



The
CHRISTIAN TREASURY

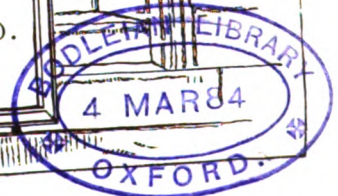
CONTAINING

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MINISTERS AND MEMBERS
OF
VARIOUS EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS



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CHRISTIAN TREASURY.

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EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS.

FOOLISHNESS AND POWER.*

BY EUGENE BERSIER, PASTOR OF THE REFORMED CHURCH OF PARIS.

‘For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us
which are saved it is the power of God.’—1 Cor. i. 18.



FOOLISHNESS—power! These are the two names that Paul here gives to the preaching of the cross. I propose, my brethren, to study in succession these two ideas, in order afterwards to show you the tie that closely unites them together. This will be the plan

of our reflections.

The preaching of the cross is **FOOLISHNESS**. I pray you to remark, my brethren, that it is not an enemy of the gospel, but an Apostle, who says this to us. Christianity has not waited until the world cast this reproach at it; it has not left it this satisfaction. This insult it has itself seized, and been the first to claim as its lawful property. And let not men say to us that it is here a figure of speech, a bold apostrophe, that has escaped from the Apostle. The gospel is sparing in its use of these exaggerated epithets, of these figures of rhetoric; and, moreover, the same thought is found underlying the entire teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ presented His doctrine as a thing that the world would charge with folly. He clearly speaks of the incompatibility that there is between man's view of things and that which He preached; He foretold

His disciples that they would meet with opposition, hatred, and contempt.

This is, indeed, a strange method of seeking to gain men; so strange that it would be foolishness if it did not show a divine inspiration. Usually, when a man wishes to succeed, he promises to himself and to his disciples success. Every general well knows that in order to succeed he must announce victory to his soldiers. It is the same in the order of intelligence; a philosopher, a chief of a school, is forced to prove that his doctrine answers to all the needs of the age, and will satisfy all its aspirations; he points out intelligences already prepared to embrace it, and proselytes who are about to range themselves under his standard. We ourselves, sometimes yielding to this attraction, have we not announced the near triumph of our beliefs! Jesus Christ alone said to His disciples, ‘You will be judged, calumniated, hated because of My name;’ and it is this thought that Paul takes up when he speaks with so much assurance of the foolishness of the cross.

The cross specially merited this distinction and this reproach, for it is it which epitomises our entire Christianity. It is its centre; it is in it, above all, that there appeared what was strange and opposed to human wisdom. The preaching of the cross was designed to be foolishness; it has been so, my brethren, and Paul has said not a word too much.

And, first of all, considering it only from an

* Translated from the French for the *Christian Treasury*, by permission of the author, from the seventh edition of the second volume of his sermons. Paris: M. Fischbacher.



WHAT NEXT?

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.



WHAT shall I try next? This question has arisen in the mind of more than one minister of Christ lately, as he has looked over his parish and bewailed the thinness of his congregations, or the still more lamentable lack of conversions. It occurs to him that if he could discover some novel topics for his pulpit, or add some attractive features to the order of worship, the empty pews might be filled. Perhaps, he says to himself, the introduction of a little more of the liturgical might attract some who have a liking for a homœopathic dose of ritualism. Perhaps an artistic choir might 'draw.' He hears that a sort of 'vesper' service of song is quite a success in a certain church; and he reads in his newspaper that an eloquent and devout pastor, in order to fill the aching void at his evening service, announces a series of 'original parables' or stories for the young folk. At some rate or other, by hook or by crook, our friend is quite determined that he will fill his house, and the question is, What shall I try next?

If we had the ear of this sorely perplexed brother, we should drop a suggestion or two of this kind. Brother, you are an ordained ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, set in charge of souls, and to deliver to them God's glorious message of eternal life. You are simply responsible to Him for the doing of your whole duty, and you are *not* responsible for results. Have you exhausted the treasury of God's Word? Are there no more vital, arousing, quickening texts of Scripture for you to unfold and press home on the conscience with a tongue set on fire by love? Have you visited all your flock, and laid your heart alongside of theirs? Have you done your utmost to kindle the fervour of the prayer-meetings,—which are to the spiritual life of the Church what the furnace is to the Church edifice? To your anxious question, 'What next?' let us modestly suggest—try hard honest work,—and do not go down to Egypt for help.

We entreat you, do not import any sensational baits into your pulpit, for after you have coddled your people with confectionery they will have less appetite than ever for solid meat. There is a wide field for the Moodys, Sankeys, and Sawyers among the unreached masses. Do not dishonour your own pulpit, or the promises of your own Master, by running off in despair after some evangelist or Bible-reader to come and put in their sickle where you have been sowing gospel seed for ten years. Stand to your post, as a man of God; and don't hoist signals of distress, with the idea of bringing some 'outsider' to your assistance. It is the omnipotent Spirit that you need—not any arm of flesh. Remember what David said, when he reached in after the old trusty sword with which he had beheaded Goliath: 'There is none like that; give it me.' When the 'sword of the Spirit' has lost its power to cleave human hearts, then you may inquire, *What next?* but not until that distant day.

'Be not weary in well doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not.' That due season is God's own time, not ours. There are no years or months in His existence. You may be sowing seed whose harvest shall be reaped by your successor. Stephen's prayers and Stephen's teachings ripened into results after he had gone up to his martyr-crown. Perhaps in the midst of your steady, *legitimate* work (for God blesses no other), your ears may be saluted by the sound of an abundance of rain.

Revivals are not obsolete. In my own pastoral experience, the outpourings of the Spirit have usually come when no one predicted them. The first revival I was ever favoured with began with the special efforts of a godly young girl to save the soul of a friend, and at a time when I was feeling peculiarly discouraged, and had entertained a very cowardly thought of deserting the church for another one. What place next? was in my mind. God's answer was—'Put ye in the sickle, and reap, for the harvest is ripe!'

Let us not be misunderstood. There may

be several legitimate improvements made, both in the methods of preaching and the methods of worship. Because a minister freshens and enlivens his sermons by new illustrations, or because he seeks to secure his people's participation in worship, let him not be denounced as a novelty-hunter or an unfledged ritualist. Our people ought to take more part in the service of worship than they commonly do; they ought to do more of the singing and more of the Bible-reading, and if at the conclusion of the minister's prayer 'all the people said *amen*,' it would be only in the line of Bible precedent. True conservatism means healthy progress. It is not from new progress in old paths that danger comes. It is from the adoption of new devices of human

ingenuity, and from the importation of 'clap-trap' into the house of God, that the mischief is to be apprehended. Everything that quickens zeal, and arouses spiritual emotion, and makes the truth more pungent and powerful, is to be welcomed.

Then, fellow-labourer, let us be of good cheer, and fling distrust and despondency to the winds. We are only responsible for our own duty; results are with God. There is no 'advanced thought' beyond what Jesus and His Apostles have given us. There is no *power* except from on high. The question 'what next?' will be answered in heavenly blessings, if we only stand fast by the cross of Christ and shun not to declare the whole gospel of God!—*Christian Intelligencer*.

HENRY FRANCIS LYTE,

AUTHOR OF THE HYMN 'ABIDE WITH ME.'

BY REV. DAVID PURVES, M.A., GOUROCK.



T was said of a gentle poet that he 'learned in suffering what he taught in song.' It is a favourite saying that 'the sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought.' Both sayings are singularly true of the author of this favourite Christian hymn. His was a life of conflict, first with adverse circumstances, and latterly with delicate and failing health, and, like the perfume of the flowers, the fragrance of his songs became the sweeter the more his spirit was crushed and his prospects blighted. His poems towards the close came to wear a chastened beauty, sweet but pensive, like the leaves in autumn, which are most beautiful just when they are about to fall.

We can claim the author of 'Abide with Me' as a Scotchman. Though of Irish extraction, belonging to an old family, the Lytes of Carey, he was born near Kelso, at a village called Ednam, in 1783. Old family though they were, the Lytes had become very poor; and after enjoying during childhood the influence and prayers of a godly mother, whose memory he cherished through life, Lyte was sent to school in Ireland, and from that time had to live a life of self-help, which developed his character and ripened his faculties, but only too surely, as so often happens, undermined his health. At an early stage he showed ability of a high order, and displayed a tone of moral earnestness and a winning disposition which ensured his future success. He entered Trinity College, Dublin, having obtained a scholarship, at an early age. He maintained himself there most manfully by winning prizes and teaching private pupils. He formed many college friendships, which were

maintained with rare warmth and devotedness during a chequered and varied life. At college, too, he developed, or rather evinced, the poetic talent, gaining several prizes for his poems, and diversifying his correspondence with his friends with poetical letters of a racy and amusing kind. The foundations of his character were laid during those days of study and struggle. Very early he showed an energy of purpose and a vigour of will which contrasted strikingly but pleasantly with his sweet, gentle disposition and the calmness of his intellectual pursuits. He left college a powerful but placid nature, touched, too, with a deep sense of gratitude, which in after days he kept alive by his own beneficent and generous habits.

Up to this time, however, he had shown no decided religious convictions, and it was without any high motive impelling him that he abandoned his first intention to study medicine, and entered the Christian ministry in the curacy of Wexford in 1817. This was evinced in the fact that he soon wearied of the routine of parochial work, and, at the request of a friend, abandoned it to become a tutor. It was during this period that he and Christ were brought face to face, and, as so often happens, it was at a death-bed that they met.

Here is his own account of it:—'A neighbouring clergyman with whom I was intimate, and who bore the highest character for benevolence, piety, and good sense, was taken ill, and sent for me. I shall never forget some of the circumstances which took place. His great inquiry was how a happy eternity was to be attained; and here, indeed, my blood almost curdled to hear the dying