

religion; for it has much to teach us both as to the solidarity of mankind in religious necessity and aspiration, and also as to the distinctiveness of Christianity as the only adequate satisfaction of the soul of man. Let our mind be a well-ordered inn, where many guests of reputable character are

welcomed and entertained; but let it not sink to be a casual ward, where the vagrants can seek shelter. 'Quench not the spirit; despise not prophesyings; prove all things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from every appearance of evil.'

In the Study.

Cura Curarum.

BY THE REV. A. F. TAYLOR, M.A., ST. CYRUS.

'THE heart that tries to sustain itself upon human commendation will discover with bitterness that the demand will ever increase. There is no more certain cause of depression than the accepting of lower satisfactions.'—A. W. ROBINSON, *Personal Life of Clergy*.

'On one occasion when I was going to preach a Lent course in Paris, Francis was bidding me pay little heed to the world's opinion, and he illustrated his advice by the following anecdote. The Superior of a convent committed the charge of the convent clock to a certain old man who wanted something to occupy him. But ere long he complained that he had never been given a more troublesome or vexatious charge. "What! winding up the weights twice a day?" exclaimed the Superior in amazement. "Oh no! it is not that; it is that I am so worried on all sides. If the clock is a few minutes slow, the students from within are down upon me; and then if to please them I put it on a few minutes, the other students grumble and say our time is fast. Perhaps I put it back to silence their complaints, and the others begin again, till my poor head might as well be the clapper of the bell itself—I am so bothered with the whole thing."

'The Superior comforted the poor old man by telling him to give kind words to all, but meanwhile to let the clock be and not try to adapt its time to one or two.

"Now you will be exposed to all manner of criticisms," Francis went on to say, "and if you trouble yourself as to what is said to you, there will be no end of it. Your course must be to be courteous to everybody; but meanwhile go your own way, be rational, do not try to follow all the

contradictory advice you are certain to receive, fix your mind on God, and follow the leading of His grace. We ought to care little for men's judgment, since our object is not to please them; He sees into the most hidden corners of our hearts."—BISHOP OF BELLEY.

'When you have been preaching, beware of the empty applause poured out upon you. What eloquence! What learning! Such a memory! Such grace! It is delightful to listen!—and the like, all this empty chatter coming forth from empty brains. So Jerome says that the Christian preacher should not cultivate the artifices of rhetoric, but content himself with the simplicity of fishermen, *i.e.* the Apostles; and if St. Paul condemns *listeners* who have itching ears, how much more does he condemn those *preachers* whose aim is to tickle such ears with fanciful words, choice illustrations, and artistic combinations. But if after a sermon you find a few hearers who cry out with the centurion, Truly this is the Son of God! who have learned to know Christ crucified, and who say of the preacher, It will not be his fault if we do not turn from our evil ways,—this sermon will rise up against us in the last judgment if we do not make good use of the warning. If they have learned the needfulness of penitence, the blessing of holiness, or if their lives give token that the lesson has sunk deep into their hearts, then indeed you may pronounce the preacher to be excellent and able to promote not his own glory but God's, who gives His Holy Spirit to His servant and speaks through him.'—ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

'A large part of what is called sensational preaching is simply the effort of a man who has no faith in his office or in the essential power of truth to keep himself before people's eyes by some kind of

intellectual fantasticalness. It is a pursuit of brightness and vivacity of thought for its own sake which seems to come from a certain almost desperate determination of the sensational minister that he will not be forgotten.'—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

'Let a man be a true preacher, really uttering the truth through his own personality, and it is strange how men will gather to listen to him.'—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

'It is not our own honour but God's that we seek, and meanwhile He will take care of ours.'—ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

Virginibus Puerisque.

The Parable of the Clock.

BY THE REV. FREDERICK J. RAE, M.A., ABERDEEN.

A PARABLE is an earthly story, or an earthly object, with a heavenly meaning. Now one of the commonest objects among us is a clock. We see it every day. We look at it often in a day. It has a story to tell, and is always telling it, quietly, steadily, without haste and without rest. It is the heavenly meaning of this story I am going to tell you to-day. It was told to me by one to whom it had brought much comfort.

The face of the clock is our life. The hands are God's hands, passing over our life continually, day by day, without any pause. God's hands are never removed from us. He is always acting in our life in one way or another. And the two hands of the clock tell us of the two different ways in which He acts. The short hand is the hand of Discipline. Slowly and surely it passes over our life. Not one of us, not even children, can escape it. Even children have their troubles, their disappointments, their sorrows, often as real and severe to them as the sorrows of grown-up people are to *them*. Nor should we wish to escape this hand of God, because it always brings us blessing. There is nothing God does to us that does not bring blessing.

The long hand of the clock is the hand of Mercy. And you know that the long hand passes over the dial of the clock far oftener than the short hand. I think this also is true of what God does to us. The hand of His mercy brings us happiness and prosperity and kindness, and these things come to

us far oftener than trouble. Happiness is far oftener with us than sorrow. Health is far oftener ours than illness. Food and plenty come to people far oftener than want and famine. The things that are hard come to every one of us, but not often. The things that gladden us and help us and make us healthy and strong come to us every day.

But there is one thing more about these hands. They both move together. They are both fastened to one pivot. They are both controlled by one power, and move at the same time and never separately. Do you see the beautiful heavenly meaning of this? *All* that God does comes from His love. His hand of discipline and His hand of mercy are both moved by His heart of love. And so all our troubles and all our joys are given by His love, and it is the same heart that sends both. Will you think of all this sometimes as you look at the clock in your home?

May.

BY THE REV. ROBERT HARVIE, M.A., EARLSTON.

'Grow in grace.'—2 P 3¹⁸.

To-day I want to say something about the month of May.

Its name means 'the growing month,' and we certainly can hardly fail, at this time, to take note of the growth upon the trees and in the fields.

It is not so much done now, but there used to be a great many old customs kept up on the first day of the month.

A good many years ago, I remember (when I was the age of some of you) that on the first of May we rose very early and went into a public park to get the dew. The notion we had was that if you rubbed your cheeks in the dew they would be fresh and rosy all through the summer.

It was the habit, too, of some, to go out early on that morning into the woods and to come back with flowers. With these they decorated their homes. That was called 'bringing home the May.'

Some years ago I enjoyed taking part in a ceremony which was called 'Welcoming the summer.' It was in a town in Germany of which a good part was built on the slopes of a hill, with a famous old castle at the top, and a river flowing round the foot of it. About midnight on the 30th April, most of the students assembled at the castle with lanterns, and each stood with his lantern

hanging over the castle wall. But some others were sent out to command several hills round about the town, and on the top they formed a square which we saw by their lanterns. At midnight—just as May was coming in—the castle bell began to ring. Rockets were fired, and we all joined in singing a song of welcome for summer.

In some places the gladness of the season was celebrated by choosing a young girl who was crowned with flowers and called 'The Queen of May.'

I want to suggest to you a way in which every girl might be crowned a queen, and how boys and girls alike might help 'to bring home the May.'

Have you heard the story of Gwen? I often think of her. She was a young girl who lived with her old father out in the plains of Canada. She was quite fearless and rode her own pony. She drove the wild cattle and was greatly admired for her daring spirit by all the people who lived near. But one day she fell over a cliff. She had been driving the cattle and they pressed her too near the edge, and when she came to a sharp turning, her pony didn't come round quickly enough, so both it and Gwen fell over the precipice. Her friends discovered the pony so seriously hurt that it had to be shot. Gwen was lying under it and was very badly crushed. She had to be carried home, and was so much bruised that there was no way of hastening on recovery except to lie in bed and be patient, for months at least. You know how hard it is to remain indoors when all outside seems to be calling you,—the sun shining and making everything look its best—the birds singing early in the morning—and your friends delighting in their sports. Well, Gwen loved the open air and just *hated* to remain indoors, but there was nothing else for it. She was patient for a while, until one day she overheard the doctor telling some one that she would never walk again. She was nearly mad with rage. She said she had always done as she liked and she would do so still. She was angry with God because He had allowed her to fall. She had once said she did not care for God, and she thought He had taken a cruel revenge. But you know He is not like that. He is 'Our Father in heaven.' To many of us He gives proof of His love in the round of happiness He sends us, but often we take what

He gives and forget Himself. Then sometimes He blesses us (yes, *blesses* us) in suffering. We feel we need Him then. God does not take pleasure in our pains, but He wants us for Himself and He takes this way with us

Because He cannot choose a softer way
To make us feel that He Himself is near
And each apart His own Beloved and known.

That way of God's worked well with Gwen. At first she was impatient and rebellious and wilful. It was painful for her friends (and she had many) to be near her when she lost her self-control and gave way to violent bursts of temper. She used to cry, 'Oh, I am sick of all this, I want to ride. I want to see all the things outside.' In these days she didn't think God cared at all.

But a good friend of hers let her see it in the right way. He told her about Jesus being God's Son—His Beloved—and yet how *His* life had so much sorrow. He was spitefully treated. He was despised by enemies and deserted by friends. It seemed at the end as if God Himself had forgotten Him. Yet the Father gave to the Son only what was best. Because of all He suffered, Jesus is Himself crowned with glory and honour, and He is full of love and sympathy for all who suffer.

Gwen began to see that it *must* be true for Jesus—God's own Son,—and it *might* be true for her also—she would try. That began a great change for Gwen. She put off her old angry, bitter ways, and after much striving (and many prayers for help) she became patient and self-controlled and gentle. Her room was the brightest place in all the district.

Now the violet speaks to us of *modesty* or *humility*, the lily of *purity*, the snowdrop of *courage*, the chrysanthemum of *kindness*. These are the graces which we see in Christ. After many struggles Gwen was crowned with these fair flowers of character. One day her great friend said of her, 'Of all the flowers I have seen, none are fairer or sweeter than those that are waving in Gwen's canyon.' The canyon was the place where she lived. If, therefore, *we* practise all the beautiful habits we see in Christ's life, in the place where *we* live, some will say that we are growing in grace, but others will say we have been 'bringing home the May.'