

Christian Messenger.

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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

Gems of the Beautiful.

SCATTER the germs of the beautiful!
By the wayside let them fall.
That the rose may spring by the cottage gate,
And the vine on the garden wall;
Cover the rough and the rude of earth
With a veil of leaves and flowers,
And mark with the opening bud and cup
The march of summer hours.

Scatter the germs of the beautiful
In the holy shrine of home;
Let the pure, and the fair, and the graceful there,
In the loveliest lustre come;
Leave not a trace of deformity
In the temple of the heart,
But gather about its hearth the germs
Of Nature and of Art.

Scatter the germs of the beautiful
In the temple of our God—
The God who starred the uplifted sky,
And flowered the trampled sod;
When he built a temple for himself,
And a home for his priestly race,
He reared each column in symmetry
And covered each line in grace.

Scatter the germs of the beautiful
In the depths of the human soul;
They shall bud, and blossom, and bear the fruit,
While the endless ages roll;
Plant with the flowers of charity
The portals of the tomb,
And the fair and the pure about thy path
In Paradise shall bloom.

Selections.

Minister's Libraries.

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

In our fathers' days there were respectable men who talked of books as "dead men's brains," and ridiculed the idea of a minister's needing to study. As civilisation has removed wolves from England, and time has cleared the dodo from his ancient haunts, so have common sense and spiritual enlightenment exterminated these foolish brethren; at least, if one or two still linger no one is found to take the slightest notice of their senseless observations. It is no longer a recommendation to a sermon that the minister never thought of the text until he entered his pulpit; men still like the hot cakes fresh from the oven, but they like to know that the dough was well kneaded at home. We remember two or three years ago a certain ultra-Calvinistic minister beginning his sermon with, "As I was shaving this morning, this text came with power to my soul"; but no extraordinary interest was excited among the congregation by this tacit admission that he had neglected his preparation until the Sabbath morning; in fact, we discovered afterwards that such a preface was usually followed by an unbearably dull discourse, and therefore his regular hearers were not to be duped into the expectation of any excessive keenness of argument or sharpness of wit.

The world and the Church are both alike convinced that Gospel ministers are no more authorised to talk empty platitudes and undigested crudities than any other men; that bricks are not to be made without straw, nor lamps to be kept bright without tinning, nor nets to be useful without mending, either in the natural or spiritual world. There may be too many thoughtless demands upon our time, and invasions of our privacy, and too much practical forgetfulness of our need of retirement; but the false idea is dead; and meditation, private prayer, and diligent study are acknowledged to be the very basis of a profitable ministry. Happily there are few among us who would dissent from the sentiments uttered by an excellent bishop in a charge to his clergy:—

"A man who preaches much without from time to time renewing the stock of matter with which he began his career, however sound or pious he may continue to be, will be almost sure ultimately to become a very barren preacher. And I only say almost in consideration of a few rare instances, in which observation of life, and intercourse with varieties of character, seem to make an original and peculiar case of mind independent,

in a good measure, of reading. But these are rare exceptions. Generally, and all but universally, a public teacher requires to have his own mind supplied and exercised by books. And to derive full advantage from them, I need hardly say, that he must not only read, but think. Undigested reading is better, I am sure, than none. I know that a different opinion is entertained by some, but this is mine. For there is no one who does not take away some matter from what he reads, and no mind can be so inert as not to be forced to some activity, while taking in new facts or thoughts. And what is not to be put out of view, every mind becomes continually more unfurnished and more inert when reading is wholly given up. But the benefit to be derived from reading without purpose and thought, of course falls far short of that which reflection will draw from the same, or from scantier stores. And this applies very particularly to the most fruitful as well as the most important of the sources from which the preacher's materials are to be drawn. By reading the Holy Scriptures, without meditating upon them, a man may, no doubt, obtain considerable acquaintance with the facts and doctrines which they contain,—may become an adroit controversialist, and a well furnished textuary,—but unless he studies the sacred volume with patient thought (I need not add to you, my brethren, with earnest prayer), until he becomes imbued with its spirit as well as acquainted with its contents, his use of Scripture will be comparatively jejune, and cold and unprofitable. And so, you remember the apostle exhorts his beloved son in the faith—Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. And, certainly, all do feel the difference which there is between one who is giving out crude materials, taken in hastily for the occasion, and one who is drawing from the stores which he has laid up in his meditative study of Divine truth."

The Puritan preachers were hard students. They were not content with skimming the surface; they dived into the depths. They were interesting in the pulpit, because they were indefatigable in the study. They lived in stirring times, but they were not to be tempted from what they conceived to be an integral part of their ministry—long, deep, prayerful meditation. Nor has this been the case with those Protestant fathers only; nearly all successful preachers have been laborious readers. That metal would not yield so readily to the blows of yonder orator if he had not fused it in the furnace when alone. Men only mark the rushing torrent of eloquence; they ought to know that the reservoirs above require to be filled to the brim ere the cataract can leap from its heights. Those weary hours, those treasured minutes, those midnight wakings, never come into the reckoning of the populace; but there would be little ease in public if there had been no labour in private. Whitfield and Wesley read far more than the lazy stay-at-home clergy; and we are certain that no man can long sustain even a moderate popularity without toil and labour of the most strenuous kind. No freshness of illustration or readiness of utterance will avail; no old stores will long suffice; and the Spirit of God, who is never the minister of our idleness, will not long be with the slothful student. We must,—it is useless to mince the matter,—we must have time for deep draughts ourselves, or out of our belly no rivers of living water can continue to flow.

It is matter of solemn regret that very many of our ministers are crippled in their usefulness by poverty. If poverty merely rendered their house uncomfortable, their garments threadbare, and their table scant, it would be a deplorable evil, but it would not necessarily injure their success. Alas, it does worse than this; it empties the library shelves, or forbids the erection of those store-houses; it binds the eagle-spirit within narrow bounds, and tames the lion-soul by lack of food. Shut out by village isolation from communion with enlarged minds, and denied the stimulus of a society active and advancing, many a country pastor feels it a serious privation to have no books with which to refresh his thoughts and excite his contemplations. This is to him a famine of the word; a famine all the more

intolerable because from an empty basket he is expected to hand out food for hundreds equally famished. He cannot purchase the commentary which he prizes, because his children need shoes for their little feet; he must not invest his half-crown in literature, because his wife is sick and the doctor must be paid. Broken in spirit, he repeats Sabbath after Sabbath the same ideas until his people complain of a want of freshness, as if sermons were a sort of spontaneous combustion, and thought would spring up unsown like weeds in a fallow field. We may seem very "carnal" to those spiritual men who have spirited away their common sense, but we do solemnly believe that lean libraries make lean ministries, and that the most available method of improving the pulpit is at once to improve the preacher's resources. The Spirit of God alone can anoint us with the holy oil; but that he usually does in the use of means; and what means more adapted to the designed end than bringing our men into contact with the giant minds of past ages? Our prescription for congregational complaints shall be for years to come,—*"Get your minister a library, and make it as much part of your chapel furniture as the pulpit and the pews."*

But how is this to be done? Deacons of our churches, give us your earnest attention while we answer this question. A minister's library should be commenced at once. There ought to be a sum set apart every year towards the replenishment of those still in existence, and the founding of them in places where none have been before. There are very few churches so poor as to find it impossible to afford a guinea a year; and at this low figure how noble a collection of holy wisdom will have accumulated in half a century. Let the books be in trust for the minister for the time being, and let the trustees regularly inspect the whole to see that volumes are not removed; and we think it will become an object of emulation with our churches to excel in the richness of their stores, and members will cheerfully, by legacy or otherwise, assist in creating first-class collections of renowned writers.

The Christian Traveller.—an Authentic Narrative.

HAVING tarried a few days in a beautiful village of the West, I embarked in a vessel which was crossing one of the great lakes. Three other individuals had taken passage, and night coming on found us waiting for a breeze. About nine o'clock, when the sails were being hoisted, another passenger came on board. When we had cleared the harbor he entered the cabin, and seemed to suppose that he was alone; for we had all retired to our berths. The lamp was burning dimly on the table, but it afforded sufficient light for me to discover that he was young. Seating himself beside it, he drew a book from his pocket and read a few minutes. Suddenly from on deck was heard the voice of the captain uttering oaths, terrific beyond description. The youth arose, laid his book on the chair, and kneeling beside it, in a low whisper engaged in prayer. I listened attentively, and though his soul seemed to burn within him, I could gather only an occasional word, or part of a sentence, such as "mercy," "dying heathen," "sinners," etc. Presently he seemed in an agony of spirit for these swearers, and could scarcely suppress his voice while pleading with God to have mercy on them. My soul was stirred within me. There was a sacredness in this place, and I was self-condemned, knowing that I also professed the name of Jesus, and had retired with my fellow-passengers to rest, not having spoken of God, or committed myself to his care.

Early in the morning I was waked by a loud voice at the door of the companion-way: "Here! Whose tracts are these?" followed by other voices, in threats and imprecations against tract-distributors, Bethels, temperance societies, etc.

I thought of the young stranger, and feared they would execute their threats upon him; but he calmly said, "Those tracts, sir, are mine. I have but few, as you see, but they are very good, and you may take one, if you wish. I brought them on board to distribute,

but you were all too busy last night." The sailor smiled and walked away, making no reply.

We were soon called to breakfast with the captain and mate. When we were seated at the table, "Captain," said our young companion, "as the Lord supplies all your wants, if neither you nor the passengers object, I would like to ask his blessing on our repast."

"If you please," replied the captain, with apparent good-will. In a few minutes the cook was on deck, and informed the sailors, who were instantly in an uproar, and their mouths filled with curses. The captain attempted to apologize for the profanity of his men, saying "it was perfectly common among sailors, and they meant no harm by it."

"With your leave, captain," said the young stranger, "I think we can put an end to it."

Himself a swearer, and having just apologized for his men, the captain was puzzled for an answer; but after a little hesitation replied, "I might as well attempt to sail against a head-wind as to think of such a thing."

"But I meant all I said," added the young man.

"Well, if you think it possible, you may try it," said the captain.

As soon as breakfast was over, the oldest and most profane of the sailors seated himself on the quarter deck to smoke his pipe. The young man entered into conversation with him, and soon drew from him a history of his life. From his boyhood he had followed the ocean. He had been tossed on the billows in many a tempest; had visited several missionary stations in different parts of the world, and gave his testimony to the good effects of missionary efforts among the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands. Proud of his nautical skill, he at length boasted that he could do anything that could be done by a sailor.

"I doubt it," said the young man.

"I can," answered the hardy tar, "and will not be outdone, my word for it."

"Well, when a sailor passes his word he ought to be believed. I know a sailor who resolved that he would stop swearing, and did so."

"Ah," said the old sailor, "you've anchored me; I am fast, but I can do it." "I know you can," said the young man, "and I hope you will anchor all your ship-mates' oaths with yours."

Not a word of profanity was afterwards heard on board the vessel. During the day as opportunity presented itself, he conversed with each sailor singly on the subject of his soul's salvation, and gained the hearts of all.

After supper he requested of the captain the privilege of having worship in the cabin. His wishes were complied with, and soon all on board, except the man at the helm, were assembled. The captain brought out a Bible, which he said was given him in early life by his father, with a request that he would never part with it. We listened as our friend read Matthew's account of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection; and then, looking round upon us he said: "He is risen—yes, Jesus lives; let us worship him."

It was a melting scene. Knees that seldom bowed before, now knelt at the altar of prayer, while the solemnities of eternity seemed hanging over us. After prayer we went on deck and sang a hymn. It was a happy place, a floating Bethel. Instead of confusion and wrath, there was a sweet peace and solemnity. We ceased just as the setting sun was flinging upon us his last cheering rays.

The captain, deeply affected, went into the cabin, lit his lamp, took his Bible, and was engaged in reading till we had retired to rest.

After this, for three days, we regularly attended family worship, and had much interesting conversation on various subjects, for there was nothing in the religion of the young stranger to repress the cheerfulness of social intercourse. From his familiarity with the Bible, his readiness in illustrating its truths and presenting its motives, and from his fearless but judicious and persevering steps, we concluded that he was a minister of the gospel. From all he saw he gathered laurels to cast at his Master's feet, and in all his movements aimed to show that eternity was not to be trifled with. A few hours