attentive to its services, and then as rapidly as possible obliterate or ignore every impression received, as though it were meaningless and valueless. It is also well-known that thousands never enter a house of worship, never read their bibles, and live as though there were no spiritual realities and religious responsibilities. And yet even many of these would protest against being classed with unbelievers; and not a few of them entertain the hope that in the future they may be found on the Lord's side. Undoubtedly there is an immense amount of religious sentiment hidden, latent, revealing itself fitfully in seasons of affliction and trial, but for the most part checked and restrained. Unconcern lies like a vast snow-field on the struggling spring of piety; indifference, like a huge log bank, dampens and chills its ardor, and no sun of heaven seems friend enough to melt the one or disperse the other. Even the church herself feels the numbing effect of this chilly atmosphere. The zeal, heartiness, and enthusiasm which should distinguish its members in the advocacy of Christ's cause, to some extent have given place to inertness, languidness, and torpidity. Prayer meetings are dull and frigid, sabbath worship is formal, spiritless, and soulless. The tremendous issues of life and the solemnities of an eternal scene are discussed with a tranquility, equanimity, and nonchalance quite incompatible with their importance; while the affairs of time arouse the most intense excitement, and are conducted with energy, mobility, and vivacity. Everything that approaches to transport, rapture, or ecstasy in religion, is looked on with distrust and coolness, and is commonly regarded as a mark of inferior intellect; while ravishment and intoxication over the discovery of some long buried fossil, or delirium and frenzy over some paltry success in business, are considered natural, and as evidences of an exalted mind. And thus indifferentism is widespread, more general than atheism, naturalism, or any other ism, infecting science, paralyzing Christianity, and deadening the deepest instincts and the loftiest aspirations of humanity. It is the grand malady of the age, and calls for earnest remonstrances and immediate correction.

There is in every man a primary intuition that leads him to call on the Unseen, that impels him to cry out, "Oh! that I knew where I might find Him," and that appeals to all things visible and invisible to reveal His nature and His attributes. This thirsting after God is nature, is the expression of an unwrought desire for knowledge, which deserves to be met in the spirit of intense and untiring endeavor. To respond to it apathetically, to dismiss it contemptuously, or to appreciate it lightly, is utterly inexcusable. Looked at, therefore, from every side, the possibility of the divine existence, and the consequences which flow from it, combined with the native yearning of humanity, invest the whole subject of religion with so much significance and importance that indifferentism can only be fairly characterized as the most stupendous folly, if it is not the most sublime presumption.

In addition to these considerations, there are on the side of Christianity so many possibilities, to estimate them no higher, that the race is morally bound to deal with it in serious earnestness. For instance, the revelation which it presents for acceptance stands apart from all other books, and all the efforts of unbelievers have failed to classify it with other so-called sacred writings, or to dispose summarily of its credentials. Indeed, they have never felt called on

to refute the claims of Al Koran, or the Veda, or the Vend Avesta, as they are too visionary to convince any candid inquirer; but they have concentrated their attacks on the bible, the strength of whose position may be inferred from the savagery of its assailants. The fact that it has been made the sole object of various assaults, and yet survives their impotent rage, argues strongly for its divinity. And we peruse thoughtfully its contents; however incongruous some of its passages may seem with such an origin, we can not but feel that the dove-like spirit brooded over the human minds through whom they were given, as it moved at the beginning over the silent waste of waters when the universe emerged from emptiness and void.

"On every line
Marked with the seals of high Divinity;
On every leaf bedewed with drops
Of love Divine, and with the eternal
heraldry
And signature of God Almighty stamped
From first to last."

If Christianity has a wonderful book, it has an equally wonderful history. Its rise and marvelous progress, which the learning and ability of Gibbon and Lecky have in vain assayed to attribute to merely natural causes; its influence and remarkable adaptiveness to every race and condition of mankind, which no one has been able to account for on other than supernatural grounds; and its permanence and extraordinary power in the midst of corruptions which would have eaten the life out of any earthly system, present a series of evidences in its favor exceedingly difficult to answer, if answerable at all. Follow Christianity in its career; observe the nations it has conquered and renewed, note the literature it has created and the philanthropies it has founded; mark the long line of saints and sages, poets, philosophers, and painters it has imbued with its spirit, and sent out to enrich the world with their treasures of piety, wisdom, song and art, and then say whether such a religion is worthy of disdain or should be treated with neglect. With so many probabilities in its favor, does not the man assume a fearful responsibility who slights Christianity, and who will neither give time nor thought to the consideration of its majestic claims? There can be but one answer to such a question—an answer that brands indifferentism with guilt, and that condemns its longer indulgence.

In such times as ours, when infidel science seeks to silence the heavens that declare His glory, and insolent secularism would drown their voice in the roar and rattle of machinery and trade, and when atheistic iconoclasm strengthens its cause by numbering the indifferent on its side, every believer should be radical in his faith, pronounced in its defense, and unwearied in its propagation. Just in proportion as efforts are made to unsettle confidence in His existence or providence, and to deprive the world of the comfort which flows from a sense of His gracious oversight, in that degree ought all, who hold these sentiments, in abhorrence, to protest against them, and, in the most emphatic manner, refuse to them their countenance or sympathy. This much the wronged and outraged God at least may claim. Anything short of this falls short of simple justice, of that which he has the right to expect and to demand. And, unless the sense of obligation is clean gone from our hearts, we shall realize this deeply, blush for our inconsistency and devote ourselves with passionate enthusiasm to Him and to His service.

The relations we sustain to our fellow beings, the influence we exert, and the duties which we owe call for the most unmistakable faithfulness to our religious convictions. If we enjoy the light of truth we are bound for the good of others to diffuse it, and the lowliness of our station and the meagreness of our attainments will not excuse us if we "hide it under a bushel." Indifferentism never yet helped or illuminated a struggling soul; it has rather increased the thick haze which hangs upon the path of life. It creates the impression that religion is not en-