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Entre Nous.

Biography of Dr. James Hastings.

It is proposed to prepare a Biography of Dr. Hastings, and the Editors of this magazine will be obliged if persons having letters will send them to Kings Gate, Aberdeen. All letters received will be returned with the least possible delay.

They will also be glad to receive any special information or interesting reminiscences of Dr. Hastings.

Waking in the Night.

It is not always possible for the reviewer or the reader of a book to accept fully the description found on the cover. But in the case of a volume of Children's Sermons, *Turn but a Stone* (3s. 6d. net), we agree with Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton. 'The author knows how to state the point, make the point, clear the point, and cease. He avoids the very easy but truly mischievous mistake of addressing adults through children.' The author is the Rev. Archibald Alexander, M.A., B.D., and the sermons have all been tried on the children of St. John's Wood Presbyterian Church, and they will now be welcomed by other children.

Here is the last talk in the volume :

"He that keepeth thee will not slumber" (Ps 121³).

'Did you ever wake up in the middle of the night, when all the house is quiet, and everybody is asleep, and it is very dark, and feel—not exactly frightened, you know, but just lonely, and wishing there was some one to speak to? If you have, it is nothing to be ashamed of, for I have known grown-up people who, when they waken in the night, begin to hear strange noises, and to imagine—oh, all sorts of foolish things! It is wonderful how many queer sounds there are at night. The furniture sometimes creaks and cracks in the most alarming fashion then, a thing it never seems to do in the daytime. And even a wee, wee mouse in the wall, at night, makes as much noise as if it were a rat at the very least.

'I knew a little boy, a good while ago—he is now a minister, by the way—who used to be quite really frightened when he awoke in the dark. He lived in the country, near a main railway line, where the trains went up and down by night and day, and I remember—I mean, he told me—how it used to

comfort him when a train passed, for then he knew there was some one else awake in the big black world besides himself.

'I was reminded of him when I read a story lately about a little American lass. She lived in a street in which there was a Roman Catholic church, where there were candles burning before the altar all the time. The house in which she lived was heated, not by fires like ours, but by hot-water pipes, and a man had to come and attend to the furnace through the night, or very early in the morning. I tell you this about her home that you may understand what comforted her when she awoke in the night and felt lonely. What do you think it was? It was that in God's House, near at hand, there were lights burning all the night, because "God never goes to sleep"! This is what she said, for there is a poem about it :

I wonder if God stays awake
For kindness, like the furnace man,
Who comes before it's day, to make
Our house as pleasant as he can.
I like to watch the sky grow blue,
And think, perhaps, the whole world through,
No one's awake but just us three,
God, and the furnace man, and me!

'Well, whoever goes to sleep, God does not. And I think the angels are always awake too. You remember how, when Jacob was lonely and afraid at Bethel, God showed him that there was a ladder, from where he lay, right up to Heaven? He saw the angels going up and down it all night long—doing God's errands, watching over the world and all the little children who are lonely or afraid. You cannot see the ladder beside your bed, down which the angel of God comes to watch beside you all the night. But when you awake, and it is very dark and lonely, remember that the Father in Heaven never sleeps, and His angel is watching. Just say to yourself these lovely words, "He that keepeth me will not slumber," turn over on your other side, and close your eyes again, and you will see what will happen! For so He giveth His beloved sleep.'

The Silence of Christ.

'Have you ever thought how the spirit of the Master must have been straitened by the ban of silence which He set upon Himself? "I have many

things to say unto you" (about slavery, for instance?), "but ye cannot bear them now." Never a word did He say about that social system which must have seared His soul. Was the moral passion of Jesus less strong than that of Wilberforce? Yet never a word escaped Him upon that theme which stung Wilberforce to such righteous passion. The Sermon on the Mount is a wondrous manifesto, setting forth ideals to which the world has never yet attained; but among the most impressive things about it are its silences, the pages that are left out, the truths that for the hardness of men's hearts were never uttered, the many things which He was burning to say unto them, but which they could not then receive. We shall never know, this side of Time, at what cost to the Preacher those pages from His sermons were sacrificed.¹

Swearing.

'There is no sin more common in our midst than the sin of swearing—a sin not committed in provocation, but done deliberately. The very lowest view of it is that it is unworthy of our mind. It may add for a little a kind of unholy charm to conversation, but, when we think of it, it shows no wit, no inventiveness. The greatest fool can swear.

'There are few gifts so valuable as the gift of brightening ordinary conversation by wit and humour and thought, but there is not one of these in swearing.

'We can imagine a man—a godly man—in great excitement telling a lie, but to curse and swear is a peculiarly shameful form of sin. A lie is a sin that tries to hide itself, it is a sin that is ashamed, that pays respect to virtue. Swearing is a presumptuous sin, one that has thrown off all appearance of decency. The man who swears, in fact, goes out of his way to show how bad he is.

'It is a direct insult to God. We are not to take His name in vain, nor profane anything by which He makes Himself known. The name of Christ is that Name which is above every name. It is a name for adoration. Yet we hear it constantly in our streets, accompanied by coarse jesting, on the lips of men and women and even little children. The words that refer to everlasting destruction are too solemn. The word "hell" is no joke. To deliver us from hell cost the Son of God His very life.

'In the orders to be observed by the Commanders of the Fleet under the charge and conduct of Sir

¹ Kennedy Williamson, *The Uncarven Timbers*, 137.

Walter Raleigh, given at Plymouth, 3rd May 1617, on the eve of setting sail for Guiana, the first two rules are these:—"1. Because no action nor enterprise can prosper, be it by land or sea, without the favour and assistance of Almighty God, the Lord and Strength of hosts and armies, you shall not fail to cause divine service to be read in your ship morning and evening, in the morning before dinner, and in the evening before supper, or, at least (if there be interruption by foul weather), once in the day, praising God every night with the singing of a Psalm at the setting of the watch. 2. You shall take especial care that God be not blasphemed in your ship, but that after admonition given, if the offenders do not reform themselves, you shall cause them of the meaner sort to be ducked at the yard-arm, and the better sort to be fined out of their adventure [that is, the property sailors were allowed to take with them for trading in foreign ports]. By which course, if no amendment be found, you shall acquaint me withal, delivering me the names of the offenders. For if it be threatened in the Scriptures that the Curse shall not depart from the house of the swearer, much less shall it depart from the ship of the swearer."

'By loving God and cultivating our minds and our eyes we may make our conversation so interesting that it will have no need for oaths and curses to give it an offset.'

This is from *Pilgrim Cheer* (James Clarke; 5s. net), a book of Devotional Readings, by the late Rev. J. P. Struthers, M.A. Mrs. Struthers has done an excellent work in collecting these from her husband's sermons; for everything Mr. Struthers wrote was marked by its freshness of thought. She was encouraged to make the selections by a letter which Dr. Denney sent to her: 'I am sorry you think nothing could be saved of his sermons. It was here he was original, deep, and tender and searching, like the Bible itself. I know he did not write them out fully, but I fancy he must have put down some indication of what he was going to say, and often that is the most interesting form of record—although one has to put a mark of interrogation. *Pascal pensant* is more interesting than "*Les Pensées de Pascal*," and we get a more vivid impression often from notes than from a "finished" work.'

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