

God's Poems.

BY J. HUNT COOKE.

The humblest flower is a poem by Him
Who dwells amidst the blazing cherubim.
Read it well,
It has something to tell,
In rhythm of color it will confess,
God loveth beauty and gentleness;
Marvelous are all his works, and each,
If you will but hearken, some lesson will teach.

The lowliest life a poem may be,
Pleasing to God by a soul that is free;
Child of light,
Be holy and bright,
That so, by a noble life and true,
You may be to God what a flower is to you;
A blossom of song for the garden sublime,
He is gathering in from the garden of time.

Spiritual Preaching.

BY REV. T. H. HARMAN.

When I speak of spiritual preaching I do not mean corporal preaching, or a violent use of the body, such as stamping or hammering the desk with the fist, or pacing the platform like a chained animal. What I mean by spiritual preaching is energetic, inspiring spiritualizing preaching, such that will make the congregation feel the fire that runs through the veins of the speaker. It has been said, "like preacher, like people." A preacher may be ever so intellectual; his sermons may consist of the most modern thought and investigation, put in ever so interesting a style; but if it lacks the spirit, and thrill, and enthusiasm of a heart warmed and aglow with the importance of the subject, it will fail to meet the approval of the Master.

In too many of our pulpits to-day we hear history repeated, or eulogies pronounced on eminent men, or logical or scientific treatises, rather than pure, genuine, soul-stirring preaching. Bishop Nind says, "The urgent call to-day is for live and magnetic preachers—for pulpits that can draw and move the people." He also says, "Graduates from our theological schools are often well equipped as scholars, and sound and forceful thinkers, without being essentially improved as preachers." This is certainly the result of intellectual culture to the neglect of the spiritual. The same result will follow only intellectual preaching. The hearers will be intelligent, but cold and indifferent spiritually. In so many cases education makes men cold and formal in their treatment of Scripture. But this should not be. In speaking thus, I do not intend to oppose education; for a young man should never think of entering the sacred ministry, without the very best mental equipment possible. Christianity is not a system for drones, and God has not made the mind capable of development without a purpose, and therefore it is our duty to improve and develop it. Yes, I think he calls us to prepare just as much as he calls us to preach. In fact, I believe God will hold us responsible for neglect to improve our minds to the extent of our opportunity. Instead of making men stiff and selfish, and formal, and complex in thought, education ought, if properly pursued, to make them humble, and spiritual, and simple in their sermons.

The preachers of to-day have a craze for oratory and eloquence with which they expect to hold and interest their audiences. But real orators, like poets, are born, and not built up by layers, and they are not so plentiful as the foliage of the forest, but average about one to every two millions of people. I believe the ministry is responsible for much of the indifference manifested on the part of Christian people. In order that people be moved to action by preaching they must see the gleam in the eye, and the flush of the face, and must, so to speak, hear the throbbing of the heart. A minister can not lead the people into the depth unless he goes down himself. I do not believe in being bombastic, but I do believe in a holy, consecrated sanctified enthusiasm, and I believe that the showers of blessings fall rather meager on the preacher who does not possess some. We need more thunder in the pulpit, and not simply thunder and noise alone, but there must be the electric fire or lightning that is capable of striking somewhere.

Education fails in its purpose if it does not cultivate in man a deeper spiritual feeling. How ever education may assist in comprehending the literal in the Bible, the spiritual and deeper current flowing through Scripture is revealed only by the Holy Spirit. That is why it is hid from the wise and revealed to babes. While we should seek to instruct our hearers when in the pulpit, yet I think the main purpose should be to inspire them to more holy living. This can not be done unless we preach so as to reach the emotions and stir the fountain of action. One has said, "Much of the preaching of to-day is as if the com-

K. D. C. Cures Dyspeptics and makes them cholera proof

mand was to 'Feed my giraffes,' instead of 'Feed my sheep.' They seem to be looking in the trees for the multitude instead of the ground.

While it is not well on ordinary occasions to show any excess of emotion, yet there must be emotion in our preaching or it will be vain. A religion that produces no feeling is of no practical value whatever. I know there is a reality in the Christian religion because I feel it, is good philosophy; and I know that God's spirit dwells in my heart because I feel him, is none the less philosophical. When a soul is born from above it will report itself. Some one will find it out. Just so with a minister that is full of the Spirit; he will make it known by his preaching.

It seems to me there needs to be a coming back to the old-time prayer and class meetings, and the preaching where we roll up our sleeves and go to work as though the whole world were perishing before us, and we only left to save them.

I believe if our preaching were more spiritual the people would become more spiritual, and have more sympathy for, and more interest in religious things. If the people were more spiritual they would give more of their means to support the cause. The best way to reach a man's pocket-book for a given cause is to get him in sympathy with that cause. I believe that if the church were as spiritual as it should be there would be plenty of money for its various interests. Dear brethren in the ministry, let us be more spiritual and inspiring in our preaching, and, if possible, lead the church to a higher spiritual atmosphere.

The Accessories of Prayer Meetings.

Complaint is oftentimes made about "dull prayer-meetings," want of life and relish for public services, and so forth. Before throwing the responsibility either upon minister or people, it would be well to inquire how far things, not men, have to do with success or failure in these matters.

We write from a deep conviction that all persons are more influenced by the little things of circumstances—be they new or old arrangements, sounds, and the like, than they would perhaps be willing to admit. The fact operates only the more deeply, because unknown and unsuspected. Dr. Hamilton advises all Bible readers, if possible, to have a book which the very beauty of the binding and the fairness of the paper would induce its possessor to read. Yet the truth is the same in the handsome as in the old musty volume. But we are irresistibly influenced by what our eyes see, and our hands touch—pleased or annoyed oftentimes without knowing why. It is important that we have good food, and also that it be properly cooked, but we all know that our appetites and relish for the same are considerably influenced by the manner in which it is served.

Well, now, if ministers and officers were but keenly alive to the bearing of these remarks upon the subject in hand, we are persuaded that there would be little room for complaint.

Beecher dwells on the importance of the minister being in the midst of the people and they being gathered closely around him. There is a world of weighty advice in this remark. Call it magnetic influence or spiritual influence or by whatever name you may; still every thoughtful speaker at or leader of a meeting, must often have felt the deep and actual truthfulness of this. The minister has more power with the congregation, and the people have more power in their prayers for one another, when they are gathered closely together and in a room that is not ten times too large for them.

Then as to the singing. Oh, we wish that on this subject we had the pen of a ready writer, and eloquence to set forth the positive importance of this part of a public worship. As it stands now the whole weight of a service is thrown on to those who may preach or pray. All else is regarded as mere preliminary or breathing time. We have had our souls harrowed up by hearing awful words sung to almost comic tunes, or bright and triumphant words set to tunes fitted only for a dirge or a requiem. Let the words and the tunes be a matter of previous arrangement and actual preparation, just as the sermon is calculated not for sensuous effect but for spiritual impressions, so that the truth contained in the words may even captivate by the beauty of their utterance, or force their way by the winning pathos of their expression. At present scores of singers do all their preparatory work during prayer, a most irreverent custom which ought to be put down at once and forever.

Once more. How often Christian people are called upon to meet in the

Try K. D. C. while eracho

week-evenings in cold, dark, uncomfortable rooms! And the smell. Ah! well, we won't say anything about that,—when by a little forethought all might have been comfortable and even cozy. The very arrangement of the seats in harsh parallel lines, looking so exclusive and unlike a family gathering; the presence of a railing between minister and people, should by all means be avoided. Set your forms in a quadrangle or horseshoe shape, so that the minister has every person almost within arm's length, and destroy that detestable practice of men gathering together on one side and women on the other side of the room.

Is anyone inclined to smile at these details brought in connection with so great a subject as that for which we gather together? We have heard persons almost rebuke others for want of self-sacrifice or spirituality when urging the importance of these things. But we fail to see any Christian virtue in trying to worship God when your teeth are chattering with cold, or your body pained by an uncomfortable seat, or your ear shocked by a screech or a groan called singing. Let us remind our readers who it was that mentioned so small a detail as "shutting the door." He knew well that the ear and the eye could take in that which could mar or quicken the devotions of the soul.

We might write much more on these matters from personal experience, but forbear. Let us say—and we write meanly for officers and singers—mean success and efficiency in every detail of public worship. Let the comfort and arrangement of the room speak a welcome, let the singing speak out unmistakably the sentiments of the soul, let the touch of the hand speak sympathy and love. Attend to these and other accessories that will suggest themselves to you, then, we think, you will be gratified with the result.—E. W.

Borrowing Trouble.

"I have had a great deal of trouble in my life from things that never happened." This was the acknowledgment of one who, in review of a long life with its varied experiences and its abundant illustrations of the faithfulness of God to his covenant with his children, brings at the same time the testimony of experience to the unprofitableness of an apprehension and forecasting evils which are conjured up by morbid imagination and distrust of Providential wisdom and care. No doubt this experience coincides with that of a large number who break for themselves the sweet security of that covenant, which is in all things well-ordered and sure.

President Garfield used to say that "it was the unexpected that happened." The expected often does not happen. There is no more unprofitable investment than discounting contingencies. There is no limit to possibilities. If we allow ourselves to constitute all the distant clouds within our horizon into possible blizzards and cyclones, we can darken the sunshine of our brightest days and turn all life's brightness into gloom. "Some days must be dark and dreary." But there is always "the clear sun shining after rain."

It is neither good philosophy nor good religion to anticipate the worst issue when troubles and difficulties make their attack upon us. Because her little child begins to droop it is not reasonable for the mother to forebode its death. We need not be stricken with terror and dismay because our affairs are not quite as prosperous as we may desire. Our apprehensions may be just as groundless as old Jacob's were when he cried out, "All these things are against me." Never was man more mistaken. Every item in his adverse estimate was gloriously in his favor, and combination of supposed disaster and sorrow was just ready to turn upon him such a flood of joy and light and lasting good as was beyond all compass of his effort to bring above, and beyond the power of his imagination to conceive. He could never have planned the same which God was now ready to reveal.

Instead of borrowing trouble to to paralyze our energies, making our hands hang down and our knees feeble and rob life of its joys, we had better seek that strong, practical faith which is the gift of God, and which will garrison the soul with perfect peace and with the love which casts out fear. What chance is there for the worst to happen when all things work together for good?—*The Christian Intelligencer*

He who is false to a present duty breaks a thread in the loom, and will find a flaw when he may have forgotten its cause.—Beecher.

Drive out Dyspepsia or it will drive out thee. Use K. D. C.

The English People and the Bible.

No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was as yet the one English book which was familiar to every Englishman; it was read at churches and read at home, and everywhere its words, as they fell on ears which custom had not desensitized to their force and beauty, kindled a startling enthusiasm. . . . The power of the book over the mass of Englishmen, showed itself in a thousand superficial ways, and in none more conspicuously than in the influence it exerted on ordinary speech. It formed, we must repeat, the whole literature which was practically accessible to ordinary Englishmen; and when we recall the number of common phrases which we owe to great authors, the bits of Shakespeare, or Milton, or Dickens, or Thackeray, which unconsciously interweave themselves in our ordinary talk we shall better understand the strange mosaic of biblical words and phrases which coloured English talk two hundred years ago. The mass of picturesque allusion and illustration which we borrow from a thousand books, our fathers were forced to borrow from one; and the borrowing was the easier and the more natural than the range of the Hebrew literature fitted it for the expression of every phase of a feeling. When Spenser poured forth his warmest love-sonnets in the "Epithalamion," he adopted the very words of the Psalmist, and he bade the gates open for the entrance of his bride. When Cromwell saw the mists break over the hills of Dunbar, he hailed the sunbursts with the cry of David: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered. Like as the sun riseth, so shalt thou drive them away!" Even to common minds this familiarity with grand poetic imagery in prophet and apocalypse gave a loftiness and ardour of expression, that with all its tendency to exaggeration and bombast we may prefer to the slipshod vulgarisms of the shop keepers of to-day.

The Touchstone of Life.

A recent newspaper paragraph began with this sentence: "Low spirits are a common excuse for a great deal of selfishness." At once one wants to transpose this and make it read: "Selfishness is the cause of low spirits." It is simply impossible for an unselfish nature to be troubled with melancholia unless it be caused by a diseased liver. The man or woman who suffers from "low spirits" is diseased either in body or soul, and would better look to it that the disease does not become chronic.

The selfish person is self-centred. He is so interested in his own feeling, moods, personal affairs, that he cannot see the mountains of his neighbor's woes for looking at his own molehills. No man can have a perspective who does not look beyond his own dooryard. And to fill his time so that he has the sense of usefulness he must have a dooryard so wide that it calls for the service of his neighbors to keep it in order, and his time as overseer of that service; when it reaches this proportion he is forced to become interested in taxes, tariff, and the condition and balance of trade. Low spirits, then, depend on how the decision of these public questions affects his private interest. Unselfishness is the key that unlocks the door of happiness, and puts one in possession of those riches which even death cannot remove.

After all the secret of true living is not in possession but in disbursement. Whether the accumulations are of mind, purse, or other possessions, man lives as he shares. He exists in proportion as his possessions stand between him and his neighbor. Isolation, whether caused by wealth or poverty, prevents the birth or expression of sympathy, and sympathy keeps man so in touch with his neighbor that there is no time, except in illness, for the inertia that causes low spirits. Sympathy is the safeguard of the human soul against selfishness.—*The Christian Union*.

Serious Things To-Morrow.

Many years ago a Greek nobleman made a feast for his friends. In the midst of his mirth a messenger entered in great haste, with a letter. It was from a distance, to tell him that a plot had been formed by his enemies to kill him that night. "My master desired me to say that you must read the letter without delay, for it is about serious things."

Ward off Disease by taking K. D. C.

Serious things to-morrow," said the nobleman, as he threw the letter aside, and took up his cup of wine. The delay was fatal. Before his feast was at an end, his enemies rushed in to the hall and slew him.

"What folly!" you say; "why did he not attend to the warning?" But are you not acting in the same manner? The world with all its pleasures and profits to-day; serious things to-morrow!

Give heed to this friendly warning. Forsake your evil ways. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and without whom you must be forever lost. He invites you by His Holy Spirit in His word; "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;" for "now is the day of salvation." Serious Things To-day!

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.—Was written in poetry, and contains about 1,000 of the 3,000 proverbs of Solomon. The whole book abounds in allusions, now found for the first time and precisely applicable, to the age of Solomon; to gold and silver and precious stones; to the duties and powers of kings; to commerce. The Book of Proverbs is not on a level with the Prophets or the Psalms. It approaches human things and things divine from quite another side. It is the philosophy of practical life. It is the sign to us that the Bible does not despise common sense and discretion. It impresses upon us in the most forcible manner the value of intelligence, prudence of a good education. Above all, it insists over and over again upon the doctrine that goodness is wisdom, and that wickedness and vice are folly.—*Dean Stanley*.

Pearls.

Make life a ministry of love, and it will always be worth living.—*Browning*.
The love of Christ is the conducting medium to the love of all mankind.—*Jouett*.
If we are devoted to God's fear, we shall be delivered from all other fear.—*Spurgeon*.

As there are many wolves within the Church, so out of it there are many sheep.—*Augustine*.
Do they cast us out of the city? They can not cast us out of the city which is in the heavens.—*Gregory Nazianzen*.

No evil dooms us hopelessly except the evil we love and desire to keep in, and make effort to escape from.—*George Eliot*.

A holy life has a voice; it speaks when the tongue is silent, and is either a constant attraction or a perpetual reproof.—*Hinton*.

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