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The writer does not know whether or not Florida had such a charm for others as it did for him. It was his first visit into the land of fruits and flowers. Everything was full of novelty and interest from the time the train left Jacksonville, the gateway, till we reached Orlando, the beautiful, set down in the midst of its lakes and orange groves and long stretching arches of moss-covered trees.

The lure of the land must have been on the Commissioners, for we were given to understand that this was the largest Assembly, in point of numbers, for many years, if not indeed in the history of our Assemblies. And while the Assembly, impatient of long speeches and prolonged discussions, concluded its business with its record breaking speed, set some two or three years ago as a seven day assembly, yet many of the Commissioners were loathe to leave and tarried over in different portions of the State.

As to the hospitality of the people of Orlando; all that the late lamented pastor, Dr. Staggs, had promised in his most felicitous invitation was fully carried out. The only feature of regret being that he was not with us with his genial humor.

The Composition of the Assembly.

In its make-up it seemed to the writer, who has attended five or six Assemblies as a Commissioner, and several others as a

THE VALUE OF AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH MARK RUTHERFORD.

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Some years ago, Claudius Clear wrote a letter to the British Weekly on "Exports and Imports; the law of life," in which the following occurred: "If intellectual life is to remain unflagging and unweakened to the end, our imports must exceed our exports. If they do not, we may go on but it will be from weakness to weakness. We shall not know the meaning of those confounding and yet inspiring words which speak of going on from strength to strength." (Further) "I should say that every year a man who has to give forth, should take up the study of a ruling mind and submit himself to the spell. He should read every book of the author and every book about him on which he can lay his hands." "In some respects," he continues, "the preacher's is the hardest business of all. He has to preach to the same people for years, perhaps every year a hundred times. How much thought and feeling are required for that! To do it well, to keep up with the young minds, to freshen minds that are old and weary, to maintain the zest and interest of the springtime—how difficult it must be!"

I accepted the counsel of this paragraph and at once determined to read Mark Rutherford, to whom Claudius Clear had already introduced me. My first order was for "everything Mark Rutherford has written." Alas, my publishers were not acquainted with him and reported they had no information on the subject! As they had nothing to offer, I was shut up to an occasional letter in my favorite journal. But after some months I received a package of books that contained "The Autobiography and Deliverance of Mark Rutherford," "Clara Hopgood," "The Revolution in Tanner's Lane," and one or two others less important. I eagerly read each one of these that week and have since re-read them with great profit each year.

I commend to ministers the reading of Mark Rutherford for four things:

1. The purity and simplicity of his Anglo-Saxon speech.
2. The lucidity of his style.
3. His sympathy with humanity.
4. His criticism of theology and life.

I make selections from the three volumes named to illustrate these points. The selections are made from the pages where the books opened as they were laid on the desk. To show the purity and simplicity of his Anglo-Saxon speech, I choose this sentence from Rutherford's description of a scene in the English Parliament.

"There were not fifty members in the House with the leisure or the ability to understand what it was which had actually happened, and if they had understood it, they would not have had the wit to see what was the rule which ought to have decided the case." (M. R. Deliv. p. 4.)

There are forty-nine words in this sentence; thirty-seven are Anglo-Saxon, three Scotch, two middle English or Anglo-Saxon, six French, and one Latin derivative. Of the forty-nine, forty are one syllable words.

Take another, from "Clara Hopgood," (p. 120): "At Great Oakhurst where the doors were always open into the yard and garden, where every house was merely a covered bit of the open, where people were always in and out, and women never sat down, except to their meals, or to do a little stitching or sewing, it was really not necessary, as Mrs. Caffyn observed, that husband and wife should 'hit it so fine.' "

There are sixty-nine words in this sentence, twelve of which are French or Latin derivatives, and fifty-seven are Anglo-Saxon. Of the sixty-nine, fifty are words of one syllable.

But one more will be sufficient in illustrating this point. I take it from "The Revolution in Tanner's Lane."

"Some of us can call to mind a word, just one word, spoken twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years ago, which rings in our ears even today as distinctly as when it was uttered, and forces the blood into the head as it did then."

There are forty-four words in this sentence, thirty-three of which are one syllable words, and forty-one are Anglo-Saxon derivatives.

These selections could be duplicated over and over again,—treasure-houses of words distinguished for purity, simplicity, strength, clarity and dignity. Words like these the preacher needs—words that stick, that calm, that open, and stir the life of the soul.

The second advantage of an acquaintance with Mark Rutherford is to be found in *the lucidity of his style*. Robertson Nicoll has written on "The Morality of Style," especially the style of writers on Christian doctrine, and what applies to them may with equal importance apply to the preacher, saying, "They ought to look upon style as sacramental, as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Style reveals the nature, and the Christian character ought to reveal itself in Christian writings. They should show the qualities of sincerity, reverence, humility, patience, and earnestness. These will reveal themselves in lucidity and distinction. In lucidity first of all." The man who wants to become an effective preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and a skilled workman in training of character in high and holy things, can not neglect style, this quality or attribute, this indefinable something which gives carriage and character to all his work. "To gain the skill required to place the features of the human face on the canvas in such a way as that they shall breathe and speak, requires the unflagging toil of years, but how much more difficult it is with human words to paint the face of Christ so that they shall woo and win the hearts of men." (The Minister as a Prophet, by Charles Jefferson.)

In Mark Rutherford there are no

"Rich windows that exclude the light
And passages that lead to nothing."

There is simplicity itself, coupled with "lucidity and distinction" which Sir Robertson Nicoll demands. "For his aim and object are to deliver men out of all places where they have

scattered in the cloudy and dark day." I select two passages from the "Autobiography and Deliverance." He is in receipt of a letter from Mary Mardon, telling him, if he wishes to see his friend, Mary's father, alive again, he must go down at once. It would be difficult to find a passage in any book surpassing this in its portrayal of the solemn pathos of death, its awe, its power to break in upon the soul. There is not a single useless word, not a touch of exaggeration, not one obscurity in phrase or setting, in any line of the passage.

"I went that day, and I found that the doctor had been, and had said that before the morning the end must come. Mardon was perfectly conscious, in no pain, and quite calm. He was just able to speak. When I went to his bed-room, he smiled, and without any preface or introduction he said: 'Learn not to be over-anxious about meeting troubles and solving difficulties which time will meet and solve for you.' Excepting to ask for water I don't think he spoke again. All that night, Mary and I watched in that topmost garret looking out over the ocean. It was a night utterly unclouded, and the moon was at the full. Towards day-break her father moaned a little, then became quite quiet, and just as the dawn was changing to sunrise, he passed away. What a sunrise it was! For about half an hour before the sun actually appeared, the perfectly smooth water was one mass of gently heaving opaline lustre. Not a sound was to be heard, and over in the southeast hung the planet Venus. Death was in the chamber, but the surpassing splendor of the pageant outside arrested us, and we sat awed and silent. Not till the first burning point of the great orb itself emerged above the horizon, not till the day awoke with its brightness and brought with it the sound of the day and its cares, did we give way to our grief."

Again. With a friend, Mark Rutherford had established a mission in Drury Lane. He describes his first visit to it.

"The first Sunday I went with him to the room. As we walked over Drury Lane gratings of the cellars, a most foul stench came up; and one in particular, I remember to this day. A man half dressed pushed open a broken window be-

neath us, just as we passed by, and there issued such a blast of corruption, made up of gases bred by filth, air breathed and re-breathed a hundred times, charged with odors of unnameable personal uncleanness and disease, that I staggered to the gutter with a qualm which I could scarcely conquer."

A single example from "Tanner's Lane" added to these will suffice; a picture of two ministers, of Tanner's Lane, who, as pastors of the Independent Chapel, ministered in their order.

"Rev. John Broad was not of the Revival type. He was moderate in all of what he called his 'views'; neither ultra-Calvinist nor Arminian; not rigid upon Baptism, and certainly much unlike his lean and fervid predecessor, the Rev. James Harden, M. A., who was educated at Cambridge; threw up all chances there, when he became convinced of sin; cast in his lot with the Independents and wrestled even unto blood with the world, the flesh and the devil in Cowfold for thirty years, till he was gathered to his rest. A fiery, ardent, untameable soul was Harden's, bold and uncompromising. He never scrupled to tell anybody what he thought, and would send an arrow sharp and swift through any iniquity, no matter where it might couch. He absolutely ruled Cowfold, hated by many, beloved by many, feared by all—a genuine soldier of the Cross. Mr. Broad very much preferred the indirect mode of doing good, and if he thought a brother had done wrong, contented himself with praying in private for him. He was not however, a hypocrite, that is to say, not an ordinary novel or stage hypocrite. He could not doubt, for doubt was not in the air. Nor was Mr. Broad a criminal in any sense. He was upright, on the whole in all his transactions, although a little greedy and hard, people thought. Another recommendation, too, was that he was temperate in his drink. He was not so in his meat. Supper was his great meal, and he would then consume beef, ham, or sausages, hot potatoes, mixed pickles, fruit pies, bread, cheese and celery in quantities which were remarkable even in those days; but he never drank anything but beer—a pint at dinner and a pint at supper."

George Eliot, or Charles Dickens, can not surpass this.

They laugh at inefficient and false clergymen; they pour out their scorn and ridicule, but with no honey in their temper, no saving fairness in their judgment. Rutherford has much piquancy in this thrust as either of them, and what is far more important, more justice in his account of the minister's calling. He knows ministers who are true and valiant men, with whom Eliot and Dickens seem to have had no acquaintance. A man does not rise from the reading of George Eliott with any relish for ministers or their calling. Mr. Lyons, "a painful and pious preacher" is her best and sincerest minister, but such as he allures no youths to his calling. If there was none but James Hardin in the books of Mark Rutherford, a man would feel he were fortunate in making his acquaintance. In describing him, Rutherford balances style in truth. Life is presented as life really is.

A third reason for a minister's acquaintance with Mark Rutherford lies in the fact of *his sympathy with humanity*, his acquaintance with the minister and the ministry, in private, practical, public, and professional relations. "The Autobiography and Deliverance," is the sad story of a man's drift from the Orthodox Ministry into a Unitarian Ministry, that did not so much command his respect, and then, into that unanchored, unattached mediocrity of service and occupation which enables such men to exist but never to live with any robustness and buoyancy in this busy, perplexing, exacting life. The yearning for recognition and following is most pathetic. He had preached on Christianity as an answer to questions earnestly asked by men, and had said, "Christianity was essentially the religion of the unknown and of the lonely; of those who are not a success. It was the religion of the man who goes through life thinking much, but who makes few friends and sees nothing of his thoughts. I said a good deal more upon the same theme which I have forgotten. After the service was over I went down into the vestry. Nobody came near me but my landlord, the chapel keeper, who said it was raining, and immediately went away to put out the lights and shut up the building. I had no umbrella, and there was noth-

ing to be done, but to walk out in the wet." (P. 35-36.) Ruth-
erford, to be sure, was melancholic and a hypochondriac. But
this is the ailment common to passionate souls that pour out
their blood for the redemption of the race.

"I had been preaching for many months, and had met with
no response whatever. Occasionally a stranger or two visited
the Chapel, and with what eagerness did I not watch for them
on the next Sunday, but none of them came twice. How I
groaned over my incapacity to stir in my people any partici-
pation in my thoughts or care for them." (P. 46.) Now lis-
ten to his judgment on these years and his conduct: "I was
seeking amongst men a sympathy which proceeds from the
Invisible only. Sometimes, indeed, it manifests itself in the
long-postponed justice of time, but more frequently it is noth-
ing more and nothing less than a consciousness of approval by
the Unseen, a peace unspeakable, which is bestowed on us
when self is suppressed." (Ibid.)

In the Redemption he says, "We may reconcile ourselves to
poverty and suffering, but few of us can endure the conviction
that there is *nothing in us*, and that consequently, we cannot
expect anybody to gravitate toward us with any forceful im-
pulse."

Thus the heart of this lonely, disappointed, distracted man
is opened to us with its sorrow. And all those about whom he
writes, have some ailments akin to his own and to all the race.
His story is of men and women who are "commonplace," but
who have demands made upon them for an endurance by no
means commonplace and who have sorrows as exquisite as
those of their betters.

The great bond of Christian fellowship is sympathy. The
important thing is to remember that the distinguishing mark
is not brains nor force of will; but passion, sympathy, love.
"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples."

The great need of the world is sympathy—love. Men and
women in every walk and station of life are hungering for the
sense of a touch that is tender and that understands. The ab-
solute demand upon the minister of Jesus Christ is for this

kinship with the race. Then he must welcome and seek out the ways and means by which his heart life may be refreshed and sensitized to this great need. A reading and re-reading of Mark Rutherford will do this for him.

The fourth value to the preacher of an acquaintance with Mark Rutherford lies in *his criticism of theology and life*. I set down, without any attempt at orderly arrangement, items covered in my notes on the following subjects: Calvinism, Arminianism, ignorant practitioners in the Ministry, Agnosticism, definition of Christianity, creeds, politics, discipline of children, theological training, city life, double standard of morality, narrow orthodoxy, honesty, sincerity, self-mastery, the unemployed minister, conversion, immortality, the Atonement, the Bible and prayer.

Mark Rutherford's story is one of revolt from the evangelical independency of the first half of the last century. Describing his own upbringing, and conversion, so called, he says, after much deliberation it was settled that I should "go into the ministry." "Accordingly, after some months of preparation, I was taken to a dissenting college"—the buildings and establishment is described (p. 12), "consisting of a President, with an American degree of Doctor of Divinity" who taught theology, "three professors who imparted as much Greek and Latin as it was considered we ought to know. Behold me, then, beginning a course of training which was to prepare me to meet the doubts of the 19th century; to be the guide of men; to advise them in their perplexities; to suppress their tempestuous lusts; to lift them above their petty cares, and to lead them heavenward."

There you have his conception of the task to which we are set, and no broader, profounder, loftier one is expressed outside the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A scathing criticism of the usual ideals, method and teaching of the theological training follows. His first hitch with his teachers was on the preaching of the atonement. I quote the page: "There was not a single word which was ordinarily used in the pulpit which I did not use,—satisfaction for sin,

penalty, redeeming blood, they were all there, but I began by saying that in this world there was no redemption for man but by blood; furthermore, the innocent had everywhere and in all time to suffer for the guilty. It had been objected that it was contrary to our notion of an all-loving Being that He should demand such a sacrifice; but, contrary or not, in this world it was true, quite apart from Jesus, that virtue was martyred every day, unknown and unconsolated, in order that the wicked might somehow be saved. This was part of the scheme of the world, and we might dislike it or not, we could not get rid of it. The consequences of my sin, moreover, are rendered less terrible by virtues not my own. I am literally saved from penalties because another pays the penalty for me. The Atonement and what it accomplished for man, was therefore a sublime summing up, as it were, of what sublime men have to do for their race; an exemplification, rather than a contradiction, of nature herself, as we know her in our own experience (p. 22)."

"Now, all this was really intended as a defense of the Atonement; but the President heard me that Sunday, and on Monday he called me to his room. He said my sermon was marked by considerable ability, but he would have been better satisfied if I had confined myself to setting forth as plainly as I could, the 'way of salvation' as revealed in Jesus Christ, a repetition of the old story of which, Mr. Rutherford, you know, we never weary; an exhibition of our exceeding sinfulness; of our safety in the Rock of Ages, and there only; of the joys of the Saints and the sufferings of those who do not believe.' His words fell on me like the hand of a corpse, and I went away much depressed." The chapter concludes, "Now when it is getting late, I recognize a higher obligation, brought home to me by a closer study of the New Testament. Sympathy, or no sympathy, a man's love should no more fail toward his fellows than that love which spent itself on disciples who altogether misunderstood it, like the rain which falls on just and unjust alike." (P. 25.) But this paper is only intended to make selections illustrating the value to the preacher of an acquaintance with Mark Rutherford and, with one or two more, I close.

"Preachers are like unskilled doctors with the same pill or draught for every complaint. They do not know where the fatal spot lies on lung or heart or nerve which robs us of life." (Mk. Rd. p. 82.)

"It is only when feeling has ceased to accompany a creed that it becomes fixed, and verbal departure from it becomes heresy." (P. 102.)

"To waste a Sunday morning in ridiculing such stories as that of Jonah was surely as imbecile as to waste it in proving their verbal veracity."

So, my brothers, you will find a profit in reading Mark Rutherford. Treasure his wisdom. He treats of life's great adventures, its struggles and hopes. He can give you insight into the life of the common man as you meet him every day, in commerce with your fellows. There is a fine passage on honesty and sincerity, on the inadequacy of culture and refinements to meet the tests of life, on the grandeur of the Bible and its great doctrines and many kindred themes. The main "curse of his existence was not pain or loss, but gloom; blind wanderings in a world of black fog, haunted by apparitions." While the sun never bursts in full splendor undimmed upon his path, and there is much groping in the twilight for the way, you feel the night is far spent and the twilight is of the early dawn, soon to be scattered by the glories of a new and an abiding day.