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No. 13.

From the Watchman.

Rev. Dr. Armstrong's Paper.

Two Classes.

[Continued from last week.]

In relation to scepticism our congregations are commonly divided into two classes, namely: Those whose faith in Christianity is thoroughly established, and this class is by far the more numerous. Then we have a small class who are in doubt, to a greater or less degree. But, as a rule, a confirmed sceptic does not and will not attend church services. He may be reached by the press, but not by the pulpit. The principal care then should be, first to instruct, enlarge and more fully confirm the faith of true Christians. This will put all his powers under exercise; for the grand end of all preaching is to uplift mankind to the true height of its nature, and to enlarge it to a breadth of character which is worthy of Christ Jesus. Our business is to hold up Christ to the hearer as his true ideal. But in order to do this, and to present every man perfect, the first thing is to educate the hearer to the true art of hearing. This itself is a difficult work for the popular mind is debased by the supposition that there is but one party to the act of preaching and hearing. The preacher is not looked upon as an educator, but as a sort of religious lightning rod, to bring down fire from Heaven, he being the positive force and the hearer the negative. To root this pernicious thought out of the common mind, so completely as to throw each Christian hearer back upon the true thought that Christ is the only fountain from which he is to be filled, will demand in the Christian preacher a peculiar inner life. He cannot do this without a soul all aglow for his proper work as a preacher of Christ. It will demand in himself a rounded Christ-like character, and that on more than a common scale. It will call for deep thought and a serene personal faith. And with these he will become dead to the notion that his preaching must of necessity revolve about a limited number of topics. If the idea once seizes him that Gospel themes can ever be exhausted, then great and essential truths will become so familiar to his own mind that he will either fall into the mistake that he has already taken their deep-sea soundings, or else he will be constantly straining after freshness and even novelty, in order to produce "impression." And, of course, if his grasp of fresh and

doubts, or dreaminess, or inertia, or want of common sense.

The Second Class.

What is the wisest thing to do with that second class of our hearers who are in more or less doubt about the truth of Christianity, will require the best judgment that we can command. But in the nature of the case, the instances must be very rare where it will be the best to treat of infidelity from the pulpit. There are other and better methods of meeting the wants of this smaller class than that of injecting sceptical thoughts, speculations, objections and arguments into the minds of promiscuous masses who are not tainted by unbelief, for the purpose of meeting the needs of some few who are. A child, be the offspring of either Christian or infidel parents, can put a question which no sage on earth ever has answered or can. And teachers both of Christianity and of scepticism are constantly stating adverse propositions which they neither can nor do meet. And this is particularly the case in the absence of that candor which does not care to give the full and honest answer, or where ignorance will not allow of this. Nothing is more common in this controversy than the dextrous and even flippant handling of the gravest subjects that wise men have grappled with for thousands of years, and this in the form of boxing-glove and sword-exercise style, to the utter disgust of every thoughtful mind on either side of the subject. And yet the only consideration that can justify a Christian preacher at all in addressing a man who doubts in any shape, is the honest, loving, earnest effort to remove his doubts and to lead him to the faith of Christ. But this he never can do by the methods just referred to. The work of the preacher is to draw men to Christ with the cords of a man. But this sort of unholy gladitorial twist to the most vital threads into a hunter's bow-string. It is questionable whether pure argumentation ever converted a sceptic to Christ since He was nailed to the cross. Certainly I have never known, or read, or heard, of such a case. The Apostle Paul himself never came so near failure in his ministry as he did at Athens, where he had his wonderful contest with scepticism. He preached but little of Christ there, and had but few converts. We have a New Testament record of a church formed there, and no Apostolic letter was sent to Athens as to Ephesus and Rome, and what few converts he had there he seems not to attribute to his logic, but to the little Gospel that he

vine mind, accepting the sceptical

conscience, its prophecies, miracles

and doctrines without any sense of

constraint, excepting that of un-

affected trust. Coleridge and Carlyle

speak of infidelity as a howling

desert, and if we do preach on that

subject, it must be done with the

stout, brave heart, the manly seal of

faith, and the hallowed mystery of

love, which true men need in such a

region. There is but one force that

can ennoble the man who hears us,

and that must be applied to the

heart, the centre of our own being.

First. This work calls for large cul-

ture first in ourselves and then in our

subject, and this can only be reached

by special training for this specific

work, without which our best exer-

tions in that line will be but well-

meaning baldness if not stupidity.

There must be the most care-ful

preparation for the undertaking;

each statement of fact and position

must be made on accepted authority,

and in the spirit of transparent can-

dor. The work must bear unques-

tionable marks of honest research;

altogether it must be enstamped

with that accuracy which proves that

the true relations between scepticism

and Christianity have been thor-

oughly mastered. All these must be

set forth fairly and fully in their

relations and affinities. Old and su-

perannated methods will not do; nor

will vague generalities; nor the shout

of old shibboleths; nor indefinite

issues; nor the assumption of authority;

nor the presentation of trivial and

wire-drawn distinctions; much less

can boastfulness be tolerated, or

wounded dignity, or self-conceit, or

pious swagger. But we all know to

our mortification that in this sort of

preaching modesty and ignorance

have not always kept close company.

Men have made it the stalking-horse

of folly and of impertinence to the

contempt of the pulpit. The preach-

ing of the Gospel should always im-

ply the possession of simple common-

sense at least. But when the hands

of sceptics are strengthened by this

kind of dishonor, aided by an incur-

able irreverence in some defenders

of Christianity, Voltaire may well laugh

about in the temple of God, while

good men and good angels prefer to

weep.

Prohibition.

BRO. EDITORS: In the vicinity of

one of my churches in Chilton

county, the people are still struggling

to prohibit the sale of whiskey,

though some of the friends of prohi-

bition are doubtful of success. And

of whiskey.

Strange to say that members of the

church will favor retailing whiskey

while some men who are not members

are doing all in their power to pro-

hibit the sale.

Eternity alone will portray the

evil of whiskey, and yet men pro-

fessing the religion of Christ, will

support it by voting against prohibi-

tion, and worst of all by themselves

drinking to excess. Where is the

good that has ever been accomplished

by the sale of whiskey?

I dare say that it is no where to be

found, but on the other hand, the

blackest crimes known to the human

family have been perpetrated by its

use. Then on how sad to think that

those people whom the Savior has

called "the children of the day," "the

Mrs. P. F. De Merville.

As a shock of corn cometh in his

season, so are matured souls gathered

in the garner of God.

Died on the night of the 21st of

February, Mrs. P. F. De Merville.

She was born in Perry county, Ala.,

April 1, 1826. At an early age she

gave her heart to the Master, united

with the Baptist church in Marengo

county, Ala., and has ever devoted

her life to his cause. The announce-

ment of her death will bring sadness

to the hearts of all who knew this be-

loved Christian. Though we were

in a measure prepared for her demise,

for she had been a sufferer for many

long weary months with a painful

disease, yet when the messenger came

and "bore away the jewel," leaving us

only the echo, "our hearts were

man being enveloped with the dark-

ness of human imperfection, death is

a grim and gloomy spectre; and we

look upon the still, icy frame of our

loved ones with reverence, awe and

grief too deep for utterance, but God

our Father in his infinite mercy tells

us in His Divine Word that "death is

not destruction," but the beginning

of life, the true life, and with the eye

of faith we leave the gloomy grave,

raise our hearts and minds above to

that celestial home, prepared for the

children of God; and behold our

loved ones there, not incumbered with

forms of an earthly mold, subject to

pain and suffering, but happy spirits

in the land of glory, looking down

upon us with tenderness and love,

wooing us by their gentle ministrations

to join them in ministering unto us.

(Yes I believe they minister unto us,

and are often with us) to think less

of the fading joys of earth, live nearer

to God, and seek more diligently for

the riches which the Father is

ready to bestow upon all who ask

him—wisdom, purity, virtue, meek-

ness, faith and love. Yes, Mrs. De

Merville, the affectionate wife, the

devoted mother, the kind neighbor, has

"passed over the river," her pilgrim-

age is done, and we trust she has al-

ready received her "crown of right-

eousness" and is now filled with joy

unfathomable in the presence of her

Lord.

To the bereaved husband and chil-

dren we offer our tenderest sym-

pathies, praying that God may send

his afflictive providence as the sancti-

fying means of drawing their hearts

to him who "wounds to heal." Draw

sweetness, life and comfort from his

holy Word. None but those who have

suffered can know the depth of solace

and joy to be found in the precious

Word of God.

One who LOVED HER.

Forland, Ala., Feb. 25, 1884.

Posture in Prayer Again.

DEAR BAPTIST: In your issue of

March the 6th there appears an ar-

ticle under the heading "More about

Posture in Prayer," which I suppose

was intended as a reply to an article

that appeared in your columns not

long since over my signature. Now I

wish to say to that brother that at

the time of writing I had no idea of

such an article as he refers to ever

having appeared in the columns of

the BAPTIST, neither have I any re-

collection of it now, and had no

reference to anything he had said or

written on the subject and was much

surprised and a little mortified that

a brother should so far misunderstand

of late, and his face turned his face

and all the congregation stood

before him, and he stood before

the altar of the Lord, and he

presented his hands, and he

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Dr. R. F. Hodson.

Greys born away the prize drill in Opelika. The interest of the new being held in Wilcox.

er petroleum at Bladen a struggle of ultimate

commencement of the college was celebrated on

at least 15,000 Demo- crats for Governor O'Neal

of Knights of Honor of Florence on the sec- ond.

State highly commends Klery in withdrawing a race.

drawn for the killing of Burke county, has been

the Court.

arders of Robinson is able to make his bond men in jail.

addressed an enthu- siasms last week con- sidered railroad.

been made in Selma for the use for a foundry and engineering factory.

tered a reward of \$400. one, who recently mur- dered at Ft. Payne.

ter thinks that South in the condition of the too much Oak.

ifornia trout have been seen in the streams of East Tennessee.

loosa have petitioned for incorporation for the im- per part of the Warrior

ly has become the As- surenville Advocate.

Mrs. H. does not

smith, was crushed by recently. He was restless and had a flask

est.

five policemen belong- ing police force have been accused of having drawn into a false ambus-

News.

old.

is dead.

celebrated his eighty.

having built the larg- est.

an English Naturalist

tion.

commerce, of Lyons, range of pork.

the Suez Canal Com- mission Convention between English ship owners.

been Russian Min- istry, has presented his heretofore reside in

asked the American Legation to inter- vene between China and

a speech cost him in preparing it and which better it might

Russian offices who have last autumn and chiefs to petition has been appointed

to a toast given at St. Patrick's Day at a band when an- nounced a message of lament.

on Wednesday, of protesting against against and fines journals, and to the press last.

River report that discovered another the Arabs in a re- 800 children. The European fac- tor plundered care- Europeans. Assis- sed settlers.

Alabama.

Rainer and Miss

M. Price and Miss

merlin and Miss

os. H. Story and

Thomas and Miss

H. Wilson and

Andrew M. Reed

oodson, Jr., and

Sims, of Georgia,

arace, of Alexan- Cromwell

Montevaillo, and

Cailla, Ga.

B. Sims and Miss

Barkdale and

Sims J. Lewis and

Stephen Hardy and

tion Wiggins and

Wm. F. Wells

Alabama.

appen.

M. Pitts.

Walker.

Moore.

Cratcher.

Fordney.

Hutchins.

Meadows.

aggie Tally.

Tompkins.

P. Milford.

J. McConstin.

D. M. Mosley.

W. Harris, Sr.

D. M. Randolph.

Fannie Aycock.

G. L. Holley.

John G. Abet-

Lassiter, aged

Wells and Mr.

A. H. Fairmore

Wm. Blackburn;

Mr. Anthony

illand.

Holderdale;

as Furnace.

Thomas Lesley,

Mr. J. M.

J. D. Chap-

Mrs. E. L.

and Mr. H.

Miss Murrell;

Bynum; and

