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Letter from Bro. Ohappell.

Dear Recorder:—We are now in the midst of the Chinese New Year holidays. Of all the feast days of the year—and there are many—this season of a week or more is perhaps the most important. Great preparations are made. For two or three weeks before, a casual observer could see there is something unusual on hand. The streets are all crowded, the trade in all sorts of commodities is brisker, the movements of the people are quicker, and seem to indicate that every one had some purpose in life—a conclusion you certainly would not reach by observing their actions on ordinary occasions. Every one who has no money is very anxious to get some, if not in one way, then in another.

Just before this season of the year, thefts and house-roberies are frequent. And there are good reasons for such eagerness on the part of all to be prepared for the advent of this season. For not only is this the season of festivity (and even the beggars try to observe the occasion and expect more generous alms of the public than usual); but it is the time when all outstanding accounts must be paid. This is so fixed and invariable a rule, that many insolvent debtors, without the hope of borrowing money, or of raising funds in some way so as to tide over New Year in business matters, and many others, who, because of extreme poverty, or unexpected calamity, find themselves unable to meet their obligations, commit suicide rather than face the shame and social ostracism which would result from their extremities.

It is not so much from their sense of honesty, it seems to me—for they are willing enough to put off the payment of a debt at other times—but because the custom is so fixed and unalterable at this point, and because all earthly happiness, so far as social relationships and future prosperity are concerned, turn upon strict conformity to this custom—a law more potent than some of their laws of life and death: not one thinks of the possibility of escaping its demands. If conformity is not possible, then John Chinaman meekly bows his head to inexorable fate (for he is consistently a fatalist), and all regard him as an object of pious self-immolation to unseen and unknown powers. But usually some way is found to meet liabilities, for no Chinaman lives to himself, or ever dreamed that he did. He lives in his family, counting the dead generations of his ancestors before him, and the unborn line of generations after him, subject to such a complex fabric of interwoven conditions as makes the reason of a Western man reel on its throne—but these are all well known to himself, and he is, when once born into that family, so closely related to it through life and for all time that he personally thrives or not, lives or dies, with his family. So that personal debts involve not individuals alone, but whole families, and that New Year may be a prosperous and joyous one, every family will see to it that all such matters are satisfactorily adjusted. This is moreover the time for making arrangements for the ensuing year. Throughout the transactions of this whole season are closely interwoven with their heathen worship of idols, whether of images or of ancestral tablets. The season is ushered in the night before New Year's day with such a popping of crackers as would make a Western boy's heart leap for joy. The use of these fireworks, including crackers, rockets, wheels, &c., is not only an expression of joy and exhilaration, but has an element of worship in it, too; for the evil spirits are supposed to be so terrified at the noise of the crackers that they flee, and probably because so much of this noise is kept up throughout the following days, these same evil spirits may be supposed to remain in such a state of fear and intimidation as to remain away till the New Year's festivities have been successfully celebrated, and the cycle of time prosperously begun its next annual revolution.

New Year's morn found me in Yangchow. The day was beautiful, and the streets were so quiet that one could but be reminded of a Sunday's calm in a Christian land—shops all closed, no business of any kind being done; for all buying of things to be used for several days had been previously done. This holiday rest from labor is to continue several days, for a Chinaman's idea of happiness is to have nothing to do and plenty to eat and drink. This New Year's morn seems unusually quiet because two thirds of the people are asleep, having spent nearly the whole night in idolatrous orgies, and nature demands a recompense. The few who are on the streets are all smiles and ready to congratulate everybody, for to-day the only salutation is "I congratulate you, and may you be rich," including not only a specific wish that you may have a "Happy New Year," but a general wish for your prosperity all through the year. All seemed especially well satisfied with themselves and the world; for every one seemed to be dressed in his very best, and he has plenty that's good to eat at home, or he thinks he has, which amounts to the same thing. I began to wonder why it was that every one should have nice clothes to wear on this day, when at least one-half of them could not show decent clothes the remaining 364 days of the year; so I asked the teacher who was walking with me how this was, and he explained that those who were too poor to have decent clothes on this day could levy on their friends who did, borrowing a hat of one, a pair of shoes of another, one garment here, and another there, until he had secured the full complement to make him look like all the rest, and he is happy. "Fine feathers ne'er can make fine birds," says the proverb, but it goes a long way towards making up what there is of a Chinaman in cold weather, especially on New Year's day. For if these clothes were subtracted from the general sum, the little left would be small, and you wouldn't want it, my friend. But do not be too sure you would want him plus his clothes. My ride back to Chinkiang was enjoyable. The beautiful spring-like day, combined with the festive attire of men and boats that strewed the canal side, conspired to make a scene really inspiring. A flowing tide and a favorable wind soon took us to our destination.

L. N. CHAPPELL.

Chinkiang, China, Feb. 21, 1893.

Books for Young Ministers.

In 1874, when I was about to enter upon my first pastorate, my father gave me a hundred dollars with which I was to purchase books. I examined many catalogues, and finally made out an order. I have lived to realize that much of the money I then spent was spent in ignorance. After nearly twenty years' experience, I am sure I could make a wiser investment than I then did. With the desire of aiding some young man just now about to begin his work, and lay in his supply of tools, I am penning these notes.

Foremost, I would advise against the purchase of all subscription books. In every case they are too costly, are not permanently valuable, and are made for sale more than for use. A young pastor, among his earliest lessons ought to learn to say "no" to book-agents. Having said it, stick to it.

As a rule, a young man cannot afford to buy books that are to be shelved and forever laid aside after a single reading. Books of reference that are standard works are the books he should first seek after. The others must come in afterwards according as he is able to get them. Having once secured a good and abundant supply of books of reference, he may then begin to fill his shelves with other—some for a single reading, some for ornament, and some for—well, just so that he can say he has them.

Which is the most valuable commentary on the New Testament for a young Baptist preacher? I think there are two sets of books to be named in the answer to this question. First comes the series called the "American Commentary on the New Testament," issued by the Philadelphia Publication Society, and written by American Baptist preachers. All the volumes are not of equal value, but as a series, I have found none superior. Next, I would name the Pulpit Commentary, now being issued by A. D. F. Randolph & Co., of New York. These books, when all the volumes are published, will comprise a commentary on the entire Bible. So far, I have received forty-one volumes; the whole set will doubtless make up sixty volumes. They can be purchased by any responsible minister on the easiest terms from the publishers. In these books, the "Introduction" in each volume is quite full and satisfactory; the critical and exegetical portions are clear, pointed, and fully up in all points with the latest advances made in this sort of study; the homiletical departments are sometimes over full and burdened. However, while I have never been able to use a single outline given in the books, I have received much mental stimulus from reading what others have written. I am quite sure that for a commentary for practical use on the whole Bible, these books are the most useful that I have seen.

Olshausen's six volumes on the New Testament are good books. Some years ago, Dr. Hiden, now of Richmond, told me they were his favorite works, and I notice that even to this day he continually quotes and appeals to Olshausen in discussing New Testament matters. Dr. Olshausen only wrote the commentary through Thessalonians, his death ended his labors; but the work was carried to completion by Dr. Elrard and Wiesinger. The writers lean somewhat to rationalism, and some have said they were not sound. This depends upon what soundness is, and, forsooth, who is to judge, any way!

I have just received the twenty-one

volumes of the "Preachers' Homiletic Commentary on the Old Testament," from Funk & Wagnalls, but am not yet prepared to give an opinion about the books.

Meyer's eleven large volumes I purchased for \$33, simply because every one said he was "the prince of exegetes." May-be so. If any one wishes to take a stroll through the dry and rattling bones of the valley, or wishes to study the New Testament as a science, I commend to him Dr. Meyer's works. I am free to confess that I never consult him until I am forced to do so, and even then I am glad when the dry consultation has ended.

Ellicott—five volumes—with endless abbreviations, and ten thousand references to books found only in a plethoric episcopal library, is not much better to read than Meyer. But Dr. Broadus holds the volume on Galatians in the highest esteem.

Lange's series were all good books until better ones came on the market. They are very heavy and dull, and full of German philosophy. Being translations, too, makes the style less entertaining. The volume translated by Dr. Toy I have never examined except cursorily.

Matthew Henry's commentary is a great big sermon, with the Bible as a text. It is excellent for family and devotional reading; but I would not advise one to purchase it for his study, unless he is able to own many books that he will not use very often.

For good models of expository work, I am inclined to think the "Expositor's Bible," issued by Armstrong & Son, stands among the foremost. So far, thirty volumes, at \$1 each, have come from the press, and many of them are full of charms and enchantment. It amazes one to see how the dry details of a book like Leviticus can be made to spring up before one into life and being. These books are worthy of study for many reasons, but for one especially, viz.: every preacher should study and learn the expository art. When once mastered, it adds greatly to one's power. A busy pastor, with a thousand cares and as many calls upon his time, is not able to study individual books of the Bible carefully, closely and critically, and at the same time carry on all his other work; but expository preaching will require this sort of work, and thus in preparing for the pulpit, he will soon acquire a wide acquaintance with the books of the Bible. The idea prevails with some that expository preaching requires less study, on the ground that a long text will furnish more material with less labor. I have seen a swallow in the afternoon, flying along near the surface of a lake, and dipping down now and then to get a mouthful of water. So also have I seen men pretending to preach expository sermons, who now and then "dipped down" and got a mouthful from the text. These disjointed and wandering discourses that go everywhere and get nowhere, can never be justly termed expository sermons. Hence, I say, preachers should acquire the art of expository preaching, and the "Expositor's Bible" will greatly help in this direction.

Other books ought to be mentioned, but I must leave them for another time.

Sumter, S. C. C. C. BROWN.

Long and Short Pastorates.

Bro. Bailey:—This question has been put in the religious papers two or three times, lately, but it receives but little comment. Whether or not the preachers and others are afraid to take hold of it, or it is too small a matter about which to give an opinion, I do not know. As I look at things, it is a very much-needed question, and should be so seriously considered by preachers and all. I know that it is considered to be more popular to maintain long pastorates. That is just why it is the wrong thing. And further, it tends to drift both people and pastor into almost irremediable ruts of bigotry and ignorance. And unless the pastor is a man of much originality and studiousness, the community will soon have his prayers and sermons all memorized. And directly they will conclude that they and their little preacher are about all the real orthodox people in the world, and what they and their little preacher do not know is not in the Book. The biggest fools in the world are those who have but few ideas, and are so sharp in them that you cannot teach them any more. This is the woful tendency of long pastorates.

People naturally and spiritually like a change of diet, unless they have had their judgments and tastes spoiled. We go to the Bible for examples of faith and practice, which is all right; but do we there find where the apostles, or Christ, either, sat down in one little town, or with one little settlement church, and held on like grim death for fifteen or twenty years? But, you say, they were missionaries. We grant that, and so are all of God's ministers missionaries. Jonah preached all that was necessary to great Nineveh in a short time. Christ and the apostles were frequently importuned to remain longer by brethren, but they answered them that they must needs go to other places. Don't you suppose that the people were as hard to indoctrinate then as now? The funny part of their preaching, or about their preaching, was, that they preached the gospel, preached Christism, and not socialism and polycism. If we undertake to tickle every one's fancy in a community, and learn, or try to learn, every one's little taste, and then hammer out little silver spoons to fit all of their mouths, it would take forty years to do that work; and more, too; and by the time we got all our spoons done, the

Devil would have their mouths all squinched up and puckered round, until the last job of spoon-making would be more difficult than the first. God has but one spoon, and he fixed the best way. People can fix their mouths to it, or let it alone. This is all the Master designed for his purpose.

H. C. STANBRIDGE.

Motes and Beams.

Strange as it may seem, it is unquestionably true that the man with a beam in his own eye is usually the one that makes a business of pulling motes out of his brother's eye. The most censorious people in the world are those whose characters are fullest of faults. We content ourselves with simply stating the fact, and we leave our readers to work out the philosophy of it as they may see fit. The language of our Lord in dealing with these professional critics is imperative to the last limit: "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." The prime business of every human being is to seek for completeness of his own character before God; and only in proportion as he secures this end is he competent to instruct, admonish, and rebuke others. Clear vision does not come, and cannot come, till the beam is removed from the eye. As long as this obstruction remains in place, it distorts every object upon which the eye rests. There is something almost ludicrous in the very thought of one's setting up as an expert oculist while his own sight is thus fearfully disordered and disturbed. It is like the quack doctor who went "through a Western community peddling his 'chill medicines,' while he himself was shaking with alternate fits of fever and ague.

The true Christian, recognizing the force of his Master's words, will hold himself amenable to the highest standard of character and conduct; will not excuse himself for having been tolerant of any improvable personal deficiencies; will strive to remove and put away all his sins, and to overcome all his infirmities; and, when he has done his utmost, will still feel how immeasurably he has fallen short of the Divine requirements. But while he judges himself severely, not to say harshly, he will be inclined to judge everybody else gently and kindly. In his own conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, he has learned how hard it is to walk uprightly before God, and he feels in his heart a tender pity for those of his brethren who at any point have failed to show the highest manhood and the most flawless virtue. If perchance he detects a mote in a brother's eye, he will not make an outcry over it, so that all the world may hear and run to see; nor will he try to gouge it out with rude and unskillful hand, in such a manner as to endanger the farther usefulness of the eye itself; but he will easily and graciously remove it, taking care to inflict the least possible pain.

There is nothing said of our Lord in all the New Testament more remarkable than this, that "He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities." The cynic smile was never on his lips, the cynic tone was never in his voice. He looked on men with infinite pity because "they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Are we like him? If so, we shall cultivate "above all things" that "fervent charity which covereth a multitude of sins;" and we shall not fall into the error of wasting on better people than ourselves the moral censorship which ought to be expended in bringing to perfection the virtue of Christianity in our own lives.—Selected.

What Can Replace the Gospel?

A multitude of men are bent on destroying Christianity. They wish to demolish the whole system and everything connected with it. Well, suppose they succeed? "Suppose," says Dr. E. Greenwald, "the Bible burned, the churches closed, the pulpit silenced, all Christian institutions of whatever kind overthrown, all Christian doctrines, Christian piety, Christian duty, Christian worship, Christian influence, Christian life, in public and private, in the church and in the family, by individuals and communities, to be wholly a thing of the past, and no trace of them permitted to remain anywhere in all the land. This would be the result if they should succeed in their insane crusade against Christianity. Where would we look for a better system than that which we would so wholly renounce? We have cut down this tree, where do we find another that bears better fruit? Let us look around and see what systems prevail in the world, and under whose control large numbers of the people are now living. Which would be selected in place of the Christianity renounced?"

Let the skeptic ponder this question. Let him look at heathenism, at Mohammedanism, at the dying superstitions of the eastern world, and let him ask the question, would he embrace any of these exploded absurdities? Let him look at atheism, a leafless, sapless tree, and inquire what a world would be without a creator, ruler or law; and then let him hesitate before he seeks to undermine a faith which has brought more joy, peace and brightness into the world than all the other religions that man has ever invented or embraced.—Faithful Witness.

A dog-ear in the Bible is an excellent indicator.—Selected.

One Stitch at a Time.

"What is the secret by which you do your work so beautifully?" The questioner held in her hand an exquisite piece of crochet work, wrought by the lady to whom the question was addressed.

"There is no secret about it," replied the lady; "I only make every stitch as perfect as I can, and am careful to put it exactly in the right place. There isn't one wrong or careless stitch in all that work. If I make a mistake, I ravel it out and correct it."

"One perfect stitch at a time. So the marvelous fabrics of lace at fabulous prices are made. So the intricate and exquisite embroideries are wrought. So costly garments of men and women are put together. One perfect stitch at a time!"

The noblest lives are lived—one moment at a time. No moments wasted; no moments carelessly spent; no moments viciously spent. Wrong stitches in crochet can be raveled out, and made right. But who can reverse the tide of time, and undo a wrong act and make it right?

Some unknown friend left a card on my desk, on which was printed this: "I shall pass through this world but once! Any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it, now, in his name and for his sake! Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

Is there a better secret than that for making the whole fabric of life perfect? "Any good thing that I can do;" that covers all our duty to God and to ourselves. "Any kindness that I can show to any human being;" that covers all our duty to our neighbor. Love to God and to our neighbor is the fulfilling of the law.

One stitch at a time! Sometimes we allow ourselves to become confused with the thought or feeling that we have a dozen things to do at once. But this is a mistake. We can do but one thing at a time, think one thing at a time, speak one word at a time, see one thing at a time. For every duty really required of us, we have time given in which to do it. We may pass rapidly from one task to another, we may construct machinery by which much of our work can be done simultaneously, and thus multiply our executive power; but to live two minutes at once, is something no mortal can do, any more than we can recall one act or one moment of the past.

"Let us then be up and doing,
Heart within and God o'erhead."

—Christian Advocate.

Post Mortem Love.

I stood at his coffin, and then there were many tongues to speak his praise. There was not a breath of aspersions in the air. Men spoke of self-denial—of his work among the poor, and of his good qualities, of his quietness, his modesty, his humility, his pureness of heart, his faith and power. There were many who spoke indignantly of the charges that falsehood had forged against him in past years and the treatment he had received. There were enough kind things said during the two or three days that he lay in the coffin, and while the company stood around his grave, to have blessed him and made him happy all his fifty years, and to have thrown sweetness and joy about his soul during all his painful and weary journey. There was enough sunshine wasted about the black coffin and dark grave to have made his whole life-path bright as clearest day. But his ears were closed then, and could not be thrilled by the grateful sounds. He cared nothing then for the sweet flowers that were piled upon his coffin. The love blossomed out too late. The kindness came when the life could not receive its blessings.

But meanwhile there is a great host of weary men and women toiling through life toward the grave, who need cheering words and helpful ministries. The incense is gathering to scatter about their coffins; but why should it not be scattered in their paths today? The kind words are lying in men's hearts and trembling on their tongues, which will be spoken by and by when these weary ones are sleeping; but why should they not be spoken now, when they are needed so much, and when their accents would be so pleasing and grateful?—Exchange.

To the Point.

When professedly Christian people have time to chase up the vagaries and delusions of Lieut. Totten and other manipulators of millennium mathematical computations, it is a pretty good sign that they need to engage in some practical form of Christian service. If the end is coming this September, it will be well to crowd the interim with good works. It is more than likely that the lieutenant has made an error of some fifteen thousand years, or so, in one of his varied twists of the figures; but good works will always be in place, and will count mightily when born of faith.—Standard.

There is a romantic idea in the minds of some of our young sisters that they can reform an attractive and dissipated young man by marrying him. Cold facts counter the statement that this experiment is nearly always a dismal failure. She who marries a man who drinks, even moderately, may make up her mind sooner or later to be a drunkard's wife.—Central Baptist.