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"HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS"—2d Timothy, i. 13.

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## Poetry.

### Poem

READ AT ALUMNI DINNER OF COLBY UNIVERSITY  
BY HON. CHARLES THURBER.

When the statesman gets up on the stump or the stand,

To instruct the dear people at duty's command,  
'Tis a chronic device to denote he is wise,

To declare he is taken entire by surprise,  
If I told you I never had dreamed such a thing

As to rise here, to-day, in this presence and sing,  
And I had not prepared an impromptu, not one,

To impart to you either instruction or fun,  
And I really, when called on this moment to rise,

Like the statesman, am taken entire by surprise—  
I suppose you'd as really believe what I say

As you would the old statesman, were he here to-day:  
Yet I can say, since hearing my yesterday's strain

It is strange that you set me to singing again.  
I'd a glorious old mother, as genuine as gold,

And who blessed me till almost a hundred years old,  
And although I had seen her in life's daily walk,

And had heard her on subjects a thousand times talk,  
I could never discover o'er one little bit

Of a bluish, excepting the following, to wit—  
She had always clung fast, from her childhood and youth,

To the old-fashioned habit of telling the truth,  
And her children, imbibing the same verdant tincture,

Speak the truth, the truth only, whenever they speak;  
And the consequence is, with a habit so hard,

It has pretty near ruined her son for a bard,  
He can measure his verses and jingle his rhymes,

And can sing of the wrongs and the rights of the times,  
But as truth is his motto, and nothing but truth,

He can never call in fiction to help make it smooth,  
But as one who is daily surrounded with duns,

If he pays, it must be from the scantiest funds,  
And in order to pay his poetical debts,

He must compromise out of his puny assets.  
I decidedly think 'tis the best thing to do,

When we speak to say nothing but that which is true;  
But I own the old Adam with hope in his eye,

Beholds something bewitching full off in a lie,  
Yet a witchery, however enchanting it be,

That possesses no influence with you or with me;  
If it had, we'd not been, I am bold to avow

The poor sinners we are, but distinguished ones now.  
Lexicographers often have blundered and erred,

Notwithstanding their research respecting this word.  
They define an impromptu, a thing whose *ecclat*

Owes its power and its point to a slight *coup d'etat*;  
Like a glass of Rochelle, 'twill not relish and flash,

If the parts are not mixed and imbibed at a dash;  
Like celestial artillery, it startles the more,

As the time is the less 'twixt the flash and the roar;  
Like a bomb, a slow match may explode at the last,

But it may not until the occasion is past.

Now to this definition it is I demur,  
And I'm forced to declare Lexicographers err,  
For impromptus, the genuine, as nowadays wrought,  
Are the product of labor and study, and thought.

That egregious old Bruin, Sam. Johnson, whilom,  
Used to get up his wise conversations at home,

So that when at the club he had power to evince  
Nature meant him to be a colloquial prince;

And 'tis said Mr. Coleridge marked out through the week  
Both the subject to speak on and how he would speak;

And e'en Garrick made targets beforehand for wit,  
To set up as occasion presented to hit;

And extempore speeches, too numerous to name,  
That for being thought so have secured the most game,

Were the product of honest and whole hearted toil,  
With a plentiful midnight consumption of oil.

On occasions like this, speakers oftentimes soar  
To the clouds upon subjects ne'er thought of before;

And we think, we the people, who're not so *au fait*,  
If there are giants now, it must be such as they;

For we think human heads out of which, when they please  
Can be drawn such a fund as is drawn out of these,

Must have surely been trained in the very best school,  
And without the least doubt, must be pretty near full.

I've a friend who's a cistern of water up high  
In his attic, that yields him a constant supply,

And whate'er be the time, and whate'er the demand,  
The supply, howe'er little or great, is at hand;

And we think from the constant and bounteous supply,  
That the cistern will never be shallow or dry,

But alas! if we look in the rear of the screen,  
Where the actions and all the machinery are seen,

We shall find pretty sure, by the clatter and thump,  
Down below, in the cellar, a paddy and pump,

And the cistern is no better filled and supplied,  
Than a great many good common cisterns beside.

I was once in a pulpit, and sat within reach  
Of the learned divine who was present to preach.

And he leaned on his elbow and said in my ear,  
Loud enough for a number around us to hear,

"Tell me, what shall I preach on? I'm sadly perplexed,  
For I've not got a sermon, not even a text."

Well, he preached, and I heard, and if 'twere not that I  
Saw the notes 'neath the Bible he looked at, so sly,

Should have thought e'en without being told when 'twas o'er,  
That he never had thought of that subject before.

Have you e'er heard a parson, with seeming delight  
Say he got up his sermon on Saturday night?

That he'd been about town all the week until then,  
At the very last moment, he took up his pen?

If you have not, I have, and the clerical chap  
Seemed to think a new feather it put in his cap.

It is true, oftentimes, when he boasts he has not  
Had a moment for rest, preparation or thought,

It is not strictly true, as at first we infer,  
'Tis a qualified phrase, or a slight *ruse de guerre*,

And we doubtless shall find, if we venture to seek,  
That a paddy and pump were at work through the week.

If you ask why I talk about Clergymen so,  
And permit Jurisconsults unmentioned to go,

I will answer the question, impromptu and now  
And harmonious with truth I am sure you'll allow.

If I judge the lawyers and fall in their way,  
They might get me in trouble and then make me pay;

If the clergy attack they may put on the screws  
But they can't make me pay any more than I choose,

And you know modern honor appears very lax  
About calling and settling the minister's tax.

What has this to do with our business to-day?  
If you look you will find it has much, every way.

But 'tis mainly because when we have a good time,  
We desire an admixture of reason and rhyme,

As a banquet, to please all the feasters that eat  
Must not have, for its courses, all good solid meat;

It must have intermingled some light kind of fare,  
And it may be, full often, things lighter than air,

Yet the lightest of dishes, though not strictly food,

Should be made of material all healthy and good,  
And I therefore selected the clergy to prove

That my theme's a material that good people love;  
And you'd scarce think the clergy could enter one's mind,

And impromptus not come in before or behind;  
So I bring these combined, and you'll see if you look

If there's anything wrong, 'tis the fault of the cook.  
When another fleet year, through its circuit has rolled,

And our Colby, so dear, is another year old,  
May the clergy, all brimming with wisdom be here,

With impromptus selected along through the year,  
And the Tullies beside them sit down at the feast,

For a lawyer's more safe by the side of a priest;  
Or, to speak more exact, it is easy to see

If the lawyer's not safer, the people may be.  
May the Galens come early, and late disappear,

For the sick may feel better the longer they're here,  
May the merchants flock hither each fresh from his till,

And feel liberal as he who has just made his will;  
May they then find young Colby enriched by fresh lore,

And another year's gain exceed any before;  
And the green tree of learning still grow and expand,

And deposit its fruitage all over the land;  
And as Christ has commanded the race, everywhere,

For instruction to go to the fowls of the air,  
So he doubtless would say, were he with us once more,

Go away to the Robins for pure solid lore.

For the VISITOR.

**South India Missionary Conference.**

IN TENT, BANGALORE, )  
JUNE 17, 1879. )

As none of the missionaries from the Lower Provinces are present at the Conference now being held in Bangalore, Bro. Timpany and I have decided to send our brethren in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, some account of the proceedings. Bro. Timpany is to write to the *Messenger*, and it is now my pleasant duty to supply the *Visitor* with a few introductory lines.

The last Missionary Conference for South India and Ceylon was held at Ootacamund, in 1858; so you see such meetings do not occur very frequently. I believe that only four who attended that gathering were present at this. I suppose Bangalore was chosen on account of its beautiful climate at this time of year. I believe it is rather hot here in April and May, but as soon as the south-west monsoon comes the air is very much cooled. This town is 216 miles from Madras, with which it is connected by a railway. The last eighty miles are travelled quite slowly, as the line ascends on a heavy grade for that distance. While ascending the Ghaut, one cannot but notice the change in the temperature and the increased efforts put forth by the locomotive.

Bangalore is situated on an elevated plateau which extends from the Eastern and Western Ghauts; it is over 3000 feet above the level of the ocean. While our friends on the plains are suffering from the heat, we are enjoying a magnificent climate, cold mornings and cool days. There are few drawbacks to one's thorough enjoyment of this climate and the interesting meetings held from day to day. But I should omit a prominent source of annoyance if I failed to mention the eye-flies that torment both speakers and hearers in the hall where the conference is held. At meals, also we are pestered with these little mites that come hovering near our eyes.

Most of the missionaries and others who are here from a distance are accommodated in the Caddon Hotel, said to be the best hotel in India. Some of us are in tents pitched quite near the hotel. The hall in which the meetings are held is connected with the hotel, and is a splendid hall, especially for a place like Bangalore.

But of course the place is not the attraction that has brought us missionaries together. We have come to see each other, to report progress, to compare our respective plans and modes of working, and to learn all we can from each other. Even to see the veterans of this army is worth a little trouble and expense on the part of

a recruit like myself. It is a source of great pleasure to meet with brethren, old and young from Ceylon and all parts of Southern India. Besides that, we have many native brethren present, and it is a great pleasure to see and hear them. Among our Baptist brethren I have been privileged to meet Dr. Jewett, Mr. Downie of Nellore, and Mr. Campbell of Secunderabad.

Though the conference began on Wednesday, the welcome meeting was not held on Tuesday evening, as at first proposed, but on Wednesday evening. The large hall was cleared of most of the seats and turned into a grand drawing-room, with sofas, easy chairs, etc., and a carpeted floor. It was intended to afford an opportunity for introductions. I had the pleasure of meeting a Canadian lady from a town not many miles from my old home. Refreshments were served about 8 or 8.30 o'clock, and the meeting was closed with family worship at 9.30.

On Friday morning the Conference had its picture taken. No less than three attempts were made, and as is proverbially the case, the third was successful. There are, I believe one hundred and five faces in the group. I know there are almost that many, as my face is numbered 104 in the key. I feel it an honor to be in such a picture.

I intend these lines to be only introductory. In my next I shall try to give a brief account of what has been said in the Conference.

COCANADA, JUNE 27, 1879.

In my letter written at Bangalore on the 17th, I gave some account of Bangalore itself, and of some of the special meetings and events connected with the conference. I think I forgot to mention a praise meeting which was held in the dining-hall, on Sunday, the 15th, just after tea, at 8 p. m. Many of the good old hymns like "Rock of Ages" were sung, and many of the more modern Sankey hymns also. But in addition to these English songs and hymns, we had some in Tamil, some in Telugu, some in Canarese, and one in German.

But I must proceed to say something about the regular business meetings of the Conference. These began on Wednesday, the 11th at 10 a. m., with Bishop Sargent of the Church Missionary Society, in the chair. After devotional exercises the first subject for discussion was taken up. It was "Vernacular Evangelistic Work in Town and Country." Three papers were read about this, each presenting the views of its author, as to the best methods of conducting such work. Mr. Alexander of the Church Mission at Elore, advocated the employment of earnest men from among the converts, even though they had but little education. Such men, he said, might travel up and down through the villages, and tell the old story of Jesus and his love. They might be the means of doing much good, while their expenses would be very small. They should seek to live on the gifts of the people to whom they were carrying the message. He said this had been tried as one kind of agency on the Ongole field by Mr. Clough, and on his own field also.

The second subject which came before the Conference was that of "Accessions to the Christian Church." This was subdivided into two parts: First, recent accessions, their number and character. Bishop Sargent read a paper on the recent accessions in connection with the Church Mission work in Tinnevely, and Mr. Downie of Nellore read one about the great accession on the Ongole field. A good many asked for further information as to whether all those who had been baptized had first been well examined or not. Some replies were made to these questions, but as some were still unsatisfied, it was decided to have the question up again on the next day. After some further remarks by brethren Downie and Timpany and also by Dr. Jewett, most of the missionaries present seemed to feel that if Mr. Clough had heard enough from these converts to satisfy him, there was no need of further talk on the subject. The second subdivision of this subject had reference to the mode of dealing with the

new converts. Dr. J. W. Scudder of Bellore, and another missionary read papers on this subject.

On Thursday papers were read on "Educated Hindoos, and how to reach them," also on "Higher Education; its value as a christianizing agency."

I believe that a few years ago there was quite a lively discussion on the question of Christian High Schools and Colleges as a means of reaching the caste classes of India, Brahmins and Sudras. Some maintained that so few were converted, that the money and time had much better been spent in more direct missionary work. At this Conference, the conclusion came to was, that these institutions have their place in their grand work of converting the people of India to Christ. Those who feel called to that work should engage in it, and those who feel called to preach from village to village, should take this evangelistic work. It was shown that many young men who are educated in the Madras Christian College go forth to the villages where they may have secured appointments, and there exercise a certain influence on behalf of Christianity which is quite a gain. Even if they do not become christians, they befriend those who have made the change, and seek every opportunity to help any missionary who may pass through their village. We heard also of a very flourishing college at Jaffna, in Ceylon in connection with the American Congregational Mission there.

On Friday papers were read on "Middle and Lower Class Education," a kind of work in which all missionaries must engage to a greater or less extent. For the sake of the children of christians, such work is necessary not only in our stations, but also in the villages where christians may live. The boys and girls must at least learn to read and write, and count if our Christians are to amount to anything as a power in the land. "Female Education" was next considered, and both under the subdivision of "Day Schools," and under that of "Zenana Teaching" very interesting accounts of the work that is being done among the women of Southern India were given. The papers on "Zenana Teaching" were written by lady-workers, but read by gentlemen.

As it almost time for me to close if I wish my letter to go this week. I must reserve my account of the rest of the Conference for another occasion.

I remain,  
Yours Sincerely,

JOHN CRAIG.

One of the special dangers and defects of preaching in this country is connected with the popular liking for oratory in the pulpit, the demand for what is called eloquent preaching. The common American idea of pulpit eloquence is low and sensational. It means chiefly a rapid and emphatic utterance of sonorous sentences with something extreme, paradoxical, and violent in the thought presented, though not much thought is required. People demand of the preacher that he shall arouse and excite them, and they enjoy with a kind of voluptuousness the temporary stimulus and thrill of emotion which the preaching causes. It results from the laws of mental action that preaching of this kind does not inspire consciousness, nor tend to practical moral activity. It necessarily produces and fosters mental conditions which are extremely unfavorable to spirituality of character and life.

This appetite for eloquence, working with other tendencies of the age, has helped to make the preaching in this country dramatic and entertaining, but, in a large measure, unspiritual. This, I think, can be rightly regarded only as a calamity, a tendency opposed to the interests of religion, adapted to weaken and subvert it, and to lead the people who are influenced by it into a region where religion would be impossible or regarded as unnecessary. This is one of the most important among the unfavorable tendencies of the age. It has made preaching "more interesting and attractive to the masses," but this has been accomplished by sacrificing much that is essential in religion itself.