

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XV.—MAY, 1888.—No. 5.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—CRITICISMS ON SOME OF THE ABLEST REPRESENTATIVE PREACHERS OF THE DAY.

BY AN EMINENT PROFESSOR OF HOMILETICS.

NO. VI.—REV. R. S. STORRS, D.D., LL.D.

“THE prince of living pulpit rhetoricians,” would be a true, but it would be a very inadequate, and it might be a very misleading, characterization of the subject of the present paper. Dr. Storrs is easily that, but he is alike more, and other, and better than that. He rises upon occasion from the rhetorician to the orator; and even when he is least the orator and most the rhetorician, he is always so sterling in thought, and so lofty in moral or religious purpose, that to think of him as only, or as chiefly, a rhetorician, would be to make a capital, a vital, mistake in critical appreciation of his quality. He is a great sincere and serious soul, in whom—by a mere chance perhaps of early determining choice on his own part—the genius of the orator was destined to be somewhat overborne by the culture of the rhetorician. It is bold pure conjecture to hazard, but I can easily conceive how, if the youthful Storrs who was a student-at-law of Rufus Choate had taken his lifelong bent in style of thought and expression from a Dorian master like Webster, instead of a Corinthian master like Choate, he might have issued a quite different speaker from that stately, that magnificent, pulpit orator who is our national joy and pride in the actual Dr. Storrs of to-day, bearing so strongly and so lightly the burden of his well-nigh seventy useful and honorable years.

Do you say, ‘But warmth of temperament was wanting to this otherwise prodigally gifted nature, and that deficiency was from the first in itself enough to have made him, and hopelessly to keep him, the style of orator that he is, capable indeed of shining like the sun, but incapable of warming as the sun warms’?

A natural judgment, but probably fallacious. A mask of oratoric manner, early put on and twenty years unceasingly worn by a public

sonal responsibility cannot be thrown on the organized body. "It is high time to awake out of sleep."

Rub thine eyes, O drowsy man! Look out on the work and rouse thyself for battle in this imperial hour.

REV. GEORGE MATHESON, D.D.

BY REV. CHARLES PARKHURST.

EDINBURGH has been called the Washington of Scotland, and to the American this very fittingly describes it. It is a delightful city of spacious streets, magnificent buildings and memorable monuments, statuary and art; it is more classic than Washington, however—of course has more of the antique and has always been the city of churches and eminent preachers for this far-famed religious land. Knox, Chalmers, Guthrie are representatives of the caliber of the Scottish pulpit. The tourist should plan his Sabbath in Scotland for Edinburgh. It should be borne in mind that the Established Church in Scotland is Presbyterian. Our party had a very genial and profitable Sabbath in this cultured city. Scotland is impressively religious. Perhaps in no place is this more distinctively seen than in the famous city of Edinburgh. The Sabbath is devoutly observed by the people as a whole. All saloons and victualing places are closed on the Sabbath, except hotels, and all business ceases except such as is necessary to sustain life and to be comfortable.

These words are penned on the continent, in Germany, and one would hardly know that the Sabbath had come by the din and whirl of active life all about him. We attended four services on the Sabbath in Edinburgh, covering nearly the entire day, and we never saw, in any American city, so many people of thoughtful mien and devout manner wending their way to and from the churches. Moody's great work in Edinburgh left a most deep and aggressive religious impulse upon the people. On the street corners,

in the least hopeful parts of the city, devout and earnest men and women were holding religious services, singing out and preaching impressively the simple gospel of our Lord Jesus. In "Newsome's Circus," a structure holding five thousand people, in the evening Rev. John McNeil of the Free Presbyterian Church preached to an audience of working people only limited in size by the capacity of the building. Many were turned away for want of room. It is therefore an era of religious life and activity in this city, as I doubt not in all Scotland. Our first inquiry for the Sabbath was for Dr. George Matheson. This was occasioned by the fact that his book, "Moments on the Mount," had fallen accidentally into our hands a year ago. We were greatly charmed and helped by the book, it was so devout, original and fresh in its exegesis. To our inquiry, Who is Dr. Matheson? we could get no answer. We could only learn that he preached at Edinburgh. Great was our surprise to learn that he was totally blind, and had been during all his ministry. This excited our curiosity and desire to hear him. He is pastor of St. Bernard's Church, Established, which is therefore Presbyterian. He was ordained to the ministry in Tunellan, Scotland, eighteen years ago, and was at that time blind; his blindness was the result of too assiduous use of his eyes in his preparatory studies. In the eighteen years of his first pastorate he was most successful, and the church greatly prospered under his care. A sister, into whose sweet and attractive face we were privileged to look, has always lived with him—been eyes for him, and indeed taught him all of what is known as the "dead languages." At an early hour, therefore, with unwonted curiosity and expectation, we are in his church. Of the intelligent usher we make many inquiries, which are most cordially answered. Dr. Matheson has been with them one year. The church

had taken on new life and activity in his pastorate. It was with difficulty now that seats could be secured on the Sabbath for those who pressed to hear. He was a most excellent pastor, spending the greater part of each afternoon calling throughout his parish; this he does with the aid of a young theological student who accompanies him to direct him. He is, however, a most indefatigable worker in his study, and demands a reader or dictates for the press each forenoon.

We are anxiously awaiting the coming of the preacher. What a quaint church is this! It is the old box pew, very poorly cushioned, and if the architect had planned to make the seats as uncomfortable as possible he could not have succeeded better. There must be some unusual attraction to bring people to such seats as these. We should never come but once unless the pulpit had so much of intellectual and spiritual vitality as to make us forget where we were. A high gallery runs clear round the church. The bell has ceased to toll, but the people are still coming, and we are compelled to sit closer together to make room for those who desire seats. On a greatly elevated position in front is a small pulpit, not larger than a flour-barrel, with only room for one person. Above it is the sounding-board, the like of which we have once seen in America. Behold! a rear door opens, and in comes our long-looked-for preacher. Have we been a long time in introducing him? Well, it seemed a long time before he came; perhaps because we were so anxious to see him. We have desired that you should be thus anxious; but he does not look as we had fancied. We thought at first it could not be he, but an unfortunate exchange; but we are assured by the stranger at our side that it is indeed Dr. Matheson. We confess to strong likes and dislikes. We rather enjoy having our favorites in the pulpit. We had created Dr. Matheson into

such a one. That he? Why, we had cast his face into that of the typical Scotch student, a Dr. McCosh in earlier years, but he is not that at all. I should not look for him in the pulpit, but on the farm. Forty-two years of age, he looks ten years older. He has the face and form of General Grant when the hero of Vicksburg was most stout. Taller, however, rather more muscular, yet he makes you think most of the man the American people loved so much. With full beard and natural open eye, you would have no thought that he was blind had you not been so informed. He has a remarkable congregation in members, in an indication of intelligence and spiritual sympathy and anticipation; but he does not know it. Can a blind man preach with enthusiasm when he must lack the responsive help and inspiration which the seeing eye could get from such an unusual audience? Are we to be disappointed? Have we expected too much? We do not believe it. The man who can write such a book must have it in him to preach. Now he rises, his body swaying a little until he gets his equilibrium. Announcing a psalm for alternate reading, he takes his verses without the mistake of a word, and throughout the whole service calling for several hymns and Scripture references with chapter and verse, he never made an error. Of course it was all memorized. Then he prays; and such a prayer! It seems profane to write about it. Two things are evident, however: though his visual sight is entirely eclipsed he does "see God," and he does see into the souls of his hearers. Like a skilled harper, he has touched every string of the human soul and made it chime into the ear of God. In that prayer we have been to the mount of worship, and we could go away content even if we heard no more. It was wonderful the way in which that blind preacher talked with God and uttered the aspirations of the people.

In the afternoon of the same day

we heard one of the most scholarly of the faculty of the Presbyterian College preach and pray, but it was all cold, inapt, unresponsive. The thoroughness with which Dr. Matheson apprehended the life of his people, their struggles, sorrows, defeats, victories, and his almost superhuman sympathy with such actual life, was the most remarkable characteristic of the man. For forty minutes he preached on the text, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Though we undertook to make a full abstract of the sermon, and it lies before us, yet so *faint* and imperfect is our *negative* of that discourse that we will not do this great man, so little known as yet in America, the injustice here to produce it. Such a sermon is never forgotten. Much that we had often vaguely felt he expressed. It was not metaphysical nor controversial. He never said anything about different theories of inspiration. He just showed how natural it was for God to reveal himself in his word just as he has done, and how each personality through which it came, like David, John, James, Paul, retained his identity and peculiarity. The whole range of il-

lustration in art, science, history and in practical life was touched with the familiarity of a master in each department. We were instructed, refreshed, inspired. God has given that faithful man, with his studious habits, his pastoral nurture and sympathy, an immense equivalent for the loss of physical vision. Dr. Matheson is to become a special favorite to tourists, who long to have the Sabbaths come that they may hear instructive and inspiring preaching. His works, of which two other volumes besides the one named are already published, "Aspirations" and "New and Old Faith," are to be great favorites also with American readers who love the fresh, sharp and classic in religious literature. But Dr. Matheson is perhaps best known in America by his book entitled "Can the Old Faith Live with the New?" The best work of his life is yet to be done.

We have thought it fitting to introduce him to the American public, thus to answer some of the inquiries which we have been asking about this eminent preacher and writer. May many others have the privilege of listening to him, which will remain an epochal event in our experience.

EDITORIAL SECTION.

HINTS AT THE MEANING OF TEXTS.

Christian Culture.

The House Beautiful.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?—1 Cor. iii. 16.

SCIENTISTS and philosophers are warring and jangling respecting their theories of phenomena, and especially regarding man. The Christian can listen undisturbed to their conflicting statements, while he accepts the declaration that "the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost."

Taking the idea of the text and looking upon the "human form divine" as the "house beautiful," we would remark that,

1. *The house should give signs of*

its superior occupant. We judge of the inmate by the residence. If everything around is disorderly, we attribute it to the character of the tenant. If the paths are clean and the flower-beds are trimmed, we know that there is taste and the cultivation of the spirit of beauty on the part of the occupier. So we judge regarding the human house. Sin makes its marks upon the countenance. Care traces its wrinkles on the face.

2. *The house should be kept clean.* Health is defined as internal and external cleanliness. Sanctification is spiritual cleanliness. Christ will cleanse. And the soul made pure will manifest that purity in the outer