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ALL this freshness and greenery of the early spring is an "earnest" of the beauty and fruitfulness soon to cover the earth. What a splendid promise it is of the fuller, richer gifts of the haying and the harvest, the vintage and the fruit-gathering, through the glorious summer, into the autumn and its purple shades!

All our lives are full of experiences that are "earnests" of the better things to come. In times of health of body and mind, we have a foretaste of the perfect heavenly existence; in hours of high mental delight and spiritual elevation, we have a glimpse of the loftier, richer life into which we shall come in the heavenly state; and in the best friendships and most unselfish love of those dear to us, we are tasting sweet pre-libations of the unmarred communion and unending loves that forever satisfy and delight the saints.

"If such the sweetness of the streams,
What must the fountain be!"

THOUGH Dr. Hoge's paper on "Funeral Reform" has been published in full in the Richmond dailies, we think it well to give it also in the *Central Presbyterian*. It will reach many who do not see a Richmond paper. It will have a wide reading through our constituency, and will be largely influential in shaping opinion, among the people as well as among ministers. It is a model of careful, judicious writing on a subject that must be handled with great delicacy and deference,

THE Moderator of the Synod of Virginia, Dr. Finley, has appointed the Rev. J. A. Lefevre, D. D., Rev. W. H. Woods, and Mr. William Snowden a committee to prepare a memorial of the late Rev. James Nicols, of Laurel, Md., to be presented at the next meeting of the Synod.

THE Presbytery of Winchester, at its late meeting, heartily endorsed the proposed rebuilding of the old Opequon church, near Winchester. The Rev. H. M. White, D. D., and T. K. Cartmell, Winchester and C. G. Crawford, Kernstown, Va., will correspond with those interested in the plan.

WE have the Catalogue of Hampden Sidney College, one hundred and twentieth session, ending June 11th, 1896. The college has six full Professors, and two assistant Professors, and has ninety-three students. Hampden-Sidney received its charter as a college in May, 1783, and has had a long and useful career, serving the State, and serving the Church. It is vigorous, and well fitted now to do excellent work in the education of Virginia's sons.

MARRIED at Shanghai, China, March 16th, the Rev. Mark B. Grier of the Southern Presbyterian Mission at Su-Chi-en and Miss Henrietta B. Donaldson, M. D., of the Northern Presbyterian Mission. They were to be at home after April 10th, and we regret that our engagements will prevent our calling at Su-chi-en. Our heartiest congratulations go across the western waters to the happy mission home.

THE American Society of Religious Education held an annual meeting in Washington last week. It seems to be the aim of this society to resist the growing secularization of education in this country. The expulsion of the Bible from the public schools, the management of important institutions by directors appointed for political reasons, and often wholly irreligious, the appearance of professors of pronounced unbelief in the universities, are occasions for serious alarm. There were addresses on a great variety of important subjects. Among the speakers were Dr. H. A. White of Lexington, Dr. J. M. P. Otts of Alabama, Dr. Thomas Hume of North Carolina, and Dr. Tennis Hamlin of Washington.

THE Arbitration meeting in Washington, last week, was one of great significance. Many notable men were present, and able speeches made. The result must be found in the extensive increase of the public sentiment for peace and arbitration; and a permanent court between Great Britain and the United States. On Monday, the 27th, Mr. Balfour in the English Parliament, "said that the government would deal with both the general question of arbitration and also with the special question connected with Venezuela, and it was confidently hoped that by patience and tact on both sides a peaceful and satisfactory solution of the matters would be obtained."

THE Golden Jubilee of the Waynesboro church will be celebrated Saturday and Sunday, May 9th and 10th. On Saturday at 11 A. M., Dr. Finley, Dr. J. Henry Smith, and Dr. J. P. Smith, and at 7.30 P. M., Capt. H. W. Henry, Dr. A. R. Cocke and R. W. Allen, Esq. On Sunday at 11 A. M., the anniversary sermon will be preached by the Rev. A. M. Fraser, of Staunton, and at 7.30 P. M., an anniversary address by Col. Bennett H. Young, of Louisville, Ky.

THE present year bids fair to preoccupy the public mind with politics, to the detriment of religion. Millions of immortal beings will be arrayed in several hostile camps to decide by the force of numbers the respective merits of *tweedle-dum* and *tweedle-dee*. If great principles alone were submitted, the people would be almost unanimous. In the meantime Jesus Christ and his gospel are *indefinitely postponed!*

OCCASIONALLY eccentric men provide their own coffins. No one ever digs his own grave. But this is the common occupation of nations. Except so far as Christianity acts as a conserving agent, the tendency of the body politic is to corruption and death.

DR. BUCKLEY, of the *N. Y. Christian Advocate*, tells how a plagiarist was once detected and rebuked. "The one who detected it, after having endured it long enough, fortified himself by a careful reading of the authors from whom the thief stole, and took his seat in the church. At the end of the first stolen passage he exclaimed 'Ruskin;' at the end of the second, 'Chalmers;' at the end of the third, 'Emerson;' raising his voice louder and louder each time. At last the minister said, 'If this man is not removed, I will not proceed.' 'Original,' said the man. It would be well if such things were always thus openly rebuked."

Union Seminary Notes.

The Rev. Eugene Daniel as Moderator of the Synod of North Carolina, under proper advisement, has appointed Professor Henry Louis Smith, of Davidson, N. C., to the vacancy in the Board of Directors of Union Theological Seminary occasioned by the death of Professor W. J. Martin; the effects of this action extending unto the next meeting of Synod. *

Woman's Foreign Mission Work of East Hanover Presbytery.

The Woman's Foreign Missionary Union of East Hanover held its Eighth Annual meeting in the primary-class room of the Second Presbyterian church, with a gratifying attendance of its members from our city churches. Rev. Mr. Hyde conducted the devotional exercises, and delivered a stirring address. He commended the work of the Union as a means of greater stimulation, wider dissemination of information, and a more certain increase of interest and zeal, and paid a graceful tribute to the active part women had always taken in the great cause of missions. The president, in her annual address, reviewed the work of the Union since its organization, stating that from 1888 to 1896 the sum of \$11,300 had been contributed through its treasury. Officers for the ensuing year were elected and plans for future work considered.

Funeral Reform.

BY THE REV. M. D. HOGE, D. D.

Following is the full text of Dr. Hoge's paper read before the Richmond Ministerial Union:

When in the providence of God the bereavements come which take so much of the music and fragrance and sweetness out of life, and when sorrow has awakened the tenderest and most sacred emotions of the heart, we dare not dictate to the mourner how the inevitable grief should express itself, nor lay down arbitrary rules as to the manner in which the last, sad rites of respect and affection for the departed should be performed.

Few subjects demand more considerate and delicate handling than funeral usages, or more deferential regard for the traditions, the sentiments, and the preferences of others.

In the discussion of such a theme all assumption of superior wisdom is unwarrantable; all that gives even the intimation of a dictatorial spirit is unpardonable. The advocates of funeral reforms must not claim a refinement of feeling or a more delicate sense of propriety than that of the public to which they make their appeal, but must confine themselves to the consideration of what is most in harmony with the religion they profess, with what is due to the sorrow of the bereaved, and what will most conduce to the good of the entire community.

I appreciate the courtesy of the Ministerial Union of this city in requesting me to prepare a paper on this important theme. I recognize, too, the difficulty and delicacy of the task assigned to me, and in the discharge of the duty I can only state the conclusions to which I have come after long consideration of the subject; and yet, remembering, as I do, the fallibility of all human opinions, I shall be ready to surrender any or all of mine if they are proved to be untenable.

There seem to be some usages in the conduct of funerals which all who have given the subject any thought are unanimous in agreeing may be changed with advantage, and there are other usages with regard to which different opinions are entertained.

In the natural order of such a discussion we may consider these separately, beginning with the reforms about which there appears to be a general approval.

The Proper Time.

First. As to the proper time for holding funeral services.

Whenever practicable, it is desirable that they should be held on some other day than the Sabbath.

It is admitted at once that there are circumstances which make the interment necessary on that day, and when such is the case all discussion on the subject is idle. But to select that day when no such necessity exists is to be deprecated for many reasons. It entails a vast amount of unnecessary labor, as is evident from the number of persons employed in their different vocations, in making preparation for the funeral, and in conducting it to its close.

The desecration of the day in other ways is equally evident. Some of our cemeteries are thronged on Sundays as if they were public parks. When an interment takes place crowds of unsympathetic idlers gather about the grave—sometimes with a levity which is painful to the bereaved. When there is a military funeral on Sunday there is often an accompanying rabble that outnumbers the soldiers in the procession.

If the time for the funeral should be fixed at the hour of the regular service in the church, then many who are not interested in the event are disappointed at such a substitute for their ordinary worship; and if the time for the funeral is fixed in the interval between the usual services, then an undue amount of labor is imposed on pastors whose regular duties on that day sufficiently tax their time and strength.

Funeral Expenses.

Second. The cost of funerals.

Here probably all will admit that reform is possible, practicable, and desirable. We live at a time when the difficulty of obtaining employment is increasing with the increase of population and of monopolies which make the rich richer and the poor poorer. A large proportion of the people are in straitened circumstances. A man may ordinarily regulate his household expenses according to his means of living, but he finds this privilege taken away when a death occurs in his family, because of the prevailing custom which demands such expensive preparations for the funeral. Many a family is straitened for months after the funeral for want of means of supporting the living, because of the amount expended in burying the dead.

This could best be corrected if the rich would set the example of as much economy in funeral expenses as is consistent with the respect and love they cherish for the departed, and it is not beyond the province of the pulpit to urge a diminution of extravagant display at a time which speaks so impressively of the emptiness and vanity of all that is seen and temporal.

Third. Exposure at the grave.

Since funerals must occur at all seasons of the year, and often when the weather is most inclement, the question arises, how can this dangerous exposure be avoided? To stand with uncovered heads for a quarter or half an hour on the wet ground, possibly amidst rain and sleet and bitter wind, subjects the officiating clergyman and friends of the deceased to unnecessary discomfort and danger. Some are now sleeping in our cemeteries who would, in all probability, still be among the living but for such disregard of the natural laws of health. It may be suggested, therefore, that after the religious services are concluded the company should retire, only those remaining whose duty it is to see the interment properly conducted; that the ladies remain in their carriages, and that none should be expected to stand with uncovered heads in winter storms, after the prayers are ended—nor even during the prayers, if age or infirmity of any kind makes such exposure hazardous.

Another reason for the retirement of the bereaved immediately after the conclusion of the religious services is the prevention of the anguish which is often intensified by the saddest of all sounds, the falling of the clods upon the coffin. Mourners who have been able to repress all outward demonstrations of their grief during all the preceding services have given way here and have sometimes fallen to the ground or uttered piercing cries which have been heart-rendering to relatives and friends. And even when there is no such outburst of irrepressible grief, it is nevertheless true that the filling up of the grave is ordinarily the most trying ordeal through which the afflicted pass, coming to them, as it does, like a fresh bereavement.

Coming now to what may be regarded as the second division of the subject, which relates to funeral customs concerning which there are differences of opinion among men equally conscientious, and equally anxious to adopt such as are most in accordance with reason and propriety, we take as our fourth topic,

Mourning for the Dead.

Fourth. Wearing mourning for the dead.

There must be something congenial to the sorrowing heart in the sombre habiliments of woe or they would not be so generally worn, notwithstanding the protests of physicians, the confessed discomfort of the suffocating veil, and the often unwelcome appeals to sympathy, which these badges of private grief make to uninterested spectators in public assemblies. Let us, however, deal gently with those who find a sable dress in harmony with a sorrowing heart, but at the same time let us encourage those who would discard mourning attire but for the seeming demand of custom and the fear of criticism lest the disregard of it should imply the want of affectionate sorrow for the dead. The sincerity of

grief need not be questioned on the part of those who have the moral courage to discard these external badges of personal sorrow. Without giving offence to those who differ from us, we may at least commend the decision of those who never put on mourning for the sake of their example to those whose straitened circumstances forbid the expense entailed sometimes on large families who can ill afford this indulgence in the luxury of woe. In some of our households, at least, there have been those, whom we never mention and whom we never forget, who have suffered the sorest bereavements and who cherished the memory of their dead with the tenderest affection, and yet who did not remind the public of it by any outward manifestations of their grief.

Fifth. Double funeral services.

In most of our churches there are forms which their pastors use when officiating at the grave. There are also fraternities, societies and orders which have a ritual of their own. It sometimes happens that both the church ritual and that of the fraternity are used, thus increasing the time spent at the grave and causing an objectionable repetition. There is an impropriety in this which is painful. The officiating minister may commence the service by repeating the prescribed texts of Scripture. He may then commit the body to the ground in accordance with the church formula, and then offer the appropriate prayers. But when he ends the service and pronounces the benediction, another service immediately begins. The same texts of Scripture are repeated, the same form of commitment is used, and prayers similar to those just offered are again heard. This double service is as objectionable as it would be if in the church on the Sabbath day the pastor should offer an invocation prayer, and then some other minister should rise and offer the same invocation, or if when the pastor closed the worship of the hour with a benediction another minister should follow him with the same benediction. A dead body cannot be committed to the grave twice, a congregation cannot be dismissed twice. All the parties concerned are equally interested in preventing this vain repetition. It must be as distasteful to those who represent the fraternities as it is to the pastors. I am speaking on their behalf as well as our own. I am not criticising these organizations nor their rituals. I have never found their chaplains obtrusive. On the contrary, they are respectful and deferential and never commence their service until the clergyman officiating has ended his. They no doubt realize as fully as I do the incongruity, the unreasonableness of a double service. It may be that by conference between men equally desirous to maintain consistency and the most edifying way of conducting funeral services a harmonious solution of the problem can be secured.

Funeral Exercises.

Sixth. Funeral sermons and addresses.

Lastly, we come to the consideration of a question about which different views are held, and yet one upon which public opinion seems to be steadily approaching an agreement. There are arguments in favor of sermons or addresses as a part of funeral services which are entitled to attention. The most weighty of them is the opportunity the funeral gives for reaching a class of men who rarely enter a church, but who may be touched by an appeal made more impressive by the solemnities of the occasion. Notwithstanding that such opportunities do occur, there are other considerations which seem to overbalance this advantage, in the estimation of the Christian public, as is evident from the fact that the number of those who adhere to the old custom is diminishing, and in some denominations it has become entirely obsolete. One by one, pastors who once delivered funeral discourses have abandoned the practice, and now confine their exercises to the reading of appropriate portions of Scripture, to hymns, and to prayers. It is safe to say that the cultivated moral sense of the community is less and less in sympathy with funeral discourses.

One great purpose of such addresses, when

they were common, was the desire on the part of the pastor to comfort the bereaved and to impress the lessons of God's providence in affliction. Now it is felt that the appropriate time and place for such ministries is in the home of the bereaved, after the funeral is over. In the days when funeral sermons were preached, the stricken family often sat silent during its delivery until the preacher began his portraiture of the life and character of the deceased, and then immediately there was such audible distress as to show that the anguish of the bereaved was aggravated by those well-meant attempts to administer consolation. The pastor's sympathy can be best shown in private, and his comforting words are more profitably heard after the first shock of the bereavement is over, and when they are tenderly spoken in the quiet retirement of home.

Not an Imaginary Sketch.

In a community like ours, where there is so much neighborly feeling, and where the different denominations dwell together in such harmony, people frequently attend the funerals of their friends when conducted by pastors of a different faith from their own. If it is the habit in one of these churches to have funeral discourses, the visitor not accustomed to them in his own, and seriously disapproving of them, is sometimes really distressed when compelled to listen to what violates his sense of propriety, as utterly unsuitable to the time and place. The pastor goes on persistently, administering comfort, as he hopes, to the mourners, while it may be a large proportion of his audience finds inexpressible relief when his discourse is ended. This is not an imaginary sketch, but what our friends repeatedly tell us of their experiences on such occasions.

Then, too, funeral sermons and addresses have come into disrepute because of the unconscious exaggeration which often characterizes the portraiture of the deceased. Men who have had better opportunities of knowing him than the pastor had, and who have been familiar with his social or business life, are often startled with the eulogiums they hear from the pulpit, and they conclude that the preacher was either ignorant of the real character of the deceased, or very careless in his statements. Great harm is sometimes done to the impenitent by pictures of the joys of the deceased in the heavenly world, whose death-bed repentance furnished the preacher his only ground of hope, and irreligious hearers say it is not worth while to seek salvation while the world is so full of attractions, and when forgiveness can be obtained so easily at the last moment. Many a preacher has undone his own work by virtually contradicting at funerals what he had taught in the pulpit at other times. Or, if the pastor discriminates and withholds his praise from those whom he knows to have led worldly lives, he deeply pains, or, offends relatives, whose affection enshrines the departed with all the cardinal virtues.

It is freely admitted that there are pastors whose funeral discourses are always judicious, but the custom is so liable to abuse, and the best of men, in their anxiety to comfort the bereaved, are often so unconsciously led to exaggeration, that the Christian public, recognizing the fact, prefer that funeral services should be conducted without addresses.

Speak for Themselves.

A good life will speak for itself, and needs no funeral eulogium to keep it in remembrance. Good Dr. Peterkin, after forty years of saintly service in this city, and who had a silent funeral so far as addresses were concerned, needed no pulpit panegyric to keep his memory fresh and fragrant in this community.

All classes of hearers may receive salutary impressions from the Psalms and portions of Scripture ordinarily used on such occasions, expressive of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and they are not likely to be made more impressive by any words of man; nor do the sublime lessons of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians on the resurrection and the

life immortal need to be supplemented by any human presentation of the theme.

There are, indeed, occasions when the emotion of sorrow is so profound and universal in the community as to demand the relief which comes from some expression of it, as when a distinguished Christian soldier, statesman, or philanthropist dies, and when the great lessons of the life of the departed should be enforced in the presence of the largest audience that can be attracted. But even then I would not have the address to the public made at the time of the funeral. I once had the honor to deliver an oration in memory of General Stonewall Jackson, but it was on a week-day, and in the Capitol Square. Had General Jackson been buried from my church, there would have been a hymn, a prayer, and a selection from Scripture, but not a word of eulogy.

Our Contributors.

Practical Christian Sociology.

BY THE REV. JAMES LITTLE, A. M.

This is the name of a suggestive book recently published by that earnest social reformer, the Rev. Wilbur F. Crafts, Ph. D. Our author regards and treats all questions relating to social progress and reform, as every Christian writer should, in the light of the religion of Christ, and with an eye to the advancement of his kingdom. He thus approaches the temperance reform, which in various ways he has labored to advance; showing by both tongue and pen the evils of the liquor traffic to the end that it may be totally abolished. He seeks also to apply the principles of true religion to the labor question, advocating honest work and fair wages. He also strives manfully to preserve the Christian Sabbath as a day of rest honoring to God, and conducing both to man's physical and spiritual good. He brings to view many startling facts in regard to social purity, marriage and divorce, and urges that the happiness of the home depends on the rightness of the relations and life of husband and wife, while the permanent strength and stability of both home and country depend on the purity of the former.

Dr. Crafts has also embodied his knowledge, experience and efforts in these and other affiliated lines of labor and reform in a valuable series of fine lectures, which, by request, he has delivered to the students of some of our colleges and theological seminaries. His topics as given to the Princeton Theological students are "Practical Christian Sociology" from the standpoints, (1) of the Church, (2) of the Family and Education, (3) of Capital and Labor, (4) the same, (5) of Citizenship. These form the text of his books. The notes and appendix are full of interest, and constitute more than half the volume. In them information may be found on all the questions of social reform now before the American people.

In reading the book we have sometimes felt that our author might as well have *elided* certain bits of his statements about slavery, the war, &c., and that he runs at times perilously near swallowing up the minister of the gospel in the social reformer. We cannot quite agree with him when he urges ministers to attend political meetings, to press their people to do likewise, and to denounce the evils represented by corrupt candidates for office. We think the minister can legitimately exert such influence, not as a minister, but as a citizen only.

In regard to *sociology*, we observe, that it is a subject of rapidly increasing interest and must receive more of the attention of intelligent Christians in the future than it has done in the past. For it is an attempt to present in a systematic way the doctrine and facts of man's social being. It is necessarily a many-sided question, because a complex one. It presents to different inquirers different aspects of society, and of man's social nature, according to the side on which it is examined.

Then it has an inside, *i. e.*, an organic life, as well as an outside or manifested life. The student of sociology must also be a student of biology. Society has a germ life or power which determines its form, growth and character. This must be studied and considered as well as its outward manifestations and developments. The practical sociologist, understanding the organic principles and tendencies of society, is best fitted to point out its disorders and to prescribe the proper remedies for its healing. The social reformer who is deficient here will be empirical, perhaps heroic in his treatment, but not safe or practical.

Now regarding society as an organization, one class of people looking at that aspect of it, which makes it the protector and custodian of property, regard it as the rightful owner and disposer of all property belonging to the whole community, and hence entitled to direct labor and dispose of and distribute the produce and income of both property and labor. Those who take this view deny the right of individual ownership of property, or to dispose of any but the portion allotted to them. This is the ground taken by most socialists, and these are the elements of the doctrines of the heresy of socialism.

Viewed from another standpoint sociology is regarded as the science of that vast organic growth called civilization, which takes account not only of those internal forces and principles which determine its form and character; but of those external influences which so markedly affect its growth and power. Thus trade, commerce, education and the like, though of comparatively recent origin, yet exert a mighty influence on our western civilization. The latter, however, existed long before these influences were observed at all to affect it.

Then viewed from another, the Christian standpoint, sociology regards society as being, or as designed to be, pervaded by and conformed to the laws of Christ, so that it shall be or become the kingdom of Christ, acknowledging his authority, the obligation of his precepts and the power of his example as its supreme law. Of this kingdom Christ himself is the recognized sovereign and King. Now all the followers of Christ are, or ought to be, engaged in the speedy and successful outworking of this great problem, the achieving of this grand result. For it is nothing else, and nothing less, than the application of the gospel of Christ, or of Christianity itself, to man's social relations and nature and to all the economic and spiritual ills and needs of society.

A Sacramentarian Puzzled.

BY THE REV. R. P. FLOURNOY.

A writer in a late number of the *Contemporary Review*, who was brought up among Friends, but afterwards became a member of the Church of England, in an article entitled "Experiences of an Anglo-Catholic," propounds a rather smile-provoking conundrum in the following words:

"Since I have learnt to believe that it is through the sacraments that the divine grace which enables us to lead a really Christian life is conveyed to us, I have often marvelled how it is that the distinctive features of the Christian *ethos* are so strikingly apparent in those who have neither part nor lot in the sacramental system."

Such a bit of scholastic *naivete* could hardly be matched. No one but a certain sort of Englishman who was, at the same time, an "Anglo-Catholic," would be likely to put it in this way, and few, even among pedants, would use the Greek word *ethos* instead of the plain English morality; yet the difficulty must occur to every thoughtful sacramentarian who is sufficiently open minded to acknowledge to himself that "the distinctive features of the Christian *ethos*" are strikingly and unmistakably apparent in any who are not of his company. Many such must be greatly perplexed by the phenomenon, though they may not