

The Fourth Watch of the Night.

Matt. 14: 22, 23.

Low in the moonless night,
In the rough wind's despoil,
They ply the oar.
Keen gusts smite in their teeth;
The hoarse waves chafe beneath
The muffled roar.

Numb fingers, failing force,
Scarcely serve to hold the course,
Hard worn, half-way,
When o'er the tossing tide,
Pallid and heavy-eyed,
Scowls the dim day.

And now in the wan light,
Walking the waters white,
A shape draws near.
Each soul, in troubled wise,
Staring with starting eyes,
Cries out for fear.

Each grasps his neighbor tight,
In helpless, huddled fright,
Shaken and swayed.
And lo! the Master nigh,
Speaks softly, "It is I;
Be not afraid."

E'en so to us that strain
Over life's moaning main
Thou drawest near,
And knowing not thy guise,
We gaze with troubled eyes,
And cry for fear.

A strange voice whispers low,
"This joy thou must forego,
Thy first and best."
A shrouded phantom stands
Crossing the best loved lands
For churchyard rest.

Then, soft as is the fall
Of that white gleaming pall,
By snowflakes made,
Stillling each startled cry,
Thou speakest, "It is I;
Be not afraid."

—Good Words.

Visitor Pulpit.

COUNTERFEITS.

A Sermon Preached by Pastor C. H. Wetherbe, at Scriba, N. Y.

Many deceivers are entered into the world.—II. John 7.

The first deceiver, that entered into this world, was Satan. He is the father of all deceivers. There is not a particle of honesty in the devil. He is a thorough fraud, from beginning to end. There is no doubt, however, but that he has told the truth, a good many times; but it has been only for the purpose of making his lies more successful. Whenever he has used the truth, his object has been to mislead people, and trap them into some soul-destroying falsehood; and, in this, he has been far too successful. Millions of people have been eternally destroyed by the deceptions of the devil, and how many more will be led down to the abode of the lost, in hell, through the wiles of the arch-deceiver, God, only, knows.

Now, when it is said, that "many deceivers are entered into the world," it is equivalent to saying, that many counterfeiters are in the world. And what is a counterfeit? It is something which has a resemblance to another thing; or, in other words, it is a false thing, which is designed to represent a true thing. It is an imitation of something else. It is a fraud—a deceiver. We may employ another term, and say that a counterfeit is a hypocrite. And so, we may say, there are many hypocrites in the world. In discussing this subject, I shall make some analogies between counterfeit christians, and counterfeit things.

I. Notice who it is that makes counterfeiters. Let us consider the thought, in its application to material things, for a moment. What class of persons are engaged in the manufacture of counterfeiters? Are they honorable and upright people? No. They are dishonest people. They are deceivers, themselves, in heart and purpose, and they express their dishonest qualities, by making counterfeiters. They may pretend to be honest, but their very pretensions are dishonest. Their works belie their professions of honesty. They are, doubtless, possessed of a good deal of a certain kind of intelligence, and much shrewdness; for such qualities are necessary, in order to be successful counterfeiters. It takes a good deal of brains to be a skillful counterfeiter. And it requires a pretty thorough knowledge of certain materials, and processes, to enable a person to make a counterfeit gold, or silver, dollar, or bank-note, which shall closely correspond with the genuine one. No fool, nor half-witted person, was ever a skillful counterfeiter. All successful counter-

feiters are talented people. They possess a good deal of the devil's wit and cunning. And whoever goes into such a business, can rely upon the devil for suggestions and help. What they cannot think of, he can. He is their chief backer. Now it is needless to say, that no good people ever engaged in making counterfeiters. Counterfeiters may have some qualities, which the world commonly calls good; but, certainly, no really good person ever makes counterfeiters. Furthermore, a counterfeiter is not a friend of the Government, or the Bank, whose money he counterfeits. It is true, that he may not be a positively bitter enemy of either the Government or Bank, whose coin, or paper, he counterfeits. He, certainly, does not appear to be against the one or the other. In fact, he really speaks in favor of them. This is a part of his deception. He says that Banks are good institutions. He expatiates on the beauty, and strength, and solidity, and grandeur of the Government. But, for all that, no counterfeiter is a real friend of the bank, or the Government, whose money he counterfeits. Indeed, he is their enemy; for no true friend would issue counterfeiters against them.

Now, who makes counterfeit christians. Do good people? No. Does the church? No. It is no church, nor any good person, nor any good influence, that makes counterfeit christians. Counterfeit christians are made by the counterfeiter, themselves, with the help of the devil. In the first place, they are not christians—they are only imitations of christians; and, in the second place, they do not want to be christians, for if they did, they could, and would, take the proper steps to become christians.

They are simply unconverted people, dishonest at heart, and in purpose and practice, who strive to appear to be what they are not.

They may not be dishonest, in some directions. It may be that they—at least many of them—never stole a dollar, nor cheated a person out of a cent, in a direct manner. This is true of that class of religious counterfeiters who are morally respectable, and are honored with social courtesies. They possess certain qualities of mind, and personal attractions, which command for them the respectful consideration of many of their fellows. But, notwithstanding this, they are dishonest, so long as they play the part of a hypocrite, or a christian counterfeiter; for no one can be a christian counterfeiter, and be morally honest, at the same time. And such ones make themselves counterfeiters, by their own free choice, and deliberation. No one has a right to lay the responsibility of such a state of things upon any one but the guilty parties themselves.

And here, let me say, that it requires a good deal of intellectual ability for a person to successfully counterfeit a true christian. He must possess considerable of the devil's wit and wisdom, in order to cleverly counterfeit the real child of God. And he needs to be constantly on his guard, if he would not be easily detected. But, is such a person a true friend of Christianity? No. He may speak well of the cause—in fact, he must do so, in order to pass as a christian. He praises the church, and lauds the Bible, and recommends charity, and declares in favor of personal righteousness. But, for all that, he is an enemy of the cause of Christ; for no one can be a counterfeiter, and a real friend of Christ and His church, at the same time.

II. Observe that though counterfeiters afford some advantages to their makers, yet, in the long run, they prove a detriment to them. The one great object of counterfeiting is, to gain personal advantage. If there were nothing to be made, by counterfeiting gold, or silver, or bank notes, no one would engage in the business. But, the hope of securing personal benefit, on quite a large scale, perhaps, leads people to counterfeit. And, for awhile, they doubtless derive some advantage from their work. This depends, a good deal, upon the skill with which they counterfeit money, and also how well they succeed in keeping from being detected

in their bad business. But, though a counterfeiter may derive considerable benefit from his success in making and circulating his spurious money, yet, in the long run, he finds that the business is a detriment to him. What he gains in that way, he loses in some other way; for, no true prosperity attends such a dishonorable work. There is no blessing in it, but rather a curse. Besides, such ones are in great danger of being detected, and brought to account for their illegal and nefarious business. They may elude the officers of justice, for quite a while, or escape altogether, as is, sometimes, the case; but, as a general thing, they are, sooner or later, arrested for their crime, and made to suffer the penalty. And, even in those cases where the guilty parties escape the penalty of the law, the advantages, which they have gained, are not permanent. They have been worse than wasted, in giving satisfaction to the appetites and passions, at the expense of bodily health and moral virtue. And how is it with a counterfeiter christian? Is there any advantage, to anyone, to counterfeit christianity? Yes, there is, in some cases, a temporary advantage. If a person succeed well, in counterfeiting a true christian, it will enable him to secure the confidence of those who would not, otherwise, have much, if any, confidence in him. It raises the standard of his credit, and increases the value of his personal influence. People, both in the church, and out of it, are led to trust his word, as they would not, if they knew his real character. They place, in his hands, certain interests, which they would not dare to do, did they not suppose that he is what he professes to be, a genuine christian. If he wants credit, of the merchant, or business man, he gets it, on the strength of his supposed christianity. If he make a statement, it is accepted as true, and, therefore, reliable. In fact, there is considerable advantage derived, to one who is smart enough to be a pretty thorough counterfeiter christian. But he needs to be extremely careful, lest he be detected. There are sharp eyes all around him; and, unless he be uncommonly keen, some of those sharp eyes will see the hypocrite, under the christian garb; the wolf in sheep's clothing. And, sooner or later, they do see it. As a general thing, a counterfeiter christian cannot pass for a genuine one, a great while, without being detected by someone. He may succeed in practicing his deception for a year or two, so that a great many will take him for what he claims that he is worth. But, if he stay long in a place, his true character will be found out, by many more than he is aware of. He may not hear himself condemned, perhaps, by the words of his fellowmen; but he will witness a significant change in their attitude towards him. He will read, in their faces, an expression, which virtually says: "you are not what you profess to be. You are a pretender—a counterfeiter." There is an unwelcome coldness in their manner towards him. If he be a member of some church—which is quite apt to be the case, because a counterfeiter christian would rather be in a church than out of it—if he be a member, and his real character has become somewhat known, to the other members, they do not take pleasure in calling him "brother." Nor do they care to hear him make one of his accustomed prayers, however nicely phrased it be, nor speak on the subject of religion, though it may sparkle with eloquence.

And he sees this—he reads it in their actions. He has found out, too, that his word is not trusted, and that his credit, with the merchant and business man, is gone. And, besides, though his conscience may have become somewhat seared, yet he is still lashed by its fury, and tormented by its accusations. So, upon the whole, he has found that though counterfeiting may have some advantages, yet it is a great detriment to him. He loses a hundred-fold more than he gains. He loses in temporal things, and spiritual things; and the spiritual is infinitely greater than the temporal.

There is as great a curse—perhaps greater—resting upon counterfeit christians, as upon any other class of guilty men: Christ's severest woes

were pronounced counterfeit christians. His wrath was intensely hot against them. And though they may change their residence, as often as they get detected by men, and circulate throughout the land, yet the curse of God will follow them. And, when they come to die, and lie down in hell, no one's torment will, perhaps, be greater than theirs.

III. The cause of Christ is not responsible for the existence and acts of counterfeiters.—One of the standing objections, which unbelieving and sceptical people bring against the churches of Christ, is, they contain so many hypocrites. To this, I reply, in the first place, that there are not so many hypocrites, in the churches, as some would have us believe. Many are called hypocritical, when there is no good foundation for it. The assertion is intended to be a slur against the cause of Christ. It arises from the spirit of hatred, which possesses many of the opposers of christianity. Then, in the second place, it is not fair, nor just, to call every church member, who is not a true christian, a counterfeiter; for the reason that there are those who are simply mistaken, in supposing that they have met with a change of heart. They have not intended to deceive anyone, by making a profession of religion. They despise a counterfeit christian, and, therefore, would not, intentionally, do anything which might be misleading. Perhaps they were too hastily received into the church, and this, too, without any fault of their own. Or, it may be that they sincerely thought that they had experienced religion, and then ought to join a church, as a matter of duty. Perhaps they were taught, that their is some special virtue, or particular sanctity, in the ordinances of the church, which, if they were once submitted to, would confer saving grace upon them. All this has been done, time and again, and such things should be taken into account, by those who are inclined to raise objections against the cause of Christ. But, while it is proper that I should throw out these suggestions, as a discrimination between different classes of professors of religion, between true christians and those who are not christians, yet I am free to acknowledge that there are counterfeit christians, in every denomination. I will not say that they are in every church, for that would be too sweeping an assertion.

You will please keep in mind, that I make a distinction between those who have been led—perhaps carelessly—to suppose that they are christians, but are not—I make a distinction between this class, and a real counterfeit christian. A counterfeit christian is a deceiver, and he intends to deceive. Now, I set out with the intention of establishing the fact that the cause of Christ is not responsible for the existence of counterfeiters. The church of Christ never made a counterfeit christian. Of course, I speak of the true church of Christ. The word and doctrine of God, on which the true church is founded, not only does not make counterfeiters, but absolutely opposes them. It denounces them, with the utmost severity. To say, therefore, as some do, that the cause of Christ is responsible for the existence and acts of counterfeit christians, is not only unjust, but it is a slander upon the cause. It is true, however, that there are some counterfeiters, in some churches, which the churches would like to get rid of; and they do, when they can be put in possession of sufficient evidence to try them, and condemn them. But, it is often difficult to secure a proper amount of proof, in order to accomplish this. Some of the counterfeiters are very clever, and close imitations of the true christians—the genuine metal. And this makes it all the more difficult to detect the false, and cast it out. It is just so in relation to counterfeit money. Some counterfeiters are so cunningly executed as to defy detection, at the hands of many, who are skilled in such matters. Old experts have been deceived, in many instances. It is not difficult for them to detect a poorly executed counterfeit. Many, who do not claim to be experts, are able to detect an ordinary counterfeit. But there are other counterfeiters, which baffle their powers

of detection. Even the most skillful expert is, sometimes, quite deceived, at first. He may have his suspicions aroused, as to the genuineness of the coin, but he is not decided about it, until he has exerted himself, to his utmost, to determine its true character. I once read of a silver half dollar, which was received at the treasury department in Washington. It was one, among thousands of other pieces, and all looked alike. There was nothing, in the appearance of this coin, which suggested that it was a counterfeit. But one of the expert clerks, who had been in the business of handling money, a long time, in testing this one thought that the ring of it was a half note lower than the genuine ones. He thought that he might, possibly, be mistaken; and so he tossed it up, and when it struck the counter, he listened, with his practiced ear, as intently as possible, and, sure enough, its tone was a half note lower than a perfectly genuine coin. He examined it closely, and it certainly looked as good as the best of silver pieces. The outside, was surely, good silver. He cut into it, and found, in the centre, a lot of gross. About one-third of it was base metal. It was pronounced the most deceptive counterfeit, of the kind, on record. But was the Government to be blamed, for that counterfeit? No. Was it owing to any fault of the Government? No. Was the Government responsible for the fraud committed in its name? No, not at all. No Government, nor Bank, is responsible for the counterfeiters that are issued against its money. There are counterfeiters, all through the land, counterfeit coins and bank-notes, which go by the names of the genuine ones; but the true ones are not responsible for the false ones.

And it is precisely so with the true churches of Christ, they are not responsible for the counterfeit christians that are circulating among them, and bearing the same name.

IV. Counterfeits prove the existence of the true.—If there were no genuine gold, or silver dollars, there would be no counterfeit ones. If there were no true bank notes, there would be no false ones. Men do not imitate that which is good for nothing; they imitate what is good and valuable. The fact that there are imitations, and counterfeiters, proves the existence of the true ones. And not only this, but the more valuable a thing is, the more apt are men to counterfeit it. Hence it is, that pearls and diamonds, which represent great value, are often counterfeited. A good many years ago, there was in the possession of a certain man, what was reputed to be a pearl of extraordinary value. It was claimed to exceed all others in worth. But, after a while, it was found to be a counterfeit. So, also there have been many counterfeit diamonds, which, their owners pretended, were worth vast sums. And all this goes to prove, not only the existence of true coins, and genuine bank-notes, and pearls and diamonds, but also the fact, that the more valuable a thing is, the more liable it is to be counterfeited. Now, what is true of counterfeit money, and pearls and diamonds, is equally true of counterfeit christians. If there were no true christians, there would be no counterfeit ones. And the fact that there are counterfeiters, shows the worth of a true christian, and proves the value of Christianity. If Christianity were a fiction, no one would perpetrate a fraud in its name, and make what he could out of it. It is because there is a high value in Christianity, and in true christian life, that men counterfeit it, that its value may be transmitted to them. And so it has come to pass, that wicked men have, unintentionally, paid a high compliment to the reality, and value of Christianity. In their attempts at counterfeiting the christian, they have, thereby, proved that there are true christians, and that their power and influence are worth a good deal to mankind.

V. Notice that people do not refuse to patronize a bank, because there are counterfeiters, in its name. Though honest and candid people are opposed to counterfeit money, and, indeed, despise it, yet they are not opposed to genuine money, and the banks which issue it. The fact that

there counterfeiters, which bear the name of the bank, and appear to be in favor of it—this does not prevent people from patronizing the bank. They do not think any less of the Bank, on account of the counterfeiters. This should be the case with people, who are not members of a church, and do not pretend to be christians. They should not refuse to have anything to do with the cause of Christ, because there are counterfeit christians. And yet, how many declare that they will not become christians, nor speak favorably of the churches, because of the counterfeiters. But the cause of Christ is surely worthy of as fair treatment as banks and governments receive. It is nothing really against Christ's cause, that counterfeiters exist. O, then, become a true christian, and bless God for the great value of Christianity!

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