

THE BIBLICAL RECORDER.

T. MEREDITH, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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TERMS

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DIVORCE BETWEEN THE PULPIT AND LITERATURE.

Rev. Dr. Barnes closes his article in the Repository, on the Relation of Theology to Preaching, as follows:

From some cause there has been a sad divorce between the pulpit, as such, and large departments of literature. When from the poetry that charms and pleases—from the reviews of Macaulay, and Jeffrey, and Sydney Smith—and from the Guardian, and the Spectator, and still more from the light and attractive literature of this age, men turn to sermons, they feel as if they were going from sunshine to gloom, from a clear to a murky atmosphere, from the saloons of pleasure and enchantment, the hall of the Alhambra, to the catacombs of Egypt. There are no public discourses which men in this age are so ready to hear, none which they are so indisposed to read, as sermons. The very name, considered as referring to reading matter, is synonymous with all that is dry and dull. While of all the people on the earth we are most given to hearing sermons, there is almost any thing which we will not sooner read. There is a deep demand in our nation and in our times for this kind of public instruction; but this demand, so far as its literature is concerned, is not met. The most unsatisfactory of all books are sermons, and no wise man now publishes a sermon with a view to its being sold; if sermons are published, it is done with a remote hope that they will be accepted kindly, if given away; and happy does the author deem himself if his friends will receive them as a gift, even with scarcely an implied pledge that they will read them. The man who advertises a volume of sermons does it at the peril of his bookseller; and of all the manuscript productions now in the world, those, the smallest proportion of which would bear to be published with a view to a sale, are probably the piles of manuscript sermons which are found in the studies of ministers of the gospel. It may be said, it is true, that they have answered their end, and that a valuable end; it is true, that from the necessary sameness of the subjects in such discourses, it could not be expected that the public would demand or bear their publication. It is true, that even when a sermon has been written with much care, all then, after being preached, it is laid aside forever, and no one may wish to look at it, a man would not feel that his labor has been ill-bestowed, or that his careful study in composing it, and his attention to even to the neatness of his chirography, or his manuscript, has been in vain, or more than the farmer feels when he has tured a handsome furrow, and his field, as a mere specimen of ploughing, is beautiful, that it has been in vain; for it is one of the characteristics of good farmer to lay his furrows thus; and, though all that beauty shall soon disappear, the great object has been gained, in the waving golden harvest that follows. So the preacher may feel, that though his manuscripts may go no further than his own pulpit, and then be forgotten or buried, still his care is not in vain. The ample result; not to be seen in the elegantly bound volume at the happy fruits of piety that shall spring on the field that he cultivates; a golden harvest more rich than any over which the zephyr waves.

But while this is true, it is still true that the age and the circumstances demand that there should be a high literature than there is in sermons. As literary compositions, they should be of the highest possible order; they should be such as will not only offend, but as will attract those of taste and refined taste; they should be such as will not make the theology that is preached by them to cultivated minds, but such as will be worthy the minds that have received the highest education which our country can furnish, and such as shall become those who, in their stations, must contribute more than any other class of men to form the public mind and the character of the nation. As some of the truths which God designs to teach in his works, are rendered powerless and unattractive by the exquisite beauty spread over them of creation, the simple and pure charms which they are conveyed to us in the stream, the river, the vale, the landscape, so some of the truths of revelation will be rendered less powerful and efficient, by being conveyed in a dress that shall correspond with the methods in which God addresses us in his beautiful works. The world, as God has made it, is full of beauty. He speaks to us in a myriad of exquisite charms of the works of his hand, and surrounds himself with every hue of life and love, when he approaches us in his works. The expanding flower, the rainbow, the varied lights that lie at evening on the clouds of heaven, the soft, the gay lights

that play in the north, the dewdrops of the morning, the fountain, the lake, the ocean, the waterfall, the flower-covered prairie, and the waving forest; these are the things through which God speaks to men in his works. So, with all that is attractive, and beautiful, and simple, and pure, and chaste in thought and language, should it be our aim that He should speak to men; when He conveys the noble truths of redemption to the world by our instrumentality; and so should the pulpit be seen to be the appropriate place for conveying the richest and noblest truths that have dawned on this part of the universe—the system of theology which He has commissioned us to preach.

PREPARATION FOR ETERNITY.

It is a wise and beneficent law of nature, that as old age begins to steal upon us, the sensibilities become blunted and the powers both of body and mind more torpid. Hereby are the aged relieved in a great measure from the sufferings they would otherwise endure. But if their hearts have never been renewed, if habits of sin have become fixed by the frosts of age, this benevolent provision of nature becomes their curse. Respecting them it may be impressively asked, can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye, who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well. The appropriate season for the great work of conversion has been suffered to go by unimproved; and now it is an easy matter to hold on in his course of sin, till his few remaining sands are run out. Conscience may, indeed, now and then make a convulsive effort to show him his danger; but remorseless habit has well nigh choked her voice, which utters only a feeble, dying groan; and the man goes, grey-headed in sin, to his final account, as stupidly as the ox goeth to the slaughter.

But the invalid, the man who from month to month feels himself to be tottering on the brink of the grave, and who a mere breath will plunge into eternity, he must be awake to the solemn scenes before him. Thus reason infers; but experience shows the conclusion to be false. It is doubtful whether as large a proportion of those in feeble health do not live and die, unconverted as of the healthy and robust. The invalid may, indeed, through fear of death, be all his lifetime subject to bondage. But he soon learns the fatal art of procrastination once learnt, he ventures to practice it as madly and fatally as the most robust and reckless. Soon disease has so far weakened his powers that he cannot bring them to the decisive and vigorous action which the work of repentance demands. The torpor of disease stifles more and more the voice of conscience; and he whom God has held for months and even years on the brink of the grave, that he might prepare for his exit, goes into eternity an unconverted man. Oh, the astonishing infatuation that reigns in the human heart! God of mercy, what but thy grace can save man from destruction!

Such is a common method, by which sin succeeds in robbing men of their eternal birthright. And though multitudes discover the fatal delusion on their dying beds, and send back to survivors a loud and a warning voice, and though the Bible admonishes them with a trumpet tongue, it breaks not the fatal charm, nor checks the downward course of that vast multitude, who are moving steadily forward in the broad way to destruction. Yet the God of sovereign grace interposes for the rescue of some, who become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and commence a life of faith. Yet even these need much discipline in the school of Christ before they can habitually discern the things that are unseen and eternal. Very prone are they to come again under the power of that delusion which kept them so long, while unconverted, from a realizing sense of the nearness of eternity. Oh, that I might have the power given me to set forth the vast importance to the Christian of keeping his soul constantly and vividly impressed with eternity as a reality near at hand! A deep and thorough conviction of this solemn truth, is in fact one of the most powerful principles that stimulates a man to action, and therefore it will enable a man to accomplish more for the honor of God and the good of man, than any thing else.

Upon the irreligious man, the apprehension of speedy death, even while in health, sometimes exerts a paralyzing influence. He perceives that his eternal interests are not secured, although nothing can be more uncertain than life; and conscience is enough awakened to see the amazing hazard he is running by delay. But his heart still clings to some worldly idol, and thus in the contest between conviction and inclination, the mind is kept in a painful suspense. It sees the vanity of the world, yet cannot muster resolution enough to come to the great decision. No wonder that in such a dilemma a man's usual energy should forsake him, even in his worldly pursuits. For in the midst of his labors the withering thought continually recurs, What is a man profiting, though he gain the whole world and lose his soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Until he free himself from the thought of eternity, or give his heart to God, inefficiency must characterize all his efforts. But let him take the glory of God as the motive of his actions, and the thought of eternity as near at hand will nerve his arm with an energy no other principle can impart; for no man accomplishes as from the portion of time put into his hand for the purpose of his preparing for his appearance before it, has undergone another proportionable diminution; and that as he falls short of that virtuous stature, to which he might have grown by the improvement of all his time, exactly so far shall he sink beneath that seat in the future kingdom

of God, which was originally within his reach; and beneath that sublime superiority to death, in the hour of its approach, with which an earlier preparation for it would have enabled him to meet it. It is high time to awake out of sleep. The time that lies before him is lessening with an alarming rapidity. The little he has left for himself, is now less than ever. He has lost another month. The candidate of heaven—it is enough to agitate a statue!—is degraded another degree from his first appointed rank, should he ever at length arrive in the immortal city of God. Another beam is shorn from the crown of glory, which, at his birth, was placed over his head.—That broad and ample support for confidence towards God, which the dedication of all his days to his service would have placed underneath it, has lost another pillar. That peace, with which it was originally in his power to have pressed the pillow of death, is robbed of another smile. Sufficient, sufficient subtraction his inheritance has sustained. His moral patrimony he has enough impoverished. Let what is left be seized with an eager hand.—Brooks.

From the Christian Souvenir.

OBEEDIENCE.

BY MRS. L. H. SIGOURNEY.

God bade the sun break forth in light
And yonder paler flame,
With silver lamp to lead the night,
And stars to beam with crescent bright,
And heedful of his word of might,
Each to their orbit came.

God bade the Spring awake, and tread
On winter's icy reign,
She touch'd the snow-drop in its bed
The frisk at the brooklet's head,
And ting'd the queenly rose with red,
With green, the leafy plain.

God bade the Autumn yield its store,
And bending o'er the world,
The trees resign'd the fruits they bore,
The berry burst its luscious core,
While harvest to the sickle pour,
Their sheaves of ripened gold.

God to the heart hath said, "be still,
When sorrows o'er thee sweep;"
And doth it, heedful of this will,
O'er ruffled bowers and perished till,
Even when its bitterest tears distill,
In meek submission weep.

God to the heart hath said, "be mine."
And bastes it not to bring
Its buds that blush, its flowers that twine,
The earliest clusters of its vine;
Its first affections to the shrine
Of its Almighty King.

TREATMENT OF BACKSLIDERS.

It is a sad and obvious truth, that a considerable portion of those who have made a public profession of religion, even in our most evangelical and best disciplined churches, have subsequently become in a greater or less degree unfaithful to their vows, or in the expressive English of the Bible have backslidden from the Lord, and are living in that criminal and miserable state. It is a truth also equally sad and apparent, that as a general fact, this large class of persons are either grossly neglected or injudiciously treated as is no other class of persons connected with the church. While their backsliding is of the heart, chiefly, and is manifested by no gross overt obliquity, they are simply neglected; when they have proceeded to visible acts of immorality, and discipline has become necessary, it too often happens that through its faulty administration, that discipline operates to the destruction, and not the reclamation of offenders.

We know of no practical subject connected with the prosperity of the church, more worthy of the attention of the religious press and the ministry, and of Christians generally. Why should not the large number of backsliding professors found in our churches, constrain our pity and command our effort? Why is there not more of affectionate watchfulness over weaker brethren? Why is it that persons just beginning to inquire after salvation, receive minute and persevering attention till they join the church; but no sooner is that done, than they are scarcely thought of again; though their ignorance, inexperience, and constant exposure to temptation and every evil influence, all render them needy of the most watchful care of their brethren?

How easy might it be, if we were all affectionately watchful over the first mis-step of a young professor, to save him from falling into great and grievous sins; whereas, neglected and unwarmed in the early stages of his relapse, his case soon becomes too bad for restraint or remedy.
And then the case of those who have backslidden so long and so far from God, as to render them in our eyes hopeless, but who are by no means always dead to the voice of sincere pity; or the pleadings of Christian love and anxiety. There are moments in the experience of perhaps nearly every wanderer, when he realizes the shame, the sin, and the utter misery of his condition; when he would welcome to his side a faithful and affectionate monitor, and would drink in the language of kind remonstrance and friendly entreaty, and struggle to throw off the shackles of sin, and return to his heavenly Father. Why is it that there are not such kind and faithful Christians, seeking along all the avenues to death for the souls of their erring brethren? Why are there not special missions to backsliders, and special meetings of conference and inquiry for them? Why are not the mountains of sin echoing with the foot

steps and the cries of those who search for the lost sheep of the house of Israel? And why is there not a louder, and more generous and earnest joy over one reclaimed prodigal, than over ninety and nine righteous?

We ask for this subject the prayerful consideration of our Christian brethren and readers. We believe if there was a proper concern in the church on this subject, many who were once hopeful members of the church, but who have fallen amid the many snares which were spread in their path, might be brought back again in their right mind to the fold of God's people, filled with joy and with the blessed hopes of the gospel. And multitudes more, who are now in danger daily and hourly of being led off from the narrow path, might, by a very moderate exercise of Christian watchfulness and counsel, be saved from the sin and misery of a backsliding state.—W. Y. Evangelist.

JOHN BUNYAN.

He appeared in countenance to be of a stern and rough temper; but in his conversation mild and affable, not given to loquacity, or much discourse in company, unless some urgent occasion required it; observing never to boast of himself, or his parts, but rather seem low in his own eyes, and submit himself to the judgment of others; abhorring lying and swearing, being just in all that lay in his power to his word; not seeming to revenge injuries, loving to reconcile differences, and make friendship with all. He had a sharp quick eye, accomplished with an excellent discerning of persons, being of good judgment and quick wit. As for his person, he was tall of stature, strong boned, though not corpulent, somewhat of a ruddy face, with sparkling eyes, wearing his hair on his upper lip, after the old British fashion; his hair reddish, but in his latter days, time had sprinkled it with grey; his nose well set, but not declining or bending, and his mouth moderately large; his forehead something high, and his habit always plain and modest. And thus have we impartially described the internal and external parts of a person whose death hath been much regretted; a person who had tried the smiles and frowns of time, not puffed up in prosperity, nor shaken in adversity, always holding the golden mean.

In him at once did three great worthies shine
Historian, poet, and a choice divine;
Then let him rest in undisturbed dust,
Until the resurrection of the just.

In his pilgrimage God blessed him with four children, one of which, named Mary, was blind, and died some years before. His other children are Thomas, Joseph, and Sarah; and his wife Elizabeth, having lived to see him overcome his labor and sorrow, and pass from this life to receive the reward of his works, long survived him not; but in 1692, she died, to follow her faithful Pilgrim from this world to the other, whether he has gone before her, while his works remain for the edifying of the reader, and praise of the author.—Vail.

THE REFORMATION.

The Reformation was Rome's own work, forced upon the world by her own bad acts; she would hear no protest; she rioted in her spiritual insolence; she laughed to scorn the cry of her own children; and, when they became urgent, she opened no door by which they might go forth alone with their suffering and sorrow, but she prisoned them close within her stern and iron rules. There was no alternative for them but to break forth or to die. They chose the former, and in doing it the world first saw and wondered at the depth of her iniquity, and threw off her yoke, she has herself to thank for it—herself to blame, and no one else. O! amidst all the mockeries of this poor world, the saddest mockery of all is the puny efforts of small minded men to give a kick to the mighty spirits of the Reformation. The very liberty we enjoy—the freedom to think for God and unto God—the power to stand before him in all the identity and glory of that manhood which the Lord himself has dignified in his incarnation and blessed work of redemption—all have been won for us by the labors of that great event; and it is no wise man's part to speak lightly of the martyrs' witness and blood, by which his dearest privileges have been purchased.—Church of England Quarterly Review.

REMARKS ON DUELLING.

The following impressive and pertinent remarks on the murderous law of honor, were written by the Philadelphia correspondent of the New York Evangelist, shortly after the re-interment of the remains of the late Commodore Decatur, which took place in this city, on the 29th of October last.

The distinguished individual who was borne to his last resting-place, died before his time. He was not swept away by a pestilence; he did not fall in the defence of his country, or by any dispensation of Providence properly so called. He was one of the victims of "the law of honor," which is as false as Beelzebub, and as cruel as Draco's code, and ought to be "driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world." An unhappy quarrel between him and Commodore Barron, led them to the field, where Commodore Decatur received a mortal wound, and died in the early age of 41. If there is anything that deserves the heavy and universal reprobation of all "good men and true," it is this bloody code by which so many lives have been needlessly sacrificed. It has not the poor commendation of showing a man to be honorable and brave. No truly honorable man will consent to murder or be murdered. And

it is no proof of bravery, but rather an evidence of cowardice. It evinces a craven, cowardly spirit, to shrink from the sneers and contempt of those who demand the sacrifice of conscience and defiance of God, to conform to the rules, which they have arbitrarily established. These scenes of human butchery are a stain upon our national escutcheon, which the waters of the Ganges cannot efface. How many circles have been filled with inconsolable grief by this demon of evil demanding a victim. A recent instance is fresh in the recollection of the reading community. A man of high literary attainments, a father of a family, whose guardianship of children, already half-orphaned, was a sacred and imperative duty, goes to the field of deadly strife. In the space of one brief hour he is borne to his home bleeding, fainting, dying.—An aged mother, two sisters, and a little son, utter screams of agony in view of the awful calamity which has fallen upon them with such a sudden and crushing weight. Go with me, ye "men of honor," to that habitation which you have rendered desolate and wretched. See that aged mother bending over the remains of a loved son, who has fallen by your hands. Hear her frantic cries at the bereavement you have occasioned.—Listen to her tale of sorrow as she pours it into the ear of Him who has said, "vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." Think you that that atrocity will forever go un punished? Does revenge seem sweet as you see its fruits in the anguish and the agony of those who have been robbed of their hopes by your agency? What are your reflections as you review the bloody scene which your guilty infatuation occasioned? Does not conscience sometimes whisper in your ear that there is a fearful reckoning for these deeds of atrocity? Do not frightful visions sometimes disturb your midnight repose? Does not your murdered victim sometimes rise up before you, pale, ghastly, and dying, as you left him on the field of honor? Look at your friend, your companion, who has fallen by your ruthless violence.

"See, his face is black, and full of blood,
His eye balls fluster out than when he lived,
Staring full gashly, like a strangled man,
His hair appeared, his nostrils stretched with struggling,
His well-proportioned beard, made rough and rugged
Like to the summer's corn by tempest lodged."

There's your work, ye "men of honor!"
Glorify in it, if you can! There's the laurels you have gained,
Gather them up, and transmit them to your children to perpetuate your fame!

RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS OF NEW ENGLAND FIFTY YEARS AGO.

A Jubilee was held in New Braintree, Mass., to celebrate the completion of fifty years, since the Rev. Dr. Fiske became pastor of the Congregational Church in that place. In the course of a sermon preached on the occasion by Dr. Fiske, he spoke as follows:—

"One remark is, that fifty years ago, it was a very unusual thing, that any religious duty of a devotional character, was performed even by professors of religion, except in the family, especially in the presence of their pastor. It was not till I had been here more than 11 years, that I was permitted to hear a sentence of prayer offered by one of my people. The reason was, not that there was no Christians, but it was considered the special duty of the minister to do all the praying as well as all the preaching, when he was present, and it was designed as a mark of respect to the Christian ministry. During all this time, and so far as I learned, under the ministry of my predecessor, there was not a social prayer meeting in this place. It was much after this sort in most of the churches."

"Another remark is, that the church at the time here spoken of, consisted almost entirely of persons in married life, and most of them far advanced in years. At the time of my settlement, there was not a young person to be seen at the table of the Lord when his people sat down to commemorate the love he manifested in giving his life a ransom for all. It seemed to be the general understanding that the better sort of persons, when they settled down in the married state, and children were born to them, should connect themselves with the church. The neglect to dedicate children in baptism, was justly viewed as an implied renunciation of the gospel, and an approximation towards heathenism."

OPPRESSION OF THE TAHITIANS.

A recent letter from an American in the Pacific, presents this melancholy glimpse of the effects of the French invasion upon Tahiti.—A fine illustration of Popery is this whole business:—

It is sink or swim with the natives of Tahiti, at the latest advice. They had en masse, assaulted the French lines, and obtained some trifling advantages. The chief difficulty of the French arises from scarcity of forage and provisions.—Admiral Hamelin's arrival has altered somewhat the position of parties. He landed from the ships of war about one thousand men, and after a severe action drove the Tahitians completely from their lines to a pass in the mountains, where they were surrounded by his forces. Quarter was allowed them if they would deliver up their arms, and wives and children, as hostages for their future peace. The result is not yet known here.

AN EXTRAORDINARY METEOR.—A large luminous body was seen shooting rapidly through the air at midday, in Virginia, a few days since. It was seen by many persons in different counties, and its appearance was accompanied with a loud rumbling sound, terminated by an apparent explosion.