

## CHAPTER XI.

## MR. PHINNEY AS A PREACHER.

MUCH that has been said in the preceding chapters, incidentally illustrates to such an extent the character of Mr. Phinney as a preacher, that only a few words need be added here. His success in winning souls to Christ, is owing to what many regard as a very humble talent. According to their standard, they would give him credit for very little *genius*. His success, it is true, is not to be attributed to what is called *originality* of thought, profound reasoning, nor to eloquence; but rather to the power of causing his hearers to *feel deeply* that which they already know. Call this talent by any name you please, but concede it to him in large measure and you have the truth.

He is not a man of books. His heart has rich experience, however, in the glorious realities revealed for the godly man in the Book of books. He speaks of them as things he sees and knows. His illustrations he draws from the world in which *he* lives. In his delivery, he does not *try* to be natural, but what is a thousand times better, he *is* natural. The following paragraph, which the writer cut from the Portland Argus more than a year ago, is in point here, and alludes in a happy manner to Mr. Phinney's style of preaching:

“ELDER CLEMENT PHINNEY.—This venerable father in the gospel preached at the Methodist Church in Chestnut Street on Sunday afternoon last. He is now quite infirm, but in his pulpit efforts as unique, and interesting and cheerful as ever. He is a warm-hearted man, devoted to the cause, and never fails to keep wide awake himself, and to keep his audience so. His fund of anecdote and incidents of his long life as a preacher, is inexhaustible, and he draws upon it in such a manner as to interest both old and young. We saw the tears stealing down the cheeks of many faces, that tried hard to conceal the telltale of their feelings. The Elder has the true key to the best feelings of the human heart. May his descent to the grave be gentle and happy.”

In his preaching, he never fails to draw largely from the “fund of anecdote and incidents,” of which the Argus speaks. Though his anecdotes, almost without exception, are to the point, and well-timed, there is much in his manner of relating them. No matter how often you hear them, they produce their effect. “When I resided in Monmouth, Me., in 1833,” says Bro. Curtis, of Roxbury, Mass., “I sent for Bro. Phinney to come and attend a Quarterly Meeting held in that place. He came and preached two sermons that produced considerable effect upon the congregation. In about two years from that time he attended a Quarterly Meeting in the same place, and preached two sermons from the same texts that he employed before. When he commenced preaching, and began to relate the same anecdotes he did before,

—anecdotes which I had often heard him relate—I thought I would look round upon the congregation, and see if his preaching produced any effect. I saw a great portion of the congregation bathed in tears, and soon, to my astonishment, I found myself weeping with the rest.”

Once he was preaching upon the excuses which the sinner makes to his own conscience for neglecting the calls of the Savior. He followed the sinner from refuge to refuge, revealing the groundless hopes he entertains for his security. He pressed the truth more and more closely. At length, one of the hearers springing upon his feet, exclaimed, “Good God! I can find no hiding place; you have found me.”

Some young preacher may wish to know how he prepared his sermons. The following incident will afford a clew to his method: He was at a Quarterly or Yearly Meeting. The audience was very large, and he was expected to preach. “It lacked,” says he, “but an hour of the time. My mind was uncommonly barren. I had neither text nor subject. I began to be alarmed. I went to a grove to ask my Father for a message. He assured me I should have one. When I was returning, I saw a fly, busy sucking at some sweet substance. I stopped to study. Soon a spider came out cautiously from its lurking place, and threw its web over the left wing of the fly. The fly felt it, and fluttered its wing a little at first, but was soon still, and kept on eating. When the left wing was well secured, the spider began to fasten the other in the same way. Again the fly flut-

tered, but kept on eating, and was soon at rest. I was on the point of killing the spider, but something told me to let it alone—if the fly would not escape while it could, it deserved to die. Soon the right wing was fast. The spider then rushed upon the fly; it attempted to escape, but in vain; the spider killed it, and dragged it off to its house. ‘Bless God,’ said I, ‘for this message; sinners cling to their pleasures while the devil is throwing chain after chain around them. I will go and tell them what the enemy is doing, and warn them in the name of God to escape while they can break his chains.’ I went and told my story. God’s power was in it. Sinners all over the house wept aloud, and many of them fled to Christ.”

It is a source of regret that some of the sermons he delivered in the prime of his life were not reported, if, indeed, such sermons can be reported. But we cannot avail ourselves of such. The best we can do, is, to give the following, which a friend has kindly furnished. This is a good specimen of his sermons at present, so far as can be reported, but the reader must remember the difficulty of representing on paper what such a preacher delivers.

#### SERMON,

*Preached in the Roger Williams Church, Providence, R. I.,  
Nov. 24, 1850, by Clement Phinney.*

REPORTED BY ELI NOYES.

TEXT—Luke 10:42. But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.

These words, to me, are *weighty*. They are the words of the Savior, when he was here on earth.

At this time, he was in the place where Martha lived, who had received him into her house. Mary, her sister, was sitting at the Savior's feet, hearing his words. Martha; it appears, became jealous, as all worldly minded professors are apt to be, and she says to the Savior, "Don't you care for me, Master?"

Now, the Savior knew well what was the state of mind of his poor erring daughter, and knew that it was important for her to improve this occasion. The Lord Jesus was not there every day. So he calls upon her in language that waked her up, "*Martha!* *MARTHA!!* thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."—These little children, when their names are repeated, know that something is out of order, so Martha must have known that her conduct had not been exactly right. Jesus did not mean to be understood that the things of this world were not needful in their place, but he meant to let her know that one thing was *more* needful than all the rest—Mary had made choice of this one thing. She had chosen to sit at her Savior's feet, and to hear his words. She had doubtless investigated the subject before she made choice of this one thing needful. She had looked the matter all over, and had come to the conclusion, that religion was more important than all the things of earth.

But some will say that none but females and old people—the weak minded—make choice of religion. The infidel says it is altogether beneath me to choose

religion. But remember that there are as giant minds as ever existed, who have preferred religion to all things else. There is Isaiah, that flaming old prophet, who, with his prophetic glass, looked down to this day of the Savior, and his good old heart got so animated with the value of this one thing needful, that he cried out, from the fulness of his soul, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price."—Ah! Martha, with all her carefulness, could never prepare a feast like this.

And there, too, is Moses, who, when he was of age, chose the one thing needful. There was, in fact, something very remarkable in him from his very birth. His mother saw that he was a *goodly child*, and lest he should be murdered by that cruel old slaveholder, Pharaoh, she hid him three months, and then, finding she could hide him no longer, she made an ark of bulrushes, and having put him in it, she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. Now, who should first come down to the water but Pharaoh's daughter, and as she and her maids were strolling about, she saw this curious thing—a very curious thing for a slave to make; and so she sent her maid, who brought it to her. When she opened the ark, she saw a babe there, and the babe began to weep. This excited the compassion of the king's daughter, and she determined to adopt him on the spot. I will call him *Moses*, said she, for he was drawn out of the water. She supposed him to be one of the Hebrew children.

Now, Moses' sister, who had been standing, watching, asked if she might go and call a nurse of the Hebrew women, and she was told to go. She now tripped along to the door of the child's own mother; and glad enough was the mother to become the nurse of her own child. O, bless God! what a rod is preparing for old Pharaoh's back.—Said the king's daughter, "I have found a babe, and if you will nurse him, I will pay you wages;" and I have no doubt that a handsome sum was paid out for nursing the child. Now, hear, young gentlemen! This Moses was brought up at the king's court, in all the learning of the Egyptians. When a young man, walking about the streets, it would be said of him, this is the king's grandson; and who knows but that such an ambitious little fellow might look forward to the sceptre and crown of his old grandfather. But now, mark you: when Moses came to be of age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Now, you see, this great Moses put all the afflictions which he knew the people of God must suffer, with the recompense of reward, into one of the scales, and all the pleasures, and even the crown and sceptre of Egypt, into the other, and up went the beam that contained the pleasures of the world. Well, Moses, which weighs the most? which will you choose? "O the recompense of reward, with all the afflictions." He chose that, and he went through with the afflictions like a hero. Now, friends, we must, like Moses, look this sub-

ject over, and count the cost. What will be taken away, if we choose the one thing needful?

In the first place, let us look at the things of this earth. O how many beautiful things in this city! Its fine buildings and streets, and its wealth! But, have riches never been taken away? O what heart-rending scenes I have witnessed! I once met a man who had been a rich merchant in the city of Portland. He took me by the hand and said, "*How do you do, Elder?*" How do you do, dear? "O I have *lost my all*. When you was here in Portland, engaged in a revival, I was worth my thousands; but now all is gone, except the family organ on which my daughter used to play, to cheer me when my mind was harrassed and confused with cares and business." Ah! dear, said I, you should get something that cannot be taken away. I called to see his poor wife, and O what a time I had with her. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she said, "I have to resort to my needle again, for a living." Thus it is, dear friends. There are those who think their mountain strong as Gibraltar, who fall from a state of wealth into a state of the most distressing poverty. Ah! I have seen the fine carpet done up, and the elegant furniture sent off to the auction.—So insecure are men in the possession of wealth.

And what more may be taken away from us? Honor may be taken from us—O, how taken are many with the honors of this world!—A letter comes from the office, bearing a title of honor upon it—how gratifying to the feelings! But, alas, how vain and fading

are honors! See the great Bonaparte, as he goes forward with his conquests. Why, when I was young, it used to make my blood boil to hear of his exploits. The sound of his approach would make nations tremble. But see him after the battle of Waterloo, disappointed, and brought low. Here, his worldly honor begins to wane, until we find him confined on the island of St. Helena. A few years ago, my two sons, with a large ship's crew visited his grave. As they stood by its side, over which waved the weeping willow, they said within themselves, this is the grave of the great Bonaparte; and here is the end of earthly greatness. Who that witnesses the fall of such greatness will not adopt the language of the poet, and say:

"Farewell honor, empty pride,  
Thy own nice uncertainty  
If the least mischance betide,  
Lays thee lower than the dust:  
Worldly honors end in gall,  
Rise to-day, to-morrow fall."

These words would be an appropriate epitaph for Bonaparte's tomb-stone.

O how strange are the ideas of some men of the value of worldly honors. A Brigadier General, under whom I used to train, said in regard to a Congressman who had changed his politics, "If that man had not changed his sentiments, he might have had a handsome inscription on his grave-stone. How blind to suppose such an inscription would have done him any good.

And what else may be taken away, if we choose the one thing needful? Our friends may be taken

from us,—O how happy I have seen parents with their dear little children.—Can this group be broken up? O, yes; death enters the family circle, and sad changes are made. How often I have seen the husband weeping the loss of an affectionate wife, and the wife weeping over the remains of a kind husband. I have seen, too, the little children flock around the bed of a dear mother. So it was with the little ones of my eldest daughter. They came around the bed of their dying mother, crying as though their hearts would break. "We cannot give you up," said they. "O yes," said their mother, "I am going to heaven, and you must give your mother up." Death had come to take her away, and he could not be denied.

Mother! that rosy-cheeked daughter of yours, before six months, may fade and die. Father! that noble son, in whom you place so many hopes, may soon be in his grave. I once put up at the house of an old brother, where I had often visited. When I arrived at the door, they came running out, glad to see me. We went into the house, and soon we were seated at the table. I observed that the place of one son was vacant, and I inquired, where is Edmund? The mother dropped her knife and fork, her countenance fell, and the tears dropped from her eyes. "Ah!" said she, "have you not heard of Edmund? Oh! Edmund, our dear Edmund, upon whom we depended for support in our declining years, went out from us with his team, and within 20 hours from the time, was brought home a corpse. His body now lies in the family burying ground." O what is death doing in

our world! Thus one goes after another. How often I visit a family from which a member has been taken away,—I see the hat he wore, and the farming utensils he used, but his body lies in the grave. We are all hastening onward to our final home. Some youth may ask, why, old man, those withered cheeks, those grey hairs, and crippled limbs? Why go hobbling about these streets with your cane? Ah! the iron tooth of time is doing up its work, and I shall soon be gone.

Go to that grave-yard, and you will find graves of all lengths. Now, as your friends may be taken away, how important to choose what will not be taken away.

But for whom is this one thing needful? The youth are apt to say, "It is needful for you, old preacher, and for grandfather and grandmother, but not for those as young as we are." But religion is of the greatest importance to youth. Parents, what is to become of your children who are leaving home? Many such children feel quite strong in themselves, but, ah! daughter, though you have a good education, there are many things you do not know. You need religion to keep you from the thousand snares that are laid for you. Perhaps you will first be invited, by some blackleg, to go to the museum, and from this alphabet of the devil's kingdom, you will go on to ruin. I knew a beautiful female, 18 years of age, who went to live in one of our large factory towns, who was thus led away; and her mother afterwards found her in a house of ill-fame.—Oh, how must

that mother have felt as her poor erring daughter fell down before her, and said, "If I had only got religion before I left home, I should not have come to this place." Take warning, young ladies, and remember the words of this old man when he is gone.

How many young men, too, who have left the parental roof, have been led away, until sin has proved their ruin! There is Robinson and his Helen Jewett, and many others like them—gone down to death, and their beauty with them.

But look at the other side. I once called upon a sister, and asked her, where is your son? She replied that he was in the West, and she had just received a letter from him. So away she tripped with a light heart, and sparkling eye, to get it. The son said in his letter, "Mother, I have got into a place where there is no Sabbath, except what I keep myself; but on Sunday I read the Bible you gave me when I left home, and pray. I try to keep up my religion, and religion keeps me."

Business men, you need this one thing needful. It keeps men in every time of danger. You are not able to conduct the business of this great city, without religion. Parents, you need it to enable you to guide your little obstinate children. Father, what will you do in bringing up that little boy, unless you have religion to enable you to govern him? Mother, you can never manage that bright little daughter as you should, without religion.

And O, it is needful for the aged. What sight is more beautiful than to see old grandfathers coming to

the house, and the flock of little children leaping out and seizing him by his hands and his garments, and he placing his trembling hand on their little heads and pronouncing blessings in the name of his God. Never shall I forget the prayers of my godly old grandfather; as he placed his dear old hand upon my head, when I was a child.

Dear aged friends, what shall you and I do as our eye grows dim, our ear deaf, our feeling benumbed, unless we have religion? O, may we, like good old Jacob, be waiting for the salvation of God.

The President of the United States needs this one thing. Were he here I would tell him so. Ah! we want such men for rulers as we had in our first National Congress. Once when they got into great difficulties, Benj. Franklin said, 'Let us pray.' They had prayers, and found their way out of the difficulty. We want men who fear God, to manage the affairs of our Government. As said Jefferson, "I tremble for my country, when I remember God is just." Unless there is a change in the character of our great men, very soon, I believe I have seen the best days of America.

See old George Washington kneeling down by the side of the fence, lifting his heart to God in prayer for his country. The old Quaker who overheard him, knew that God would hear that prayer, and give victory to America. Washington feared God, and committed his cause to him; but the sentiment, "Our country, right or wrong," I fear will upset this nation! We must have a greater regard for religion

on the part of those who figure in the politics of our country, or we are gone.

Now, friends, after hearing what the old man has to say about the concerns of this world, and the one thing needful, which will you choose?

O dear youth, will you not make the wise choice? Come one and all, and make choice of the good part which shall not be taken away from you.

Brethren, I renew my choice this day—I choose religion for my portion, forever. I know it will be good in death, and good at the great judgment, when the supporters of infidelity will flee as a shadow."

The following is a sketch of a speech he made at the last session of General Conference. We are indebted to Bro. A. K. Moulton, of Lowell, for it. The subject of the recent Fugitive Slave Law was under discussion. Some of the young men had waxed warm, as well they might, while considering some features of that ungodly law. Some had spoken of the right of resisting by arms in some cases, its execution. It will be seen by this speech that, while the old gentleman is a thorough going Anti-Slavery man, he deduces his anti-slavery from his religion, rather than his religion from his anti-slavery. This speech presents an illustration also of his power of giving an interest to things with which the hearer has been familiar all his life.

—ELD. CLEMENT PHINNEY being pressingly called for by the Conference, and being quite infirm in con-

sequence of the weight of years, was assisted to ascend the pulpit stairs, and spoke something as follows:

"I was lately thinking over the condition of the wretched slave, and saying in my heart—what will become of him—things seem to be growing worse and worse. But in the midst of this train of thought, I heard my Heavenly Father say—true, I did not hear any audible voice, but I seemed very sensible of his presence, and it seemed as though his spirit whispered to my soul and said, "Stop, stop, child. I'll see to it. Just you and the other abolitionists do your duty, and I'll see to it." Well, I looked about me, and I could see no possible way by which anything could be done for the poor creatures, when all at once I espied Moses, gazing at a burning bush, which blazed and burned, and yet was not consumed. Moses was gazing in perfect wonder, for though he was skilled in all the learning of Egypt, he could not account for this strange sight. But by and by he heard a sound come out of the fire, which said to him, Moses, pull off your shoes from your feet, for you are on holy ground. Moses stripped off his shoes, and the bush kept burning; and God said, I have seen the affliction of my people, and I have come now to send you for their deliverance. Moses began to make excuses about it, and said he wasn't fit to go, he was slow of speech, but God finally told him he would send Aaron with him. Moses had a rod in his hand, and the Lord told him to throw it on the ground, and he obeyed, and the rod became a serpent.

Moses took it by the tail and it became a rod in his hand. He held out that rod, and started on his mission. He didn't take any gun nor any sword, but only his rod that had been made a serpent, and started for Egypt.

Some of our young brethren have been talking about shouldering their guns to fight with the slaveholders. Better let your guns hang, young men; you don't need them. Moses only took the weapon God directed him to. Only do this, and you may defy all the slaveholders that ever lived, from Pharaoh down—all welded together. Glory to God, brethren, by this time, I began to feel better. I watched Moses and Aaron as they went on together. Moses was a stammering man, and Aaron spoke for him, each doing his duty as God directed. They went to old Pharaoh, and did their errand to him. But Pharaoh looked down upon them with disdain. Says he to them: You, Moses and Aaron, do you go about your business. My slaves are in that brick yard at work, and you must not meddle with them. It did not seem as though they could do much. These were all feeble instrumentalities, but still, however dark their prospects looked, they worked on, and did their duty. But they had to have awful work down there before Israel was set free. The old wretch hardened his heart and made the slaves work the harder, and then to be beaten because they didn't make as many brick when they had to gather stubble for straw, as when they had their straw all found. But God sent them judgment after judgment—he

slew their cattle, turned their waters into blood, plagued them with locusts and frogs and hail and darkness, and among other plagues he tormented them with lice; this was an *awful plague*.

Finally, old Pharaoh had to give up. He couldn't stand it any longer; and he said they might go. And so they started, father, mother, grandfather and grandmother, and little children and all. O I thought then I saw them starting out from the southern plantations, just as the children of Israel from Egypt, and old Pharaoh couldn't help it. Moses still held on to his rod. But after they got out a little ways, the old villain said, "I'll have some sport with them. I don't know but that Moses thinks he will lead off those slaves, but he won't do it. I'll follow them and have some sport with them." So on he goes after them, with his mighty army. But when they stood by the border of the Red Sea, crying to God, and the Egyptians pursuing, Moses still holding out his rod—O that did me good, to see how he held out that rod—pressed hard in the rear by the Egyptians, God spake to him and said, "Speak to the people that they move forward." Moses stretched out his rod over the sea, and the sea divided, and gave the children of Israel a dry passage through the midst. Pharaoh pursued. But though the Israelites had a pillar of fire to enlighten them, the Egyptians had to work in the dark, as the enemies of God's people always do, and just as the slaveholders are now doing, while God enlightens his children.

The face of the country was such that the Egyp-

tian hosts, compelled as they were to perform all their operations in darkness, could not tell where the bed of the sea commenced. So when they, by some means, discovered that Moses was on the march, they started too. As soon as they got fairly under way, and had all got down into the bed of the sea, glory to God, the Lord told one of his angels—"Here, do you go down there and pull out that old wretch's linchpins." So down flew the angel, and pulled out the linchpins and their wheels came off in the dark, and the sea poured in upon them, and destroyed the whole of them, and they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Then I saw Miriam leading forth the daughters of Israel with her timbrel in her hand, and a sweet singer she was too. I have no doubt she was as sweet a singer as Jenny Lind. [Great sensation, and some laughter.] Why, I did not mean to make you laugh, brethren. I am in earnest. I have no doubt she was as good a singer as Jenny Lind. And she led the choir, and they sang gloriously—a glorious song of triumph, and of praise to the living God.

There, brethren, when I saw that, I shouted glory to God. And I said, O Lord, I won't worry any more about the slave laws, only try to do my duty, and stir up the brethren to do theirs, and though the slaveholders try their best, as sure as there is a God, these fellows will have to give up by and by. If they don't give up their slaves willingly, God will take them in hand as he did old Pharaoh—no trouble about it. You needn't take your guns, young men.

With God for our defence, we are safe against all the slaveholders on earth. [Great sensation.] Well, brethren, I had no thought you were going to cheer me; but you may depend, when I saw all this, I felt better; and I thought I would just relate it for the benefit of my brethren. God will fix this matter right, you may depend upon it. Glory to his dear name."

## CHAPTER XII.

## MISCELLANEOUS INCIDENTS.—CLOSING REMARKS.

IN this chapter, it is our purpose to gather up the fragments. As by our correspondence with Mr. Phinney's friends, we have continued to receive items of information up to a time when most of the book is in type, some things to be mentioned here, appropriately belong to former pages, both in the order of time, and affinity of subjects.

By the following incident, the reader will be again reminded that Mr. Phinney is keenly alive to the ludicrous. When near sixty years of age, he was conversing at a Quarterly Meeting in presence of several of his fellow laborers, about some aged ministers who had entered upon their "second childishness." "They think," said he, "they know as much as they ever did, and they will not listen to the counsels of those who know them to be in their dotage. If it is not so with me now, it soon will be, I fear; but if I must be a child, I will do the best I can to secure good tutors and governors. I will now choose me three guardians." Accordingly he named three ministers. "Now, brethren," said he, "in the presence of these witnesses, I in good faith, choose you as my guardians. When you see me in my dotage, and that I do not keep my place, tell me, and advise me what to do. I will believe, and mind you. Be faithful; watch over me; I shall be a child before I know it."