

WRITING ONE'S OWN EPITAPH.

"What a strange proposition!" would be the ready reply of every reader, were that work now proposed to him. "This is no work of ours. Let those who come after us do it. This work is not to be done by us, but for us, and an absurdity is the idea of a such a work till after we are dead."

But if an epitaph on a tomb-stone has any thing to say of moral character, it speaks of what was done before death—not of what was done at death, or after it. The person was doing, when life ran on, that which formed the basis of the epitaph, provided there was no hypocrisy in the inscription. The author of the inscription was only, when making it, transcribing what had been already virtually written. He did not create, but took the materials already furnished at his hand. He copied in a comprehensive sentence a volume which had been written before. Who wrote that volume? It consisted of the life of the deceased. It was the life he lived. He then furnished what was condensed into those few words, by which the chiselled marble spoke to the world of him who slept beneath.

We are busy, then, about the very work we should reprobate, and properly, were it proposed in the shape of our actually writing our inscription on our tomb, by our daily manner of life, the motives that govern us, the emotions which are awakened in our bosoms, the words we utter, the example we present to the world, by all this we make inscriptions. We tell the world who we are. We speak more forcibly and effectually than the cold stone, that marks where we lie, can speak to men.

We speak to the few comparatively what is spoken by the engraved stone. We speak to the many by what we now display of character. There will be only now and then a loiterer in the churchyard where we shall lie. Here and there, one in the thousands may look upon the epitaph found there. But the many—the multitude about us—are reading what we are now offering by our daily life for their perusal. We thus speak in every circle in which Providence places us, and to every class of persons thus brought into contact with us. And, as life is prolonged, the number becomes immensely great. The living epitaph addresses a vastly greater audience than the dead.

And small is the impression made by the cold stone's best account of us. Our present and daily developed character has a living voice, our kindness beams in the eye. Our love for the soul speaks by the affectionate warning, or the fervent intercession. Our reverence for God, in the sacredness of our manifest regard for all his institutions. Our spiritual mind in the reference, in all our actions, to eternity. The tombstone is dead—we are alive; and living and heart-affecting is the appeal we make before the living witnesses, of our living piety. That cold stone is a cold address. Our warm-hearted and visible piety has warmth to melt cold hearts around us.

The cold chisel drives into the cold stone the words that tell what we were. But we, by a close and faithful walk with God, act with far higher power upon the living spirits of men. We engrave directly on the heart—Alive unto God, we press the moral features of our characters upon the living, the sensitive, and yet the indestructible tablets of rational minds.

"I am writing my epitaph!" This might be the truthful utterance of every human being on the theatre of life. How much interest in the question, and who ought not in the deepest seriousness to ask it—"What am I writing!"—*N. Y. Observer.*

Integrity among Christians.

The religion of Christ is utterly opposed to all those deceitful arts and manoeuvres by which so many seek to make their way in the world. It exhorts, "that no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter." It inculcates the most elevated standard of morals in relation to this whole subject. And whenever true Christian principle prevails, there will be seen a standard of action in this respect, far higher than that which obtains in the world at large. In the business relations of life, the professed followers of Christ come directly in contact with the men of the world, and reveal most clearly the principles by which they are guided. If they are known, in this practical way, as hard, artful, overbearing men—if they must be watched and guarded against, just as one guards himself against a professional horse-jockey, they may rest assured that their Christian influence in the

community where they dwell goes for very little. Men at large will not and ought not to recognize any great worth or virtue in a religion which manifests itself in this way. Many professing Christians seems to suppose that they exhibit a real integrity, so long as they keep strictly within the bounds of a *legal morality*. But it is not so. The laws of the land are necessarily imperfect. They cannot be adapted to all the cases of right and wrong which may arise in the intercourse of men.—They cannot mete out true *moral justice* between man and man, in reference to a thousand little interests. It is no uncommon circumstance that gross *injustice* is perpetrated in the name of the law, simply because of the limitations and deficiencies of law. And the professing Christian, who is on the look out for such opportunities—who goes forward in the way of wrong, simply because he has law on his side, thereby forfeits the respect of men, and sorely impairs his influence. The gospel of Christ goes deeper than these human laws. It gives laws to the conscience and the heart, which every true follower of Christ will observe, though human laws do not require him to do so.

These truths have a practical application. There will often be found in the Church, men who seem to pride themselves upon being shrewd and sharp at a bargain—upon being equal to the world in all the cunning and overreaching of trade, and the church has to bear the disgrace of such a spirit. For the enemies of religion take a great delight in marking the conduct of such men, and holding up to reproach the church of which they are members. A church member who has had one jot of his worldly spirit abated by his connection with Christ, who is just as eager and just as unscrupulous in his grasp after this world's goods as before, is certainly a very singular person. His offence may not take such a shape as to be exactly disciplinable, and yet it may be doing far more injury to the church, than many offences, which are made the subject of discipline.—*Congregationalist.*

Power of the Gospel.

We were attending one of the churches in this city in our usual place. It was communion season. The pastor, on admitting some new candidates, remarked that there was one who had been accepted, who was prevented by her infirmities from attending on that day—it being inclement and stormy. She was a poor colored crippled girl—a member of the Sabbath-school. All remembered to have seen her hobbling into the church—an object of the deepest pity. Yet, he remarked, the experience which she had expressed in her own simple language of God's dealings with her soul, was truly wonderful. That soul, in that poor, shattered, unattractive body, was a temple of the Holy Ghost. Like blind Bartimeus, like the poor, the maimed, the blind, to whom our Saviour preached, she had been adopted among God's children. She had been brought in from the highways and hedges to a fit place in the house of God, which the beautiful and the gay, the rich, the educated, the happy in this world's smile, had passed by and despised. The gospel did not look at the earthly shell which enclosed the gem of immortality. There was that which was capable of becoming equal to the angels. The gospel gathered her in, and would prepare her for a radiant seat among the sons of light.

So it was ever with this Divine Word. It is the wisdom and power of God to the salvation of all who believe. It uses not earthly standards; it weighs human souls in the scales of Heaven. Despise none of these little ones. Pride not thyself upon thy gifts. The measure of an earthly judgment will not bring thee to heaven, or keep any out of heaven. These glad tidings come to thee only as a poor sinful man, whatever may be thy earthly condition; and they are God's word and pledge of salvation, and heaven to thee, however poor, and wretched, and despised thou mayest be in thy present state.—*N. Y. Evangelist.*

Glory of Salvation by Christ.

The rank of the redeemed sinner is not only raised after his fall, it is raised to a height above all creation. And this elevation is the necessary consequence of the way of his salvation. The exaltation of his rank is not the reward of his sin, but is the necessary consequence of his being made one with Christ, in his obedience and righteousness. In order that Christ might redeem his people, he became one with them. In this way he was es-

teemed, and truly esteemed, guilty as owing their debt. By this, his righteousness become theirs. In this way, also, everything that belongs to him becomes theirs, as far as their common nature admits. His rank as God exclusively belongs to himself, but in every thing in which he is one with his people, they possess whatever belongs to him. By their oneness with him, they died with him, they were buried with him, they rose with him, and with him now sit in heavenly places. They will sit on his throne, and reign with him forever over all worlds. All the domains of the universe belong to him, and in him they belong to them. They are joint heirs with Christ. As the wife possesses all things that belong to her husband, so the Church possesses every thing that belongs to Christ, by virtue of their marriage. The high rank, then, to which believers are raised, is the necessary consequence of their union with Christ. He is the head; they are the body. If Christ, the head, sits on the throne, the members of the body must sit in union with the head. And so they are represented in the Book of God. Redeemed sinners sit on the throne of the Lamb, while angels stand in the outer circle around it.—Whatever worlds of intelligent beings may be supposed to exist in the universe, however numerous and glorious the hosts of angels, in the whole range of creation there cannot be found an equal to redeemed man. Here is wisdom, ye sons of science! You talk of your discoveries. Be silent, ye children of vanity!—What are all your discoveries, when compared with the discovery that the gospel makes of the glorious destination of the ransomed sons of God? Here is a discovery that raises man from a degradation below the vilest reptiles to the highest rank of created existence. Down, down, vain pretenders to wisdom! There is no science equal to the science of salvation. Our science raises its pupils to the throne of God.—*Carson.*

Grounds of Substantial Peace.

Let the world be as valuable as it will, yet something else is wanted to give peace to the mind, something that can calm the fears and raise the hopes for futurity; and this nothing but religion can do, which entitles us to His protection, before whom things past, present, and to come bow down and obey. If we have the assurance of his love and favor to us, nothing can disturb us: we stand upon a rock against which the winds and waves may spend their fury, but shall spend it in vain; for it is immovable. The very circumstances which give terror to the worldly man, and fills his breast with horror, will give ease and comfort to the pious. When he thinks of the shortness of his life, and the speedy account he must give to God, his blood retires to his heart, and hardly there maintains its post; but when the good man's thoughts are so fixed, his heart springs with joy, and all his hopes begin to bloom; the prospect of that blessed day so fills his mind, and engages all his thought, that he is lost in pleasure and delight, and forgets all the pains and calamities of life. Not the tyrant's frown, nor the executioner who waits for blood, can rob him of his peace; he looks on them as messengers sent by Providence to deliver him from his pain, and to carry him to the haven of his rest where his soul longs to be. This, this only was the art by which saints and martyrs overcame the world, and looked upon racks and gibets, and every form of death, but as so many doors opening into the kingdom of rest and glory. By the same art still do good men triumph under all the trials of fortune; by this they preserve their peace in their latest hours, and resign with joy their spirits into His hand who gave them.—*Bishop Sherlock.*

Biblical Pronouns.

Luther pronounced pronouns to be the sweetest and most consolatory expressions to be found in the word of God. What, in fact, more tenderly elevating than where the prophet Isaiah heralds peace and refreshing to the people of Israel? "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." No longer the "Lord God, the Lord strong and mighty," but "your God;" and "my people." And how marked the difference, between saying, "The Lord is a shepherd," and "The Lord is my shepherd;" between the heathen, who acknowledges God as the Father of all things, and the ransomed of his well-beloved, who behold in the Lord, "Our Father which is in heaven;" between "the Lord will hear me when I call upon him," and "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The Useful more Enduring than Beautiful.

The tomb of Moses is unknown; but the traveller slakes his thirst at the well of Jacob. The gorgeous palace of the wisest and wealthiest of monarchs, with the cedar, and gold, and ivory; and even the great temple of Jerusalem, hallowed by the visible glory of the Deity himself—are gone; but Solomon's reservoirs are as perfect as ever. Of the ancient architecture of the Holy City not one stone is left upon another; but the pool of Bethesda commands the pilgrim's reverence at the present day. The columns of Persepolis are mouldering into dust; but its cisterns and aqueducts remain to challenge our admiration. The golden house of Nero is a mass of ruins; but the Aqua Claudia still pours into Rome its limpid stream. The temple of the Sun at Tadmor, in the wilderness, has fallen; but its fountain sparkles as freshly in his rays, as when thousands of worshippers thronged its lofty colonnades. It may be that London will share the fate of Babylon, and nothing be left to mark its site save mounds of crumbling brick-work. The Thames will continue to flow as it does now. And if any work of art should still rise over the deep ocean of time, we may well believe that it will be neither a palace nor a temple, but some vast aqueduct or reservoir; and if any name should still flash through the mist of antiquity it will probably be that of the man who in his day sought the happiness of his fellow men rather than their glory, and linked his memory to some great work of national utility and benevolence. This is the true glory which outlives all others, and shines with undying lustre from generation to generation—imparting to works something of its own immortality, and in some degree rescuing them from the ruin which overtakes the ordinary monuments of historical tradition, or mere magnificence.—*Edinburgh Review.*

Music.

Luther is frequently and fervently thankful for being enriched with a love of music. He says, "It is one of the fairest and most glorious gifts of God, to which Satan is a bitter enemy; for it removes from the heart the weight of sorrow, and the fascination of evil thoughts. Music is a kind and gentle discipline; it refines the passions, and improves the understanding. Those who love music are honest and gentle in their tempers. I always loved music, and would not for a great matter be without the little skill I possess in this art." The amiable and talented Hooker, in the fifth book of his "Ecclesiastical Polity," speaking of music, says, "Touching musical harmony, whether by instrument or voice, such is the force thereof, and so pleasing effects it hath in that very part of man which is most divine, that some have been induced thereby to think that the soul itself, by nature, is, or hath in it harmony."

Choice Sayings of Newton.

My principal method of defeating heresy, is by establishing the truth. One proposes to fill a bushel with tares; now if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts.

Many have puzzled themselves about the origin of evil; I observe there is an evil, and that there is a way to escape it, and with this I begin and end.

I can conceive a living man without an arm or a leg, but not without a head or heart; so there are some truths essential to vital religion, and which all awakened souls are taught.

We should take care we do not make our profession of religion a receipt in full for all other obligations.

A man truly illuminated will no more despise others, than Bartimeus, after his own eyes were opened, would take a stick and beat every blind man he met.

When weak arguments are adduced to sustain a good cause, and are refuted, it is a common error for men to suppose that the contrary side of the question is established. The point at issue is yet untouched. To show the inconclusiveness of an argument is not to adduce one upon the opposite side of the question.

It is very important in debate to introduce but few arguments and sustain them well. In war, Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great owed their success to the introduction of the phalanx. Napoleon gained his victories by concentrating his forces upon a single point.

Cultivating the Heart.

It is easier to educate the mind than to educate the soul; and no training is more difficult than that of the moral affections though the