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Miscellaneous Articles.

THE SLEEPLESS DEATH.

A TRAGICAL punishment is said to have recently occurred in China. A man, found guilty of a grievous offence, was sentenced to be put to death by being *deprived of sleep*. Three persons were appointed to watch him, who relieved each other in their work of terror, and thus kept their victim awake. On the eighth day he piteously implored to be put to death, but his sleepless agony was continued until the eighteenth, when he expired.

This terrific incident illustrates some characteristics in the doom of the ungodly.

1. The punishment of the wicked is DEATH. The impenitent are *now* under condemnation, and are experiencing a part of the penalty of the violated law. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." So that there is a death of the *soul*, feebly but fearfully symbolized by the corruption of that of the body. This is the fearful doom that must seize upon all who leave the world without pardon. It is threatened doom; it is doom that is in process of execution; and it is doom that can be fully accomplished by the avenging power of the Almighty Judge. The sins of men are against the Majesty of Heaven. They are rebellion against a glorious government, contention with everlasting righteousness, opposition to a holy God. Such sins must needs receive punishment. The punishment is the death penalty. Thou art doomed to die, oh offender against law and grace!

2. The punishment of the ungodly is SLEEPLESS death. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever. And they have no rest *day nor night*." Suffering, with intervals, is comparatively endurable. Its intensity is an element less terrible than its

in leading their children to the Saviour, but brothers and sisters were mutually helpers in each others' spiritual welfare.

5. Further, not only were all the children hopefully converted to God, but they have all been elevated to *usefulness and influence in the Church*. The three sons are *ministers* in the Presbyterian Church; and two of the daughters married ministers, and the third is the wife of an elder. Revivals of religion have followed the ministrations of divine truth in "home, the school and the church," where these servants of Christ have laboured in his name.

The widowed mother lately departed to glory; and it was an affecting sight to see her mortal remains followed to the grave by five Presbyterian ministers and a ruling elder, the male representatives of her family.

FIRESIDE SINGING.

WHEN the father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and domestics and guests gather around the evening fire, and when all voices join in the same sweet old familiar hymn, there is a music more delightful than that of concerts and theatres. And this is what actually takes place in many a Christian family, and might take place in more. It is a cheap luxury, but one which gold and silver cannot purchase. These hymns, with the very tunes, will be remembered long years hence, when that light-haired boy, whose face is glowing with the ingenuous excitement, shall perhaps be spending his last days in a foreign land; or when that rosy girl, having become old and wrinkled, shall be telling her grand-children about the days of her youth. Wisdom suggests how good it is to treasure up a store of such memories in the minds of the young.

Divine truth is more acceptable to youthful minds in metrical form. This may be one reason why so much of the Bible is in poetry. The man is far too austere for my notions, who looks with contempt on the rhyming couplets which the child repeats by his mother's knee. Perhaps the little stanza, beginning, *Now I lay me down to sleep*, has been repeated by millions; perhaps it has been blessed to the saving of souls. Who composed those humble verses we know not; but his works do follow him. There are infant verses which we never forget; and hence the incalculable importance of filling the child's mind with those which inculcate saving truth. But if verses are captivating in their naked form, how much more so are they when set to music, and sung again and again at the happiest period of life! It is greatly to be regretted that many families deny themselves this means of influence. If it did no more than beguile a long winter evening, and make home delightful, it would be worth all our pains; but it awakens and deepens religious feeling, and lays the foundation for future experience. I venture to

assert, that there is no one, educated in the manner of our Presbyterian forefathers, who does not know certain hymns, which he can never hear without thinking of the days when he sung them with his father and mother. And will any man tell me that these are common effusions? No, they are sacred in our thoughts, and separate from all other remembrances.

At the present day it is held by all practised musicians, that every child, free from organic defect, may be taught to sing. In families where sacred song is cherished, we never knew any exceptions. In cases where the parents cannot sing, they may easily cause their children to be instructed; the danger is, that they will wait too long. Equally important is it, to have frequent exercises of this sort, and to connect them with the flow of parental and filial love. It should not be a task, and it may be made an entertainment. When conducted with seriousness, such extemporaneous concerts are proper for the evening of the Lord's day. At other moments also, when the members of the household are gathered, as in the twilight hour, when work is laid aside, there is indescribable pleasure in sending up "the sacrifice of praise." Happy is the house, where every day is sanctified by the "voice of melody!"

Something depends, moreover, on the selection of hymns. Children should be taught such as they may remember with profit all their lives. We may carry too far the principle of adaptation to the infant mind. There are adults who remember only hymns of childhood. We should bear in mind that boys will be men, and that if they are to remember hymns as men, they must learn them now. What follows? We ought to charge the minds of the young with the very hymns which will do them good when they are old; and we ought to connect each of these with one and the same tune. For an inculcation which is to last for life, there is obviously need of great repetition; and in order to repetition, the number must be small. It has often occurred to me, that *twenty good hymns*, each wedded to its appropriate tune, and fully committed to the memory, would be better than whole hymn books, learnt and then forgotten, after the method common in our schools. And then how important it is, that some of these should express those very acts of adoration, faith, and love, which, rightly uttered, may be the salvation of the soul! Who knows, but that the gracious words he teaches his child, may be repeated in hours of soul-concern? Hundreds have, with dying lips, pronounced the verses of Dr. Watts, "Jesus can make a dying bed;"—verses which of course they had previously committed to memory. As the matter now goes, it is left very much to chance what hymns the children learn, and how often they repeat them.

After all, there is no method which attains all the ends in view so well as that of household singing. In visiting a dear Christian friend not long since, I was much instructed by the way in which I saw the affair managed in his family. As we sat around the blaze of his hospitable fire, while the children hung about their parents

in attitudes betokening affection, and one or two respectable domestics formed the outer circle, passages of Scripture were recited from memory, and psalms and hymns were sung. In a way perfectly free from constraint, and leading to no weariness, several hours of the Sabbath evening were thus spent. I could not prevent my thoughts from running forward to the time, when these beloved parents would probably be no more in this world, but when those who are now in youth would hold in thankful remembrance the impressions of household piety. When great awakenings occur among a people, the fountains of sacred harmony are unsealed. Then the voice of singing is heard in every house; and young friends when they come together, join in the praises of God. The practice of the fireside prepares for this, as well as for the more sublime worship of the great congregation. President Edwards, in his account of the work of grace at Northampton, says: "It has been observable, that there has been scarce any part of divine worship wherein good men amongst us have had grace so drawn forth, and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing his praises." And again: "There are many things in Scripture that seem to intimate, that praising God, both in speeches and songs, will be what the Church of God very much abound in, in the approaching glorious day. And the places in the prophecies, which signify that the Church of God, in the glorious jubilee that is foretold, shall greatly abound in singing and shouting forth the praises of God, are too many to be mentioned. And there will be cause enough for it. I believe it will be a time when both heaven and earth will be much more full of joy and praise than ever they were before." O let us, who are parents, spare no pains in preparing our children for the joys of better days!

C. Q.

INJURIOUS EMBELLISHMENTS.

A FLORIST will tell you that if you paint the flower-pot that contains a favourite, beautiful, fragrant flower, the plant will wither, and perhaps its blossoms will die. You shut out the air and moisture from passing through the earth to the roots, and your paint itself is poisonous. Just so, mere external cultivation, superficial, worldly accomplishment, or a too exclusive anxiety and regard for that, injures the soul. The vase may be ever so beautifully ornamented, but if you deny the water of life to the flower, it must die. And there are kinds of ornamental accomplishments, the very process of which is as deleterious to the soul, as paint upon the flower-pot is pernicious to the plant, whose delicate leaves not only inhale a poisonous atmosphere during your very process of rendering the exterior more tasteful, but the whole earth is dried and devoid of nourishment. Nature never paints, but all her forms of loveliness