

THE PREACHER'S CALL.

(COMPOSED 1815.)

The blessed Jesus, lovely Savior,

He has called on me to go ;

In the vineyard I must labor,

Or on me must come "the wo."

Farewell, dear wife and little children,

The Gospel Trumpet I must blow,

And sound salvation to poor sinners,

For the word to me is "Go."

O, hark, poor sinners, will you hear me ?

O, come, dear sinners, now repent,

For the blessed Savior calls you,

'Tis by Him to you I'm sent ;

O, come, poor sinners, be entreated !

Say, will you have my Christ, or no !

To you my errand is directed,

And still, the word to me is "Go."

O, come, backsliders, who have wandered,

Come home, come home, to Father's house ;

Come home, come home, you wandering children,

Come home, come home, and pay your vows.

The blessed Savior now invites you,

All things are ready now I know,

And the fatted calf is killed,

And still the word to me is "Go."

Ye little lambs of my Redeemer,

Ye who feed in pastures green,

Follow, follow Christ your Savior,

Ever in his light be seen ;

Ever mind and love each other,

And shun the paths that lead to wo,

And travel on the way together ;

So farewell, brethren, I must "Go." "

CHAPTER IV.

HIS FIRST TOUR AS AN EVANGELIST.

BEING now satisfied as to duty, Mr. Phinney left home to preach the gospel in the islands named in our last chapter. *To preach*, we say, if it be lawful to intimate that one may possibly be a preacher who has received neither a human license nor a human ordination: who, perhaps, has neither heard of "Apostolic Succession," nor been graduated at any Cambridge or Oxford. He of whom we speak, had at this time, none of the qualifications these confer. The call of a world perishing in sin, was his only license; and the promptings of his own regenerate heart, his only ordination; the Holy Spirit, sending life-currents through his heart, was to him in place of priestly benedictions; and a familiarity with God's Word, acquired by the daily study of King James's translation, in place of Ancient Classics. Of education, in the common acceptation, he possessed only that modicum which, by revealing deficiencies, banishes the courage, or rather rashness, of ignorance, and confers a becoming modesty.

By necessity, not by choice, when he set out on this Quixotic expedition, as to many it well may seem, he almost literally kept the injunction given to others, to take "no money in their purse." He rode no famous Rosinante, so romantic as to half partake his master's zeal in fasting and enduring hardships to

accomplish some great purpose, but simply an honest team horse, that must have his daily allowance of rest and provender. It happened well, as we say, therefore, that our traveller the first night reached the abode of an old friend, who kindly provided for himself and horse, without an eye to "filthy lucre." He well might go on his way next morning rejoicing. Nor could it have been less grateful to his feelings to meet, soon after parting, with his worthy friend, a Christian brother, who, upon learning his object and destination, furnished him with the few shillings his own scanty purse would afford.

But this day was still destined to have its trials. By passing ferries and otherwise, he found his money so reduced at night, that he felt himself compelled to ask a charity at a private residence. He was, without hesitation, refused the hospitality which most New Englanders are happy to exercise. "As I left that house," says he, "my heart almost sank within me; but, said I to myself, my name is Phinney. I have put my hand to the plough, and will not look back;—I'll never surrender."

This repulse was of great service to him, as it taught him the important lesson, that whoever is in need of charity must be careful not to reveal his necessity. Though since that time he has been compelled to ask favors, he at the same time has it understood that it is not, so to say, a case of "life and death" with him.

Soon arriving at a hotel, he made himself at home, calling for whatever he wanted, as though possessed

of a large fortune. He determined, if necessary, in the morning to give his horse for the bill—at all events so to manage as not to crush his spirit by his feelings of absolute dependence upon the mercy of others.

"Soon after tea," says he, "a company entered the hotel to drink, and swear, and gamble. The spirit of a sing came upon me. I sang the 'Preacher's Call.' One by one, being convicted in their consciences, they went out."

Whatever was the effect of the singing upon the company, among whom was he who, a little before, had so coldly repulsed him from his house, it prepared the landlord and his wife to confess to him, that though professors of religion, they were far from leading Christian lives. In the morning they not only dismissed him free of any charge, but they urged him to call upon them upon his return.

The next night he arrived at the residence of Mrs. Mary ~~Card~~. This lady, though blind from her birth, was endowed by nature with great intellectual powers, and by grace with spiritual gifts so rich, that in absence of the minister, she was esteemed leader of the church in the town of Woolwich, where she resided. Of her, Mr. Phinney says: "her better never lived on earth; not even Anna, who lingered at the Temple, was dearer to Christ. Having received her blessing and the promise of her prayers, I felt happier than if the favor of princes had been bestowed upon me."

He had now nearly reached his destination. The

next morning, when he arrived at the ferry, beyond which lies Squam Island, though the waves ran high, he hailed the ferry-man, and insisted upon being set over. Though that boat carried no Cæsar and his fortune, our humble traveller felt it was none the less protected by Him in whose hand is the ocean, and whose will the winds of heaven obey.

The inhabitants of these islands were plain, industrious fishermen. Kind and generous, their hearts were easy of access to those of kindred spirit. Now let us suppose that instead of our frank and generous mechanic, a graduate from some Theological Seminary is about to make his first attempt at preaching, and that, too, among these fishermen. Our graduate for several years has been to a great extent excluded from the converse of plain laboring men. For three at least, he has been upon the Procrustean bedstead; he has been stretched where it was necessary; has been cut off according to exact measure; his memory is well stored with dogmas; his metaphysical powers so trained that, like Butler's hero,

"He can distinguish and divide

A hair, 'twixt south and south-west side."

Now even if his heart is warm, his modes of thought, and his method of speech are nevertheless such as to separate him so far from the hearts of this people, that weary months and perhaps years must pass, before one sinner will, under his preaching, be convicted of sin against God,—before one will be led to the kingdom of Christ.

On the other hand, Mr. Phinney has none of the advantages conferred by the schools. But his language, though comparatively good, is such as the people are accustomed to every day; his modes of thought are like theirs; such too are his methods of manifesting his emotions, that he gains a ready access to their hearts; they easily believe that his heart is rejoicing in the salvation of Christ; that his soul yearns for their salvation, and that God has sent him on an errand of mercy to them; and, as he is really baptized into the spirit of that very mission, he easily wins them to Christ.

No sooner did he touch the shore of the island, than he began to announce his message by singing the "Preacher's Call" to such as stood upon the beach, trembling for his safety; and, as his mellow notes, indicative of a heart more mellow, rose above the voice of the surging waters, the generous islanders pressed around him; they greeted him; they welcomed him to their homes and their hearts. They all entered the house nearest at hand, and immediately held a prayer meeting. Many were at once deeply impressed; and, before closing that meeting, arrangements for others were made. The new preacher's fame soon spread, and multitudes rushed to hear from him the word of life.

When many on this island had been converted, and when it seemed to him that the work for which he had come here was accomplished, he passed over to Parker's island. In the latter place he received a welcome no less hearty than in the former; nor were

his labors less blessed. On both these islands reside at this day those who were then brought into the kingdom of Christ.

This visit, which occurred sometime in the winter of 1814—15, though of not more than six weeks' duration, was blessed to the conversion of scores of souls. Well might this faithful servant of Christ return to his family, rejoicing in his Master's saving mercy.

It is, perhaps, no more than justice to return for a few moments, to the comparison of our mechanic and graduate. It will at once be conceded by all who know any thing of human nature, that in these meetings, attended by not a little excitement, and perhaps, a little unwholesome enthusiasm, there were some "spurious" conversions, and also some "declension" afterwards. Still it is not difficult to see in this case a wise adaptation of means to a good end. Neither is it necessary, in accordance with this view, to maintain that Mr. Phinney and his like had, at that time, the qualifications best adapted to lead those converts forward in the divine life. For this all readily admit, that one with his heart, his spirit, his sense of a divine call, his adaptation to the state of the people; who, at the same time, was possessed of a thoroughly trained intellect, would be better;—that one thus prepared could more efficiently aid his people in attaining to that state of society in which true piety, true refinement, and true human culture are properly blended—a state which is the highest gift of Christianity to earth. But it is very difficult, if not impos-

sible, to our nature, to combine these qualifications in one person. It is especially difficult to combine in one person *the adaptation* spoken of—the modes of thought, forms of speech, and methods of manifesting emotion, such as are congenial with those of the great mass of the people—and that rigid discipline, which is afforded alone by severe and long continued study. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ and every one members one of another."

Well it must be, therefore, for any denomination of Christians, to appreciate every gift; to cherish those who, though unlettered, are willing to go forth with their lives in their hands, to preach to others that gospel which has redeemed their own souls. Well, too, it must be for those who are willing to invite our graduate to his own office, whatever that may be. If he is a little awkward at first in approaching the hearts of the people, be sure that in that respect he will soon improve. If he has true piety and a true heart, the people will find it out. Not only will he improve himself, but, what is far more to the purpose, the people will, under his influence, improve in their tastes and methods of thought.

Still it will be of no little service to the cause of Christ that this view of the subject has been introduced, if from it our young men, who are preparing by study to enter the ministry, shall again be reminded that, while it is impossible to be too thorough in their studies, still, much, very much depends upon their

spirit, their baptism into the work of their mission, and their acquaintance with human nature, not as it appears in school, but in this suffering world. God help us to be "members one of another."

Upon leaving home, Mr. Phinney had so much anxiety of his own to surmount, that he entirely forgot to consult his neighbors as to what they would think and say about the propriety of his course; or, possibly he thought they would not make it their business. But in this he was mistaken; for no sooner was it "noised abroad" that their good neighbor "had really gone off to preach," than they took the matter under their consideration. Some said that it must be that he was beside himself,—too much zeal making him "mad." Some said, that one who would go off and leave his family so, to spend his life for others, had denied the faith, and was worse than an infidel; others, more charitable, were of opinion that he had only "taken it into his head to be a great man;" and others still, either better acquainted with him, or more disposed to appreciate him fairly, said that God was calling him to a great work, and would undoubtedly provide for the preacher and his family. It is gratifying to state, that a few of the last class were not content merely to say to the family, "Be ye warmed and fed."

One who held a small note against Mr. Phinney, had more to say against the impropriety of his course than any other; he threatened, that in case he should ever return to town, "to sue" him. This threat, he, like others who have no confidence in their own ve-

racity, confirmed by a profane oath. But what of the threatened law-suit? As we have said, Mr. Phinney had been among men of generous hearts. They did not therefore receive of his rich spiritual gifts, and then forget his wants. He was able not only to "take up" the note, but also to lay out a few dollars for the comfort of his family. This, forsooth, furnished the man of threats with a clue to the problem which all others had attempted in vain to solve, and here is his solution: neighbor P. has gone to preaching for money.

We will close this chapter with an incident or two illustrative of Mr. Phinney's method of heaping "coals of fire" on his enemy's head.

During his residence in Phillips, the whole community were thrown into great distress, by learning that they had purchased their lands of an agent who could not make their titles good in law. They had either to buy their lands again, or leave their homes, the toil of years. After Mr. Phinney had secured the title to his land, he called upon the pretended agent, to ask of him the return of a fifty dollar note that he had given in part pay, but got for his pains a "take care of your business and I'll take care of mine." After appealing in vain both to his sense of justice and generosity, Mr. Phinney left him, saying, "I'll not forget to pray God to make you willing to do right." A few weeks after, the note was returned.

At another time, after he had entered upon the work of the ministry, the following incident occurred: He had paid his tax; but by some mistake, he was called upon for the same again. Of course all he

did was, to say he had paid and had the receipt. The collector afterwards, however, wrote to him to call and pay, and "save costs." Mr. Phinney, calling at the office one day, said to the officer, "What does this mean?" He became excited; but Mr. Phinney produced the "voucher." When the officer saw that he had been making a show of his authority at his own expense, he undertook to intimidate the honest man by falling into that kind of blustering, to which those are liable who have a bad cause to maintain; he still insisted upon having certain fees, adding, "pay or I'll make you suffer." "I know my rights, and am not to be intimidated," said the preacher; "but, to show you that I love peace, I'll give you the last money I have for my family." The other, as though he had just made a discovery, said, "Oh, you are that Phinney that goes on preaching expeditions, are you?" "The same, sir." "I shall of course take your money," said he, adding, "I have a perfect hatred of hypocrites." "Take it, sir, if your conscience will let you," was the answer, as the money was handed over.

It may not be best always to yield to such unjust demands, but the spirit in which Mr. Phinney did it, was not without its good results. Some years after this occurrence, the officer heard him preach. At the close of the meeting he not only returned his ill-gotten gains, but, what was much more difficult, he made proper confession.

CHAPTER V.

HIS SECOND TOUR AS AN EVANGELIST.

FOR more than a year after his return from the visit, some incidents of which are narrated in the preceding chapter, Mr. Phinney preached but little, giving his attention for the most part to secular business. During this time, having disposed of his land in Phillips, he had removed to Berlin, a town adjoining, where he was doing his utmost to provide for his family a comfortable and permanent home. Though thus engaged in business, he had not abandoned the hope of entering "the gospel vineyard" sometime as a permanent laborer; but, at present, he found himself unable to make any definite arrangements in this respect, as some debts which would soon fall due must be paid. We shall see, however, that he was soon led in a way not of his own devising.

Some time in June, 1816, he started to Gorham to engage in labor, to procure the means of meeting the demands just mentioned. The first day, arriving some time before night at Farmington, many of his friends who had, as we have seen, been converted under his influence, insisted upon his preaching to them that evening. He consented, and the meeting was not in vain; as at least of the redeemed will in heaven no doubt, as they now do, look back to it as the time in which they were enabled to make their escape from the kingdom of evil.