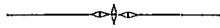


on the Church-life of the people. They were days of trial, bloodshed, and utmost peril to the Christians when those towers were in active use. We have seen that they were places of safety in cases of sudden invasion. As they stand before us in gray ruins they mutely witness to the heroic struggles for faith and fatherland in which our Celtic ancestors engaged, to the tears they shed, the sufferings they endured, and the labours they carried on. What varied scenes have they witnessed! How many tragedies have been enacted beneath their walls! What countless hearts have ceased to beat under their shadow, and now mingle with the graveyard dust around! Here "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." Here factions fought, unrestrained by the sacredness of the ground and the associations of the scene. Here piety and patriotism grow warm, as on the plains of Marathon or the storm-tossed shores of Iona. And hither comes to-day the pilgrim from distant land to muse and wonder and admire and learn. For those old towers teach solemn and precious lessons. A sweet Irish poet, Denis Florence Macarthy, has written of them:

The pillar-towers of Ireland, how wondrously they stand
 By the lakes and rushing rivers, thro' the valleys of our land!
 In mystic file all through the isle they lift their heads sublime,
 These gray old pillar-temples, these conquerors of time!
 How many different rites have these gray old temples known!
 To the mind what dreams are written in these chronicles of stone!
 What terror and what error, what gleams of love and truth,
 Have flashed forth from these walls since the world was in its youth!

WILLIAM COWAN.



ART. III.—MY CASES OF OLD SERMONS.

MY eye has just fallen on this cold wintry night on my old sermons. There they are before my eyes as I write, on a wide under-shelf of one of my book-cases; and as I have been looking at them in a somewhat sad and reflective mood, being all alone to-night, they have suggested some thoughts which I feel strangely moved to attempt to write down. It may be that to do so will be useful to some of the younger clergy, and, I hope, not without interest to some older ones. At present my thoughts seem a heterogeneous mingle, but they impress me greatly. Tennyson's touching lines rise to my mind—

O would that my tongue could utter
 The thoughts that arise in me!

but I greatly fear my pen will not do so adequately. However, I feel "inwardly moved" to attempt to do so, and I obey the motion. Perhaps it may be of God.

One thing I plainly foresee, that from the very nature of my subject I must necessarily be more egotistical than I like to be, and so prove a butt for uncharity. But that I must risk for the sake of my younger brethren.

Most of sterling worth is what
Our own experience teaches ;

but how can one write of one's "own experience" without a very frequent use of the personal pronoun? Elia's delightful essays are very full of the ego, but we more than forgive it; we feel that it is that very fact that constitutes their chief charm. What a loss we should have had if Charles Lamb had been possessed of an affected modesty, or if he had been more afraid of Mrs. Grundy's uncharity!

First, I must say those cases look very neat and orderly; and I say this with the less hesitation because the merit of that is not mine—or only to a partial degree—but another's; I am not a sempstress, but they are made up in brown-holland cases, tied up with red tape, in bundles containing some twenty-five sermons in each; and bachelors may infer something from this. On the front of each bundle are the numbers of the sermons written, as thus—1-25, and so on, till now the number reaches to over 1,300. Near them are my "sermon register books," in which each sermon has been from the commencement of my ministry entered with particulars, thus:

No.	Text.	Subject.	Where Preached.	When.	Remarks.
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I should add that my sermon register has another department containing columns under each book and chapter of the Bible, in which each sermon is entered, thus:

<i>Genesis.</i>			
Chap. I.		Chap. II.	
Verse.	No.	Verse.	No.
—	—	—	—
26	296		

and so on, so that I can at once see the sermon I have preached on any particular verse, or whether I have never preached on it. A friend of mine also keeps a common Bible, in which he underlines each verse he has preached on, and puts in the margin the number of his sermon on that verse—a very convenient plan, and I wish now I had had it hinted to me in my early days; for through not always consulting my register, I have several times forgotten that I had ever preached on a particular text, and have written on the same

text two sermons even in the same year—sometimes, I confess, I have discovered it to my mortification.

“Then you always preach written sermons?” No; not always. I sometimes preach extempore from brief notes. But I always adopt the same plan, even with my notes. I preach, as a rule, extempore on weeknight evenings, and sometimes on Sunday. But I much prefer my written sermons (and generally those of other men), and I am sure the more thoughtful and spiritual of the laity do too. And this suggests another feature in those cases of sermons yonder. About the first 200 of them are in the ordinary large sheets, but all those after that number (and I have, as I said, over 1,300) are in paper the size of what is called Albert size. I find that in my handwriting twelve pages of this size will contain a sermon of half an hour, beyond which time I now very rarely preach. I know that *that* is considered too long. I do not think so. At least, I can never write a sermon at all to my satisfaction under that time. I do not believe that a really good sermon—unless the delivery be very rapid—can be preached under that time. A more or less useful address may, but surely nothing that is worthy of the name of sermon. And, always supposing that the *delivery* be not drony, I believe the intelligent laity will think so too, the daily secular press notwithstanding.

I was led to adopt my new size of sheet by hearing a very able London preacher very soon after I became a Vicar. I was under the impression that he was preaching extempore. His sermon had all the effect of it; for he had an ordinary Bagster's Bible on his cushion, and no apparent sign of a sermon. But I learnt that every word of his sermon was written, and was in his Bible before him, and the turning over of the small leaves was hardly noticed. I said to myself: “That is an excellent plan; for it seems to me to combine the advantages of the written sermon with all the effect of an extempore one;” and from that hour I adopted it, to my great comfort and satisfaction. And, provided a preacher will take the pains—as surely he ought—to read his sermon over four times before he preaches it, he will get to know it so well, and to catch so well what is on the page, that he will be able to deliver it with perfect freedom, and without any appearance—and, if he will take the pains to tutor his voice to a natural delivery, without any of the tone—of reading. Any way, I felt most thankful for that practical hint. I like to see a man preaching from *the Bible* literally. I like to see the Book in the pulpit, and not to be poked away, even when the text is read out of it. It seems to me more like “preaching the Word,” and less like an essay upon some subject of it.

And I believe it has a good and important effect on the minds of the people to see God's Word in the minister's hands, or lying open before him; and for texts, when they are quoted, to be read out of *it*, and not from out the sheets of a manuscript.

Then, further, as to this mere material form of the sermon, I would earnestly counsel every young preacher to be very careful of his *caligraphy*. I speak painfully here; for at first I made a great mistake in regard to this point. In my old sheet sermons my writing was large and bold, so that I could read or preach them off without any bungle, or fear of it; but when I adopted the smaller sheets I foolishly wrote much smaller, and with lines very close together. That did not matter much when my eyes were young. But lo! now I find that the sermons of those days, many of them, are useless so far as preaching them again is concerned. Yet from the first (and for the sake of my younger brethren I must be pardoned for appearing egotistical) I made it a conscience to take such pains with my sermons that I feel that I could preach many of them now with satisfaction and advantage. But, owing to my folly in not looking sufficiently forward to the time when the eyesight would not be so good, I wrote in this very small type and in these close lines, and now I either cannot preach even the best of them at all, or only by a serious amount of conning. For the last few years, therefore, I have put on four extra sheets of paper, and write in lines further apart and in larger type, and take altogether much more pains with the legibility of my caligraphy.

"Then it appears you preach your old sermons over and over again?" I do not think that quite appears. The very fact that I have over 1,300 fully-written sermons—and I am not very venerable yet—is a tolerably sufficient proof that I am no great sinner in that respect, especially bearing in mind that I served one parish as Curate and three as Vicar, and also that I have numbers of notes of extempore sermons besides. Still, I confess I do preach old sermons frequently. And why should I not, if I think them good enough and new enough for the people? I still, however, make it a practice to write one new full sermon a week, besides preaching new extempore ones at weekday services. But for a second or third sermon on a Sunday I very often preach an old one, making it a rule, however, never to preach the same sermon to the same congregation till after a lapse of eight or ten years—quite a generation in a London congregation.

I leave these minor points—which, however, are more important than they may appear—with impressing upon my younger brethren in the ministry the very great importance

of preparing the *delivery* of their written sermons. It is a common fallacy that a written sermon must be *read*—or, at any rate, that it must appear to be read by the reading tone that it necessitates. But I hold that it does not necessitate it at all. That all depends upon the preacher of it. If he will only set himself to acquire and practice a natural speaking tone, it *may* be delivered with all the naturalness of an extempore sermon. Indeed, we know many extempore preachers whose tone is as much like a read sermon as though they actually were reading it. On the other hand, we know preachers of written sermons who so manage their delivery that it has all the appearance of extempore speaking. An actor is really delivering a written text, yet he speaks as though he were speaking impromptu. It is all a matter of pains, drill, and practice; and the acquiring of a speaking delivery is worth any amount of such labour. For if anything is more damaging than another to the effectiveness of preaching, it is the drony, sing-song sermon-tone. From it may God deliver our Church of England pulpit! And yet how strangely our young curates adopt it!

Shall I appear egotistic, again, if, in looking at those sermon-cases, I thank God that His grace enabled me to take so much pains with them? Yet I will undertake the risk of this for the sake of my younger brethren. There is not a sermon there that was written on the Saturday night—the too common time which many young preachers give to their sermons. Hardly one of them that was not commenced on Friday morning, and many of them on Thursday morning; and that not until the text had previously been thought out and a skeleton of the plan prepared. And what a satisfaction and comfort now to think of that! They could tell of many a day's pleasure being sacrificed for their sake, and of great toil gone through. Toil! they fill me with wonder how this hand (to say nothing of the toil of heart and brain) could have written those great piles of manuscript—specially when I think of all the books and literary articles, published and unpublished I have written. I have little doubt that I should have “got on,” in the worldly sense, much better if I had saved myself such toil, and had contented myself with preaching from a note or two that I might have written on Saturday night—sermonettes of ten or twelve minutes, spiced with one or two pretty and sensational anecdotes culled from some cyclopædia of those articles. But I had to consider, not “getting on,” but eternity, and to preach with an eye to the great account for myself and my hearers; and in that view I never regret my toil, unrequited though it may appear to have been as far as this world is concerned.

Then, again, as I look at them, I can conscientiously say that not one of them is a copied sermon. Nor is there one sentence in one of them, save avowed quotations, that is borrowed or that is not strictly my own. I have read sermons, of course, on many of the texts that were infinitely better than they are. But I made it a rule that, inferior or otherwise, I would not "beg, borrow, or steal" my sermons from any man. The worse for my people, some might say. Perhaps so; but that was my resolve, and, by God's help, I have kept to it all these years. I have read all available matter on my texts, but not till *after* I had thought it out for myself; and even then, if thoughts were suggested by that reading—as, of course, they were—I have always brought them out and clothed them in my own way. The plan has been rich in reward, and sermon composition is now hardly a toil but a facile pleasure. Let that encourage the young toiler, and help him to persevere.

Ah me! it is a very solemn and pathetic pile. How many hundreds who heard many of those written words are now in eternity! Yes, I may say hundreds. More than a generation has passed away since many of them were written, and my entire ministry has been in large parishes and large churches. One of my churches, in which I preached as vicar for eight years, held 1,800 people, and it was generally well filled. My other churches have also been large ones. Many of those sermons have been preached in the ears of officers and soldiers who were killed in the Crimea and in Indian battles. Many who heard them have settled in foreign lands and died there. Some who heard them have been murdered. On one is written, "This was the last sermon heard by Lieutenant R.—two days before he was cruelly murdered at —." Some were preached about murders committed in my parish—some before executions—some on the death of Prince Albert—some on the marriage of the Prince of Wales—some on famines, wars, earthquakes and eclipses that have occurred—indeed, they are almost a brief passing record of English history for a generation! And, oh, what domestic calamities they refer to, and what sad events in congregational life! And some, alas! are blotted by my tears over personal bereavement and ministerial trials of a kind that now make my heart ache. There is one sermon there half written—never to be completed. I have never had the heart to finish it, and never shall. I was stopped in the middle of it by a telegram that told me of the greatest loss I have ever yet known. Little did I think when I wrote that last sentence that no other would be added to it for ever, and that, after that sentence, life would never be the same again. Yes, there in those cases

are the most solemn thoughts of my life of manhood stereotyped before my eyes—some of the saddest, some of the happiest!

And what have those thoughts—those words—wrought? It is an awful thought that they were not spoken into the air, to be lost there. As I look at their written record, the words of the Apostle come into my mind: "To the one we are a savour of life unto life, and to the other of death unto death." Some, I hope—nay, know—have been the former. I see there one sermon that is often a source of comfort to me, and a sign that, in hours of depression, tells me that the Lord hath spoken by me; and I look at it as David might have looked at his five stones out of the brook, or as the Israelites might have looked at the sword wherewith he smote off the head of the giant, or as the early Christians may have looked on Paul's "handkerchiefs and aprons." It was preached on a "Mission" which I undertook to six different villages around Maidstone in days when "Missions" were little known. The text was Job vii. 6. A daughter of a then celebrated M.P. was among one of the audiences, and it pleased God to bless that sermon to her conversion. The fact is mentioned in an interesting memoir of her which was published, for not many months after hearing it she died, rejoicing in the God of her salvation.

There is another of like interest. It was preached in my own church to a large congregation. Therein was a young man who was living in sin. In the sermon I asked this question: "Is there any young man here who is kept back from Christ by any Drusilla?" etc. I received some time after a letter from that young man, saying that that question entered his conscience like an arrow from heaven, and he said to himself, "Yes, I am." He went home, shut himself up in his room, fully confessed his sin to God, sought pardon, obtained it, and resolved to give up that hindrance. His subsequent life has shown how true a conversion it was. For thirty years he has walked in the way of the Lord consistently, and is now a superintendent in a Church Sunday-school.

There is another on the text "Choose ye this day," etc. That sermon awoke at least two that I heard of to decision for Christ. I shall never forget my joy at the letter received from one of them. He walked well for some time; but, alas! soon after he removed to another parish where were no spiritual advantages, and so fell into temptation and a snare. Whether he was ever recovered out of the snare of the devil I cannot tell. These are sad ministerial experiences, showing us that deep convictions and resolutions are not always true conversions; and that it is a very perilous thing for even a

truly converted man to remove into a spiritual arctic circle. People rarely think of their soul's welfare in regard to change of situation; but it often prevents fruit coming to perfection, or leads to sad backsliding. Let me hope that this interesting case was only one of the latter kind, and that the Good Shepherd brought back the wandering sheep to His fold.

One of those sermons had a very remarkable effect, and it may be well to note it, since it shows what great issues may flow from our pulpit utterances; how God may use them in shaping the destinies of men; and how prayerful we ought to be, therefore, in seeking for Divine guidance in preparing them. I was preaching on Lot's choice of the country round Sodom, and I described the case of a young man being tempted to leave home for the Australian gold-fields for the sake of mere temporal advantages, and going where there were no means of grace, but manifold temptations and corrupting examples, and of the consequent peril to his soul. A young man, of whom I knew absolutely nothing, was present who (as I afterwards was informed) was just about to sail to that place with those very ends. He was so struck by the applicability of what he heard to his case that he resolved to abandon his intention and to remain in England.

I remember another curious case. I was, in one of those sermons, describing a character. After the sermon, a young man came to the vestry and wished to speak to me. I saw he looked very excited, not to say angry. "You wish to speak to me?" I said. "Yes," he replied, "I want to know who it is that has been telling you about me, and what you mean by speaking of me in the pulpit as you have to-night." "Sir," I said, "I have not the least idea who you are. I do not know your face, or your name, and no one certainly has ever spoken to me about you." He could hardly believe it, for he felt certain that I was describing *him*, and that someone must have been talking to me about him. Thus, through the preaching of the Christ, "the thoughts of many hearts are revealed."

Some of those sermons recall other interesting reminiscences of an encouraging character. Here are two that a pious English Bishop heard among the Alps, and which he thanked me for very warmly. Not long after he died in the act of prayer. There is another; a copy of which is now in St. Petersburg. It was heard in Switzerland by a lady resident in the Russian capital, who asked for a copy of a sermon that she found so edifying and comforting. Such "tokens" from memory often cheer and support when "signs and tokens" do not appear in one's ordinary ministry. It is great thing to know that the Lord *has* used us as His instruments.

But those cases suggest other memories of a sadder kind. How terrible to think of the truths that some of them contain, and to remember that this one and that one heard them, and heard them in vain! I can remember many who lived without God in this world and died without Him—who, I know, heard numbers of those sermons—nay, and I know felt them. One was a very melancholy case. He was a man in good position and of great influence in his locality; and being one of the old "Church and King" school of Tories, he "always attended his church"—at least in the morning—and at this he was most regular, and even attentive. He did not like the truth preached, but he would not have been worthy of "Church and Queen" if he had not been in his parish church once a day. He was very friendly with me, and even kind. But the truth never seemed to come home to him in its power. I never knew, however, the full meaning of the words, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not," until one day, when he came to me to use his influence with me to vote for a certain candidate at the borough election. I told him "I would do anything I could for him, but I could not vote against my conscience." He angrily replied, "Oh, put your conscience in your pocket!" What a revelation of a state of mind that could say that, even to his minister!

There, too, are sermons that were heard by some who died drunkards and the victims of other vices. I can remember how I distinctly *thought* of them when I preached this sermon and that; and that *that* sermon was specially written with a view to impress one whose face seems now to be photographed upon it, but who was *not* impressed, and who, if he were, resisted the impression, and lived and died, notwithstanding, a godless and a wicked man. Oh, my old sermons, I look at you with awe! Were they as faithful with those souls as they might have been? I read some of them over again, now that those souls who heard them are in eternity, and I really hardly see how they could well have been more faithful. That *is* a comfort now. But I have been thinking, as I have been gazing, what witnesses against those unhappy souls are there dumbly lying! Will there be—will there not be—a resurrection of those sermons? The paper of them will one day be ashes or dust; but will they not rise again? O God! may they not be witnesses against myself! But how solemn to think that those fading sheets that lie there will be factors in the judgment of the Great Day!

RICHARD GLOVER.

