

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE near approach of another Christmastide, with its fresh outburst of merry-making and holy joy,

Our Rocky is a reminder of the world's **Helicon** debt to the Incarnation.

To the Christ-child we owe all that is best in life and hope. For when those feet of flesh touched that rocky birth-place at Bethlehem, there gushed forth a stream of blessing richer far than the fountain Hippocrene on Mount Helicon struck by the hoofs of the fabled Pegasus—a stream perennial in its flow.

Poet-angels found in it inspiration for their advent song. Humble shepherds were charmed away from their midnight watch among their silent flock to see in the face of a Babe the sunrise of the hope of a race. The wise men, led by a star, were conducted to an Oracle where divinest wisdom ever wells up in exchange for the gold and frankincense and myrrh of the heart's devotion. And to-day the Helicon of joy and affection and strength for the Christian soul is the manger where the young Child lay.

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FOR several years the American public has been hearing, in a more or less humorous manner, of

The Hook-the "lazy germ" and its **worm and** ravages among the negroes **Regenera-** and "poor whites" of certain sections of the South. **tion**

Now medical science is giving us facts which indicate that this "lazy germ" is no joke, but an actual disease that is afflicting unto death, or worse, whole communities, aggregating, perhaps, several million people. This disease is caused by an animal

parasite which enters the human organism through the hair follicles and pores of the skin, makes its way tortuously through many organs, and finally fastens itself upon the walls of the intestines, where it literally drains the life-blood of its victims.

A more dramatic illustration of the complexity of the problem of human regeneration could not be imagined than is afforded by this hookworm and its victims. Here are whole neighborhoods of people, throughout large areas of the South, that are hopelessly sunken in physical and mental decay. For decades they have been the objects of religious and other kinds of social reform. They have been preached to and exhorted to repent of their sins. They have been instructed in schools in the hope that they might be aroused from their intellectual lethargy. They have been scolded by economic reformers for their laziness and thriftlessness and urged to shake off their apathy and become self-respecting. In spite of it all, physical, mental, and moral degeneration has gone right on working its ravages among blacks and whites, young and old, "converted" and "unconverted" alike. For, the hookworm was a type of "innate depravity" that calls to repentance could not reach; of ignorance too deep-seated for education; and of laziness that neither the scourge of ridicule nor of rods could arouse. Not even Christian Science nor the Emmanuel movement could have gotten rid of this body-sickness and soul-sickness.

So it is that the medical specialist's diagnosis of "hookworm" seems likely to point the way of a new movement in the regeneration of the "crackers"

THE PREACHER

POPULAR PREACHING AND THEOLOGICAL STANDPOINTS

An Interview with Charles Henry Parkhurst, D.D., LL.D.

THE REV. WILLIAM DURBAN, LONDON

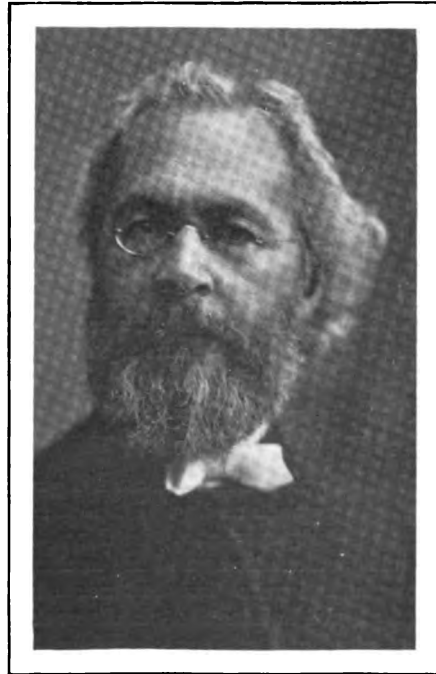
SOME men are so well known far beyond their own connection that their personality needs no description. The reputation of the pastor of Madison Square Presbyterian church, New York City, is threefold, resting upon his achievements as preacher, author, and civic reformer. It would be superfluous for me to preface this interview with allusions to so familiar a career, and I therefore without any such preliminary give the reader the echo of Dr. Parkhurst's conversation.

"Under proper conditions," said he, "I am in favor of long pastorates. I have been here nearly thirty years, as I commenced my ministry at this point in 1880. Of course of some pastorates it must be predicated that the shorter they are the better, but if not a misfit, the longer a pastorate is the better; for, like a tree, if it gets its roots well down into congenial soil, then it is a deplorable waste of time to shift after getting thus well-rooted. In a city a short ministerial term renders it impossible for the pastor to come into contact with the people for that part of his work which is best done without the pulpit. By the abbreviation of the pastorate intimate acquaintance is destroyed. One immense advantage of continuity is that it furnishes opportunity to watch over and confirm impressions made on the young as they are growing to maturer years and gaining confidence in the minister. This necessarily takes time."

At this point in the talk I asked the doctor what was the effect, according to his own experience, on the preacher, of a protracted ministry in one spot.

"The changes in congregations in such a city as New York are very rapid indeed, and a pastor should be a growing minister, for otherwise he will become repetitional and fall into arid ruts, so that his people will find his ministry barren, while it will be perilous to himself. But so long as he grows and covers new areas of truth, then the longer he can be with his people, the better for him-

self and them. If he reaches the point where he stops thinking, then it will become expedient to arrange a divorce of the matrimonial tie between minister and people. In former times pastorates used to run as long as forty years. Dr. Mackenzie, of Cambridge, Mass.,



CHARLES H. PARKHURST, D.D., LL.D.

has been there for fully forty years, and one of his predecessors was there for fifty years. Only one of the pastors of that church ever left it for another. The New England churches used to delight in long pastorates like those of Beecher, Storrs, and Buddington in Brooklyn, so that such long pastorates were not confined actually to the New England States. In New York City Dr. John Hall and Dr. W. M. Taylor remained for long years with their churches. Dr. George Alexander,

recently moderator of our Presbyterian synod, came only a year or two after I did and is still at University Place church in New York City."

"Do you indulge in any special methods of preparation?"

"I never went to a theological seminary, altho I had enjoyed the benefit of a collegiate course. Most of my theology I have learned since I began preaching. My sermons, as a rule, are topical rather than textual. Usually I find the topic first and then get a text to fit it, but not always. My theory about textual thought is this, that a thought which has not vitality in it to determine its own form and method of development, is not a thought which it is worth while to take. A Christian thought is like a seed which has life in itself and determines what will proceed from it. I often sit down with one idea in mind, and allow that to grow rather than seek to manufacture a scheme. I do not ordinarily start with a theme, as is the practise in theological seminaries, but I commence with an idea and let that develop. Dr. Storrs, when I asked him how he went to work to construct a sermon, said that first he felt for a great thought and then let it germinate and grow. R. S. Storrs was our greatest pulpit orator. He was a very staunch believer in the gospel and was a great help to the cultured classes."

"Do you read much in special directions with a view to particular preparation for the pulpit?"

"No. My preparation is more of a generic kind by very wide reading. I use other authors to start my mental machinery, as a stimulus and acceleration of my intellectual movements. I write slowly and seek to have my topic well in mind early in the week for the coming Sunday. I write carefully about six hundred words a day during the week for a sermon of 3,600 words. You want to know what is my standpoint? When I was studying in Germany I passed through unsettlement and never came exactly back to the theology I had inherited from my thoughtful father, but formed a theology of my own. I hold to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, but not too technically. No Christian proof can be exactly divine, for a definition is a limitation of a truth and does not express it. I never try to pin my people down to formal and limited expressions. I have no interest in a dogma, but much in-

terest in a truth in its relation to human life. A truth that is lived counts, not a truth as it is uttered. Therefore the Savior said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' The new theology I reject so far as it is a denial and negation. I emphasize what is constructive and I preach what I know and believe, while I keep out of sight what I do not believe. Dr. W. M. Taylor, when I told him I had been reading a book on the devil, said that he himself did not think enough about the devil ever to care to preach about him. If you preach uncertainties, you develop uncertainties. No line of business that one can enter into requires so little capital as the business of an agnostic. Some men think it indicates intellect to say, 'I don't know'; but really this requires an exceedingly small amount of intelligence. I enjoy preaching more than ever. One is bound to do so as long as his view of truth expands, and as long as new views continue to open up. When I am jaded and need a vacation, then I feel a lack of freshness in my preaching.

"As to my special proclivities and partialities in the field of study, I am greatly interested in comparative philology. Professor Seeley, of Amherst College, said to me, 'You have been for fifteen years under intellectual strain, and you had better preach a bit.' I was thirty-three years of age when I commenced to preach. Previously I had no thought of preaching. I had been all that time studying on various lines, and had been waiting for professorships in theology. I took the church at Lenox, Mass., a small country parish, and enjoyed preaching there for five years. The joy increased as I went on. My recreation has been found in travel, for I have made twenty-six voyages to Europe, on each occasion going much about the Continent."

"THE strong man will not preach his doubts. He will preach the things that he believes, and the things that he believes to have a vital bearing upon the lives of men. He will show lucidly just why he believes them and just what their bearing on life is.

"He will make it evident to all that he is an honest friend, that his profound ambition is to introduce men into the discipleship of Jesus Christ, that he has a level head and a genius for hard work. Then after a time he will find that he can say to his people anything that his conscience dictates, and only on rare occasions will he experience serious discomforts for having done so."—*Prof. Edward I. Bosworth, D.D.*