

A Brand From the Burning.

GRIFFITH, the reporter, wearily folded his notes on Rev. Dr. Ranting's long sermon and leaned forward when the evangelist said, "Let us pray," till his forehead rested on the edge of the back of the next pew.

The minister prayed long and earnestly in a canting monotone, varied only in effect by the sonorous "amens" that emanated from all over the church.

Griff's prayer was, "Lord, I'm so tired!" Then he fell asleep. And no wonder. He had been up all the night before—poor fellow.

He dreamed. He thought he was in a great church, sitting alone in a back pew. The sermon was over, and the pipes of the immense organ sent notes trembling forth into the most beautiful harmonies he had ever heard. He leaned his elbow on the pew end, and under his hand closed his eyes. Suddenly some one touched him lightly on the arm. He looked up.

"Your pardon, sir, but will you tell me your name? I see you here so often in these revival meetings."

It was a wonderfully handsome young woman, who spoke in a low, silvery voice. She stood in an attitude of religiously-subdued pride, looking at him—and oh, what glorious eyes! Her face was pale with a sort of evangelical excitement. Griff took his time to reply. He stared at her a moment, deliberately.

"Griff," he finally said, "or—I mean—Mr. Griffith to you—or, as you please."

"Mr. Griffith, are you a Christian?" she asked at once with great concern.

"No, miss—or madame," he replied, with a smile; and with mock mournfulness, "I'm only a newspaper reporter."

She started to laugh, but recollecting that it would be a sin, checked herself.

"Can't you be both?"

Griff shook his head and gazed at the carpet in the aisle.

"Don't you feel that you could love Christ who died for you?"

He looked up quickly into the sweet, earnest face, and whispered, a little huskily, not loud enough for her to hear: "I think I could love somebody better who would live for me."

"What? What did you say?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Excuse me, you did, though; yes, it was something. Come, tell me now; let me help you."

"You wouldn't like to hear what I said—I know you wouldn't. I can't tell you."

"But you have some unhappiness. Won't you tell me?"

Her tone was so gently persuasive. He was actually about to confess, "I love you, first; I can't help it," when she slipped away,

he didn't know where. And he heard the organ again; this time louder, and a congregation chorus.

He awoke. He straightened up and glanced around to see if anybody had noticed him, then grabbed a hymn book and jumped to his feet.

When Dr. Ranting concluded his invocation, he looked out over the audience and saw Griff's head still bowed as if in the most desperate supplication. He felt encouraged at this manifestation of the Spirit's striving.

"Now," said he, "I want all those who are Christians to stand up."

Everybody in the house, except Griff, rose to their feet.

"Praise the Lord for so many," the minister exclaimed righteously, surveying the fruits of the Word. "Now," he continued, looking askance at the still mourning Griff, "we shall remain standing and sing hymn No. 249. And I want those who would like to be Christians to simply rise to their feet—just rise where you are. All sing."

During the first stanza nobody rose, but the exhortation given in the interlude had its apparent effect. The second verse of the hymn was begun, and it was really this that waked Griff out of his sweet slumber. When he stood up every minister on the pulpit platform—at least a dozen—cried: "Praise the Lord! The Lord hath triumphed!"

The congregation turned and looked at the convert and sang with increased feeling. The ministers, led by Dr. Ranting, hastened down the aisle. The doctor grasped Griff's hand and squeezed it with the strength of Samson.

Another D. D., whose sermons Griff had often reported, patting him on the back, declared: "My boy, I have been waiting for weeks to see you take this step."

Griff was, for a brief period, too dazed to speak or to offer any resistance. At length he stammered to Dr. Ranting, who held his arm in a vice-like grip:

"Doctor, I'm afraid—I think, doctor—yes, sir, I was asleep."

"Too true, my boy, too true," replied the indefatigable minister. "Ah, 'could ye not watch one hour?'"

"I was very tired when I came in, to tell the truth," said Griff, with the glimmer of a hope of getting out of the predicament. But in the singing and outbursts of praise the explanation was misunderstood. Dr. Ranting raised his voice high above all, saying: "Our brother here says he was asleep, but he is now awakened to a realization of his sin."

"Doctor," protested Griff, appealing to another preacher who stood by, "I don't want to deceive you. I don't want to stand here and play the hypocrite. I—"

"We believe you. We know how

it is. You are tired of deceit, tired of hypocrisy, tired of the hollow world. You wish to forsake all that is evil and cling to all that is good."

Griff saw it was no use to say anything more. He was as thoroughly converted to his fate as need be. They led him unresisted—a meek, contrite young man—up to the altar. And they prayed for him such long and so many prayers that he began to fear seriously that the city editor would demand to know where he had spent the last twenty-four hours or so. Would the city editor swallow this story of adventures the assignment had brought about? Not he.

At last, however, it ended—the mourning. But that was not quite all.

Dr. Ranting called upon Griff to testify before the congregation. Griff tried to brave it out.

"I feel," he said—you could have heard a pin drop—"I feel"—his voice quavered and he smiled—the smile of the just, five hundred people thought—"I feel that my sins—my sins—"

"Speak out, brother," a gray-haired saint encouraged.

"Sins are for—"

"Shout, if you want to, son," put in another lifetime church member.

Griff did shout, but it was not the kind of shout they anticipated from his swelling—almost-to-bursting—manner. It was a shout something like "ppf-f-f-f-f—ha, ha, ha, ho, ho, hoho, ha, ha, haba, he, he, he, hebe, he!"

He afterward told his friends:

"I couldn't have held in if I had died the next minute."

Now another man does the Rev. Dr. Ranting's revivals for Griff's paper.—Selected.

Anent Infant Damnation.

The Rev. Dr. Talmage, in a sermon says:

"If you will bring me a Presbyterian of good morals and sound mind who will say that he believes there ever was a baby in the lost world, or ever will be, I will make him a deed to the house I live in."

I have before me a book entitled "The Day of Doom," by Michael Wigglesworth, pastor of the church at Malden, Mass., first published in 1662. The author describes the last judgment in a poem of 224 stanzas. Cotton Mather, who preached the funeral sermon of Wigglesworth in 1705, said: "The 'Day of Doom,' which has been often reprinted in both Englands, may find our children till the day itself arrive." And the epitaph on Wigglesworth's tomb, believed to have been written by Mather, ends with these words:

He to his Paradise is joyful come,
And waits with joy to see his Day of Doom.

I now quote Wigglesworth's verses

on infant damnation:

Then to the Bar all they drew near,
Who die in infancy,
And never had or good or bad
Effected pers'nally;
But from the womb unto the tomb
Were straightway carried,
(Or at the least ere they transgress'd)
Who thus began to plead.

The infants protested against being punished for Adam's sin in an argument of considerable length:

Then answered the Judge most dread:
"God doth such doom forbid,
That men should die eternally
For what they never did.
But what you call old Adam's fall,
And only his trespass,
You call amiss to call it his,
Both his and yours it was."

Further on the Judge says:

Had you been made in Adam's stead,
You would like things have wrought,
And so into the self-same woe
Yourselves and yours have brought.

But abating his wrath, and relenting a little, God delivers the final sentence in these words:

Yet to compare your sin with theirs
Who liv'd a longer time,
I do confess yours is much less,
Though ev'ry sin's a crime.
A crime it is; therefore in bliss
You may not hope to dwell,
But unto you I shall allow
The easiest room in hell.

What that "easiest room" is appears further on:

But who can tell the plagues of hell
And torments exquisite?
Who can relate their dismal state
And terrors infinite?
Who fare the best and feel the least,
Yet feel that punishment
Whereby to naught they would be
brought
If God did not prevent.

The least degree of misery
There felt is incomparable;
The highest pain they there sustain
Is more than intolerable.
But God's own pow'r from hour to
hour
Upholds them in the fire,
That they shall not consume a jot
Nor by its force expire.

This poem was immensely popular for more than a century. Nor did all orthodox preachers repudiate infant damnation in the early part of this century. Fifty years ago elderly persons assured me they had heard it preached from the pulpit, and fifty-seven years ago, at the funeral of my niece, aged seven years, the Rev. Elisha Yale, D. D., of Kingsboro, N. Y., a Presbyterian, expressed doubt of the salvation of the child. That doubt is quite compatible with the "Confession of Faith," which says:

"Even infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth. So also are other elect persons, who are incapable of being called by the ministry of the Word."—Chap. x, sec. 3.

At the time of that funeral I was a member of Dr. Yale's church; and I doubt not that even then there were some Presbyterian preachers who believed in infant damnation and avowed it. But now you might not find a good enough Presbyterian to enable one to win the prize offered by Dr. Talmage.

W. H. BURR.