

Lutheran Observer.

Unless with proofs of Holy Writ, or with manifest, clear and distinct principles and arguments, I am refuted and convinced, I can and will recant nothing.—Luther.

In Essentials, Unity; in Non-Essentials, Liberty; in all Things, Charity.

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WHOLE NO. 3662.

Poetry.

LOSSES.

BY FRANCES BROWN.

Upon the white sea-sand
There sat a pilgrim band,
Telling the losses that their lives had known;
While evening waned away
From breezy cliff and bay,
And the strong tides went out with weary moan.
One spake, with quivering lip,
Of a far freighted ship,
With all his household to the deep gone down;
But one had wilder woe—
For a fair face, long ago
Lost in the darker depths of a great town.
There were who mourned their youth
With a most loving ruth,
For its brave hopes and memories ever green;
And one upon the west
Turned an eye that would not rest,
For far-off hills whereon its joy had been.
Some talked of vanished gold,
Some of proud honors told,
Some spake of friends that were their trust no more;
And one of a green grave
Beside a foreign wave,
That made him sit so lonely on the shore.
But when their tales were done,
There spake among them one,
A stranger, seeming from all sorrow free:
"Sad losses have ye met,
But mine is heavier yet;
For a believing heart hath gone from me."
"Alas!" these pilgrims said,
"For the living and the dead—
For fortune's cruelty, for love's sure cross,
For the wrecks of land and sea!
But however it came to thee,
Thine, stranger, is life's last and heaviest loss."

YUSSOUF.

BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

A stranger came one night to Yussouf's tent,
Saying, "Behold one outcast and in dread,
Against whose life the bow of power is bent,
Who flies, and hath not where to lay his head;
I come to thee for shelter and for food.
To Yussouf, called through all our tribes 'The Good.'"
"This tent is mine," said Yussouf, "but no more
Than it is God's; come in, and be at peace;
Freely shalt thou partake of all my store
As I of his who buildeth over these
Our tents his glorious roof of night and day,
And at whose door none ever yet heard Nay."
So Yussouf entertained his guest that night,
And waking him ere day, said: "Here is gold,
My swiftest horse is saddled for thy flight,
Depart before the prying day grow bold."
As one lamp lights another, nor grows less,
So nobleness enkindleth nobleness.
That inward light the stranger's face made grand,
Which shines from all self-conquest; kneeling low,
He bowed his forehead upon Yussouf's hand,
Sobbing: "O Sheik, I cannot leave thee so;
I will repay thee; all this thou hast done
Unto that Ibrahim who slew thy son!"
"Take thrice the gold," said Yussouf, "for with thee
Into the desert, never to return.
My one black thought shall ride away from me;
First-born, for whom by day and night I yearn,
Balanced and just are all of God's decrees;
Thou art avenged, my first-born, sleep in peace!"

Contributions.

WHY ARE CONVERSIONS FEWER?

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

That there has been a lamentable falling off in the percentage of conversions during these recent years is proved by the statistical reports of most of the evangelical denominations. There may be several reasons to account for this painful fact. I am convinced that one reason is that—with happy exceptions—there has been a decline of direct, pointed, faithful and persuasive preaching to the unconverted. Too many discourses are addressed to nobody in particular; preaching to Christians has been relatively overdone, and preaching to the impenitent underdone. I do not mean denunciations that only irritate, or mere hortations that are often a waste of breath. I mean that the preacher should so hold up the ugliness and the doom of *sin* before the sinner's eye that he should feel his own guiltiness, and so present Jesus Christ that the sinner should flee to him as his only Savior. "Warn them from me" is God's solemn injunction to every minister; he has therefore no more right to cap Sinai or conceal hell than he has to hide the sin-aton-ing cross of Calvary. In short, I mean logic set on fire by love.

Ministers ought to go back to the fountain-head, and remember that Jesus Christ "began to preach, and to say *repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They ought to remember that Peter began the great Apostolical campaign by preaching repentance to the unconverted, and Paul ceased not to warn night and day with tears. They ought to remember that the most successful preachers from Whitfield and Wesley on to Spurgeon and Moody were men whose chief aim was to awaken the unconverted, and to lead them straight to Jesus Christ. Spurgeon never had any "revivals" in his great church; and for the good reason that there were no spiritual declensions to be revived from. He sowed the Gospel with one hand, and reaped conversions with the other. His church was like the orange-trees I saw in California; there were white blossoms on some limbs, and ripe golden fruit on some other limbs. Unless a minister intensely loves souls, and longs for souls, he will never save souls; if he does, and uses the right means seasoned with prayer, God will give him souls converted as his rich reward.

In my own experience of forty-three years of pastoral work, I delivered hundreds of discourses to the impenitent, and did not limit them to seasons of especial outpourings of the Holy Spirit. My Bible gave me abundant ammunition in such texts as "choose life," "come, for all things are now ready," "Jesus only," "quench not the Spirit," and that piercing passage "past feeling." Preaching to the unconverted is not easy work; it costs more mental labor than any other sermon-work—except during a great descent of the Holy Spirit, and at such times all sermons make

themselves. Preaching is a luxury when every stroke echoes in converted souls.

There is a common theory now that in order to awaken sinners, ministers must preach first to awaken Christians; and this process is often kept up until the members of the church are rather hardened under constant hammering. On the other hand, nothing stirs up comatose Christians like the sight of awakened persons going into an inquiry-room with their pastor. If a worldly-minded church-member sees his own son or daughter come home from church or the Sabbath-school under conviction and with a melted heart, it is a live coal on his own conscience. The sight of awakened inquiries wakes up many whose eye-lids are grown heavy. God pity our churches if the chief business of our ministers is to Christianize Christians!

It is not only the duty of a pastor to endeavor to win converts by his efforts in the pulpit, but in his ministrations during the week. I found that many could be reached for personal conversation in pastoral visitation, and by appointing times for meeting inquirers; many also by addressing kind letters to the unconverted. Personal effort is one secret of success. A very zealous and very judicious pastor in a neighboring city has had for three years past very large gatherings of new members, and without outside help. The pastor faithfully told his people that they were as responsible for souls as he was; he bade them seek the power from on high, and called for volunteers to visit and converse with unconverted acquaintances. Sunday-school teachers were urged to pray for and labor with their scholars. In the meantime the pastor delivered awakening and soul-convicting sermons, and wrote two hundred letters to individuals directing them to their path of duty. Such a course as this—dictated by common sense and solicitude for the salvation of souls—is within the possibilities of every minister. How shall a minister escape if he neglect the salvation of souls within his reach?

One other cause for the decline in conversions must be noted—and that is the decline of a warm, living and attractive religion in too many professedly Christian homes. The parents do not maintain the "church in the house." Family worship is either neglected entirely, or else made a pious sham. Instead of following up the faithful preaching in the pulpit by watering the Gospel seed at home, they choke the seed by their worldly talk on the Sabbath, and their worldly walk during the week. The downward pull of their six days is too much for the upward pull of the best work of their pastor on his one day. When the Elkanahs and Hannahs become scarcer, who wonders that the Samuels are fewer also?

I have ventured to indicate two chief causes for the downward trend in conversions. *That trend can be stopped*; and it will be if every minister will face his Master when he enters his pulpit, and will see the light of the judgment-seat in the faces of his auditors. As my own very imperfect life draws towards the sunset, I would say to my younger brethren that whatever of good I may have wrought through the press, the sweetest joy of my pastorates was the privileges of receiving over two thousand souls into Christ's flock on confession of their faith in him. Many a hard-toiling brother who never had my favoring opportunities will deserve a goodlier crown. And the one crown that is within the reach of all of us is that of the *winner of souls to Jesus Christ!*

—"Spend no time in arguments. I believe that is a work of the devil to cause delay. If a man comes to argue we should go on our knees, pray with him, and then let him go. Job never fell until he got into an argument with his friends; he could stand his boils, and all his other afflictions, better than an argument."

SHALL WE HAVE THE CONTINENTAL SUNDAY IN AMERICA?

BY P. ANSTADT, D. D.

There is an agitation going on now in the City of New York to have an "open Sunday," that is, that the liquor bars and beer saloons shall be legally open on Sunday. This is urged on the plea that New York City contains a large number of foreigners who are opposed to our American Puritanical Sunday laws, and "demand an open Sunday saloon, as they had it in the country they came from, and that we should deal perfectly square and honorable with our German citizens."

Further, it is claimed that this Sunday open saloon should not be merely a local matter, but should extend to the inland cities and towns through the whole country. We are very sorry to see that one of our daily papers advocates the open saloon also in our good city of York.

This agitation for a Continental Sunday in America is doubtless promoted by the liquor-sellers. These claim to carry on their body and soul-destroying business during seven days in the week, while all other people engaged in honorable and useful occupations are required by law to observe the Christian Sabbath.

It is surprising and mortifying to learn that even some ministers of different Christian denominations advocate an open-saloon Sunday. But there are also strong voices in opposition. There are the words of Rev. A. P. Doyle, a Roman Catholic priest in New York City: "What astonishes me most is to find reputable ministers, sound on so many social questions, doing their best to destroy the sanctity of the Lord's day by declaring for the open Sunday saloon."

The American Sabbath Union, representing fourteen evangelical organizations, has adopted resolutions in protest.

The Protestant Episcopal Temperance Society has adopted among others the following: "No good reason has ever been given why a traffic confessedly injurious in its effects upon the community should be granted special privileges not allowed to unobjectionable kinds of business."

Dr. Funk, of New York, remarks: "At its best it is a beastly business that justifies words like these of John Sherman: 'Abandon liquor as you would abandon a pestilence, for liquor wrecks more lives than all of the horrors of the world combined.'"

It is hardly probable that the New York State Legislature will legalize the Sunday open saloon. Senator Green, of Binghamton, N. Y., says: "Put me down as in favor of the American Sabbath."

Senator Depew says: "There is no use trying to force foreigners in this land to observe a Puritanical Sabbath. They don't understand what it is. We must give up strict Sabbath laws." He is in favor of selling liquor on Sundays, "during legal hours."

To which the "People's Paper" of Philadelphia replies: "We certainly have the right to govern our own land for its best interests, irrespective of the fancied need of the ignorant, dirty, beer-swilling crowd coming to our shores. Because they know nothing of morality or purity is no reason why the people of the United States should surrender their principles, and bid defiance to the laws of Almighty God. Those who come to this land must be willing to abide by its laws. They must be taught to respect the Sabbath, and the God of America. If not agreeable to these conditions, no one will force them here, and their absence will benefit the country many times more than their presence. Let the American people instruct the foreigners here along educational and religious lines, and show them an example of sobriety and respect for the commandments of God. We