

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XX., No. 34.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, August 25, 1875.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXXIX., No. 34.

Poetry.

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

"The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. vii: 17.

He is my Shepherd, I his sheep;
I do not want to know
Whether the way be soft or steep
By which I am to go.
If green and smooth the mountain be,
I need not ask for more;
If stony, he will carry me,
As he has done before.

He is my Shepherd, I his sheep,
We travel onward still,
By pools where water-lilies sleep,
By many a quiet hill;
I feed in many a grassy dell,
I drink the waters clear;
This gracious voice I know so well
Is music to my ear.

He is my Shepherd, I his sheep;
I wandered once, I know;
I heard him on the mountains weep
That I should leave him so.
I trembled as I faintly guessed
A sorrow so divine,
For as he clasped me to his breast
The blood gushed forth on mine.

He is my Shepherd, I his sheep;
And what if death be near?
The shadows up the valley creep,
And yet I do not fear;
As closer to his side I cling,
I feel the cross so true,
With which his love was pledged to bring,
And safe has brought me through.

He is my Shepherd, I his sheep;
We journey on and on;
At last the smile upon his lips
Shall tell me all is won.
The table that he spreads for me
My foes shall all behold,
And in these trembling fingers see
His cup of royal gold.

The cup he put so gently by
When death was drawing near,
He freely fills for such as I,
And tells me not to fear.
And for those funeral odors shed
Upon his dying brow,
He pours the oil of joy instead
On each disciple now.

Shepherd! Good Shepherd! Turn and see!
I follow far behind:
The voice of mercy calling me
Comes borne on every wind.
Set wide the Father's open door,
That I the light may see,
And in his house forevermore
At last abide with Thee.

Religious.

HINTS ON THE VOICE. FOR YOUNG PREACHERS

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

If you have any idiosyncrasies of speech which are disagreeable to the ear, correct them, if possible. It is admitted that this is much more easy for the teacher to inculcate than for you to practise. Yet to young men in the morning of their ministry, the difficulty is not insuperable. Brethren from the country have a flavour of their rustic diet in their mouths, reminding us irresistibly of the calves of Essex, the swine of Berkshire, or the rants of Suffolk. Who can mistake the Yorkshire or Somersetshire dialects, which are not merely provincial pronunciations, but tones also? It would be difficult to discover the cause, but the fact is clear enough, that in some counties of England men's throats seem to be furrowed up, like long-used tea-kettles, and in others they ring like brass music with a vicious metallic sound. Beautiful these variations of nature may be in their season and place, but my taste has never been able to appreciate them. A sharp discordant squeak, like a rusty pair of scissors, is to be got rid of at all hazards; so also is a thick, inarticulate utterance in which no word is complete, but nouns, adjective, and verbs are made into a kind of hash. Equally objectionable is that ghostly speech in which a man talks without using his lips, ventriloquising most

horribly: sepulchral tones may fit a man to be an undertaker, but Lazarus is not called out of his grave by hollow moans. One of the surest ways to kill yourself is to speak from the throat instead of the mouth. This misuse of nature will be terribly avenged by her; escape the penalty by avoiding the offence. It may be well in this place to urge you, as soon as you detected yourself interposing hum-haw pretty plentifully in your discourse, to purge yourself of the insinuating but ruinous habit at once. There is no need whatever for it and although those who are now its victims may never be able to break the chain, you, who are beginners in oratory, must scorn to wear the galling yoke. It is even needful to say, open your mouths when you speak, for much of inarticulate mumbling is the result of keeping the mouth half closed. It is not in vain that the evangelists have written of our Lord, "He opened his mouth and taught them." Open wide the doors from which such godly truth is to march forth. Moreover, brethren, avoid the use of the nose as an organ of speech, for the best authorities are agreed that it is intended to smell with. Time was, when the nasal twang was the correct thing, but in this degenerate age you had better obey the evident suggestion of nature, and let the mouth keep to its work without the interference of the olfactory instrument. Should an American student be present he must excuse my pressing this remark upon his attention. Abhor the practice of some men, who will not bring out the letter "r," such a habit is "very wuinous and wediculous, vewy wetched and wewpwehensible."

Now and then a brother has the felicity to possess a most winning and delicious lisp. This is perhaps among the least of evils, where the brother himself is little and winning, but it would ruin any being who aimed at manliness and force. I can scarcely conceive of Elijah lisping to Ahab, or Paul prettily chipping his words on Mars' hill. There may be a peculiar pathos about a weak and watery eye, and a faltering style; we will go further, and admit that where these are the result of intense passion, they are sublime; but some possess them by birth, and use them rather too freely: it is, to say the least unnecessary for you to imitate them. Speak as educated nature suggests to you, and you will do well; but let it be educated, and not raw, rude, uncultivated nature. Demosthenes took, as you know, unbounded pains with his voice, and Cicero, who was naturally weak, made a long journey into Greece to correct his manner of speaking. With far nobler themes, let us not be less ambitious to excel. "Deprive me of everything else," says Gregory, of Nazianzen, "but leave me eloquence, and I shall never regret the voyages which I have made in order to study it."

Always speak so as to be heard. I know a man who weighs sixteen stone, and ought to be able to be heard half-a-mile, who is so gracelessly indolent, that in his small place of worship you can scarcely hear him in the front of the gallery. What is the use of a preacher whom men cannot hear? Modesty should lead a voiceless man to give place to others who are more fitted for the work of proclaiming the messages of the King. Some men are loud enough, but they are not distinct, their words overlap each other, play at leap-frog, or trip each other up. Distinct utterance is far more important than wind-power. Do give a word a fair chance, do not break its back in your vehemence, or run it off its legs in your haste. It is hateful to hear a big fellow mutter and whisper when his lungs are quite strong enough for the loudest speech; but at the same time, let a man shout ever so lustily, he will not be well heard unless he learns to push his words forward with due space between. To speak too slowly is miserable work, and subjects active-minded hearers to the disease called the "horror." It is impossible to hear a man who crawls along at a mile an hour. One word to-day and one

to-morrow is a kind of slow-fire which martyrs only could enjoy. Excessively rapid speaking, tearing and raving into utter rant, is quite as inexcusable; it is not, and never can be powerful, except with idiots, for it turns what should be an army of words into a mob, and most effectually drowns the sense in floods of sound. Occasionally, one hears an infuriated orator of indistinct utterance, whose impetuosity hurries him on to such a confusion of sounds, that at a little distance one is reminded of Lucan's lines:—

"Her gabbling tongue a muttering tone confounds,
Discordant and unlike to human sounds;
It seem'd of dogs the bark, of wolves the howl.
The doleful screaming of the midnight owl;
The hiss of snakes, the hungry lion's roar.
The bound of billows beating on the shore;
The groan of winds among the leafy wood,
And burst of thunder from the reading cloud!
'Twas these, all these in one."

It is an infliction, not to be endured twice, to hear a brother, who mistakes perspiration for inspiration, tear along like a wild horse with a hornet in its ear till he has no more wind, and must needs pause to pump his lungs full again; a reception of this indecency several times in a sermon is not uncommon, but is most painful. Pause soon enough to prevent that "hough, hough," which rather creates pity for the breathless orator than sympathy with the subject in hand. Your audience ought not to know that you breathe at all—the process of respiration should be as unobserved as the circulation of the blood. It is indecent to let the mere animal function of breathing cause any hiatus in your discourse.

Do not as a rule exert your voice to the utmost in ordinary preaching. Two or three earnest men, now present, are tearing themselves to pieces by needless bawling; their poor lungs are irritated, and their larynx inflamed by boisterous shouting, from which they seem unable to refrain. Now it is all very well to "Cry aloud and spare not," but "Do thyself no harm" is apostolical advice. When persons can hear you with half the amount of voice, it is as well to save the superfluous force for times when it may be wanted. "Waste not, want not" may apply here as well as elsewhere. Be a little economical with that enormous volume of sound. Do not give your hearers head-aches when you mean to give them heart-aches: you aim to keep them from sleeping in their pews, but remember that it is not needful to burst the drums of their ears. "The Lord is not in the wind." Thunder is not lightning. Men do not hear in proportion to the noise created; in fact, too much noise stuns the ear, creates reverberations and echoes, and effectually injures the power of your sermons. Adapt your voice to your audience; when twenty thousand are before you, draw out the stops and give the full peal, but not in a room which will only hold a score or two. Whenever I enter a place to preach, I unconsciously calculate how much sound is needed to fill it, and after a few sentences my key is pitched. If you can make the man at the end of the chapel hear, if you can see that he is catching your thought, you may be sure that those nearer can hear you, and no more force is needed, perhaps a little less will do—watch and see. Why speak so as to be heard in the street when there is nobody there who is listening to you? Whether in doors or out, see that the most remote hearers can follow you, and that will be sufficient. By the way I may observe, that brethren should, out of mercy to the weak, always attend carefully to the force of their voices in sick rooms, and in congregations where some are known to be very infirm. It is a cruel thing to sit down by a sick man's bed-side, and shout out "THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD." If you act so thoughtlessly, the poor man will say as soon as you are down stairs, "Dear me! how my head aches. I am glad the good man is gone, Mary; that is a very precious Psalm and so quiet like, but he read it out like thunder and lightning, and almost stunned me!" Recollect, you younger and un-

married men, that soft whispers will suit the invalid better than roll of drum and culverin.

Observe carefully the rule to vary the force of your voice. The old rule was, to begin very softly, gradually rise higher, and bring out your loudest notes at the end. Let all such regulations be blown to pieces at the cannon's mouth; they are impertinent and misleading. Speak softly or loudly, as the emotion of the moment may suggest, and observe no artificial and fanciful rules. Artificial rules are an utter abomination. As M. de Cormerin satirically puts it, "Be impassioned, thunder, rage, weep, up to the fifth word, of the third sentence, of the tenth paragraph, of the tenth leaf. How easy that would be! Above all, how very natural!" In imitation of a popular preacher, to whom it was unavoidable, a certain minister was accustomed in the commencement of his sermon to speak in so low a key that no one could possibly hear him. Everybody leaned forward, fearing something good was being lost in the air, but their straining was in vain, a holy mutter was all they could discern. If the brother could not have spoken out none should have blamed him, but it was a most absurd thing to do this when in a short time he proved the power of his lungs by filling the whole structure by sonorous sentences. If the first half of his discourse was of no importance, why not omit it? and if of any value at all, why not deliver it distinctly? Effect, gentlemen, that was the point aimed at; he knew that one who spoke in that fashion had produced great effects, and he hoped to rival him. If any of you dare commit such a folly for such a detestable object, I heartily wish you never entered this Institution. I tell you most seriously, that the thing called "effect" is hateful, because it is untrue, artificial, tricky, and therefore despicable. Never do anything for effect, but scorn the stratagems of little minds, hunting after the approval of connoisseurs in preaching, who are a race as obnoxious to a true minister as locusts to the Eastern husbandman. But I digress: be clear and distinct at the very first. Your exordia are too good to be whispered to space. Speak them out boldly, and command attention at the very outset by your manly tones. Do not start at the highest pitch as a rule, for then you will not be able to rise when you warm with the work; but still be outspoken from the first. Lower the voice when suitable even to a whisper; for soft, deliberate, solemn utterances are not only a relief to the ear, but have a great aptitude to reach the heart. Do not be afraid of the low keys, for if you throw force into them they are as well heard as the shouts. You need not speak in a loud voice in order to be heard well. Macaulay says of William Pitt, "His voice, even when it sank to a whisper, was heard to the remotest benches of the House of Commons." It has been well said that the most noisy gun is not the one which carries a ball the furthest: the crack of a rifle is anything but noisy. It is not the loudness of your voice, it is the force which you put into it that is effective. I am certain that I could whisper so as to be heard throughout every corner of our great tabernacle, and I am equally certain that I could holla and shout so that nobody could understand me. The thing could be done here, but perhaps the example is needless, as I fear some of you perform the business with remarkable success. Waves of air may dash upon the ear in such rapid succession that they create no translatable impression on the auditory nerve. Ink is necessary to write with, but if you upset the ink bottle over the sheet of paper, you convey no meaning thereby, so is it with sound; sound is the ink, but management is needed, not quantity, to produce an intelligible writing upon the ear. If your sole ambition be to compete with—

Stentor the strong, endued with brazen lungs,
Whose throat surpass'd the force of fifty
tongues."

then bawl yourselves into Elysium as rapidly as possible, but if you wish to be understood, and so to be of service, shun the reproach of being "impotent and loud." You are aware that shrill sounds travel the farthest: the singular cry which is used by travellers in the wilds of Australia, owes its remarkable power to its shrillness. A bell will be heard much further off than a drum; and very singularly, the more musical a sound is the farther it travels. It is not the thumping of the piano which is needed, but the judicious sounding of the best keys. You will therefore feel at liberty to ease the strain very frequently in the direction of loudness, and you will be greatly relieving both the ears of the audience and your own lungs. Try all methods, from the sledge-hammer to the puff-ball. Be as gentle as a zephyr and as furious as a tornado. Be, indeed, just what every common-sense person is in his speech when he talks naturally, pleads vehemently, whispers confidentially, appeals plaintively, or publishes distinctly.

We are bound to add—endeavour to educate your voice. Grudge no pains or labour in achieving this, for as it has been well observed, "However prodigious may be the gifts of Nature to her elect, they can only be developed and brought to their extreme perfection by labor and study." Think of Michael Angelo working for a week without taking off his clothes, and Handel hollowing out every key of his harpsichord like a spoon, by incessant practice. Gentlemen, after this, never talk of difficulty or weariness. It is almost impossible to see the utility of Demosthenes' method of speaking with stones in his mouth, but any one can perceive the usefulness of his pleading with the boisterous billows, that he might know how to command a hearing amidst the uproarious assemblies of his countrymen; and in his speaking as he ran up hill that his lungs might gather force from laborious use the reason is as obvious as the self-denial is commendable. We are bound to use every possible means to perfect the voice by which we are to tell forth the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Take great care of the consonants, enunciate every one of them clearly; they are the features and expression of the words. Practise indefatigably till you give every one of the consonants its due; the vowels have a voice of their own, and therefore they can speak for themselves. In all other matters exercise a rigid discipline until you have mastered your voice, and have it in hand like a well-trained steed. Gentlemen with narrow chests are advised to use the dumb-bells every morning, or, better still, those clubs which the College has provided for you. You need broad chests, and must do your best to get them. Do not speak with your hands in your waistcoat pockets so as to contract your lungs, but throw the shoulders back, as public singers do. Do not lean over a desk while speaking, and never hold the head down on the breast while preaching. Upward rather than downward let the body bend. Off with all tight cravats and button-up waistcoats; leave room for the full play of the bellows and the pipes. Observe the statues of the Roman or Greek orators, look at Raphael's picture of Paul, and, without affectation, fall naturally into the graceful and appropriate attitudes there depicted, for these are best for the voice. Get a friend to tell you your faults, or, better, welcome an enemy who will watch you keenly and sting you savagely. What a blessing such an irritating critic will be to a wise man, what an intolerable nuisance to a fool! Correct yourself diligently and frequently, or you will fall into errors unawares, false tones will grow, and slovenly habits will form insensibly; therefore criticise yourself with unceasing care. Think nothing little by which you may be even a little more useful. But, gentlemen, never degenerate in this business into pulpit fops, who think gesture and