

Topics of the Times

The Marshall College freshman who shot a hazer was none too fresh.

The newspapers have to use the expression so often that they have abbreviated it to "rick quick."

For a few years more, anyhow, the Niagara River will take its fall out of the tourists in the same old way.

Hereafter wife desertion in New York is to be considered a felony. In the past it was mainly a pastime.

"Mr. Rockefeller is just as nice a man as I am," says Henry H. Rogers. There, Tom Lawson, deny that if you can.

An eastern paper says "Osterism is now engaging the English wits." English wits! What or who are English wits?

It is only fair to state that Miss Susan B. Anthony's unusual views on divorce are based on observation and hearsay.

"Many innocent men are hanged," says Judge Freeman, of Chicago. Possibly. But the number is not nearly so large as that of the guilty men who escape.

The army general staff has decided to retain the bayonet as part of the armament of an American soldier. May the time be long before he is called upon to use it.

By the terms of an imperial edict coming from Peking no more convict Chinamen are to be sliced to death. By inference the powers are asked to regard China as a Chinaman.

A New Jersey minister says that few men attend church because the feminine element is too predominant in fixing the character of the services. The feminine element is just what attracts some men.

Every get-rich-quick concern that comes and goes, leaving a trail of financial desolation in its wake, only confirms the wisdom of Barnum's observation that a large number of people are never satisfied unless they are being humbugged.

The papers cannot be too grateful to the valued Milwaukee Sentinel for warning them in advance that it would be unfair to liken young Mr. Hyde to Harry Lehr. Some of them might have been careless enough to let the idea occur to them.

Professor John Franklin Jameson of the University of Chicago has discovered that the Fourth of July comes on Aug. 18, that being the day when the declaration of independence was adopted. This is rather confusing, but our celebrations for the last 129 years have probably been at least as near to an anniversary as Christmas or Easter and were just as much enjoyed as if they had been held on Aug. 18.

The science of meteorology has not yet taught man what a day may bring forth in the way of weather. Farming operations are clouded with uncertainty from seed time to harvest, and from the nature of the case the most enlightened and conservative tiller of the soil is compelled to gamble in "futures" much as does the speculator in the wheat pit. Unfortunately, too, his stake is often his all. Delayed or premature frost, too much or too little rain, to say nothing of the visitations of creeping or flying destroyers, always threaten him with loss or ruin and keep him forever guessing. He must bet his crops on the presence or absence of favorable conditions, an inexorable fact that in the course of ages may have had something to do with the ingrained gambling habit which besets mankind everywhere.

There is no sound reason why the preachers should be better men than lawyers or financiers. The real obligations of all men are equal. But the preachers are in trying positions, because they assume to represent a high standard of morality. They profess religion. Lawyers and financiers can say they do not pretend to be better than other men. To a certain extent they plead guilty. They claim the merit of not being hypocritical. The world is quite in agreement that the hypocrite is detestable. The charge of insincerity and hypocrisy goes to the weak nerve of the preacher and his misfortune is that the world is still so skeptical as to the rule of goodness that under the charge he is placed at once under suspicion. Relatively he is somewhat in the situation of the rich man who is charged with questionable methods in his business of accumulation.

Defoe, the author of "Robinson Crusoe," holds a high place among the saints of the nursery calendar, but in

a review in the Forum of Defoe's voluminous works Prof. W. P. Trent is pained to confess that Defoe was a great liar, a spy, an intriguer, a tortuous secret service man, a government informer, and a bad lot generally. Yet Prof. Trent, besides vindicating Defoe's genius as the first great realist, has some charitable and extenuating things to say of "the greatest liar that ever lived." Now, to be the greatest liar that ever lived is a distinction not to be sneezed at. Lying is a field well filled. The competition is intense. It requires rare abilities to be a really great liar; only one thing requires greater, and that is to tell the exact truth. An illustrious list might be made up of great liars, and at its head, perhaps, should be placed the world's historians. Defoe may have been a very bad man, but "Robinson Crusoe" is very good. When we have the pearl shall we complain that it comes from a diseased oyster? His tale has opened many a youthful mind to the sunlight of life. It has taught many a mature mind the great truth that the real essentials of comfortable living are few, and not the least of these is human companionship. There is no way of estimating the good that is done in the world by a good book. It may be a lie—so is "Pilgrim's Progress"—but it is nevertheless truer to the real principles of right living and right longing than our own lives are. Defoe was a creature of his own times, but his work is immortal. His vices were those of his environment; his genius was his own.

It sometimes strikes one that our civilization is a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde affair. There are so many contradictions in it. It is at once materialistic and altruistic. It is sordid and saintly. It makes paupers and cries over them. It is an age of loot and law. It is an age of boodle and beatific virtues. It steals from the widow and orphan and gives the proceeds to libraries and universities. It is an age of frenzied finance and of hospitals and homes for the aged and children. And all the while the search for moral rottenness goes on. It is an age of publicity and of challenge and of protest. It is an age of aspiration for public and private virtue and of the ceaseless discussion of ethics. Never before have public crimes been so gibbeted. Never before have the ills of society been so hung up to the public gaze. Lawson is telling about frenzied finance and Russell of the beef trust and Lincoln Steffens of the shamelessness of cities and Ray Stannard Baker of the rule of corporations. Every magazine has its corps of scavengers digging at the filth. And the newspapers seek most of all for the headline that tells of graft. The victims of our civilization are ever before our eyes. And we go on making more victims. How can these things be? Is this money-grabbing society of ours the society that builds blind asylums and homes of refuge? How can the two dispositions go together? Easily enough. Everyone has in him divergent impulses, and society is but an aggregation of individuals. The question is, will the better or the evil desire prove the stronger? Can we doubt which? If the desire for self-purification is not greater than the propensity to have and to hold, our condition is sorry indeed. It is the old, old struggle—with this difference: The day of flourishing evil and wrong is also the day of publicity and protest—the day of desire for better things.

GENERAL FITZHUGH LEE, FAMOUS CONFEDERATE VETERAN.



General Fitzhugh Lee, who died of apoplexy recently, was one of the noted soldiers of the country. He was a nephew of Robert E. Lee, the Confederate chieftain, and fought with distinction on the Confederate side. He was in command of the whole cavalry corps of the army of northern Virginia when, in 1865, he surrendered to General Meade. From 1886 to 1890 he was governor of Virginia, and was consul general at Havana prior to the declaration of war with Spain. Then he was placed in command of the Seventh Army Corps, and at the close of hostilities was made governor of Havana. Later he was in command of the department of the Missouri.

If his children listen eagerly for his footsteps he can't be such a bad fellow.

THE POPULAR PULPIT

THE PROBLEM OF PRAYER.

By Rev. H. A. Harrington.
"Pray without ceasing."—1. Thess. 5-17.

To many it is an open question whether it is worth while or even possible to pray at all, and therefore out of the question entirely to pray continually. Paul's injunction appears even to those who believe in prayer applicable only to the monk and the recluse. Even if it were possible to obey the command in the ordinary sense it is doubtful whether the world would be any better if life were one perpetual prayer meeting.

It is not strange that many have swung away from the practice of formal prayer when the older conception of its meaning is contrasted with the modern conception of life. Once prayer meant the sealing of the eyes and the ears to the scenes and the sounds of this life that one might gaze upon and hold communion with those of another world. It meant, too, almost exclusively the act of ardently petitioning heaven for the things that one could not and often would not get for himself. But life to-day dare not shut its eyes; it counts it a sin to ignore this world of need and sin even for the sake of the bliss of a world where these things are not.

Then, men ask, if prayer is no more than a getting of goods from God without labor or compensation, in what way does it differ from begging? In what way is the man who says "Heaven owes me a living" any better than the one who says "The world owes me a living"? The product of such prayer is pauperization. The logical end of that theory is savagery; all the inducements to toil as well as the restraints of life would be gone; one might ask for calamities on others as well as for blessings on oneself.

But practically all the difficulties of prayer arise from the limitation of its meaning to a petition. They come from the point of view that thinks only of answers, of goods sent in response to prayer orders. The man who says I will work for my bread instead of begging heaven for it may be still a man of prayer. His work may be the noblest prayer, while his heart may go out to God in gratitude for strength and opportunity to labor. Work is prayer, love is prayer, gratitude is prayer, education is prayer. The world needs more men and women who pray with their hands of helpfulness, their feet that speed on errands of kindness, their eyes that look out in good cheer, their ears that listen in sympathy.

Prayer is an attitude rather than an act. It must be without ceasing. It is like love, not an act nor a series of acts, but a relationship. It is as much more than words as love is greater than its deeds. Formal prayers are to prayer itself as the letters of a friend are to the love of that friend. The love goes on without ceasing; the prayer, the aspiration, the longing after the presence of, the knowledge of, the love of God goes on without ceasing.

Prayer is an atmosphere, a habit, a second and higher nature. It is a life that in itself is one long unbroken petition for his likeness and his life. It will find expression in words, but it will not be limited to them. It is the child living with his father; such a life will involve the making of requests and the granting of them, but such things will be only incidental, not essential, to its communion. Living with such a father we shall tell him all our needs, desires, fears, but shall we hide from him our joys, hopes, and aspirations? We shall want him to see our work, to rejoice with us in it. Prayer will not be reciprocal.

The prayer that is no more than petition for provision must be as painful to God as it would be to us who are parents if our children never addressed us save to beg for their meals and their clothes. On the other hand, the life of prayer that found no expression in words, that made no requests and looked for no tangible gifts, would be as strange as if our children were dumb and we were powerless to love them in deed as well as in feeling. The life of prayer is the realization of the perfect relations of the All Father with all his children.

UNITY vs. UNIFORMITY.

By Rev. William E. Barton.

God hates uniformity, but loves unity. He makes no two apple blossoms alike, yet the underlying structural ideal is so true that should a freak of nature or device of man make the blossoms blue instead of pink they would be recognizable in certain per-

manent details as belonging to the great family whose finest representatives are the apple and the rose—both of one family. The attempt to make Christian life uniform either by means of creed or ritual is doomed to fail; but the unity of the spirit is characteristic of all true life that belongs to God.

THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST.

By Rev. T. Vincent Tynms, D. D.

Text—"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him."—Luke 1:40.

By humbling Himself to wear the likeness of men the Son of God became a Brother to the whole race of mankind, but, at the same time, He entered into special family relations. By His birth of Mary, He became not only a son of man, but a member of the family of Abraham, a scion of the royal house of David, and a near kinsman of all Mary's kindred. The gospels say little of the feelings with which He was regarded by these relatives, but some facts are recorded which are highly significant and worthy of far more attention than has usually been bestowed upon them by the Christian church.

The verse before us contains in outline the story of twelve years: "And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." Apocryphal histories of the infancy are full of marvelous tales; but none of these is trustworthy. Our information concerning the earlier years may be summed up in the statement that, after the wise men returned to their unknown country in the East, Jesus was carried into Egypt, and presently was brought back and placed in one of the most beautiful and retired villages of Palestine. In Nazareth He grew up in quietude as a healthy, happy child; dwelling in the home which His heavenly Father had chosen for Him, as the most suitable of all the homes then existent on the earth.

Artists have painted a golden light round the head of the Holy Child, as if a radiance were emitted from His body. The device we may accept as a symbol of the truth that "the grace of God was upon Him," or, in other words, that the beauty of God was seen shining through His daily deeds. The true aureola is one which no painter's brush can show on canvas; and in childhood this light shines most lustreously in the beauty of a loving and obedient spirit. He who in the zenith of His manhood said, "I am meek and lowly in heart," was adorned with this same grace in His earliest years. He would gladly listen while Joseph and Mary kept the law of Moses by talking to Him, in the house and by the wayside of all the works of God in the olden time. Like every other child in Nazareth, He would attend the common school; and just as men and women are comforted and strengthened to bear the heavy burdens of maturity, so boys and girls may have their tasks lightened and their recreations hallowed by remembering Him, who is now the Lord of Glory, but was once subject to the discipline which they are tempted to resent, and is able, as a sympathizing friend, to have compassion upon them and to help them in every time of trouble or sorrow.

It may be said, and said with perfect truth, that we can never be like Jesus in all things. We have already sinned much and grievously, and yet, thank God, we are taught that this fact will not prevent our rising to a heavenly throne at last. Sin may, and evidently must, disqualify for such functions and honors as are joyfully ascribed to Christ, but it cannot hinder the reception of His grace. God will not remember the sins of childhood against those whom He pardons in the name of His Son. Yet surely the holiness of Christ should teach us what a deadly and bitter thing sin is, even in the youngest child. The stains of evil may be washed away; the recording angel may blot out the record from the book of remembrance; but every wrong action will be a source of weakness in after life. Would to God that the Holy Child Jesus might be taken as a pattern by all the little ones who hear of Him to-day! May the grace of God be upon all who hear me now! May all who humbly strive to copy Him become more like Him day by day! May they, while striving faithfully, ever put their trust in Him and in the transforming power of His Spirit! So shall they attain at last to His perfect likeness, and He will write upon them His new name.

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Nearing the Finish.

"How long has the minister been preaching?" whispered the stranger, who had wandered into church and sat down near the door.

"About thirty years, I believe," replied the other occupant of the pew.

"That being the case," continued the stranger, "I may as well stay. He must be near the end of his discourse."

For coughs and colds there is no better medicine than Pisko's Cure for Consumption. Price 25 cents.

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At a "stag" dinner the other evening an old bachelor gave the following toast: Woman, the morning star of infancy, the day star of manhood and the evening star of old age. Bless our stars—and may they always be kept a telephonic distance.

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Willing to Risk It.

"A fool and his money are soon parted, you know," said the stingy man who had a mania for quotations.

"Well," rejoined his good wife, "for the sake of having the money to part with, I wouldn't mind being considered a little foolish."

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Find Petrified Grain.

The drillers at work in a new deep well at Junction City, Kan., are finding all sorts of odd things. Recently the drill penetrated a stratum of what appeared to be petrified rye. The grains were surprisingly like that cereal, and some one has suggested that an ante-glacial elevator or storehouse has been discovered.

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