

The Christian.

MR. GEO. MÜLLER AND HIS PREACHING.

BY GAWIN KIRKHAM.

THIS venerable servant of the Lord brought a fortnight's preaching at the Mildmay Conference Hall to a close on Lord's-day evening. The Sunday services have been crowded, but the attendance during the week has not been so large as might have been expected, though each of these had a larger number than its predecessor. These addresses and those delivered during the Mildmay Conference enable us to form an estimate of his preaching, which may be interesting and useful to others.

Mr. Müller's personal appearance is striking, being tall and commanding. He is in his seventieth year. He has a strong German accent, though he is easily understood by any English hearer.

In his public ministry he is emphatically a *teacher*. It has been represented that he has undertaken this journey as an *evangelist*, but this we venture to think is a mistake. Judging from the last fortnight at Mildmay, the line of truth he dwelt upon was far more calculated to build up Christians than to bring in the unsaved. Yet he frequently brought in the way of salvation in a clear, sweet, persuasive, and striking manner. It has frequently been observed how well suited he is to follow the evangelistic efforts of our beloved brethren Moody and Sankey.

Other preachers may learn much from him as to the *method of preaching*. He first of all gets a message from the Lord—i.e., he waits upon the Lord by reading the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer, till he realizes that he has the mind of the Spirit as to what he should say. He has been sometimes in doubt till almost the last minute, but never once has the Lord failed him. He strongly advocates and practises *expository preaching*. Instead of a solitary text detached from its context, he selects a passage, it may be of several verses, and goes over them consecutively, clause by clause. His first care is to give the meaning of the word, then to illustrate it by other scriptures, and afterwards apply it. This is done sentence by sentence, so that it is definition, illustration, and application, all the way through. Yet there is no uncertainty to his hearers as to when he is coming to a close, as he intimates at the outset how many verses he purposes to consider. His illustrations are occasionally taken from history, biography, or nature, but chiefly from the Scriptures or his own personal experience.

One of the most striking things about Mr. Müller's preaching is the way in which he induces his hearers to *reconsider what has been already said*. He frequently says, "Let us ask ourselves, Have I understood this? How does it apply to me? Is this my experience?" &c.

He makes much of *the Word of God*. Take the following outline of his address to young converts at Mildmay on Friday, the 20th ult. :—

"Let me press upon you the deep importance of reading the Word with meditation and prayer (1 Peter ii. 2, 3)—'As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.' As neglected babes never become healthy men and women, so young converts who neglect God's appointed food, 'the Word,' never become bright Christians.

"1. Read the Word of God *regularly through*. Begin with Genesis in the morning and Matthew in the evening, making a mark where you left off. When you have finished the Old and New Testaments, begin again. As an earthly will is always read through with great care, so God's will ought to be read entirely through with reverence and godly fear. Consider the *advantages* of this plan—

- (a.) We are kept from making a system of divinity of our own, and confining ourselves to a few favourite doctrines and truths. We also become lovers of the whole Word.
- (b.) Variety is pleasing.
- (c.) When we have finished reading it through, we shall be glad to begin it again. In forty-six years I have read my Bible through a hundred times; yet it is always fresh and new when I begin it again.

"2. Read in a *prayerful spirit*.

"3. Read with *meditation*. Ponder over what you are reading.

"4. Read with *reference to your own heart*. So many preachers read for their hearers; parents read for their children; and school-teachers for their scholars. Ask yourselves—

- How does this suit me?
- How does this warn me?
- How does this rebuke me?
- How does this comfort me?

If you do this, God uses the Word by you for others.

"5. Always seek to mix 'faith' with your reading.

"6. *Practise what you read*. We must carry out what God tells us. He expects us to be obedient children—'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' Come in child-like simplicity to the Word of God. Give heed to it with all earnestness, and let it settle all questions."

Another of Mr. Müller's strong points is *prayer*. It is here that most of us feel by comparison how little we know of real prayer. It is intensely humbling to sit at his feet, and listen to his experience on this subject. During the four noonday addresses at Mildmay he expounded the teaching of the Bible on prayer, and illustrated it from his own experience. He put it in this way—1. Prayer must be according to the will of God. 2. It must be offered in the name of Jesus. 3. It must be mixed with faith. 4. It must be persevered in till the answer comes. And he declared most emphatically that when these conditions were complied with he had never known a single instance of failure. He had had not only hundreds and thousands, but *literally tens of thousands* of answers to prayer.

When Mr. Müller began to pray about his Orphan Home, forty years ago, he asked for a house, and for £1000. He never doubted the £1000 would come, yet he had to wait eighteen months before the last of it was received. Since then he has received more than £650,000 in answer to prayer. One day, what is called "the higher Christian life" was touched upon. In speaking on Phil. iv. 6, 7—"Be careful, for nothing, &c."—Mr. Müller insisted, with unusual emphasis, that the child of God ought not to have a single care about anything. Not even the poor woman who has a drunken husband ought to have a single anxiety about him. Everything should be taken to the Lord, and left there. If we began to carry our own burdens, the Lord would add to them. If we had a pound-weight of care, and carried it ourselves, the Lord would make it ten pounds, and go on increasing the weight till it crushed us, and, overwhelmed by our trouble, we should be obliged at last to cast it upon Him.

Surely if any man has a right to be burdened he has. The care of 2000 orphan children is in itself a marvellous thing; but, in addition to these, he has responsibilities connected with 10,000 children in forty or fifty schools which he sustains. Then he

circulates over three millions of tracts a year, besides a very large number of Bibles and Testaments. Nor does his care end with home missions, but there are numerous missionaries abroad who are partially or entirely maintained through his instrumentality. Yet, amid all this, he comes on the platform with a countenance full of peace and joy, and declares he is so happy in the Lord that he has been constrained to leave home in his old age, to declare this happiness to his "beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, wherever the Lord shall open the way."

Coupled with all this, there is deep humbleness of mind. In his public prayers he frequently asks the Lord to bless his word spoken by these sinful mortal lips; and in his preaching he calls himself again and again "a poor miserable sinner." This is a paradox, but one full of deep meaning to those of us who are younger in the Divine life. Whether it be right to use such a prayer or no, there rises to our lips spontaneously, after hearing such a man of God, "Lord increase our faith."

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS.

DEAR SIR,—Your readers will be glad to learn that the International Conference of Young Men's Christian Associations, held last week at Hamburg, was a time of happy Christian fellowship, drawing together in the close ties of Gospel brotherhood young men (as well as some who are still young in heart if not in years) from Germany and France, England and America, Holland, Scotland, and Switzerland. Our president was an earnest Hamburg nobleman in the prime of life (Baron von Oertzen), and one of the vice-presidents was the honoured founder of the London Association (Mr. George Williams), whom God has spared to see so wonderful a development of the idea it was given him to originate some thirty years since.

The statistics given by the American delegate (Mr. Morse, secretary of the New York Central Committee) are already familiar to many of your readers, nor is it needful to speak of the work in our own islands. In Germany and Holland also, the associations are very numerous, and though it is to be feared that in many places in these countries they fall short of the character of distinctly Christian and aggressive unions of young men, yet we had many interesting anecdotes showing that they are often rallying-points of evangelical life, sometimes in places where there is little or nothing else. The German associations do a valuable work in providing homes for young workmen travelling from place to place, as is the custom in Germany, and thus preventing, in many cases, their falling into evil associations.

Three interesting excursions were arranged in connexion with the Conference, one to the celebrated Rauhe Haus, another to a missionary festival in a village some distance up the Elbe, and a third (after the conference was over) to the British island of Heligoland. To those of your readers who have not read the deeply interesting history of the Rauhe Haus contained in "Praying and Working," by the Rev. J. B. Stevenson, I may just explain that it is a reformatory for outcast children, as well as for those who, though belonging to good families, have proved unmanageable at home. The principle of the institution is that of training in families, which has been adopted in so many English orphanages; and in these families young men are trained for evangelistic work, whilst they work side by side with the boys and exert over them a Christian influence. These young men afterwards go out as missionaries, evangelists, &c., and the Rauhe Haus has thus become the centre of a great work, with many ramifications, bound together under the name of the Inner Mission. The founder, Dr. Wichern, prematurely worn out by hard work, was not

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able to greet us in person. His son, on whom now devolves much of the responsibility of the work, is not strong, and much needs to be supported by the prayers of Christians. The sweet influence of singing has from the beginning been a principal means employed by Dr. Wichern in reforming intractable lads, and as the evening closed in the children mustered in choir and gave us a delightful specimen of German singing.

The trip to Heligoland on Thursday, returning on Friday, was a delightful time of relaxation and Christian fellowship. Would it not be well if English Christians more frequently intermitted their conventions and conferences in this way, so as to allow time for personal intercourse and for the digesting of the spiritual food with which one seems sometimes almost overfed on such occasions? Some of the German brethren inquired about the religious state of this island, for which we English must hold ourselves to a considerable extent responsible; and I received the impression that, whilst the standard of morality is high, there is need for the proclamation of the truth that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." An invalid acquainted with German who should feel led to hold cottage meetings, and visit from house to house upon this rock of the German Ocean, might find at the same time invigorating sea-breezes and a blessed field of work amongst the 2000 inhabitants.

In travelling through Germany, I heard several times of the abiding blessing which has resulted from the meetings held by our dear brother Mr. B. P. Smith, in Southern Germany, at Elberfeld, and at Berlin. May the Lord put it into the hearts of others to follow in his footsteps. I would ask your readers' prayers for two young Englishmen who are about to study for a year in an important German university, and who are very desirous to be used of the Lord amongst the students. A young German remarked to me at Hamburg that it might be hard to get the young men of Germany on the Lord's side, but if once they were won over they would go into the work with their whole hearts. Let us pray that it may be so.

I must not conclude without mentioning that the Conference agreed to take up the week of prayer for young men which was so much blessed in many places last year; and a recommendation is to go down to all the allied Associations that, until the next Conference in 1878, the week beginning with the second Sunday in November (which has been the day specially observed for years past by the American Associations) be set apart for united prayer on behalf of young men. May we not confidently expect that these prayers will be as richly rewarded by a revival of religion amongst young men, as the prayers offered in the first week of the year have already been with regard to the Church at large?

Those who are interested in Christian work in Belgium will be glad to hear that the Conference of 1876 is to be held at Brussels if the Association there finds itself able two years hence to undertake the needful arrangements.

Rotterdam, August 24.

JOSSEPH G. ALEXANDER.

CADNAM; HANTS.—A first series of services having been very successful, and evident tokens of the Lord's blessing resting on the work, it was thought advisable to continue them. The Evangelization Society (whose new address is 57, Charing-cross) kindly allowed their agent, George Hafford, to return. The services were resumed on August 9, and on the 11th a free tea was given. About 600 partook of tea in a malt-house kindly lent, after which a public meeting was held in the open-air, when about 800 listened to addresses by the Hon. W. Cowper-Temple, G. Hafford, Mrs. Evans, and others. Services have been held each evening in the Tent, and, considering the busy season, have been well attended, many, on Sunday evenings, coming miles to listen to the Gospel-message. Others, unaccustomed to attend any place of worship, have come regularly, and listened with marked attention. Several Christians exclaimed, "Oh! why did you not come amongst us before; we have been spiritually dead, we need rousing up." One experienced Christian man said, "I have learned more the last five nights than in the last five years." Next Sunday (20th) will be the last of these special services; the Tent will then be removed to West Wellow, about four miles off, where George Hafford will labour for a fortnight. Will Christians who are anxious for souls pray that this effort may redound to the glory of Christ's Kingdom?