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This Week.

THE HOLLY TREE.

PRESBYTERIAN LEXINGTON.

DR. McGIFFERT AND HIS PRESBYTERY.

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The holly tree at our back fence is one of our winter friends. It abides so steadfastly in its dark and glistening green, when other things have yielded to the frost, and the field around is either brown or white with snow. It gave a dense shade in the heat of the summer, and in the winter's cold and death, stands like a monument of unfading life.

Nobody knows how old that holly tree is. It has been of slow growth, yet it is more than thirty feet high and large with a great circumference. How many winters it has seen, and how many storms it has withstood, and how many heavy snows have bent its branches to the ground! What a persistent and indomitable courage it has had! What a splendid fortitude; it is a veteran of three or four centuries and a friend born for adversity.

A singular peculiarity of some hollies is that while the leaves of the upper reaches of the tree are smooth and round, those on all the lower branches are protected with thorns. Only those parts which are exposed to the browsing of rude cattle are so furnished with thorns, that the limbs cannot be torn down, and the tree stands self-protected all the year round. It is well to have a life so hedged about with thorns that no destructive beast of evil can reach the strong soul within.

Only by the grace of God can one live an evergreen life. Only by the strength which God supplies can one be vigorous and faithful through all the winter days of life. A steadfast faith will keep us green and strong in times of adversity and days of bitter blasts. It is the nature of the child of God to be

staunch and to abide when that which is only human and earthly shall fail and perish. "I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on me!"

It was the homely conceit of old Thomas Fuller that a benefit received without thankfulness was like a piece of cloth which we failed to hem. It was not ready for permanent use, and unravelled away until only a poor, useless rag was left. What God gives us is secured to us when we add to it our gratitude and grateful love.

AN excellent method of continued Bible study in the families of a country church is that adopted by the pastor and people of Brown's Church in Cumberland, Virginia. Outlines of studies in the earthly life of Jesus Christ, giving readings and scheme of study with references have been prepared by the pastor, Rev. J. H. Davis, Jr., and handsomely printed. Once a month all the enrolled circle meet at Brown's Church and go over the lessons of the month. That Bible study under such a leader will tell for generations on the church and community.

THOREAU, the New England philosopher of nature, says that the winter is like a bone thrown to the dog, cold, and hard and meatless. All he can hope to get from it is the marrow. But the marrow is so rich and sweet that he is satisfied. The winter usually comes to us bare and cold, without any external good. But there is a marrow worth a hard struggle to secure. There is the comfort and happiness of the fireside. There is the help given to the young students at their books. There are the pleasures of reading, and there are all the profits of quiet reflection and seeking after better things. Let us be sure to get the marrow out of the winter's bone.

THE people of Hebron Church, Augusta county are much disturbed by the removal of their pastor, the Rev. J. E. Booker, and we do not wonder at their grief and earnest protest. A very much troubled member writes to the *Central* asking us to join the Hebron opposition to the pastor's withdrawal, and we are very much inclined to do so. Mr. Booker's twelve years in that pastorate have been fruitful in many ways. Our Hebron friend writes, "It is hoped and prayed that he may in the future feel that he can serve the Lord better by coming back and spending the rest of his days with us." Let Mr. Booker repent and return and the Hebron people will forgive and forget.

NEARLY three hundred years ago, in 1608, Captain Newport brought to Virginia a boat in sections which was to be carried from the waters of the James and launched in the sea to the west. His party went a few miles above the falls of the river, and seeing mountains and no sea, gave up their journey to the Pacific and returned. What became of the boat in sections, history does not tell. Now

we are building at the falls of the James a boat in sections for the great Congo river. We shall expect better things for our portable boat than Captain Newport found in his.

THE Rev. T. H. Rice, D. D., of Atlanta, has written to the committee of the Second Church, Richmond, that it is impossible for him to consider a call from that church. He writes to the editor of this paper: "My congregation is standing by me in the effort to exemplify in this whole section that solid, and noble and spiritual type of Christianity which it is the province of our Church to develop. I have not been here long enough to insure the permanency of certain work begun. It is the need of this field which holds me here." The Second Church people will hear Dr. Rice's decision with universal and deep regret, while they will respect the conscientious devotion to duty which has led to it.

A PLAN for the publication of gospel tracts has been adopted by the Synod of Memphis. Four committees of three members each were appointed to prepare tracts severally on the Work of the Holy Spirit, on Family Worship, on The Influence of Presbyterianism Among Us, and on A Call to Repentance. A committee of five will revise and edit the tracts, and distribute them through the Presbyterian Home Mission Committees among the churches. There are to be printed eight thousand of each tract. There is much to be said in favor of the scheme. They will be prepared by competent men in the Synod who know the wants of the people, and reflect the views and teachings of our own ministers. The cost of printing and distribution will be known exactly by the committee and the Synod, and the expense will be met by the Synod out of its own funds. Such literature widely distributed will instruct the people in the truth and protect them from error.

IN the dissolution of Dr. Babcock's pastoral relation to the Brown Memorial Church by the Presbytery of Baltimore last week, the fact was brought out by Dr. J. Addison Smith and others that the mode of action was outside of the constitutional provisions. The same thing was true in the dissolution of Dr. Guthrie's pastorate in Richmond, and has become the practice almost universally. The whole matter of a pastor's removal is taken out of the hands of the Presbytery. The minister receives a call directly from a church in another Presbytery, and after his own consideration and decision the Presbytery is called hastily, not to consider the call, but to dissolve the relations at the pastor's request and to dismiss him. Everything has been cut and dried, the consent of the church has been secured, and the Presbyterian action is formal and inevitable. The matter has gone so far that the Presbytery can do nothing. All this is contrary to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, and is of the very nature of Congregationalism.

you will wonder what is the family dinner-hour. If you are so fortunate as to receive a formal invitation in advance, you will not only learn, but you will have a bountiful and well-cooked meal—not, perhaps, an Episcopalian epic rean feast, but bountiful and nutritious food. If, however, your notion was to drop in unexpectedly, and take an informal family dinner, let me beg you to give it up. You may go a hundred times, and the sleek-headed girl in poplin will give no sign, and the bell will never ring. She would starve before she would ask you out, but she would die before she would ask you in, for Presbyterians are not built that way. Her father would immolate her for taking such a liberty. The best you can hope for, on an occasion like that, is a cold red pippin on a cold white plate, served where you sit shivering, in that vault-like parlor.

If you wish to be frisky with Miss Westminster, it is possible in but one way. Ask her to go to church. Sunday morning church is the most tumultuous of her gayeties; Sunday night service is to her what an ordinary dancing party would be, as compared with a state ball, to Miss Litany; and Wednesday evening lectures are to her what excursions for ice-cream or soda-water are to "unregenerate" girls.

My! for wild hilarity commend me to a coterie of strictly reared young female Presbyterians. An evening spent among them is like sitting upon icebergs, cracking hailstones with one's teeth.

Yet, dear reader, believe me, after one has tried it awhile, surprising as the statement may seem, one comes to like it. Now and again, one of them says something, or does something, like ordinary mortals; and what she says or does is in such a fetching, fascinating, feminine way that it makes one want to go again, and makes one feel glad that such, gentle, pure, refined, simple, and true people countenance an outside barbarian like one's self in their society.

There is, believe me, a lot of outcome in one of these little demure Presbyterian lassies. Of course, if she has no better luck than to marry one of her own people, that settles it! She will go through life mooning and mincing about like a turkey hen come off her nest. She will pass her life thinking that going to hear sermons and lectures is the chief end of man, and that pippins, spiced gingerbread, and cracked walnuts, served in a chilly parlor, are fit Christian entertainments.

She may even live and die thinking she is happy, not knowing any better.

But, if perchance, good fortune brings her a knight with a feather in his bonnet, and it catches her little meek eye, as it is mighty apt to do; if, after prayerful consideration, her strait-laced parents decide that it is best for her happiness to let her go, even at her soul's peril; if, all doubts and dangers past, she is borne triumphantly away, her bonnet-box stuffed with the Shorter Catechism and all orthodox kirk rudiments,—I assure you it is surprising how promptly the little bud expands, and how quickly she adapts herself to new surroundings.

I speak whereof I know.

Some Reminiscences of Dr. J. G. Shepperson.

BY THE REV. P. B. PRICE.

At a meeting of the Synod of Virginia, in Lynchburg, in the fall of 1865, there were some splendid speeches, by several distinguished laymen, on the subject of pastoral support. These laymen were themselves, probably, liberal contributors; but Brother Shepperson seems to have been impressed with the fear that the congregations which they represented would not respond to their views. At the close of the discussion he rose, and addressing the Synod, said: "Brethren, comfort one another with these words!" The peculiar accent upon "words" threw the Synod into a violent convulsion of laughter. I well remember the glee with which Dr. Dabney enjoyed the dry humor of Dr. Shepperson. His simple, unrestrained, and hearty laugh, on this occasion, was truly refreshing.

Among many amusing remarks of Brother Shepperson, in the Presbytery of Montgomery, I remember the following: He was in the habit of quoting quaint sayings from old Scotch divines, and once mentioned one who had said that the books which Paul had left at Troas, and requested Timothy to bring, were the Confession of Faith and Williston on the Shorter Catechism.

The following is an account which he was wont to give of a certain incident handed down touching the advice given by Rev. Dr. John H. Rice to a church in the country, which offered a very small stipend for a pastor, but wanted one who possessed the highest qualifications. He must be eloquent, learned, zealous, with all the et ceteras that would

make him acceptable in the highest degree. Dr. Rice replied that he knew no one who would suit them except Dr. Dwight, then for some time, as he believed, in heaven; and as he had lived so long on celestial food, he might subsist on the salary they proposed to give.

Rev. P. T. Penick, who was the high Calvinist of our Presbytery, and possessed the virtues that accompany that doctrine, was not a "Presbyterian sour." He was firm, and, perhaps, stern on occasions, but delighted in music and good stories. He told, with much zest the following on Brother Shepperson, which occurred while he was pastor at Liberty, now Bedford City: A Frenchman had come to town to exhibit some views by a panorama. He visited the ministers to secure their co-operation; but found Brother Shepperson not inclined to favor his exhibition; and came to the conclusion that he was behind the age, indeed an old foggy—and so spoke of him, as one who was not sufficiently *developed*. Dr. Shepperson enjoyed the joke, and said he was glad that he was not under that influence—though the Frenchman did not intend to say so.

When our beloved brother, Rev. T. M. McCorkle, preached his trial sermon for licensure at old Peaks Church, in the fall of 1871, Dr. Shepperson, when his name was called for criticism of the discourse, proceeded to deliver an elaborate discourse upon the advantages of expository preaching. It was the apostolical and primitive method, it was the old Scotch method, etc., etc. And, indeed, he was so well convinced that it was the true method of preaching, that he had already "thrown out a feeler in Liberty to see how it would take." Whereupon a humorous brother, seeing his opportunity, rose and spoke as follows: "Mr. Moderator, it seems to me very strange that since expository preaching has such high authority for its practice, it is not more generally adopted. Dr. ———, in his book, has a chapter on its advantages, but I am not aware that he uses that style; and I very seldom hear from our leading men an expository sermon. But I congratulate Brother Shepperson and rejoice that, at this early stage of his ministry, he has already thrown out a feeler in Liberty to see how it will take."

Brother Shepperson laughed as heartily at this as any one else. The amiable temper with which he would enjoy a joke at his own expense, was a delightful illustration of his character, in which one seldom saw anything that was not amiable and pleasant. Brother Penick said to the last speaker, "I am glad you said that; Brother Shepperson is so timid."

||The Art of Self Control.

Almost every error which, in the history of our race, has taken firm hold upon the human heart is rooted in some salutary truth. The bare and ugly face of falsehood is too repulsive to retain through the centuries the love and admiration of passing generations.

Thus if we look deeply into many of the ascetic principles which dominated the Middle Ages, we shall find food for sober reflection and personal application. Sometimes, in thoughtful hours when we seek to formulate rules for the guidance of our conduct, the correction of our faults and foibles, we find ourselves recurring to some practice of the Roman Catholic body of Christians which Protestantism, in its reaction from the errors of asceticism, has altogether condemned and abandoned.

The early saints secluded themselves from all society, they refused all indulgence in pleasure, they denied themselves necessary rest and nourishment, they closed their eyes even to the beauties of nature, they disowned the common ties of kindred; and they offered their natures thus warped and impaired as a sacrifice acceptable to God.

The Reformation, in its revulsion from this perversion of our Lord's teaching, has gone too far, and we may emulate the graces without copying the mistakes of these old disciples of Christ. Especially is this true in learning the great and important lesson of self-control.

"He that ruleth his own spirit," says Solomon, "is greater than he that taketh a city." Self-control embraces all the virtues and is itself the crowning virtue. Its absence in professing Christians has, perhaps, more than all the assaults of infidelity, injured the cause of Christ. Rare, as well as precious and beautiful, is this jewel of self-control.

The question in every thoughtful mind is how to obtain that perfection of character where every unworthy impulse, every degrading passion shall be brought into subjection to the royal fiat of Christian principle. A man would obtain the mastery over himself by forming good resolutions; but, in the hour of temptation he breaks them as Sampson snapped asunder the seven green withes. What can help him?

He prays for the upholding power of God's grace; but the intelligent Christian knows that the heathen proverb, "God helps those who help themselves," holds true also under the dispensation of grace. Bidden by Christ, a man stretches forth his nerveless, withered hand and it becomes whole; so does God's strength never supersede human effort but infuses into it a divine energy which renders its force irresistible.

Here comes in the suggestion from the lives of the early saints. Self-control must be learned by daily, patient exercise therein. As well expect that a pilot who has never been taught in smooth waters and under cloudless skies to handle the helm, shall guide a vessel through storm and darkness on a rock-bound coast, as that a man who habitually gratifies every appetite and indulges every small temper shall, in the moment of sudden temptation, calmly meet the danger and ride triumphant over the breakers of over-mastering passion. In every art and science, the beginner takes easy lessons first, and there is surely no reason why the same rule should not apply in the domain of ethics.

As to the occasions for such discipline

"We need not bid, for cloistered cell

Our neighbor and the world farewell."

"He who turns away from nothing in the providence of God and who seeks nothing beyond that providence, will never finish a day without sharing the cross of Christ." The petty trials which fret our daily lives are wonderfully transformed if we accept them as educational. Every time you suppress the hasty word, banish the impure thought, deny the unwholesome appetite, you have advanced one step in learning the great and glorious art of self-control.

Trifles are God's easy lessons for his untrained children. "They were not given you to be miserable under. Learn from them! Turn them to account! Teach yourself to be silent when you would rather speak, to speak gently and quietly when it would better accord with your mood to be loud and insistent.

This character-building is a great work. It is worth the expenditure of time and thought and systematic effort. As a human soul, you have rightful sovereignty over your body, your intellect, your awful and mysterious will-power.

"Shall the royal voice be mute?

No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,

Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of the brute."

M. G. M.

"Gather Up the Fragments."

JOHN VI. 13.

Brother—We are sure that you do not wish to see Home Mission funds wasted. Will you therefore please look up to the top of your desk, into your waste basket and on your shelf and see if the package of General Assembly's Home Mission papers, sent to you three weeks ago, is remaining, and if so, please distribute them. They were published under the direction of the Assembly to carry information to the members of the church, and if they be not distributed, the money spent in printing and postage might as well have been thrown into the fire. In this January weather a large number of church members, among the most able to contribute, will not be in church. If you send them a copy of that paper and an envelope, there will be for you a "well done," and that we do desire. Call on us for envelopes, sent free and at once, and let the members have a chance to get information and to give.

Yours hopefully,
Atlanta, Ga., Jan. 5, 1900.

J. N. CRAIG,
Secretary.

Dr. Babcock and Baltimore Presbytery.

A special meeting of Baltimore Presbytery was held last Thursday in Westminster Church, and heard the request of the Rev. Dr. M. D. Babcock for the dissolution of his relation to the Brown Memorial Church. Dr. Babcock said: "I have reached a conclusion entirely apart from the interests of my heart, in that I think my life will count for more in New York in the particular church to which I have been called than it will in Baltimore. It is a rule that I have followed to make my life count for the most. I went to my first charge for that reason, and I went to Brown Memorial Church for that reason." Commissioners represented the congregation. Dr. J. Addison Smith, of the Aisquith Street Church, vigorously opposed the dissolution of the pastoral relation, and was joined in the opposition by Mr. Frank E. Williams. Finally the question was called, and the pastoral relation was dissolved by a majority vote. It is with very great and general regret that the Baltimore ministers and churches of all denominations take leave of Dr. Babcock.