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## Poetry.

### "By the Wayside, Begging."

"By the wayside, where perchance  
This kindly voice may fall upon my ear,  
Others, they tell me, see the loving glance  
And with the gracious Saviour's pleading near.  
How would I wish to forth the Lord to meet,  
But weak and blind, I can but sit and wait  
While they embrace His feet to greet,  
Then, rising, follow Him to Zion's gate."

Begging, in helplessness and poverty,  
In great unworthiness and sorest need,  
I feel but call on Him—my earnest cry  
To reach His ear: O Master, will Thou heed  
And answer me? Did I not hold my peace,  
To who stand by? These words my prayer shall be:  
For shall my pleading cease—  
—John, Thon Son of David, pity me."

Thou wilt attend the longing prayer,  
Pass in by with sweet benignity,  
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best to put it into the pupil's mind. Therefore,

1. Do not attempt too much. So many are the possible relations of almost any portion of Scripture that the endeavor to give them all in a single exercise must needs distract and perplex, and for the most part fail. Make sure, then, of the main points first, and bring in all others only so far as the way may be plainly open. Two or three thoughts sharply put and strongly enforced are better than a dozen crowded together and dimly apprehended.

2. Secure your ground as you go on. This is done by getting back into the scholars in their own words what you tell them in yours. Question and repeat, question and repeat, in the watchword of effective teaching. The learner is to take instruction, not as the peck takes flour, but as the flour takes leaven. His mind must work until the truth becomes incorporated with his own mental processes, otherwise the seed is sown on a beaten highway where the birds pick it up as fast as it falls.

3. Seek pertinent illustrations. The great teachers of all ages have abounded in this characteristic, and none more than our divine Lord. The sermon on the Mount was one discourse, the parables are many. Follow their example. The best sources of illustration are your own observation and the Scripture. Cultivate the habit of using these to learn the art of similitudes, and remember the simpler they are, the better. Nathan's story was extremely quiet; but it went straight as a rifle-shot to the heart of David.

4. Beware of sacrificing the end to the means. This you surely do when you multiply comparisons or examples. The attention is diverted from the chief thing, and the truth is smothered. One of the best men I ever knew made one of the worst addresses I ever heard, just because it was a continuous string of little stories. An illustration is never to be brought in for its own sake. Your business is not to amuse or to fill up the time, but to teach, and whatever does not help the teaching hinders it.

5. Be of good heart. Having prepared the lesson, you know the truth, you understand it, you feel it, you are sure that it is the truth of God, and you have a right to expect its author's presence and blessing. Then set about your work in a hopeful and courageous spirit. Have what the old divine called "actings of faith" on the divine promises. This will give to your words, voice, and manner a power which the duller or most heedless scholar will sooner or later feel and acknowledge.

6. Once more, see that some portion of each of every Scripture lesson is learned by heart. It may be only one verse, but let it be learned thoroughly and accurately. It is common to stigmatize this as parrot-like, but would to God every scholar were so far apart. Memory is the easiest and most

of every conceivable degree, from I fear I have been wrong!" to the despairing cry, "O God, have mercy upon me a miserable sinner!" will not serve the purpose at all. The exact facts must be stated with lawyer-like precision. And when we have got only thus far, who does not feel that all the spiritual value of the apostolic recommendation to confess our sins to one another has already evaporated, and been squeezed out of a practice thus despoiled of all its emotional elements, and reduced to a system of mere cut-and-dried, formal rules!

And the necessities of the position thus made for themselves and for their flocks, by the Romish clergy, have resulted in the building up of a huge scheme of casuistry, the intricacy, complexity, and dry pettifogging technicalities of which are such as to be incredible to those who have not informed themselves upon the subject, and to excite the measureless astonishment of those who have done so. For let us consider for a moment what this necessity of measuring the exact measure of sinfulness of every human shortcoming involves and implies. It implies the necessity of laying down a chart, as it were, of all human actions; of dividing and classifying every possible variety of human conduct, and drawing up a tariff for the entire list! And this monstrously impossible task has been attempted. This is the aim and object of all those tons of volumes of casuistry which it has been the labor of many of the acutest minds Rome has ever had in her service to produce. From these the short compendium mentioned at the beginning of this letter has been distilled, and reduced to the system of dry rules, which form the tools of the confessor's business. A very short examination of this volume, which is written in the form of a catechism, is sufficient to show the absolute necessity of such a guide to the work of the confessional. Without such an assistance the young confessor would be entirely at sea. No knowledge of the holy Scriptures, however commensurate, no holiness of moral views, however cultured, no delicacy of conscience, however scrupulous, would help him in the smallest degree. He must learn his manual and make himself so master of its intricate contents as to be able at once to refer his penitent's case to the proper category as specified in such and such a chapter, section, and paragraph.

It needs but very short reflection, and a very limited acquaintance with human nature, to perceive what must be the effects of such a system, in the first place, upon the confessing priest. He is inevitably taught to discard, in discharging his functions in the confessional, every natural movement of conscience, every attempt to weigh by any truly moral standard the real gravity of the facts contended to him, and their tendency in the work of moulding and fashioning human character. He is compelled to resort to his cut-and-dry rules in order to ascertain precisely the degree and amount of the penitent's guilt; and he has to do this by means of a competent acquaintance with a code which nothing save long and special training can enable

any man to master, and the intricacies and difficulties of which can be mastered by no one who has not examined the books in which the system is contained—intricacies and difficulties of which we propose to give our readers some idea in our next letter, and which, we venture to predict, will not be received by them without utter amazement. Various branches of the civil and criminal law of different nations have often been reproached with want of clearness and simplicity, with the difficulty, which often arises, of knowing at once to what degree any action or given line of conduct is pronounced by them to be illegal. But it may safely be asserted that no body of law ever existed which is one-half so intricate, so subtle, so difficult as the priestly code which regulates the confessor in his functions in the confessional.

This is the effect produced upon the confessor by Rome's doctrine and system as practiced in every confessional throughout the Roman Catholic world. Now let us advert to the effect produced on the flocks, who are taught that by the efficacy of this "sacrament" of Confession alone can their sins find pardon from God. For the unconfessed sinner did not die! They have no share in the mercy promised to the repentant sinner! It is through the narrow gate of the confessional box alone that the gates of heaven can be approached. Of course the first effect on the laity is the destruction in them, as in the priesthood, of every movement of the natural conscience and even of the faculty of estimating their own conduct, and of all sense of sin. In the next place, it has this effect—that it is impossible for any man to know where he stands as regards his obedience or disobedience to God's law, till he has consulted his confessor. Has he been guilty of mortal sin? Or can it be brought in venial under any one of the innumerable exceptions and subtle distinctions which make the confessor's code a veritable labyrinth? Is it needful for him to "make restitution," or is that not necessary in the case in question? It will be seen in due time that this phrase of "making restitution," that plays a large part in the law of the confessional, does not apply merely, as might be supposed, to sins of fraud or theft, but has a much wider application. There, again, is there any indulgence applicable to his case, or not? In a word, it is absolutely necessary for the Roman Catholic Christian to go to his confessor for the same purpose, and in the same spirit, as a man immersed in all the perplexities of worldly business goes to his lawyer. For, in that transaction illegal, and in that one lawful, are found in the law by which alone the consequences of such and such an action can be escaped? Can by steering clear of the law he escape such questions as the nature of the sin, and the degree of its gravity?

Little good accordingly comes of special teaching on amusements. Summary laws attach much weight to the common appeal: "People will have amusement; if you don't give them good, they'll get bad." There are many things which I, as a Christian minister, have no vocation to settle. "People must get cloth; if not good, they will get shoddy." "People will be sick, and must have doctors; if you don't commend them Homoeopaths, they will get Allopaths, or vice versa." "People want drinks; if you don't give them good, they will get dilutions of vitriol, and what not!" I have, as a Christian minister, no vocation to make good cloth, define the best system of medicine, or open soda-water fountains. There are other agencies working in a different plane, and with facilities I do not possess, for the adjustment of these things. I admit no obligation on the Church to provide in this matter. She serves in a higher court.

3. Let us not do anything that will magnify and exalt that mere negative goodness that boasts itself in its self-denial, and that makes religion lie largely in what one never does. "I'm sure I never went to balls and parties—not like some that I could name, and high professors too!" That is a sickly, ill-conditioned kind of piety. True Christian self-denial does not get itself weighed, does not think of itself. Prudery is one thing, and modesty is another. And as prudery may be very near immodesty, so this self-conscious excellence may be very near pride, vanity, and uncharitableness.

"Then what would you do?" some one asks. I can only say that on this side of life I would do very little. "Mastery in activity" (to use Sir James Mackintosh's phrase) is the true policy in the main; or, to take another of his phrases, "disciplined inaction." Let us put the world where the Bible puts it, and leave the people to be the judges of it. If we spend our strength on one form of it, that versatile Proteus will soon take another. Let us create and maintain an atmosphere in which social weeds and noxious plants will not thrive. Let us keep the light of divine truth so clearly and so constantly turned on human life, that the unclean things of night will look hideous in it, and go to their own place. Let us make life, in our teaching, and show it in our own lives, to be too solemn and awful for frittering upon shows and merry-makings. If they tell us, taking a detached bit out of the Bible, as their way is, how much good a merry heart does, let us remind them, "it doth good like a medicine." We have no quarrel with those who use merriment as a medicine. It is with those who make it the aim and business of life, and whose intellectual and moral nature, if we could lay it bare to inspection, would be like a human being (if such could be found) who breakfasted, dined, and supped out of the druggist's, and according to the *materia medica*. And, if they have mind enough and knowledge enough to understand, let us tell them that the ages in which even the most respectable fine arts were worshipped or adored—we use the language of their votaries—were the ages of extremely coarse, degraded, and corrupt people; and that, as a general thing, in all past history, when the

initiative arts most flourished, and obtained the most distinguished patronage, there worship of God and true life-work were the least, and this not by chance, but apparently with the regularity of a law. They are not so much the means of a people's growth, strength, and advancement as the effluence of decay. If caustic, idle enough to speculate on these matters, ask us, "Is it right to dance?" let us reply by another question, "In what character do you ask—as a disciple of Christ, or as a woman of the world?" Usually the question will not be pushed farther. If ladies appeal to us regarding certain enjoyments—"are they right?" let us put it to them:—"Are they?" do you feel them to be—do your partners feel them to be—"pure womanly?" For it is the female conscience that commonly gets entangled in these questions; and yet the conscience is not engaged at all in one out of every ten cases.

Supposed self-interest, social considerations, inclination, and the like, prompt to many things of which the Christian conscience has not originally one particle of doubt; but it is nice to have some differences of opinion about them, and so to make one's self easy, and take the benefit of the doubt. What these people lack is not light, but principle; not direction, but a vigorous spiritual life; not a nicer discrimination as to how far we can go, and not be in the enemy's camp, and of that world which hates God, and on which He will rain snares, but a sense of being His, such a sense of being kings and priests unto God, as would keep them—as instinct keeps us from fire—from what is earthly, sensual, and devilish. Let us not amuse them by nice disquisitions on the ever-shifting point where fashionable folly begins and Christian relaxation ends. Let us tell them what we think the true state of the case, and act accordingly. Let us show them that we count many of their chief joys mere trifles, so poor and insignificant that we have never taken the trouble to balance the good and the evil in them, of no significance except as they may show when a light and frivolous life is congenial; that other, higher, grander work is ours; is our joy, our delight; that it is varied enough in form to give us relaxation; that we are serious, not for seriousness' sake, but because we have serious matters on hand, that leave us no time, nor strength, nor inclination for their elaborate idleness.

Let us not as Christian ministers undertake to pronounce upon the amusements, discriminating which is good, which is bad, and when an innocent becomes a sinful game. For one thing, we have more dignified work to do than to measure the comparative qualities of all the pastimes of the people, from "fox and goose" upward, and downward. For another, our oracle will be construed in ways we never intended. We approve, for example, of square dances, not of round. Well, the devil will soon put the mischievous elements of the dance we condemn into that we approve; and we are now in a worse case than before, for the evil proceeds with our approval, and we cannot turn dancing-masters to oppose it, nor be always on hand to point it out.

For yet another thing, this plan *minimizes* Christian people. "Our minister allows so and so;" "our pastor disapproves of so and so." What! have you no judgment, no conscience, no Bible! or are they packed away like children's knives, lest they should cut their innocent fingers, while a clerical mamma, or a Rev. "Father" does all the serious cutting? Let me be a preacher, a teacher, a writer, if I can; but let me never become that compound of vanity, ambition, love of power, misguided zeal, and distorted religion, "a spiritual director." We are helping of the people's faith. Sentences as well as sex forbid our being degraded into dummies.

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For yet another thing, this plan *minimizes* Christian people. "Our minister allows so and so;" "our pastor disapproves of so and so." What! have you no judgment, no conscience, no Bible! or are they packed away like children's knives, lest they should cut their innocent fingers, while a clerical mamma, or a Rev. "Father" does all the serious cutting? Let me be a preacher, a teacher, a writer, if I can; but let me never become that compound of vanity, ambition, love of power, misguided zeal, and distorted religion, "a spiritual director." We are helping of the people's faith. Sentences as well as sex forbid our being degraded into dummies.

Little good accordingly comes of special teaching on amusements. Summary laws attach much weight to the common appeal: "People will have amusement; if you don't give them good, they'll get bad." There are many things which I, as a Christian minister, have no vocation to settle. "People must get cloth; if not good, they will get shoddy." "People will be sick, and must have doctors; if you don't commend them Homoeopaths, they will get Allopaths, or vice versa." "People want drinks; if you don't give them good, they will get dilutions of vitriol, and what not!" I have, as a Christian minister, no vocation to make good cloth, define the best system of medicine, or open soda-water fountains. There are other agencies working in a different plane, and with facilities I do not possess, for the adjustment of these things. I admit no obligation on the Church to provide in this matter. She serves in a higher court.

3. Let us not do anything that will magnify and exalt that mere negative goodness that boasts itself in its self-denial, and that makes religion lie largely in what one never does. "I'm sure I never went to balls and parties—not like some that I could name, and high professors too!" That is a sickly, ill-conditioned kind of piety. True Christian self-denial does not get itself weighed, does not think of itself. Prudery is one thing, and modesty is another. And as prudery may be very near immodesty, so this self-conscious excellence may be very near pride, vanity, and uncharitableness.

"Then what would you do?" some one asks. I can only say that on this side of life I would do very little. "Mastery in activity" (to use Sir James Mackintosh's phrase) is the true policy in the main; or, to take another of his phrases, "disciplined inaction." Let us put the world where the Bible puts it, and leave the people to be the judges of it. If we spend our strength on one form of it, that versatile Proteus will soon take another. Let us create and maintain an atmosphere in which social weeds and noxious plants will not thrive. Let us keep the light of divine truth so clearly and so constantly turned on human life, that the unclean things of night will look hideous in it, and go to their own place. Let us make life, in our teaching, and show it in our own lives, to be too solemn and awful for frittering upon shows and merry-makings. If they tell us, taking a detached bit out of the Bible, as their way is, how much good a merry heart does, let us remind them, "it doth good like a medicine." We have no quarrel with those who use merriment as a medicine. It is with those who make it the aim and business of life, and whose intellectual and moral nature, if we could lay it bare to inspection, would be like a human being (if such could be found) who breakfasted, dined, and supped out of the druggist's, and according to the *materia medica*. And, if they have mind enough and knowledge enough to understand, let us tell them that the ages in which even the most respectable fine arts were worshipped or adored—we use the language of their votaries—were the ages of extremely coarse, degraded, and corrupt people; and that, as a general thing, in all past history, when the

initiative arts most flourished, and obtained the most distinguished patronage, there worship of God and true life-work were the least, and this not by chance, but apparently with the regularity of a law. They are not so much the means of a people's growth, strength, and advancement as the effluence of decay. If caustic, idle enough to speculate on these matters, ask us, "Is it right to dance?" let us reply by another question, "In what character do you ask—as a disciple of Christ, or as a woman of the world?" Usually the question will not be pushed farther. If ladies appeal to us regarding certain enjoyments—"are they right?" let us put it to them:—"Are they?" do you feel them to be—do your partners feel them to be—"pure womanly?" For it is the female conscience that commonly gets entangled in these questions; and yet the conscience is not engaged at all in one out of every ten cases.

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