

plain, didactic homily is enough. But when the people are cultivated, quick, and perceptive; when they read the best books, are familiar with the progress of scientific and moral speculation, and every week hear upon the lyceum platform the most accomplished scholars and the trained masters of certain departments—the Sunday preacher must not hope that he can charm them or hold them by any thing which is merely perfunctory. Nor can he reply that the Sunday object is worship and not instruction, for the modern church magnifies the sermon: and the sermon, not the prayer, is the real interest.

Preaching, indeed, is but a part of the clerical duty. The great ordinances of marriage and burial, and in general of what is called religious care, are attached to the clerical profession. But all these now depend upon character, and not upon the cloth. Even the Pope Alexander could not console the dying sinner who despised Rodrigo Borgia. And the law is universal. A perfunctory consolation no self-respecting man would administer. True consolation, elevation, support, so far as they can proceed from another, proceed from character only. This was the moral of the beautiful festival at Plymouth Church. And as the clerical profession is beneficially powerful in the degree that it is not ceremonial merely, and as this is the plain tendency of the time, how could the Easy Chair that thinks so be in any just sense indifferent or unfriendly toward it?

THE pleasure of Mr. Easy Chair's company was lately requested at what was called "a child's hop," and Mr. Easy Chair accepted the invitation with very great satisfaction. He had some knowledge of children, and a great deal of love for them. He knew that it is their nature to hop and to run and to shout and to rejoice, and he repaired to the proper place at the hour named. That hour, indeed, was suspicious, for it was eight o'clock, and that is very nearly the hour when most children should be going to bed. Mr. Easy Chair found the room brilliantly lighted, and decorated with beautiful flowers; and presently the guests began to assemble. There were, first of all, a party of ladies and gentlemen in full dress, and then a larger party of very much smaller ladies and gentlemen in the same general kind of magnificence. Indeed, there was an extravagance of costliness and richness in the dresses of the smaller people which caused Mr. Easy Chair to suppose them to belong to some imperial or royal embassy lately arrived from Lilliput.

He therefore presently turned and asked a neighbor of his own size when the children might be expected to appear. And to his amazement, he received a look of astonishment and no answer.

"But I pray you, madame, who are these wonderfully dressed small people whose costume is a grotesque reproduction of yours and that of the other ladies? and who in particular is that remarkable little figure with a fan in her hand, and simpering to the little fellow in velvet beside her? Are they indeed princes and princesses of Lilliput?"

"That is my daughter, Sir," was the reply of Mr. Easy Chair's neighbor, glaring at him, as it

were, and sweeping away with a rustling dignity that was withering.

Then it was explained. These elaborately dressed little people were the children who were to hop. Futile expectation! Mr. Easy Chair might as well have expected to see his grandmother hop at the age of ninety. These superb small people did only what their elders would have done. They looked at each other's fine dresses and displayed their own. Those who had not necklaces envied those who had. The boys who were fairly out of the nursery had an air of grave seniority that was profoundly depressing. There were even signs of ennui, as if dancing were very well for those who were still young. And by-and-by there was supper, and truly it was splendid. Then more dancing; and later, at Mr. Easy Chair knows not what hour, there was the gay confusion of departure, and the pretty parody was over.

It was certainly pretty, but it was a very sober spectacle. Children are naturally gay, and they frolic and dance and romp with a will. But childhood seemed to have been eliminated from these little folks. They were sallow and anxious and worn. And how stupid and sleepy they must have been next morning! And how unwillingly, with no shining morning face, they must have crept to school! And what poor little abused bodies they are, and how surely the freshness and charm of life are being destroyed for them! Yet, Mrs. Ad sends her children, and what can Mrs. Bad, Cad, and Dad do but send theirs? And if Mrs. Thompson's daughter has a silk dress caught up and flounced with lace and flowers, I know, my dear, that you do not wish to have your daughter disgraced, and I take care that our dear girl shall be as splendid as any of them!

These are the lessons that the children learn, and in turn, as parents, teach. And it is curious that the American theory of every body's being as good as any body has this perversion, that every body must dress and do as any body does. Every body who yields to the mania of extravagance for children makes it harder for every body else not to yield. But there is no use in preaching about it, if only the pleasure of your company is requested at a child's hop. Then you see for yourself. There is nothing more melancholy than such a spectacle at a watering-place hotel. The forward rudeness of the poor little overdressed figures is pitiful. The sweet modesty of childhood, the breezy bloom of health upon the cheek, the plain, simple dress, the artless ardor of joy—all that is loveliest in the lovely age is wanting at the child's hop.

Mr. Easy Chair sought the neighbor of whom he had asked information, and said to her: "Madame, who is responsible for all this?" But she eluded him with terror, as if he had been a maniac. Yes, she really fled before the terror of hearing, "Thou art the woman." For that is the answer to the question. Every parent who fosters this kind of extravagance steals the bloom from her child's cheek and the freshness from her heart and the charm from her life. The one question of her destiny becomes, "Who can give me pearls and fine dresses, equipages and a splendid house?" As Mr. Easy Chair gazed at the melancholy scene he recalled the

bitterness of Swift and of Carlyle. The unutterable anguish of Carlyle, his stormy and Titanic contempt, are due to his clear perception of the fact that the misery could be so easily avoided. If it were fate, he could be as calm as the Greek. But his feeling is rage that we who might so easily make the world a heaven, choose to make it a hell. "In the fear of the Lord," said an old preacher, fervently—"train up your child in the fear of the Lord, and then he will make the devil and all his angels fear him."

Mr. Easy Chair was about saying something of the kind to the mother of the most extravagant little person in the room, when he saw her precipitately escaping.

THE arrival from England of Mr. Froude, of Professor Tyndall, of Mr. George Macdonald, and of Mr. Edmund Yates, to lecture in this country during the winter, only shows how the lyceum, which was so often thought to be a transient popular fancy, has become a fixed popular institution. There are no names more eminent in contemporary literature and science than those of Mr. Froude and of Mr. Tyndall, and Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Yates come to America to find multitudes of friends awaiting them.

The themes of the lecture system in this country are various and amusing. The fact is that it is a new and eclectic form of popular entertainment. For some years courses of lectures by the same speaker, or, indeed, by different speakers, have not been well sustained in some of the larger cities, except when the lecturer was a person of great fame. The old course of grave literary lectures was modified for some time before the war by the introduction of politics, or

rather of political morality, as a topic. Since the war it has been further changed by a large infusion of the purely humorous element; and at present the great and most successful courses—the "star" courses, as they are called—in the chief cities comprise lectures of every kind, literary, scientific, political, humorous, with readings of every kind, concerts, and even dramatic performances. A Western paper says that the lyceum is now a system of strolling players for the amusement of the country. It says so derisively. But if Froude and Tyndall, and Beecher and Phillips, and Anna Dickinson and Mrs. Stowe, and Theodore Thomas's orchestra and Rubinstein, are the stock company, the strolling players are perhaps likely to be of some service to the country.

The old sarcasm was that they were peripatetic philosophers, lay circuit riders, vagabonds, who declaimed articles from the encyclopedia to wondering rural audiences, and were exceedingly overpaid. That, indeed, seemed to be a peculiar grievance. But who that heard the dear vagabond Thackeray, or listened to the Christmas chimes ringing from the tongue of Dickens, or saw the aboriginal glacier with Agassiz, but counts the event among the happiest, in its kind, of his life? It is as well to call them strollers as by any other name. But over that platform are likely to stroll many of the famous men and women who have made themselves our friends before we see them, and with whom we thus have a personal association forever. And it is not the least valuable or significant fact in the history of that platform that it is likely to attract such men as England has now sent to us, and who have been every where most kindly welcomed.

Editor's Literary Record.

HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY.

THERE are, we trust, a great many who will become acquainted with the life and character of Michael Faraday through Mr. J. H. GLADSTONE'S little book, *Michael Faraday* (Harper and Brothers), who would be deterred from attempting the larger biography by Dr. Bence Jones. The volume before us is a small one of 220 pages, and is divided into five chapters, or sections, containing respectively "the story of his life," a "study of his character," the "fruits of his experience," "his method of writing," and a consideration of "the value of his discoveries." There are many considerations which make the life of this great and good man a worthy subject of study, and cause us to congratulate our readers that it is thus put within the reach of every one. What Sir Humphrey Davy told young Faraday echoes the popular impression respecting science—"She is a harsh mistress, and in a pecuniary point of view but poorly rewards those who devote themselves to her service." Yet Michael Faraday, who commenced life as an errand-boy, and who throughout life depended on his own exertions for his daily bread, by his assiduity, earnestness, and single-heartedness of aim, climbed from the lowest round as a laboratory assistant to the highest,

the superintendent of house and laboratory, with the subsequent offer, declined, of the presidency of the Royal Society, and by his simple and temperate habits reserving time sufficient for those investigations and experiments in science which place him among the leaders in the scientific world. We have no desire to underrate a classical and collegiate education, yet the life of Michael Faraday is an inspiration to every man who in his youth has been denied the privilege of the highest and best culture, and yet whose matured tastes all tend toward scholarship. One of the ablest geologists of England, Hugh Miller, was a stone-mason; the ablest of modern geographers, Dr. Livingstone, was a factory hand; one of the ablest linguists of the age, Elihu Burritt, was a blacksmith; and one of the chief scientists of this scientific age, Michael Faraday, was a bookseller's errand-boy, who never had any acquaintance with Greek, but depended on friends for the nomenclature of his chemical substances, and yet, though he never passed through a university, was made a member of the Senate of the University of London. He combined in a remarkable degree the skepticism of the man of science and the faith of the humble Christian. The scientist is almost of necessity a skeptic. It is his business to doubt, and, doubting, to test,