

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters to a Young Preacher.

LETTER XXVI. STYLE IN PREACHING.

My Dear Brother,—

In preaching the gospel a minister should aim to promote the welfare of his hearers. To this end he ought to endeavor to impart instruction in a manner adapted to interest, to instruct, and to move. His language, therefore, as the vehicle of his thoughts, should be suitable for the effecting of these objects.

In some instances young preachers seem to imbibe an idea, that it is desirable to use an elegant style in preaching. Imagining that this consists in the use of long words, they sometimes employ a number of these to express what might be expressed more conveniently, more clearly, and much more forcibly, by two or three short ones. By this means they may, perhaps, secure the admiration of some ill-informed people; but they subject themselves to the disapproval of persons of intelligence and discernment. It is altogether inconsistent for a minister of the "meek and lowly" Jesus to seek the reputation of being an "eloquent orator." But if this were allowable, the use of "great swelling words of vanity," would be adapted to frustrate his design. True eloquence consists in the utterance of noble and impressive thoughts in a natural and easy manner, and in plain and familiar terms. Whatever savors of bombast naturally excites disgust.

In order that preaching may be generally useful, it obviously must be understood by the mass of the people. So Paul says, "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech." And he remarks elsewhere, "So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air." (1 Cor. ii. 1, 4, 5. xiv. 9, 11, 15-17. 2 Cor. iii. 12.) It is self-evident that what the people do not understand can not profit them.

I was never accustomed to gunning; but in the days of my youth I once fired at a flock of ducks. As my position was favorable, and the flock was large, I expected to obtain several of them. But to my sad surprise, on the discharge of the gun they all flew away. An experienced gunner told me, that I probably aimed too high, and so shot over their heads. This circumstance has often occurred to my mind in reference to preaching. We should aim at the hearts of the people, and be careful not to shoot over their heads.

There are, however, in many cases two extremes, which ought to be carefully avoided.—Had I made a second attempt of the same kind as that noticed above, quite likely I would have aimed too low, and so have failed again. As a preacher's clothing should neither be so fine nor so coarse as to attract the attention of his hearers, and draw their minds away from his subject, so likewise his language should neither be so lofty nor so low as to produce these effects. It has been remarked, that ministers who have been admired for the elegance of their diction, and the use of a flowery style, have rarely, if ever, been eminent for the efficiency of their labors.—On the other hand, grovelling and vulgar language is quite unsuitable for the pulpit. It tends to excite prejudice in the minds of persons of education and refinement, and to bring the ministry into disrepute. No species of vice may be spared through an excessive regard for delicacy; but indelicate words and phrases should never be uttered. Neither are cant phrases, commonplace remarks, nor undignified expressions of any kind, admissible in preaching.

It must not be inferred from any of the preceding remarks, that a young preacher may be negligent with regard to his style. This matter demands attention and pains. Paul enjoins upon Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. ii. 15.) It is said also, that "The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words." (Eccles. xii. 10.) While, then, our language should be plain, it ought to be above contempt, correct, chaste, and appropriate. It should be adapted to convey our thoughts distinctly to our hearers. All liability to misapprehend the meaning of what is said should be carefully avoided. It is advisable, therefore, for a young preacher to accustom himself to the use of short sentences. Long sentences, embracing a number of ideas, especially when complicated, are much more liable to be misunderstood. By presenting several objects together, they usually make a much feebler impression on the mind. Sometimes the speaker becomes entangled in a labyrinth; and neither

his hearers nor himself can tell what he intends to communicate. An intelligent friend told me of an instance in which this seemed to pervade the discourse. He had invited a lawyer to accompany him to a meeting. The preacher uttered many words. When they were returning the lawyer asked my friend, "What was that man talking about?" He was obliged to confess that he could not tell.

As perspicuity, or plainness, is peculiarly necessary in preaching, technical terms, and words or phrases in other languages, which may be properly used in scientific lectures, are unsuitable for the pulpit. They tend to perplex ordinary hearers, and to prevent them from deriving the benefit which they otherwise might derive from the discourse. If in any case it be needful to use a word not commonly understood, a clear definition should be immediately added. In general, however, all the words employed should be such as are in ordinary use, and understood by the community.

May you, my dear young Brother, entertain correct and distinct views with reference to every part of Christian doctrine and duty, and communicate them in a style adapted, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, to secure for them a lodgment in the hearts of your hearers!

Yours in gospel bonds,

CHARLES TUPPER.

Tremont, Aylesford, Jan. 16th, 1861.

For the Christian Messenger.

Are our Northern American neighbors accomplishing a "doubtful good" in their present sacrifice of blood and treasure?

MR. EDITOR,—

I proceed to sustain the negative of this inquiry; with no "doubtful" apprehensions, either as to the ultimate and permanent success of the Free States in their present struggle, or as to the justice of their cause, and of their course, since the war began. I fear not to maintain such ground in opposition to Editors and Correspondents of papers, Ship-owners, Traders, or any other individual opposer or class of opposers.

Bear with me, if I go back over ground which ought to be familiar to us all at this stage of those civil dissensions. What are the real or supposed grievances respectively of the South and the North in this, their National Crisis? We will aim to state them as intelligibly, fairly, and briefly as possible. Perhaps a more truthful and transparent delineation of the cause and course of the South is scarcely to be found than in the following sentences, penned indeed by a Northerner, but not by one of the political party which placed Mr. Lincoln in power,—probably a democrat, which party has been for years past, up to the memorable attack on Fort Sumter, truckling to and fraternizing with the South.

"Under the assumption of a so-called right of secession, certain sections of our country, or rather portions of the people of certain sections, have attempted to withdraw themselves from our national Union, nullify within their borders the laws of the United States, and set up an independent Government. In carrying out this purpose they took no steps to secure a peaceful and harmonious, not to say constitutional, withdrawal. * * * They asked no national Convention in which they might have a hearing of their grievances, or by which, if their minds were fully made up, and their exodus from the Union was under all possible contingencies a foregone conclusion, they might be discharged from the obligations of the compact, and the numerous delicate and difficult questions, which their withdrawal would infallibly originate, might be put in a train of amicable adjustment. * * * They rushed to the dismemberment of a great Empire, to the sundering of relations which involved the interests of thirty millions of freemen, and the hopes and destinies of a continent, with less of formality and ceremony than private citizens could have shown in dissolving an ordinary commercial partnership. * * *

They tore down and trampled on the National flag, the sacred banner under which their fathers and ours had first marched to National independence, and then to national greatness and glory. They seized the nation's fortresses, its arsenals, its arms, they reared their batteries against its forts, they fired against its ships, and finally they consummated their wrongs by attacking a small, feeble, half-starved garrison, whom the government proposed to provision but not to reinforce; and it was not in default of elaborate preparation, of deadly purpose, of unwavering execution, but simply by force of impregnable walls, that the whole of that gallant little band did not, at the close of that piece of unparalleled military jousting, lie blackened and gory corpses, destroyed by their brethren—their brethren politically, literally, beneath the National banner which they had sworn to defend, and which they were too honorable to betray. It cannot be forgotten that the fact that "nobody was hurt" in that terrible game of mimic war, was not owing to the humanity or chivalry of South Carolina. She did not, in a time of peace, and under the patient guns of the

fortress, which might have blown to atoms the incipient germs of hostility, weave around Fort Sumter her horrid net-work of slaughter; she did not, through long hours, rain her showers of shot and shell upon the devoted fortress, redoubling her fire when the bursting flames told that the garrison were assailed by a nearer, if not more formidable, foe, without attending a work of blood. If God made the bombardment innocuous, she meant it for destruction. She did her utmost that the men who had the presumption to remain in their place under the orders of the government and the protection of the National flag, should be killed, and the varnish of courtesy which softened the close of the fray, sincere as we may believe it was, cannot blind our eyes to the unprovoked character and deadly intention of the assault. * * * Let then our brethren who deprecate the blood-thirsty spirit of the North, and dwell with just eloquence on the horrors of war, remember who initiated the contest, and under what provocation the loyal States took up arms. They did not fire the first gun; they did not stir a finger until the nation had been assaulted, and until the safety of its capital was threatened, not merely in the irresponsible vauntings of Southern papers, but by a high official at Montgomery. * * *

But it is time to inquire into the grounds which the Southern people allege for their act of secession. They have not embarked in their movement without reasons which justify it to their own minds, and it is but simple justice to them and to ourselves that we contemplate, as far as possible, the subject from their point of view.—We refer not, of course, to the leaders in the movement. With many of them it is an iniquitous conspiracy. Flattering visions of a vast empire, embracing the fairest portion of our territory, and girdling the Gulf of Mexico, resting on servile labor, and commanding a monopoly of some of the great agricultural and manufacturing staples of the world—such visions have for years dazzled the eyes of Southern politicians, and determined them, at the earliest practicable moment, to dissolve a political connection which was distasteful to them, and which contained elements wholly incompatible with their dream of Empire. But how have they drawn to their support the large middle class, which did not share in their ambitious and splendid illusions?

We shall endeavor to state the case, with strict fairness, as between the North and the South.—The South hold to the doctrine of State Sovereignty, and the right of each of the constituent bodies to resume at any time the powers which it has granted, and thus at its own sovereign pleasure retire from the National Union. The North deny this doctrine. They hold that the separate sovereignty of the States is, under the Constitution, and so far as its provisions go, merged in the single sovereignty of the American people. * * * These separate theories of the Constitution determine the separate views of the two parties regarding the nature of the war. The North believe that, enjoying the protection and blessings of a government of extraordinary excellence, in rallying to defend it they are but discharging the most sacred and imperative of all secular obligations. The South believe that, in addition to the inherent right of secession, they are rising to resist a long series of aggressions, which have culminated in the election of a sectional President, and the triumph of a political party which aims at the overthrow of Southern institutions. They thus justify to themselves their act by the double right of secession and revolution. They seek the grounds of their movement partly in the Constitution of the country, as giving the right of peaceful withdrawal, and partly in that constitution of human nature in which is written the inalienable right of resistance to intolerable wrong. The right of secession, (the assumed right) is based on what is a favorite doctrine with Southern Statesmen, that the Constitution is a compact between sovereign States, which, therefore, they have a right to annul at pleasure. The premises in this argument we do not propose now to discuss. * * * It yet remains to be established as a principle of political ethics, that a sovereign State is not equally bound by the obligations which it has voluntarily assumed, as any private, or any number of private individuals. In private ethics, the right to give implies the right to take, but not the right to take back what you have unreservedly surrendered, (the italics are mine).—Whether it be an individual, or a State, no matter how sovereign—and, in fact, the more completely sovereign the stronger the argument—obligations solemnly assumed must be abided by until we are released from them by the power to which we have made the surrender. The theory, then, that the Constitution is a compact between sovereign States, makes, in itself, nothing for the right of secession. We must still look into the instrument itself; and looking into that instrument, blindness itself can scarcely avoid seeing that our fathers formed, not a league or confederation, but a government. Without obliterating the previous accidental colonial divisions, they overlaid them, bound them round, interpenetrated them, by an all-encompassing and paramount National Union. Look at what they did. They took from the States the power to levy armies, to create navies, to make war or peace, to enter into treaties with each other or with foreign powers, to coin money, to levy imposts on imported goods, to institute postal regulations, and interlaced the whole territory with the ramifications of one vast judicial system, centering at the seat of the National authority. * * * And without making one syllable of provision for the withdrawal of any of the parties to the arrangement, expressly declared that no State should pass a law conflicting with the laws of the United States, within its own borders.

The Southern people talk of the sovereign State of Virginia, or of South Carolina, and that, under the Constitution of the United States.—What sort of a sovereign State, we must ask, is

that which cannot build or own a ship, a fort, a mint, an arsenal, a custom-house, a post-office, which cannot make a treaty, which can neither send nor receive an ambassador, * * * which is all woven over with the network of an exterior judicial and exterior postal system?

But the right of Constitutional withdrawal denied, have the South grounds for revolution?"

The consideration of this question, Mr. Editor, we will allow our author to reserve for another week's issue of the Messenger.

A. C.

For the Christian Messenger.

Animal and Vegetable Diet.

MR. EDITOR,—

What shall I eat? and what shall I drink? and wherewithal shall I be clothed? are not the all-important questions; but they are of some importance. And as you have opened your columns to a discussion of the relative merits of of vegetable and animal food, I also, with your leave, will show my opinion.

Food and drink are, unfortunately, not matters of argument, but of taste. The palate, not the intellect, decides. The Chinese dines gloriously on earthworms and stewed puppies; the Erromangian on a roasted missionary. Even your correspondent M. would prefer apple dumpplings, pies, tarts, puddings, rice, nuts, with good coffee, sugar and cream, to a meat diet of this kind. The devout Jew would turn up his nose at a dish of ham and eggs, and would eschew and not chew a dish of fried eels or rattle-snakes. A western hunter would eat either with a relish.

Let me sit down hungry before a well-dressed turkey or quarter of lamb, with the "trimmings," and you may argue as much as you like. I am quite ready to discuss the question with you, whether those dishes are palatable, wholesome, nourishing, expedient, or lawful. But meanwhile I will "discuss" the food,—and whether I can meet your arguments or not, I can make a cheerful dinner.

I take the ground that animal food is lawful and good. That it is, under ordinary circumstances, necessary, I deny! I do not believe it adds either to our health, wealth, or happiness. I have studied the subject with some care, both theoretically and practically. I have lived in the climate of Nova Scotia for three years in succession without eating animal food. I may have tasted it four times during that period. I never enjoyed better health. I was hale, strong and—perhaps I imagined it—better tempered, than when I ate animal food. The first time I dined on hog afterwards, it made me sick for a week.

Man was made to live on vegetables. No grant of flesh was made to him for the first 2000 years. Men lived before the flood on a vegetable diet,—on the "tree yielding fruit," and the "herb bearing seed," to an age such as they have never obtained, since they were permitted to "devour flesh." The inference is not at all an illogical one, that the permission to eat flesh was intended to prevent longevity.

Chemistry shews that in the junk of hog that you eat, you get the same, and only the same elements which he got before you out of the oatmeal, the potatoes, the corn, the suill, and other savory morsels upon which he fed, and feasted, and fattened. You have yourself as good a factory as he for converting those substances into bone and muscle, and sinew. Why send them to his mill first?

"Comparative anatomy" gives its voice against animal food: A lady's mouth is not like a tiger's. Her teeth resemble most those of the animals which, like herself, have hands, not claws,—for pulling up roots, for culling fruits, and nuts, and all those rich delicacies which abound in the vegetable world; not for tearing, and rending the chicken and the dove.

The eaters of flesh are obliged to have recourse to the vegetable kingdom to make their meat palatable. They must line it well with onions, and sage, and summer savory,—they must pile on pepper, and mustard, &c., &c., in order to get it down. Cookery must exhaust all her stores of ingenuity to make it possible for man to live comfortably on flesh, and for all that deserves the name of variety, she must be indebted to the vegetable world.

M's argument from the half-starved Irish, is not conclusive. I oppose to it the case of Daniel and his three companions, who lived and fattened on pulse. Take those same Irish skeletons, and gradually accustom them to three good hearty meals per diem, of bread, and butter, and puddings, and tarts, and apples, and nuts, and raisins, and eggs and cream, or, if you choose to class butter and eggs and cream with your hogs and eels, give them a pint of good pure sw-