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THE

JOY OF THE MINISTRY.

AN
ENDEAVOUR TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY
AND DEEPEN THE HAPPINESS OF
PASTORAL WORK.

BY THE REV.
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PREFACE.

I HOPE the word "Endeavour" will prevent the title of this little book from sounding too ambitious. To increase the efficiency and deepen the joy of pastoral work is, I know, an achievement great beyond human power to accomplish. But it is not too great to aim at. And I have to call the book what it really is. It is written for the purpose of helping our younger fellow-labourers in the ministry to do their work, and to enjoy their work. This we can at least try to do for one another. No doubt each heart, each life, each ministerial career has its own peculiar difficulties. It has secrets of personal trial, struggle, need, with which no stranger can intermeddle, and in which no one can help except the great Helper. But, to a very real degree, it is granted to those who are labouring for God to be able to strengthen the hands of those who labour along with them. As we tell each other of

our experiences, as we warn each other against the dangers we have found hurtful to ourselves, and encourage each other by describing the supports by which we have been strengthened, and the gladness which has made sunshine in our own lives, we do bring to each other very material help.

One workman cannot give to his fellow-worker the strength of hand, clearness of sight, wisdom of heart, with which skilled labour has to be carried on ; from the Creator, and not from the fellow-creature, these gifts must come. But he can give his comrade many a useful hint, show him in many a little way how his work can best be got through, and cheer and guide his apprentice efforts by sympathy and counsel. To endeavour to do this for each other is surely our right, our duty, and our privilege. I claim the right and exercise the privilege as I send out these pages among my brethren, hoping that the spirit in which they receive them will cause the little "endeavour" to be for many hearts a real success.

Some of the suggestions in the earlier chapters on "the personal qualifications for the ministry," I have given in a previous work.* But I could

* "The Model Parish."

not help repeating the substance of them here. With changing years our ideas on many subjects become changed or modified. But as to the great motives for Christian life and Christian work, I can truly say, that as time goes on, I only feel a deeper sense of their necessity, an increasing desire that they may occupy a larger space in my own heart and the hearts of my brethren.

The successive chapters in this book were prepared as addresses to a party of Divinity students and young clergymen, who have been in the habit of meeting together during the university terms at my house. Already, almost before the echoes of the spoken words have died away, the hearers of them are scattered abroad in many parishes and many lands. They will be glad, I am sure, if these pages meet their eye, to be reminded of happy evenings, and earnest conversations with friends and fellow-students, when our hearts burned within us as we "took sweet counsel together" concerning our work and our battle for our Master. As the addresses were prepared for beginners in the ministry, my elder brethren will excuse their containing suggestions that are, perhaps, to riper experience, too obvious to need mention. Still, as from the first day of our ministry till we pass

to the service on high, we have all essentially the same work to do, the same Person to make known, the same human heart to deal with among our people, and to watch over with ourselves, I venture to hope that these addresses to our younger fellow-labourers may bring some help and cheer even to those who, like myself, have grown grey in the glorious work.

And help we elder ones verily need after all our years of service. If time makes our work easier in some ways, in others it makes it harder. The spiritual vision is apt to grow dim, and spiritual efforts to fall into routine. Practice, indeed, makes it easier to speak and preach. Long experience gives judgment in dealing with mankind; but the fire on the altar sometimes burns low, the smouldering embers need to be stirred from time to time, so that the flame may burst forth again with quickened vigour, and souls may be kindled by the glow of our enthusiasm, as well as lives directed by our maturing wisdom.

If this little book should touch the heart of some toiling, and perhaps weary, fellow-labourer here or there, and, calling attention to spirit-stirring truths long known, but in the routine of daily life rather fading out of notice, should

rouse it to a fresh start of happy energy in our dear Lord's service, the author, though he may never on earth know the comrade he has helped, will thank God hereafter for such a precious crown of success.

F. R. W.

CHAPTER I.

THE JOY OF THE MINISTRY.

FRIENDS and fellow-labourers,—My object in the following pages is to help you in your work. I want to show you, as far as I can, what the work is, the qualifications for it the difficulties and responsibilities of it, and the, best way of carrying it out with vigour and efficiency. But I shall occupy this preliminary chapter in speaking of the joy that brightens the toil you are undertaking. If you were about to guide a traveller over a difficult mountain pass, you might wish to encourage him beforehand by telling him of the pleasures and glories as well as of the difficulties of the walk; and I should wish, before entering into the consideration of the anxious and laborious efforts of ministerial life, to cheer you by a short description of its very real delight.

Most emphatically I declare my conviction that

he who, feeling himself called by Providence and the Spirit of God, undertakes the office of a clergyman in the Church of Christ, undertakes not only a good but a delightful work. For my own part, if I had to choose again a hundred times my course in life, I should choose the ministry. It is not only that necessity is laid upon me—that I should have to say, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel"—it is not only that I feel my Master's call commanding me, and the needs and dangers of my brethren pressing on me—it is not only that there is a constant impulse and instinct urging me (whether I like it or not) to try to make the light of the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ shine more brightly on human hearts amidst the world's darkness and sin; but it is also that I have found ministerial work so full of interest and joy, that every other employment would seem dull in comparison. I believe there is no profession where the drama of life is so varied as in the Christian ministry. There is in it constant movement, thrilling pathos, breathless interest. Issues of tremendous importance are at stake. Work of the most varied kind has to be done. Human nature in all its forms and aspects has to be dealt with. Sympathy and companionship, sweet brotherhood and sisterhood in labour, brighten

all its action; and underneath its eager and interesting struggles, its passion of hope and fear, its triumphs of success and catastrophes of failure—underneath all there is deep repose, calm heart-satisfying rest.

Our work indeed, as I hope to show more fully by-and-by, is work, and not play. We must make up our minds for real, tough unsentimental labour, both of body and mind. "Preaching the Gospel" is a very sublime thing in theory; but a young clergyman sitting down to write his sermon when ideas won't come, and the sentences (no matter how he turns them) refuse to express his meaning, is, like a schoolboy at his exercise, almost driven to tears. And there are often several sermons to be preached in a week; and there are rainy days and dirty lodgings, and long trudges through mud or snow to unsatisfactory patients; and there are long stories from prosy people to be listened to; and there are critical and quarrelsome parishioners, and troublesome school-children, and obstinate and ignorant churchwardens, and domineering rectors, or (more terrible still!) rectors' wives, and uncongenial fellow-curates, and huffy organists, and unmanageable choir singers. No dreamy bed of roses is a clergyman's position.

It has its petty worries and it has its heavy toils. And "the sorrow of others" often casts its shadow upon his life. He has to be almost every day in the "house of mourning." His blessed office is to bring to the heavy-laden and broken-hearted consolation from his Master. And if he is a real messenger of Christ, if he is a real friend and brother to his people, and not a mere machine for grinding out consolatory phrases, his own heart will often bleed, as he goes to comfort his brethren. It will be impossible for him to lighten their burden without sharing its heaviness himself; and often will the tears

> "Rise in the heart, and gather in the eyes,"

as he thinks of the weeping faces he has been looking into, and the sorrowful stories he has been listening to, and the bereaved and death-stricken homes he has been visiting.

Still, notwithstanding these shadows across his path, and these rough places on his road, I maintain that the pastor's life is full of joy. Even externally its work has much pleasantness. In the country there are the walks or rides through the fresh air, as you go from cottage to cottage. In one you sit down before the fire, and father and mother, young men and

maidens, gather round to speak to "the minister," and listen to his words. In the next your visit is stiller and sadder, but with a touching pathos of its own. You are brought into the little back room, where, on the bed, covered with its patchwork quilt, there lies some poor sufferer—a fair girl perhaps, with the bright eyes and hectic flush of consumption; or the aged grandmother, with grey locks and wrinkled face, stretching out her thin brown hand to grasp yours with tremulous eagerness; or the father of the family—the bread-winner—prostrate with sickness, but grateful for your visit, and anxious to listen to your message.

Blessings follow you as you leave the home where the simple people have been cheered in their sadness, and comforted in their pain, by prayer and "the ministry of the Word."

So you go from house to house; sometimes shown into stiff and stuffy parlours, sometimes sitting down on the three-legged stool in the cottage or cabin, sometimes paying a visit in the refined atmosphere of the country gentleman's or nobleman's drawing-room, sometimes fighting your way through barking dogs to the farmer's door. So you go on, splashed and muddy no doubt, but invigorated in body by exercise, and interested

in heart by varied spiritual work; and as you return in the quiet evening, the calm of the amber sunset under the painted clouds harmonises well with the glow of happy thankfulness which floods your heart as you look back on your day's work for God among brethren and sisters.

Each pastoral round has the zest of a walking tour. Those lanes, how pleasant they are in summer, with their garlands of wild roses and honeysuckle. The high road is long and dusty, but we can step along it with vigorous strides, and pause from time to time to chat with groups of poor but hearty friends going to market, or children tripping to school. Then we can leave it occasionally, and strike across the fields, and enjoy the repose of a ramble by the meadow banks, and the excitement of a voyage of discovery over hedge and ditch. And in the wild moors what wealth of flowers we have under our feet! The purple butterwort, the starry asphodel, the aromatic bog myrtle, "banks where the wild thyme grows," and forests of heather with the bees busy and musical in their blossoms. As we toil over these many-coloured plains, and watch the soft blue hills in the distance, seeming to float over the aerial haze on the horizon, or as we breast the shoulder of the hill to reach

some little lonely cottage that stands with its two or three fir trees like the advanced guard of civilization in the midst of rock and heather and gorse, how many trains of thought are we able to follow out, and how marvellously are the ideas suggested by our morning's study of books enriched and enlarged by this intimate "converse with nature."

Truly if in after years we are called by the providence of God to work for Him in a city, often will our thoughts go back with yearnings akin to regret from the narrow streets and noisy thoroughfares to our quiet rambles in the breezy and wide-horizoned country.

But even in the city the joy follows us. The trees, the meadows, the flowers are vanished, but there is the "wealth of souls." To what numbers of immortal beings we are privileged to minister! What interesting varieties of character we become acquainted with! Delightful as it is to study the beautiful works of God in outward nature, yet it must ever be true that "the noblest study for mankind is man." These streets that at first looked so dull and hard, soon come to have associations for our minds more sweet than the fragrance of the new-mown hay, more beautiful than the tints of the wayside flowers. In that

gloomy brick house there is a group of merry children, who love to gather round us, and cling to our hands. In the next there is a mourning family, with whose tears our own have often mingled. Here a dying sufferer lies, with the radiance of heavenly peace and joy on the wan face. This evening light comes from the window of an earnest student, whose spiritual struggles we have shared, and whose intellectual difficulties we have helped to clear. Here is the buzz of the busy school-house, where day by day we teach the grand truths of God's revelation to fresh young hearts.

As the years pass by, every street becomes linked with some hallowed memory. Not a step can we take in our district without being reminded of loved and valued friends, friends who have laboured with us in God's work; friends whom we have been enabled to guide and cheer in the battle of life; friends by whose bedside we have knelt in sickness, and whose last sighs we have received in death. Verily these happy human associations make the wilderness of brick and mortar to "rejoice and blossom as a rose."

And then the public preaching of the Word—it has its difficulties, its anxieties, we might almost say its agonies; but through and above

all, has it not its joy? Look at all those upturned faces. Think of the immortal spirits, the infinite destinies, the eventful histories—histories of joy and of sorrow, of struggle, success, and failure—represented by each one of them. Look at those hard countenances softening, those gentle eyes glistening, those children's faces beaming with interest. See how God's message can awaken and attract and touch. Think of how the words He has given you to speak bring into the lives of these listeners elements of renovation, of comfort, of hope, of strength. As you see the great congregation hushed in earnest attention while you reason with them, plead with them, and declare to them the glad tidings of your embassy, is there not, even in the midst of your anxiety and consciousness of weakness, is there not a joy vivid and intense, like the mother's joy amidst her labour pangs?

But above all other joys in the ministry is the joy of being able to hope that you have won souls for Christ. We meet with much discouragement indeed, much disappointment. And when we consider what we are, is it any wonder? But I believe that every earnest minister of Christ is, sooner or latter, in one way or another, blessed to many hearts. And it is often given to him to

know this even on earth. Sometimes, and in some positions, the harvest seems rich. And many rise up to thank him for leading them to know the reality of their own sin, and the reality of their Saviour's love. Sometimes the seed seems longer underground, or seems to be most of it carried away by "the fowls of the air." But he who patiently, laboriously, and prayerfully strives to press the Gospel of the Lord Jesus home to men's hearts and consciences, never has his labour in vain in the Lord. And the joy of success in this work of ours is a joy almost awful in its intensity. You have been attending for weeks at some bed of sickness; the patient, who had been ignorant and downcast and irritable at the beginning, has been first soothed and comforted by your teaching, then awakened, enlightened, led to know and trust the Lord Jesus, and is at the close of the solemn season quietly resting on the Saviour's love, and bowing to the Father's will. As the poor wan face lights up at your approach; as you find that your visits are the bright spots in the patient's long day; as you find that you have been the means of bringing to that soul gladness and peace in this world, and a sure hope for eternity do you not feel a joy "too deep for tears"?

And when you find the same testimony borne by many, both in sickness and in health, in youth and in age; when it is expressed by the moistened eye, and the brotherly grasp of the hand, and the broken and agitated words; when, though you hardly dare to believe it, it is brought home to your heart that you have been used by the Most High to rescue souls from sin, to confirm them when wavering and undecided, and to convey to them the precious gift of everlasting life, is not the sense of honour and privilege almost greater than you can bear? Do you not cry out, "What am I, O my Lord, that Thou shouldest do such wondrous things by my hand?"

This joy is indeed mingled with many conflicting emotions. If some souls for whom you longed have been won, many for whom you have longed equally seem still among the erring and straying. And while people are thanking you for the good you have done them, you feel with shame how much evil there is in yourself, how much lower is the state of your heart and life than the tone of your words. And even as they praise, you feel that if they knew all—all the cowardice and indolence and inconsistency that have marred the very efforts for which they are

thankful—not praise, but reproach, would be your portion. Thus you sympathise with the poet's aspiration—

> "Pray we our God one pang to send
> Of deep remorseful fear
> For every smile of partial friend;
> Praise be our penance here."

Still, whatever you are yourself, to have souls won for Christ, and for goodness and for heaven, is a substantial cause for gladness. And to the Saviour Himself you tell the secret faults that oppress you: and you know that He forgives all the sin, and accepts all the service. You know that He loves you with the love of human brotherhood, as well as of Divine compassion. You know that, as you go out to your daily toil, you have His constant sympathy. As you hesitate in awkwardness or nervousness, He sympathises with your difficulty. If the winged words come, and you are able to speak home to brothers', or sisters' hearts, He sympathises with your success.

Your work is a work for Him and with Him. He sends you out, and He goes with you. He counts you not His servant, but His friend. He encourages you to tell Him all things. He loves you when you get on well in your work; and when you get on badly He loves you still. Oh!

if you believe He is really what the Gospel declares Him to be, must not your work as His messenger be steeped in joy?

Often your imaginative powers are too feeble to realize the happiness. You have to plod on, doing what you know to be right, saying what you know to be true, without feeling anything very particular. But the joy is there, like the music of a rippling stream, sometimes forgotten, sometimes in the clatter of life flowing on unnoticed, but flowing on night and day through cloud and sunshine with its liquid melody, flowing on ever. So your joy remains, giving a sense of rest and peace amidst the varying emotions of the heart. You are trying day by day to carry out the will of the Master who is dear to you. You are trying to be of real use to brothers and sisters who are dear to you too. They often appreciate your efforts; He always does. They cheer you often with their spoken sympathy; His unuttered and unutterable love never ceases. They give you the delightful reward sometimes of letting you see in changed and elevated lives the fruit of your labour on earth. He promises, in spite of all your failures and mistakes, that "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

CHAPTER II.

PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY: FAITH.

IN order to do a thing well, it is of primary importance to know what it is that is to be done. As ministers of Christ's Gospel, what have we to do?

Our office has manifold duties; we have to comfort the sorrowful, to instruct the ignorant, to stir up slumbering consciences, to guide and direct earnest inquirers, to encourage and stimulate people of all kinds in holiness of life; we have to administer sacred ordinances, to lead the worship of the assembled people, to kneel by the bedside of the sick and dying, to bury the dead. But through and amidst all these varied offices we have one great duty. It is to make known God, as He has been revealed in Jesus Christ, to cause Him to be trusted, loved, and honoured by as many as we can in any way reach or influence.

We come to men in this material world as messengers from the great unseen God. Ambassadors for Christ, with a commission from Him, with invitations from Him, warnings from Him, promises from Him—such is our awful position.

I. It is plain, then, that the very first qualification for our work must be faith in the message we have to deliver. Though we should speak with the tongues of men and angels, if we did not believe what we were saying, it would be better for us to hold our peace. Better to be a "dumb dog" than a hypocrite or an actor. No man should dare to stand up in the church as an ambassador from God, unless he is thoroughly convinced of the truth of that revelation of God which we call "the Gospel."

Some young clergymen are fond of parading what they call "honest doubts." They think that a little flavour of rationalism is a sign of a strong mind. It seems to me to be neither a strong nor an honest proceeding to take pay for teaching what you are not sure is true. A man may feel much hesitation as to accepting the Gospel records; his mind may be in painful suspense between evidence on one side and difficulties on the other; he may have this conflict and wrestling going on within him, and be a perfectly sincere and earnest

man. But while such a state of suspense lasts, he is unfit to be ordained as a preacher. Let him first be thoroughly persuaded in his own mind. Let the difficulties be resolutely faced, grappled with, wrestled with. When they are overcome, the man will be all the stronger to teach. He will know all the better how to help those who are in mental perplexity. But while the battle is undecided, though the combatant may do his duty and pray to God, and trust Him in heart amidst intellectual difficulties, he is manifestly unfit to go forth among his brethren as a herald of the Gospel.

Let me make myself plain. There are some men who, from the character of their mental constitution, will always be liable to the recurrence of painful doubts. They may nevertheless be sincere and earnest believers. The very fact of their feeling Christ's religion to be the hope and joy of their life will raise up ever and anon morbid questionings as to the reality of the foundation upon which all that they hold dear depends. But they can honestly teach what they know to be true, although shadows of constitutional scepticism blur and dim it sometimes to their own vision. They would die a thousand deaths for the Gospel, though it sometimes seems to their anxious and

longing hearts as if it were only a beautiful but unsubstantial dream. Again, we may be thorough believers in the truth of God's revelation, and yet retain the position of *inquirers* all our lives. Every man whose intellect is not paralysed or crusted over by prejudice must retain that position. The thoughtful, active mind cannot help considering and weighing every idea that comes before it. And as we advance in experience and in largeness of knowledge both of men and things, and as the passionate prejudices of youth are gradually left behind, our convictions on many points are apt to be modified. Some views that were once cherished with eagerness are felt to be exaggerated or untenable. As we rise higher in power of thought, the horizon widens. Things that used to seem large diminish. Things in heaven and earth that were not dreamed of in our philosophy gradually come into view. The perspective changes with the point of vision. But the great convictions of the soul, the grand lines of truth, the sky-reaching mountains on their eternal foundations, remain unchanged. The earnest thinker has the same faith as the little child. With all his increased knowledge, his enlarged and enlarging ideas, his perception of old mistakes and glimpses of new vistas into truth, he still says with the

same fervour as he said it at his mother's knee, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord."

II. But the kind of faith needed for our work is not merely the conviction of the understanding, but more especially what is called "heart-faith." Never will there be the genuine "ring" in our Gospel preaching till we have felt in our own spirits the thrill of the good news. Nothing has power with men like the persuasive force that comes from personal experience. "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, which our hands have handled of the word of life, that declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us." Here was the spring of the Apostles' energy, and one of the secrets of their success. They spoke not about matters which they theoretically approved of, but about those which they had actually experienced. The same cause gives energy still, and still procures success. If the sinfulness of man, salvation by the blood of Christ, and the offering up of self in God's service, if these are with you only theories, you may preach orthodox sermons, and be admired as a sound expositor of Scripture, but you will not bring many souls to the Saviour. There is something in the tone of personal conviction that cannot well

be imitated. There may be great differences in the religious history of different persons. Religious conviction with some is gradual, growing with their growth, and strengthening with their strength; with others it is sudden and rapid, bursting out like the blaze of day in the tropic morning. But however this may have been with you, not till there has been the wrestling against evil in your own soul, and the looking up amidst the strife and conflict to the loving face of the Saviour, and the relief of resting your soul upon Him, and the interesting effort to please Him day by day, not till then will there be any of what St. Augustine calls "*unction*" in your preaching.

You sometimes hear a young clergyman delivering himself of a sermon. It is very nice; every word of it is true. The ideas are sensible, and placed together in very suitable order. But, without wishing to judge, you feel instinctively that the sermon will do nobody any good. In fact, it seems hardly meant to do so. It seems meant to say what is nice and proper, and what every one will approve of. It does that, and it does nothing more. Every one goes away saying, "that was a nice sermon of Mr. Green's," and every one forgets all about it before he reaches home. But a year afterwards you happen to hear

the same preacher; you can hardly believe it is the same. It is not that he has grown cleverer. It is not that he has improved in the art of composition. Perhaps his sentences are not quite so well formed. Perhaps there is hardly as much fluency and self-possession in his manner. But now he preaches like a man who is in earnest. He has something that he wants to say, and wants to say it as strongly and as warmly as he can. He is looking at his audience, and evidently wanting them to think of something and feel something; and they are not remarking on the propriety of his demeanour and the niceness of his sentences, but are evidently touched and impressed by what he is saying to them. Whence comes the difference? What has made that stiff and properly conducted young gentleman change so quickly into an earnest evangelist? How comes it that instead of being like a big schoolboy reading his carefully prepared "theme," he is a man speaking to men, and really grappling with their consciences? How comes it that, instead of putting together orthodox doctrines in neatly turned sentences, he is speaking with living words of a living Person, "a great God and a Saviour"?

The answer is simple. His own heart has

been awakened; he has learnt to know and hate his own sins. He has felt the unreality and hollowness, the mere professionalism, of his life. He has cast himself in real humiliation at his Saviour's feet. He has poured out to Him the confession of his failures. He has found the sweet rest of believing in His pardon. This experience of the reality of Christ's Gospel in his own heart gives fervour and simplicity and strength to his teaching.

Let me press this thought home to the conscience of each of my brothers before going farther. You have to preach about the Lord Jesus Christ to others. Do you know Him yourself? Has there been real heart dealing between you and Him? When you come as an ambassador of God to awaken the careless, and to guide anxious inquirers, and to comfort the sorrowful, will you be able to speak about a Saviour with whom you have become acquainted by personal experience? Is not this the very first qualification for your work—a real living faith in the Person whose message you are to bring to your brethren?

III. And faith in our unseen Lord has to be the permanent habitual attitude of our own souls. It is not past conviction, but present

conviction, that gives life to our words. As we speak from day to day, and from month to month, of the solemnities of eternity and the comforts of our Lord's lovingkindness, it is absolutely necessary to have echoing and re-echoing within us the consciousness, "It is all true; what I am saying is as real as my own existence." This keeps our teaching fresh; prevents it from falling into the "sing-song" of an oft-repeated tale. For we have to go on continually telling the "old, old story." However we may vary the way of putting it, the burden of our teaching must be the same essential truth. If we have not our Christian creed to tell of, we have no special message from God. But we do not tire of telling it. We tell it rather with ever-freshening fervour, because the longer we live on it, the more we feel it to be true. And as we tell a mortal man that the eternal God loves him, and that his sins have been borne on the cross of Christ, and that the incarnate Saviour at God's right hand feels for him, and has help to give him now, and a crown of glory to give him hereafter, as we tell this, and know that we are saying what is profoundly true, is there not in our very words and manner a fresh glow of sympathy with each

individual to whom we repeat the wonderful truth? We speak with ever-renewing interest, because we speak what we believe.

But there is no doubt that much spiritual exercise is needful to keep up this ever fresh, vivid faith. There is a great deal in our ministerial work that tends to make faith dull. You may be surprised at my saying this, but I am sure it is the case. A religious profession brings with it dangers to religion. We are obliged to be always talking religiously. And though this talking is both a necessity and a duty, it is a snare. Much handling takes away the bloom of the fruit and the freshness of the flower; and much talking about the Lord Jesus and His love, and about heavenly hope, and "peace and joy in believing," may easily interfere with the simplicity and purity of these very things in our own hearts. The devotion of a soul to its unseen Lord is a delicate flower. It loves shadow and quietness. In the glare of publicity it droops. Draw aside the shading leaves of humility and holy reserve, and the lovely colours fade, and the exquisite fragrance departs. So, likewise, as you go about from house to house and person to person, speaking of your Saviour, you may easily be led to speak

rather about yourself than about Him, and to lay bare to others thoughts and experiences that ought to be secrets between you and the Beloved of your soul.

Truly, this duty of religious talking is fraught with perils to our deepest spiritual life. And if the talking may easily hurt the delicate growth of that which is most precious within us, very easily at the same time it may hide the injury from our observation. We may be deceived by the words of others, but no words have such power of misleading as our own. However we feel, we must talk earnestly. It is manifestly our duty to do so; for we have to speak of things as we know they are, and not as we happen to feel about them at the moment. And when we have been preaching or speaking with intensity and fervour, how hard to suppose that we could be slackening in our own interest for the things about which we have been so eloquent! And yet such a calamity is quite possible. The praise of men, the desire of their favour or approval, may have been insinuating itself between our hearts and our Lord. His will, His service, may have become less and less prominent in our minds; to please Him less and less the great reward sought for; and all the time His

name may have been constantly on our lips, spoken of always with the deepest enthusiasm. And so the warmth of our words may conceal from our conscience the dangerous cooling of our hearts. And the good opinion of others carries on the deception. A clergyman who is externally laborious, and has warmth and zeal of manner, is almost always highly thought of by his people. Ah! how ready they are to credit us for infinitely more piety than we possess! Sometimes it terrifies us to perceive on what a lofty pedestal their hero-worshipping imagination has placed us. And there is great danger that through our folly and vanity we should take ourselves at their good-natured estimate. While they think us so earnest and self-devoted, how easy to glide into the idea that they are right! While they give us their obsequious and reverential "greetings in the market-place," how natural for our pharisee hearts to suppose ourselves the saints they consider us! They see nothing of our mixed motives, and our self-seeking, and our worldliness, and our heart inconsistency, and hence we may pleasantly forget that such faults exist. On account of these dangers specially besetting the ministerial office, the clergyman needs very spe-

cially to stir up the gift that is in him by close and frequent communion with the Lord. Above all other men he requires faith in the unseen to give vigour, reality, freshness to his daily and hourly work. His work is speaking God's truth. It must not be spoken in mechanical and conventional language. It must be spoken, if it is to be spoken aright, in words that come warm from the heart. But his work in a very peculiar way tends to chill that very heart-warmth. His only remedy and safeguard is to be much in the secret presence of the Lord Himself. There his strength will be renewed "like the eagle's." There, in that holy sanctuary, the live coal from the altar will be found to touch his lips, and enable him to speak in words of fire. There, in the light of that grand countenance he is looking into, he will see his own deficiencies, and yet see continually the mercy and love of which he is to be the herald. There, alone with his God, he can consider what he is working for, and how he is carrying on the work. The shadows of human praise and earthly reward will shrink into their true insignificance. The sublimity of the truths he has to witness to, the preciousness of the souls he has to win and watch over, will stand out in their real import-

ance ; while at that unfailing fountain of strength he can seek and find continually new supplies of grace to quicken his soul's life, to increase his faith, to warm and rouse his enthusiasm, and to vivify, gladden, and refresh all his spiritual energies.

CHAPTER III.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY: A LOVING SPIRIT.

WHEN we considered our position as messengers from God and ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ, we felt that the first qualification for our work must be earnest heart-faith in Him who sends us, and in the message we have to deliver. We cannot speak of Him really, unless we believe thoroughly in what we have to say about Him.

But as surely as we require faith in Him who sends, so surely we require also love for those to whom we are sent.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." "Jesus Christ loved His church, and gave Himself for it." St. Paul "travails in birth" for his people, till Christ be formed in their hearts. A similar spirit should

be in every one who comes with God's message to human souls. He must come to them not only with God's word, but with something (in all reverence be it spoken) of God's love. He comes as a comforter, as a helper, as a herald of good news. He comes to persuade, to win, and to warn. Can he effectually come on such an errand if he does not care for those to whom he comes?

His mission is a most delicate one. He has often to hear heart-secrets poured out; he has to be present in the sacred hour of sorrow; when any one else would be counted an intruder, he has to be as God's messenger of comfort in the desolate home; he has to stand with the husband beside his dying wife; he has to hold the poor mother's hand while the body of her dead child is lying cold and white upon the bed; he has to still the wail of the fatherless, and to lead the desolate widow to Him who alone can support and uphold her now. How vain for any one to fill such an office, whose heart is not made sensitive and delicate by the refining power of real love! If you do not care for the people to whom you minister, you might as well stay away, and not disturb and weary them with your official interference. If you have no love for

them, you have no real ministry to offer them; better not mock them with a counterfeit.

There are some clergymen who pride themselves on being "faithful;" but there is a hardness about their tone, a self-sufficiency and want of sympathy that makes their ministry disagreeable and useless. How easily we picture to ourselves this fussy loud-voiced parson, very decided and dogmatic in his sermons, very "clear" in his testimony against what he calls error, very scathing in his denunciations of everybody's sins, very diligent, but very detestable; making you cringe when you listen to him, and slip away when you see him coming, making you long to contradict everything he says, making even the most sacred truth sound odious in his mouth. Everybody *says* he is a very good man, but everybody feels he is a very objectionable man. And he is utterly unfit for the ministry of the Gospel; for he lacks that which is the mainspring of the whole Gospel, the spirit of love. He is "playing Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out."

May I venture to hint that young clergymen often fail sadly on this important point? New to themselves, new to their office, they are sorely tempted to be self-occupied, to be busied in

thinking of their own dignity or their own position, rather than of the souls of the people to whom they are sent.

We all know the manner of a youth who has just been put into his tailed coat. He cannot forget his accession of dignity. Wherever he goes, whatever he does, he is manifestly conscious of the solemn appendage that he carries behind him.

Is it too much to say that you are often reminded of this by a certain mannerism that hangs about young clergymen? Is it their beautifully-cut clerical clothes and the starch of their clerical stocks that stiffen their words and looks? No, it is something from within, not from without. It is the thought of self. Their new office brings an accession of self-consciousness. They have not entered the ministry exactly from sordid motives, nor entirely without thought, and prayer, and desire to do their duty conscientiously; but they have not entered it from any real, yearning love for souls; they have not been impelled to it by any enthusiasm for their Master's service; there has been no earnest purpose to go and spend and be spent for their Lord among those He wants to have as "the travail of His soul." They have only gone into

the ministry as a suitable and respectable profession, and so they are mere professional men, and carry with them the egotism and self-importance of young professionals. And their chief thought about their work is, "How am I behaving? how do I impress people? how do I look? how do my words sound?" rather than, "How can I help these men and women? what good can I do them? what comfort can I bring them? with what hope and strength and courage can I inspire them?"

Take it as an axiom that you cannot help where you do not love. But how are we to love? It is easy to like nice people, amiable, interesting, and attractive people. Thank God we do meet many such. There is not a parish, there is hardly a family, where there are not some individuals whom we could not help being interested in. You are sent down to some out-of-the-way neighbourhood; you intend to do your duty, but you expect to be rather lonely and friendless. You are not there many weeks before you are surprised to find that you have already several close friends. Some of them may be in your own class of life; some of them among the poor and uncultured. But they are people full of intelligence, with warm hearts, with genial manners, with ready and responsive sympathy. It is pleasant to talk to

them, pleasant to look into their kindly faces, pleasant to remember afterwards your conversations together, and perhaps your prayers together. I have been in a great many different parishes, in the north and in the south, in the country and in the city, among "the aristocracy," among the poor and among the middle-classes; and in every place where I have been, and among all classes, I have met delightful friends,—people whom it was a joy to know and have intercourse with at the time, and to look back upon whom, through the long perspective of bygone years, and to think of whose brotherly or sisterly friendship is still a deep and real joy, and will be, I am sure, "a joy for ever." It is easy to be fond of such people. But there are (it must be confessed) numbers of people who to our natural tastes are not attractive. Indeed, we cannot conceal from ourselves that they are tiresome, uninteresting, and even repelling. And as long as they appear to us in this light, our ministry is very unlikely to help them. How are our hearts to be warmed to the "uninteresting people"? How are we to learn to love them, so that we may come to them in public, in private, in prosperity, in adversity, as messengers from the pitiful Father and the tender Saviour?

1. Feeling that we are *sent to them* helps us to

care for them. There is an instinct in our hearts by which anything particularly connected with ourselves assumes in our eyes a particular interest. Why is it said that, be it ever so lowly, there is "no place like home"? Because it is your own. Your own friends, your own family, live there; your own occupations, joys, and sorrows cluster around it. Sweeter than trellices of honeysuckle and rose are the memories that cover it with their tender associations. It is not brick and mortar, wood and stone, that you see, but the centre of infinite affections and innumerable interests. Even the prosaic uniformity of the dull street-dwelling is turned into poetry by the magic word "my own." And when a set of people become by God's providence your own flock, must they not be invested for you with an infinite interest? I do not say that this is the highest motive for caring for them; but in its place and its degree it is real and natural. "These are my people. God has given them to me to take care of. My employments, my most earnest efforts, my joys and sorrows, are to be associated with them. Must they not have a very special place in my heart? Each one of them has been entrusted to me to win for Christ, or to keep for Christ. In some very real sense each will be required at my hand." Can you look

on your parishioners thus without feeling a strong link between your heart and theirs?

2. Remind yourself also of the infinite destiny before each parishioner. That dull old farmer, whose talk is of bullocks; that still duller old woman, whose talk is of her own diseases; that dried-up spinster, most tiresome of all, whose talk is of her enemies and of her ill-usage; that awkward and coarse-looking young man, who can talk about nothing at all—has not every one of these an immortal soul? Is there not opening out before each a vista of unending glory, or a tragedy of ruin and misery too terrible to contemplate? Can you think of these awful alternatives, these tremendous issues, without a yearning of love and longing? Can there be anything really dull or commonplace about a life on which hinges an eternal destiny? Is there not an infinite pathos or an infinite grandeur about these apparently uneventful histories, in each of which a decision has to be made, whose results will never end? How can I influence that decision? What part can I take in the solemn drama of that man's or that woman's momentous existence? In the presence of such a question, does not my first impression of dulness and lack of interest with regard to these people seem childish and shallow? The

habit of thus contemplating all men and women as on their probation for eternity tends greatly to correct that superciliousness and superficiality of youthful judgment with which we are apt to begin our dealings with our fellow-creatures. "In me," says the poet, who had long been an earnest student of nature,

> "The meanest flower that blows
> Awakens thought that often lies too deep for tears."

Does not the student of that grandest branch of nature, humanity, find a like depth of interest in the plainest and commonest human being? Or, rather, does he not learn to look on no human being as "common"? The blue of the "forget-me-not," the gold of the buttercup, the graceful droop of the harebell, what are these in comparison to the interest that lies behind the most coarse or wrinkled face, which bears upon it the traces of sin conquered, or sin committed, and carries with it the prophecy of an eternity in heaven or in hell?

3. Read the description of St. Paul's feelings for the people among whom he labours, and his example will help to stir and kindle your affections. "My little children, for whom I travail in birth till Christ be formed in your hearts." "I ceased not to warn every one of you night and

day with tears." "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." "We were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also your own souls, because you were dear unto us." Would it not be well often to study such expressions, and then to ask the conscience, Could I honestly speak thus? Is this the spirit in which I am labouring? Is there in my heart anything of this travailing in birth for my people, this almost anguish of yearning, this readiness to spend and be spent for them, no matter how they feel towards me; this willingness to impart to them even my own soul, in my absorbing desire to do them good?

4. But the great power for stirring love to man in our hearts is the thought of our Saviour's love. If, by-and-by, when you go to your parish, you are tempted to be indifferent and cold about your people, inclined to go your rounds of visiting, teaching, and preaching as a matter of routine, a duty that must be done, then remember how the Lord Jesus took upon Him the form of a servant, and humbled Himself to the death of the cross, for these very people. Ah! remember first how He loved you, and gave Himself for you. Think of how He has borne with all your folly and selfishness and mixed motives,

and yet how He loves you still, and condescends to use you. Then think how He came to seek and to save these people. He loves them, He died for them, He thinks of them, and pleads for them. Can what He loves be indifferent to you? Does not the example of His self-sacrificing kindness make you ashamed of your selfish coldness? Must you not feel it a privilege to devote your affectionate care to those for whom He died? Is not the chief Shepherd "going before you," lavishing among the poor feeble sheep the most exquisite tenderness? Are you not drawn irresistibly to follow in His steps, to go out and try to help and tend every member of your flock with something of that patient, tender, thoughtful, special care with which He treats both yourself and them?

5. But, with all our efforts, we cannot altogether command our emotions. The will is indeed a monarch in that inward realm of feeling; but his monarchy is a constitutional monarchy, and his authority is limited by mental and physical laws. But in the reign of *action*, the will has a more dictatorial sway. I cannot make myself feel thus or thus, but I can make myself act thus or thus. And the execution of a command in the outer and more subject realm often causes it to be obeyed in

the inner. Therefore in order to cultivate loving feelings towards those amongst whom we minister, it is of great importance to practise amongst them loving acts. You cannot get yourself all at once to feel fond of that tiresome old woman, but you can listen patiently to her story; you may speak a kindly, sympathising word to her; you may put yourself out of your way to do her some good.

I know, indeed, that love is a thing that cannot be counterfeited. As it is itself the most beautiful of graces so the imitation of it is the most hideous of affectations. Do not pretend to love people whom you do not care for. Do not try to put love in your manners and in your looks, when it is absent from your heart. The roughest words or ways are hardly so odious as "oily manners" and "greasy smiles." Be frank, straightforward, real. Be yourself, whatever you are. But try to get rid of your selfishness in act and word, and that will go far to banish it from your feelings. As you endeavour to speak kindly, which you know is your duty, and to do whatever is in your power, which is your manifest duty also, the kindliness of feeling will grow. It is your duty to love those souls whom Christ has committed to your charge. But it is your duty also to speak to them with sympathy. It is your duty to put aside the sub-

jects that are occupying your own thoughts so as to give them your full attention. It is your duty to give them your time, your labour, your trouble. As you try to perform these external duties, which are within your power, day by day, to all sorts of people, you will find it easier to fulfil the deeper duty in the heart. Kindly acts will help the growth of kindly feelings ; and then the growing love will make the loving words and deeds more easy, more natural, more effectual. In a word, pray that you may feel the sacred bond that unites you to your flock ; pray that you may realise the preciousness and infinite value of immortal souls, and that the sense of Christ's love towards yourself and towards your fellow-sinners may be shed abroad in your heart ; and then go on your way looking into the faces of your people, grasping them with the hand of brotherly cordiality, visiting their homes both in joy and in sorrow, speaking your message of comfort or of warning home to their hearts. Praying thus, and acting thus, it will be strange if you do not find a warmer love springing up in your heart towards the people for whom you pour out your prayers, and among whom you daily and hourly labour.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WARRIOR SPIRIT.

IN the great world-wide battle between good and evil the minister of God has to act as a leader. He is to be "gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient," but he has also to quit himself like a man and to be strong. There are many who imagine they would like the clerical profession, because it would secure them a quiet and easy kind of life. They think of a pretty, peaceful country parsonage, and picture to themselves the parson spending his days there between learned leisure and quiet visits to old women, who curtsey at his approach. Very different from this pastoral dream is the real clergyman's real life. Quiet enough outwardly it may be, but wherever it is lived earnestly it is the opposite of easy. Each day's work is a campaign. Each ministerial effort is the storming of an enemy's stronghold. The pastor goes among his people

with the tenderest love and sympathy, and yet he has to go "armed to the teeth." Always he has to be "very courageous," and sometimes he has to be as one of—

> "Those who clench their nerves to rush
> Upon their dissolution."

He has to carry a vigorous war into an enemy's country. For he comes as an envoy from the holy God to stir up his brethren, to rouse and urge them onward in the daily and hourly conflict with evil.

This involves speaking often what the listeners do not like to hear. He has to reprove and rebuke as well as to comfort. He cannot be a flatterer or a mere speaker of "smooth things." Though he will shrink with the courtesy of a gentleman and the tenderness of a Christian from unnecessarily hurting the feelings of another, yet he will often feel it an imperative necessity to say what will give pain. Sometimes in his doctrinal teaching he will have to go against the current of popular or fashionable opinion. Sometimes he will have to speak plainly to a member of his congregation about a special sin. Sometimes in the little politics of the parish he will have to take part against the great man,

or, more awful still, the great lady of the place. Straightforwardness, directness, truth, and justice must be stamped on all his dealings. And these qualities will bring him from time to time into collision with one and another of his flock. The clergyman is the servant of his people, and as such he has to be humble, gentle, and self-forgetting ; but he is also their teacher, and to a certain degree, and within a certain sphere, he is their ruler, and he must use his authority with dignity and determination. He must speak what he believes to be the truth, whether men hear or whether they forbear. He has to do what he considers to be right, wise, just, and expedient, whether they approve or disapprove. A weak, undecided clergyman, who is afraid of a frown or of a sneer, or of the pious shaking of an old woman's head, is in a pitiable position.

Differences of opinion among his parishioners on various ecclesiastical subjects will most probably arise. And the rector or curate will be eagerly expected by both parties to take their views of the matter. And "Surely," Lady Orthodox will exclaim, "he could not agree with those fearfully lax and dangerous opinions." And "Surely," Mr. New-Light thinks, "it would be impossible for an educated man to hold such

antiquated notions." And "Surely, surely," groans Mrs. Goodbody, "the world cannot have come to such a pass that a clergyman should give his consent to such new-fangled practices." And the Rev. Mr. Please-all is in a state of distraction. For no matter what side he takes, or what he teaches, or what he does, some one will be scandalized, and some influential people offended at the line he has chosen. And so he chooses nothing. He vacillates miserably from one side to another. No one knows what he believes, or what he purposes to do. No one knows, and very soon no one cares; for he is soon felt to be a cypher. There is influence belonging to the office, but if there is not a *man* in the office, if there is in it only a lay figure hung over with the varying opinions of others, or a puppet to be pulled hither and thither by the grand people or by the good people of the parish, the influence passes away as completely as does the power of frightening from an old scarecrow to which the birds have grown accustomed.

To do our duty in public, therefore, and to take our proper place among those over whom we have been appointed teachers and watchmen, requires some manly boldness. We must our-

selves know what we believe, we must make up our minds what line of action is really the best; and then we must stand like soldiers to our colours, and neither be ashamed of the views which we believe to be true, nor of the course of conduct which we judge to be right.

In private, too, we have to take our stand in the same spirit of holy boldness. Each day's work, if done effectually, must be done courageously. There is always a temptation to shrink from the real difficulty of our duty. We are ready enough to go and pay a visit or speak to a parishioner, and say the nice things, the proper things, we are expected to say. And then we go on our way, laying the sweet unction to our soul that we have done our duty; we have paid our visit, we have spoken piously: and all the time we secretly know that we have not come to close quarters with the man's spirit at all. Ah! is there no voice to whisper in our conscience, "Coward! coward! You have pretended to do your duty, but you have not had the manliness to do it really. You were afraid of looking the man straight in the face, and speaking to him soul to soul. You have really done him harm instead of good; you have left him with the idea that listening to your pious talk was

some kind of pious act, something to be put to the credit of his spiritual account ; you have not sent one arrow of conviction home to his heart ; you have not shaken him in the slightest degree out of his fatal self-satisfaction and slumber of conscience ; you were afraid to do so, afraid of its being disagreeable and awkward to yourself to startle or distress him, or go outside the routine expressions of religion."

It is necessary, then, to be "very courageous," in order to do real ministerial work ; and in order to be courageous it is necessary not only to think about courage, but to practise it. There are in our daily work many petty temptations to turn and flee. We must steadfastly resist them. We must make it a matter of principle never to be satisfied with half measures when whole measures are our duty, never to let ourselves stay silent when we ought to speak, never to allow ourselves to say pleasant things instead of true things, never to shrink from a conversation or interview because it is disagreeable or awkward. We must cultivate the soldier spirit. Promptitude and steadiness in obeying orders should be like a second nature to us. One question only must decide all our movements—what is my duty ? What is my great Captain commanding me to do ?

But care has to be taken not to mistake bluster for courage. The true soldier does not strut or swagger. His step is firm, but it is steady and regular. Do not think so much about being brave as about doing what is right. There is a spasmodic valorousness about the acts of a really weak man that is most troublesome. A secret consciousness of cowardice prevents him from considering simply what is the best thing to be done, and makes him eager to do something that will seem brave. And the apparently brave thing is often the wrong thing. And so the fear of his own timidity drives him to a course that is unwise and mischievous. We ought to look on the doing of our duty unflinchingly just as a matter of course, nothing to make a fuss about or to admire ourselves for, but only what must be expected from a soldier of Christ.

Let us be on our guard also against confusing boldness with hardness. Because you are determined to speak the truth, there is no necessity to speak it roughly or without consideration for others. You can be uncompromising, unflinching in your duty, and yet full of tenderness in your heart and kindness in your manner. The surgeon's hand must be firm and strong as he

cuts home to the root of the disease. But what woman would lift the patient more gently than he does? What fingers could dress and soothe the wound more tenderly than those which held the knife with such an iron grasp? Be bold, but let your boldness proceed from love, and be softened and beautified by love. Be bold, because you love your Master, and cannot bear to be diverted by anything from doing as He wills. Be bold, because you love your brother, and are ready to go through fire and water to do him good. Such boldness may sometimes hurt, because it has to thrust home, but it will never chafe or irritate, because the love from which its force comes causes it to be used with tact, with tender consideration, and that sincerity and earnestness of purpose which is so hard to be imitated, and yet so easily recognised where it really exists. Boldness without love is hard, defiant, inconsiderate, and unsympathizing. It produces that style of almost insolent criticism that is characterized in the well-known couplet—

> "Of all the ills that Heaven can send,
> Save, oh! save me from a candid friend."

Boldness with love makes the speech honest and sincere; but it makes the tear glisten, and the

voice tremble, as the painful word is spoken. It makes the undaunted soldier of Christ be at the same time gentle "as a nurse cherisheth her children."

CHAPTER V.

THE LABOURER.

IN the last chapter we considered the Christian ministry in its martial aspect. But the minister of Christ has to be a labourer as well as a soldier. A great deal of his work is not directly aggressive, and yet it is hard work. Happily the clergyman has not to be always controverting error, not always rebuking and warning, not always taking a side among opposing cliques and parties. True as it is that he is a warrior, and needs the warrior spirit, it is equally true that he is essentially a man of peace, coming from the Prince of Peace on a message of holiest peace. But he has a vast and difficult task before him, and if he is to do any good in it, he must go to work "with a will."

There is on this point a difference between a clergyman's work and that of other professions. Your pay in them is proportioned to your labour;

you must, therefore, either work or starve. The lazy doctor or the lazy lawyer gets few fees. But the lazy clergyman gets his salary regularly. The amount of his work is not a matter of profit or loss, but a matter of conscience: for in the clerical profession it is quite easy to keep up the appearance of working while you are idling. Mock work can be given with fatal facility. Shallow, external work makes great show. You can be fussy and outwardly active, and have innumerable church services, and pay innumerable visits, while you are, as to will and thought and purpose and spiritual effort, an idle lounger. Bad doctoring is found out by patients dying; bad engineering by bridges breaking; but bad ministry is not found out till the Day of Judgment. If you are affable in your manners, and ready with a pleasant word for every one; if you have a few grand-sounding sentences in your sermons, and often go in and out among your parishioners, saying polite nothings to the young ladies and pious nothings to the old ladies, you are sure to be popular; you are honestly liked by the simple and good-natured people who form a majority in every parish.

Very earnestly and honestly should the clergyman try himself as to the reality of his work,

"Am I indeed labouring for my Master? Have I given any toil for Him to-day?" Such should be the evening's question. "Have I exerted my energies? have I shaken off sloth? have I taken any real trouble? have I resisted any lazy impulses? have I been busy or have I been idle at my work?" And when the answer is dragged from the reluctant conscience, "I have been idle; I have only gone through a nice-looking form; I have satisfied myself with the appearance of doing my duty, while I have in truth done nothing; I have shrunk from everything difficult or painful, and taken my ease in respectable clerical routine;" then bring the confession with lowly penitence to your Master. Humble yourself at His feet with deep self-abasement. Tell Him how you, the teacher of duty, have neglected your own duty. Tell Him how you, the leader in service, have been an idler. At His cross and through His blood seek that pardon for yourself you proclaim to others. Ask for supernatural strength from Him to overcome your natural self-sparing instincts, and then, strong in the power of His might, make a fresh start in your work.

It is to be hard work, but it is to be reasonable work. If there is to be in it the motive power of Christian earnestness, there is to be also the

guiding and restraining power of good sense and thoughtful consideration. Some young men wear themselves out in spasmodic and exciting efforts; they seem to be always panting and blowing in the eagerness of their motion. In their ill-regulated zeal they make themselves so busy that they have no time to do anything. A man of this kind comes in to pay a visit, but he cannot listen to what his people wish to say; he cannot give sympathy, attention, kindly consideration; he must be off to the next house on his list; he must "go on with his work." He meets a parishioner on the roadside; here is a golden opportunity. The man is by himself; he is glad to see his clergyman; he stops to give him a kindly greeting. Not for years, perhaps, will there be such a chance of cultivating personal intimacy with this member of his flock, and speaking to him eye to eye, as "a man and a brother." A little genial sympathy now, a judicious question, a firm though gentle home-thrust, a patient listening to a heart's difficulties and puzzles, and an effect may be produced which years of preaching could not accomplish. But our fussy friend is so busy that he cannot stop. He must rush "on to his work." Alas! in his headlong rushing he leaves his work behind.

So at the school, so at the sick bed, so in his

classes and lectures ; hurry and fuss prevent him from giving his whole attention to the matter in hand. He has been too busy to prepare what he has to teach ; he has not thought over it nor digested it. His teaching is vague, confused, without definite point or sharp home-thrust. It produces little impression and is quickly forgotten. Even as he sits among his pupils he only gives them half his attention ; he is absent and preoccupied. Where is the close watchfulness for each individual soul in his class ? where is the keen scrutiny of each young face, so that an idea may be formed of what is going on underneath ? where is the intense interest for each hesitating answer, the smile that encourages, the sympathy that takes away shyness, the earnest reverence that abashes every approach to levity ? Ah ! you look for all this in vain from that fidgety teacher who is going through the lesson with the manifest desire to get it over as quickly as possible. He has really so much to do that he cannot let himself be delayed too long by these school children. His time is so precious that he must hurry over this piece of work and go on to the next. Even by the solemn sick bed, even in the house where sorrow and death have come with their hush of mournful calm, he cannot leave behind him his

eager fussiness. It makes him almost heartless. That poor worn-out sufferer, why cannot he sit with him for awhile, and let him have the sad relief of talking about his pains to a sympathizing friend? Why does the pastor silence his complaining so curtly, take out his Bible and administer "the portion" and the prayer so imperatively? He wants to get on with his business. He must do his "duty" with the sick man, and not waste his time in unnecessary talk. He is very sorry for these mourners, but he has other people to visit; he must not stay too long here. This or that consoling phrase, this or that nice text of the Bible, ought to be enough for them, and away he goes "on his work."

So he gets through his day, very busy but very useless. He has a long list of entries for his diary, but what record of his visits will there be when the great Books are opened?

How is this fussiness and hurry in parochial work to be guarded against?

Let the stress be laid on the quality of the work rather than on its quantity. What we really want is not to pay a great many visits, teach a great many classes, or preach a great many sermons, but to bring a great blessing to human souls. It is well to strive to reach as large numbers

of people as possible, so that we may have many opportunities for getting at their hearts ; but it is the heart-work we have always to aim at, feeling that nothing is done unless this is achieved. The quantity of efforts made must be looked on only as the means ; the end in view is the spiritual help to living souls.

The good fisherman tries to "cover as much ground" as he can. The further he walks along the river bank the greater his chance of filling his basket in the course of the day. But how warily he watches every ripple ; how deftly he throws his fly where the water eddies behind the rock, or sleeps under the shadowy bank, or breaks in merry laughter down the swift incline ! He walks far so that he may have more and more of those favourable spots for exercising his skill and wiling his silvery prey from their hiding places. But what he thinks of with eager interest is not for how many miles he can whip the stream, but how many fish he can catch. His day's success depends on the dexterity with which each cast is made.

Have we not a picture here of the work of those whom God has appointed to be fishers of men ?

> "Cast after cast, by force or guile,
> All waters must be tried."

Much time must be spent in the work, many efforts made, many people approached in various ways. The recognised instrumentalities must be used, and from time to time fresh ones invented and tried; but our success depends, humanly speaking, not on the number of efforts we make but on the deep gaze of mental and spiritual attention with which we watch the opportunities afforded by each of them, and the intensity of thoughtful endeavour with which we strive to seize the opportunities as they present themselves. Let us have it, then, well impressed on our minds that bustle is not work—that our work must be done quietly and carefully, or not at all. Let us have a holy horror of religious "red tapeism." Regular returns and entries and statistics of parochial work, and orderly and neatly-kept journals—all these things look very nice, they delight the hearts of clerical old maids; but if laid much stress on, they become a "mockery, a delusion, and a snare." Soul-work cannot be measured or tabulated. The reckoning of its results is entered on no earthly page. The Books on which it is inscribed will be opened in due time, but not here below.

But orderly method, although if wrongly used it leads to bustle, if rightly used prevents bustle and economises labour. Method, like many other

useful things, is a hard master but a good servant. If you do your parish work for the sake of your parish books, the wretched, superficial fussiness we have just spoken of, results; but if you use your books judiciously, they will help your memory, regulate your time, and enable you to do your duty more easily and more effectually.

There is a danger of working by fits and starts. We are apt to make a great rush at our work sometimes, when we are in the mood for it, and to shrink back from it at other times when we feel disinclined for the exertion, or inclined for some other occupation. And there is so little external restraint upon most of us clergymen, we are left so much to our own discretion as to the management of our time, that we might very easily drift into a desultory and irregular kind of working, guided only by our varying impulses. And we naturally enjoy some parts of our work much more than others. Some of us like to be always at our books; some of us, with the schoolboy spirit, are anxious to shut up the books and be off into the open air; some have a delight in teaching and school-work, and dread the solemnity of the sick room or the hospital ward. Most of us have our favourite parishioners, people whom we like seeing and

talking to; while others of our flock are distasteful to us, and spoken to only from a sense of duty. And our memories are very treacherous, and we forget often how long it is since we have performed this or that duty of brotherly kindness or pastoral vigilance; and we are vexed and surprised when that tiresome old bedridden Mrs. Grumble informs us, with reproachful accuracy, that it will be three months next Wednesday since we visited her last, and we had promised to come again in a fortnight.

To do our work well, therefore, it is necessary to do it systematically. Time should be carefully and thoughtfully laid out beforehand—the time for the study, the time for school, and the time for the parish. If the parish is large, and the engagements numerous, each day of the week should have its programme. The programme, whether for the day or the week, must be elastic. It must be a help to loving work, and not a fetter of iron bondage. At a call for help or sympathy from brother or sister the season of study must be allowed to be interrupted without ill-humour. Christ's servant must be at the disposal of the poor and the suffering and the anxious at all times. The plan of work laid out for Monday must be modified if some-

thing more immediately pressing has to be done. But let there be, as far as possible, the careful and economic prearrangement of employment, so that the pastor may not have to waste his time, like a little child, in puzzling what on earth he is to do next.

The statistics of the parish should be carefully drawn up wherever it is possible—the number and ages of children ; who are confirmed and who unconfirmed ; notes of any important or interesting circumstance connected with the family ; records of when each has been visited by the clergyman. Carefully and regularly should this book be kept, and carefully should it be studied. Are we tempted to be idle, to be partial in our attentions to our people ? Those blanks in our visiting lists look at us with reproachful gaze. Memory is awakened, conscience is stirred, we are reminded of work we ought to do, we are supplied with information that directs us in our doing of it. In addition to the general statistics, special lists should be kept of those who need special attention—the sick, the aged, the delicate, the troubled "in mind, body, or estate." Thus, by a little careful system, both as to the time and as to the objects of our labour, we secure greater steadiness, accuracy,

and efficiency in our work, with less of bustle or hurrying to and fro to overtake what has been forgotten or neglected.

Hard work, then, we have before us, and, like all real work, steady and regular, and almost plodding sometimes. Hard work, but always happy work; work for God, for immortal souls, for heavenly results. Happy is our labour in its very hardness. Our energies are employed, all our faculties are busy, our deepest sympathies are called out. The regularly returning order, the portion of toil for each day, the pleasant consciousness when evening comes of "something accomplished, something done," gives a sense of calm and repose in the midst of effort. We look forward as our privilege and joy by-and-by to serving God day and night in His holy temple. The joy has begun already. The teaching and wrestling with consciences by day, the study and prayer by night—what are they but angels' work? The faces of friends that we look into, the eyes that brighten with gladness or soften in tears as we bring our message—what stars can sparkle in the temple on high with sweeter interest for us than these? We are even now God's ministering servants, doing His pleasure, carrying on His work, helping the souls He has redeemed.

The room where we think, read, and pray (even though it be but a curate's humble lodging), the city street, the village church, the darkened sick room—each spot where we carry on our labour of love—is it not God's temple, glorious with His unseen presence, thrilling with the interest of His service?

Shall we grudge, then, labour for our Lord? Shall we look on the incessant toil of the ministry as a hardship? Even if we dared to be idle, could we bear to be so? Will there not be a heart-thrill of triumph, as well as a sense of necessity laid upon the conscience, as we apply to ourselves the poet's words:

> "Think not of rest; though dreams be sweet,
> Start up, and ply your heavenward feet.
> Is not God's oath upon your head
> Ne'er to sink back on slothful bed?
> Never again your loins untie,
> Nor let your torches waste and die,
> Till, when the shadows thickest fall,
> Ye hear your Master's midnight call"?

CHAPTER VI.

HINTS FOR THE STUDY.

PAROCHIAL work and study of books are often thought of as if they were rivals, or antagonistic to each other. They should be considered really as branches of the same work. The pastor is labouring for the great object of making God known to men when he is storing his mind with sacred truths and burning thoughts, as well as when he is striving to press these truths and these thoughts home to the hearts of his brethren.

To be a good teacher you must be a diligent learner. To go on year after year teaching well, you must go on in your learning. Let the learning slacken, let the stream of thought grow stagnant, and the instruction will soon lose its sparkle and its freshness. If a clergyman is really enlightened, mentally and spiritually, on the revelation of God to men's souls, and if he

has good sense to recognise his ignorance on other matters, and honesty not to make a pretence of what he does not possess, he may do much good, though his range of knowledge is very limited. But he will find this limitation to his knowledge a continual hindrance to his usefulness; and in proportion as he is energetic and strong-minded, he will strive to overcome it by diligent and wisely-directed study. There are few parishes in which a clergyman can be placed where he will not have some members of his congregation who are well acquainted with letters and books. In the present day it is often these persons who most need the pastor's help. The tone of current literature is such as to make for them difficulties and temptations which are almost unknown to those whose mental activities have not been awakened, and whose inherited ideas have not been disturbed. If the clergyman is unaccustomed to the lines of thought by which their difficulties are suggested, he can bring them very little real guidance or comfort. He may be very good and very earnest, but they quickly see that he has not breathed their intellectual atmosphere, and does not understand the language in which they and their fellows commune. Underneath any regard they may have for him

personally, there lurks something which, if it is not exactly contempt, is as much akin to it as is a big boy's feeling for his grandmother's well-meant cautions. The advice is very kind, no doubt, but it comes, thinks the receiver of it, from one who is incapable of judging on the subject of the advice.

And no one can speak so simply to simple people as those whose minds have been trained and clarified by careful study. High talking, bombastic sentences, long words, tawdry and flowery rhetoric—these puzzles to the poor and offences to the refined, where do we find them most? Is it not with those whose education has been imperfect? A little knowledge is dangerous in many ways. It certainly has the danger of giving to the style of speaking or writing a nameless, yet very perceptible, flavour of vulgarity. Look at the man who has reached the position of what may be called a "half-gentleman;" see the little tokens of self-importance and self-display breaking out in pompous manners, showy watch-chains, flashing rings, and astounding waistcoats. Is there not something reminding us of this in the grand words of the smatterer in knowledge? He is proud of his newly-acquired possession, and likes

to adorn himself with it. The possession is not large enough to make him forget himself, or feel his own littleness, or exercise what power he has with directness and simplicity of aim. Instead of wanting people to understand and feel the subjects of his discourse, he wants them to understand and feel how accomplished and admirable he is, and how perfectly he expresses himself.

In order, then, to reach the sympathies of the educated and the understandings of the poor, it is of great importance that their spiritual pastor should be a well-read man. It may not be always possible for clergymen to be learned men, but they should always be cultured men. The proportion of time to be devoted to study must, of course, vary according to circumstances. It must be in each individual case a matter of thoughtful and conscientious judgment. Different advice is required according to differing characters. Pressure must be brought on some men to leave their beloved books and their comfortable study, and sally out into muddy roads, and noisy schools, and squalid rooms, and all the bustle and effort of busy outward life; while others, who can talk easily, and like mixing with their fellow-men, and enjoy the exercise and interest of the parochial round, need the strong

sense of duty to bind them down for any length of time to the more uncongenial labour of steady, mental work. Let the division of labour be recognized as a matter, not of inclination, but of conscience. Do not stay and read when you like it, and go out and visit when you like it. But go on reading as long as you feel it to be your duty, and stop reading as soon as you believe it to be your duty. To one the going on will be the difficulty, to another the stopping will be the difficulty ; but to all alike, both the going on and the stopping should be a matter, not of impulse, but of principle. And this much I think we may lay down as a general rule, that every day should have its portion of study, as well as its portion of active exertion. An hour or two in the morning, and an hour or two in the evening, might surely be secured for the purpose in the most busy sphere. Any arrangement of parochial work which would make such an allocation an impossibility is, I do not hesitate to say, a defective arrangement, and ought to be changed. All the work will, in the long run, be degraded, and tend towards a perfunctory routine, if the workmen cannot be invigorated and freshened in their inward life by regular study.

I. As to the subject of our reading, I hope it is unnecessary for me to say that the first place must always be given to the "reading and weighing of the Holy Scriptures"—other things are useful, but this is essential. The minister of Christ is not a mere moral policeman to keep men's conduct in order; nor is he only a teacher of mental philosophy, guiding their inquiries and speculations and guesses at the unknown. He is an ambassador with an authoritative message from the living God; he is entrusted with a definite revelation as to the character, will, and dealings of that unseen and awful Being. In the life and words of the Lord Jesus, in the teaching of His inspired Apostles and Prophets, the revelation is embodied. By the records of that sacred life, by the writings of those holy men, the revelation has been preserved for the Church. There it has to be studied; there its meaning and import have to be searched for; there the teacher must have his own spirit embued with the blessedness and glory of the Divine message which he has to re-echo.

It is not the object of these papers (even if the writer were capable of it) to guide you in the study of that grand and widely-varied course of literature which we group together under the

familiar name of "the Bible." I must content myself here with two or three suggestions connected with our special subject, the pastor's work.

1. Strive in your reading of Scripture always to search for God's teaching to the human heart. The Bible is often studied almost in the same way as are Homer and Herodotus. There is much interesting criticism of ancient language, and much valuable research into ancient history. The student can give the most accurate information as to the genealogy of Hebrew kings or the geography of ancient cities. His studies are no doubt useful in their way, and may indirectly elucidate the moral and spiritual teaching of the inspired writers; but it must not be supposed that this kind of reading is a study of God's revelation. It is well that the picture frame should be cleaned and burnished, but it must not be mistaken for the picture. It is well that the casket should be carefully handled; but the casket is one thing, the gem it contains is another.

Do not be satisfied then with reading so many chapters of the Bible, or becoming acquainted with this or that portion of Scripture history. As Christ's messenger, learning His message,

let your constant inquiry be, "What light is here thrown upon the relation between God and man? What do I learn as to who God is, what God wishes, what God's plans and purposes are?" Ever as you read let this questioning be an undercurrent, giving a thoughtful tone and an earnest purpose to your study. And in proportion as it tends to make your searching of Scripture thoughtful and earnest, it will also make it honest. It will lift you above what we may call "text theology." Instead of dexterously picking out expressions here and there to "prove" doctrines that agree with your tastes and prejudices, you will be anxious to find out as you read what was really meant by the writer. You will study the history of God's dealings with men, and the outpourings of the hearts of those whom from time to time He has raised up and filled with a special portion of His Spirit, so that your own heart may be more and more attuned in harmony with the tone of His thinking and teaching, and your ideas and convictions become more and more faithful echoes of His revelation. Thus you will come to be indeed "thoroughly furnished" for your work. Taught by your Master's inspired teachers, catching up the tone that breathes through their

pages, there will be a certain inspiration in your own teaching. There will be a power about it to touch, and waken, and comfort, that will surprise yourself; for it is the power of the "Word of God." Speaking week after week and day after day, there will still be an ever-renewing freshness, vividness, and interest in what you say; for it will be drawn from the cool depths of that "well of water which springeth up unto everlasting life."

2. But, while you read Holy Scripture to strengthen you in your teaching of others, take care lest the thought of these others should interfere between your own soul and God's teaching. It might easily do so. I fear it often does so with us clergymen. "What a nice text this verse would make! How exactly it suits the case of Mr. Jones or Mrs. Brown! How profitably we might improve this passage for the Bible-class!" Do not such thoughts often rise in our minds as we read? And when they come, is not our own learning from the sacred page greatly hindered? I think it is well, then, that we should have special times for devotional reading. Besides our general study of Scripture, as students, with the help of commentaries and critical apparatus; besides our study as teachers, preparing for our expositions,

and storing our minds with the treasures we are to impart to others, we should have our little sacred seasons, when, as weak and ignorant children, we come ourselves to the Father of lights to hear what He has to say to our souls.

These times should be looked upon as precious moments for being with Himself "behind the veil." Not as teachers, but as poor puzzled learners; not as guides of others, but as erring and straying our own selves, we try to look up into His face and listen to His voice; and it is what He says to our own hearts, and not what He says to any one else, that we want to hear. Jealously we should strive to guard the holy privacy of these intimate communings. What we read is God's word to our own ear. We try to keep away the thought of how it bears on any one else. What my God and Saviour is to me, how He loves me, how He treats me, what He has in store for me, what He wishes for my character, my conduct, my feelings—this is what I want to learn, this is what I ask Him to teach me. The more quickly and attentively I listen to His voice to myself now, the stronger shall I be, the richer in knowledge and experience, to talk to my brethren by-and-by.

I do not mean that there is to be bondage in

this matter, or a straining of conscience, or a laying on it any kind of burden. I only mean that we should recognize the importance of daily study of Scripture for the nourishment of our own spiritual life, and that there should be a firm determination of the will that such should be regularly secured.

II. Closely connected with our study of Scripture is the study of the evidences of our religion. It is closely connected; for the reading we have just spoken of is the study of one great branch of evidence. It is proving the truth of what we have been taught to believe by the test of experiment. When we bring our hearts into contact with the story of Christ's life and character, and the teaching of His commissioned messengers; when we find the longings and aspirations of our moral nature so grandly satisfied by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus; when we find so many of the deepest questions of the understanding answered by it, and so many of the difficulties and trials of actual life made easier by it, we are face to face with an evidence that is of all others perhaps the most practically potent. But it is only one of the many lines of proof, by the convergence of which we are convinced that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and that our Christian faith

is based, not on hopes or dreams, but on the firm foundation of positive fact. The ordinary believer is often satisfied (and the satisfaction is by no means unreasonable) with the inward and spiritual line of evidence that comes so straight home to his consciousness ; but the teacher of religion is ill-furnished for his office, unless he is familiar with the other lines also. In the present day this is especially the case. The danger pressing most immediately upon us now is the danger of scepticism. The difficulty which our people have to contend with is not merely the old difficulty of serving God, but the difficulty of believing in God at all. Does the supernatural exist ? God, goodness, eternity, heaven, hell, are there any realities corresponding with these old words on our tongues, and old ideas in our minds ? These are the questions that men and women are asking all around, sometimes with the levity of those who are glad to escape from seriousness of thought in a complacent agnosticism, sometimes with the agony of hope and fear of those who feel that on the answer to the questions depends their all in all. Clear, decided, and convincing should be the answer Christ's ambassador brings to such questioning. To give it well, to give it according to the different needs of different doubters, to give

it so as to meet the special difficulties of the modern mind, he should be well versed in modern apologetic literature. Happily there is a noble supply to meet the urgent demand. Year by year powerful and deeply interesting works issue from the press, making us know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed. To some minds the study of such works is an intense pleasure. The accurate reasoning that, on grounds of physical and mental philosophy, grapples with the negations of the materialist; the learned antiquarian researches that help to establish the genuineness and authority of our sacred books; the careful grouping together of events in the world's outward history, and more momentous events still in the history of its thought and morals, that puts in a vivid light the reality and stupendous significance of the Gospel story,—these lines of thought and study are more interesting to many readers than the most thrilling novel. To others they are painful and harassing. The cold arguing over subjects in which their heart's love and life's hopes are bound up seems to them almost like the philosophy of those who "peep and botanize upon their mother's grave." But whether we like it or like it not, it is a training that, as leaders in the great warfare between light and darkness, we must

go through. All clergymen are not indeed placed exactly in the same position with regard to their warfare. The weapons of some have to be directed against moral rather than intellectual antagonists. Their people are generally simple and uneducated, with dangers and temptations enough (God knows), but no great temptations from either the use or abuse of their reasoning powers. And all men have not similar mental qualifications. The power of firmly grasping and clearly expressing difficult and complicated lines of argument is not a common possession. Some men are therefore better suited for work among the educated, and some for work among the uneducated. And it would be well that, in choosing spheres of labour, men should have regard, not only to the quantity of work to be done, and the quantity of pay to be received, but also very specially to the kind of work to be done in that special post, and its suitability to their peculiar qualifications. Still in every field of work the clergyman is placed as the "defender of the faith;" and no matter what be his natural aptitudes, he should carefully and earnestly learn the use of "the weapons of his warfare." He ought to have, therefore, clearly in his mind the main lines of argument that prove the truth of his great message.

III. Besides your study of Scripture and of the evidences of religion, you have before you also the vast field of what is called "dogmatic theology." This is often supposed to be a "dry" study. The dryness of the study depends on the spirit of the reader. If you merely try to charge your memory with theories and controversies, and texts on this side and that, so that you can exactly tell what were the views of various heretics, and what were the arguments by which the orthodox refuted them, the subject will be dull. You are approaching it in a dull spirit. You are like a schoolboy learning a Greek play by rote. You are like an auctioneer taking an inventory of valuable pictures. The beauty and wonder of the things you are dealing with make no impression on your spirit. Your learning may enable you to answer an examiner's questions; it may give you the credit of being "a well-read man;" but it will not make you a stronger man. It will not make you wiser to know the difficulties and temptations of humanity, nor wiser to apply to them the Divine remedy. It will not make your visits to men and women more instructive, nor your sermons more powerful, nor your spiritual life more watchful. This, however, is not the fault of theology, but of the student. If

approached in a right spirit, the study of theology is the study of the two most interesting subjects in existence—God's revelation and man's thoughts about it. It is the study of mistake and error as well as truth. But even in the errors we learn to discard and refute there is deep interest. They are the efforts of human thought to grasp the Divine. There is sublimity mingled with pathos in the very failures. Heresies, narrow views, exaggerations of religious doctrine, are they not marks of the struggle between a great thing and a greater—between man's mind and God's truth? Study your theology with sympathy for the human thought, as well as with prayer and longing to know exactly what God has made known. Feel for the difficulties of Arius even while you join with Athanasius in his demolition. Let your imagination be interested and your heart touched by the long and majestic history of Latin Christianity, even while you feel as keenly as Luther the danger and falsehood of Romish superstition. Thrill in solemn awe with Calvin in presence of Divine omniscience and Divine immutability, even though you preach with Arminius the reality of the separate human will. What God has taught distinctly or with dim hints, what men have thought about it rightly or wrongly,

wisely or foolishly, carefully or rashly, such aie the subjects of theologic study. They may be described in dry language; they may be read about in a dry spirit; but when studied with reverence for God's teachings, and sympathy for man's thinkings, they are glorious subjects, calculated to lift the heart above petty worldliness and self-seeking, calculated to clear and strengthen the understanding, and to fit Christian ministers for their grand ministerial work of dealing with men's souls, entering into the intricacies of their moral and mental difficulties, and bringing them face to face with the Revelation of God.

IV. The study of ecclesiastical history is in reality a branch of the study of theology. Still, as we read it, we have before us man's thinkings upon God's revelations. For the most important part of the history of the Church is the history of its thought. We have God's various dealings in outward providence—the working out of the great laws by which nations and dynasties rise and fall —the manifestations of tendencies in man's nature by which divisions and schisms and wars and tumults and mutual persecutions sweep over society like the gusts of wind over the stormy sea. We have these changing events in ecclesiastical history, but deep underneath all we have the strivings of

man's mind to know and express the true, and cast out the false. The turmoil on the surface comes from the struggles of the buried Titan. If we read our ecclesiastical history in an enlightened spirit, we are watching still that greatest and most interesting of phenomena — man's thinking, feeling, and acting with regard to God's teaching. But there is a special use in this branch of theology, besides the knowledge it gives us of human character, and the fresh aspects it shows us of Divine truth. It makes us feel the unity and continuity of Christ's Church. It tends to counteract the strong tendency in the clerical mind to settle down into "parochialism." Naturally and rightly his own parish has the very deepest interest for the pastor's heart; and he has to think of it, wish for it, and look into it so much, that there is a danger of his not looking beyond it. And so his mind easily becomes narrowed, and his sympathies contracted. He begins to forget that there is anything outside his parish, or that there was anything of interest there before he began his work. The attendance at his Sunday School, the number of his communicants, the quarrels of his old women, the impression made by his last sermon—these seem to him the great events of the world's history. Is it not well for him to be reminded that there have

been in the past, and are going on in the present, some other events nearly as important? Is it not well that his attention should sometimes be turned from Tommy Smith's misconduct at school, and Mr. Holdfast's stinginess in his subscriptions, and the extraordinary sleepiness of the congregation on Sunday evening, to the struggles and trials and failures and triumphs of Christ's people throughout the ages? As he remembers the agonies of martyrs and the struggles of reformers, and the long labours of missionaries, as he thinks of the fire of persecution, and the blight of false doctrine, and the oppressions of statecraft, and the tyranny of priestcraft, and the grand thunder of Christian preachers, and the massive writings of Christian fathers, and the wisdom of councils, and the wavering and yet ever onward progress of the line of Christian teaching through the world, must he not be lifted up in spirit, and made a larger-hearted and truer teacher? He feels perhaps more intensely than before that he is God's messenger to the little flock around him; but he feels, too, that he is but one in the long procession of God's soldiers and servants here, soon to be gathered into the great number whom no man can number on high. He feels that he and his people are but part of "the holy Church throughout the world."

V. There are other studies, not usually looked upon as theological or even religious, which seem to me important and useful ingredients in the intellectual diet of a clergyman. Prominent among these is mental and moral philosophy, the investigation of the laws of thought, and of the relation and interaction of the various wheels within wheels of that wonderful inward mechanism by which man perceives, feels, wishes, purposes, and acts. The more the spiritual physician understands this psychological anatomy, the more skilfully can he apply his medicines, and the more boldly, when needs be, can he cut home with the keen blade of argument or reproof. Much preaching, for want of this knowledge, is only waste of energy. Men say fine things and perhaps true things; they harp on one subject, thunder on another, but the right chord in the heart of the hearers is not touched. The particular emotion needed to move the will has not been awakened. More knowledge of the laws of mind, more thoughtful determination to act on them and through them, would have kept these orators from many a long train of useless eloquence.

VI. The study of natural science is also particularly beneficial to a clergyman; for it is another form of the search after God's truth. It is the

study of what *is*. It is the investigation of facts. Such studies help to produce a tone of patient and careful inquiry, a judicial calmness of thought that is specially useful to the clerical mind. The mere theologian is apt to be passionate and eager in his opinions. The subjects on which he thinks are so interwoven with his dearest affections and most ardent hopes, that it is hard for him to preserve an unprejudiced and impartial judgment. Where we feel intensely, it is not easy to reason calmly. Hence comes the *odium theologicum* that has been always such a reproach to religion, and such a hindrance to the advance of religious knowledge. Zeal for God's truth, as it is called, has been the most prolific source of error. Men are so eager for orthodoxy, so fierce in their pious horror of heterodoxy, that they rush into the theological fray with eyes blinded to everything but their own taditional ideas. Thus errors and superstitions become enthroned in pious affections, and half truths pass for whole truths, and realities can never be separated from the garments of conventional expression in which they are wrapped up. Thus good men who believe in the same living Lord are kept asunder by hard barriers of doctrinal differences ; and there is the sad spectacle to the world of perpetual disunion in the Church of Christ

mutual suspicion, mutual recriminations, mutual denunciations, religious people "hating one another for the love of God." No doubt the moral faults of bigotry, dogmatism, and intolerance need moral remedies. But the habit of mind engendered by scientific study helps the cure. Those who are altogether occupied in these studies have their own dangers, which we need not enter into now. But a mingling of scientific investigation with the study of theology counteracts the theologic faults. In arriving at conclusions on debated subjects, the tone of mind it engenders does not ask, "Is this the orthodox view? is it nice? does it sound pious? does it fall in with the traditions of my party? how would it be approved of by this person or that person? It simply asks, "Is it true? what is the evidence for it? what are the objections against it? on which side does the balance of proof lie?" Calmly and steadfastly it strives to shut out all considerations but this one, "What conclusion does the *evidence* lead to?" I strongly recommend Divinity students, therefore, not to think the science they have to learn in their "arts" course an interference with their preparation for the great work of the ministry but rather a help to it, for which they may be thankful, and which it is well they should use

earnestly. And I think it is useful for clergymen in their after-life to keep up their interest in scientific subjects, and whenever they have an opportunity to carry on their study of them. They will thereby be larger-minded men, more capable of weighing evidence and arriving at unbiassed judgments, and they will not be less humble and loving servants of the Creator for being careful students of His works.

VII. General literature, too, the "light literature" even of the day, should have its corner in the clergyman's library, and its portion, though not a very large portion, of his time. Relaxation is needed; the bow must be unbent; and just as it is well that the body should have its invigorating exercise, the ride, the walk, the mountain ramble, the game of tennis or cricket, or the good pull on the water, so it is well that the mind also should have its hours of unbending in which the mental powers may find pleasant exercise and interest without fatigue. This can best be effected by literature. After the careful study of the morning, after the straining of all the energies of thought and feeling in preparation of sermons or addresses that are to rouse and guide the souls of our fellow-men, after the day's toil in schools and classes, and visits to sick and

sorrowing and sinning men and women, it is a wonderful rest to "read from the treasured volume the poem of our choice," to be carried away by the ripple of sweet rhyme, or the music of stately prose, or the fascinating spell of imaginative thought, away from our struggles, anxieties, and disappointments, away into a fresh atmosphere, where we can breathe softly and quietly while

> "The cares that infest the day
> May fold their tents like the Arabs,
> And as silently steal away."

But the refreshment of literature is neither its only nor its chief advantage. It gives to the mind and to the style of speaking and writing that indescribable "something" which carries with it so much charm and power, which, though akin to knowledge, is not exactly the same as knowledge, which for want of a better name we call "culture." Learning and severe study will not produce it; they should underlie it; but over them there should be layers of gentler lore, even as over the seed-bearing calyx of the rose are folded the soft and fragrant petals. This culture is a very real help to the clergyman in his teaching. Tact, delicacy, and refinement of feeling, though they are the offspring of love, are

assisted in their birth by culture; and grace and felicity of expression are entirely its gift. Culture will not make you know the truth. It will not give fire and enthusiasm to preach it from your heart. But when you know it, and love it, and long to make it known to men, culture will facilitate your utterance, will supply you with many a helping word and happy idea, so that what you feel and believe may be more effectively commended to your hearers. It is impossible to describe the manifold advantage it is to a clergyman to be a cultivated gentleman. It gives you topics of mutual interest and sympathy with the educated members of your flock; it wins for you a sort of access to them which if you are in earnest you will use for your deeper work. It helps you also to know what such people are thinking about, what ideas are likely to be floating in their minds, what dangers to heart and understanding you have to guard them against. The literature of the day reflects the general thought and feeling of the day. You find it hard perhaps to have many opportunities for close conversation with the gentlemen, the lawyers, or doctors of your congregation. But as you read the *Nineteenth Century* or the *Contemporary Review*,

you know some of the subjects to which their thoughts have been directed.

And you read not merely as a physician looking out for the diseases he is to cure, but also as a man with a healthy appetite looking in many storehouses for nourishing food. Your mind wants to be strengthened, enlarged, and supplied with varied ideas. Every honest book you read brings you some of these. Well does one of our most earnest poets describe the spirit in which general literature ought to be read:

> "We get no good
> By being ungenerous, even to a book,
> And calculating profits—so much help
> From so much reading. It is rather when
> We gloriously forget ourselves, and plunge
> Soul forward, headlong, into a book's profound,
> Impassioned for its beauty and its salt of truth,
> 'Tis then we get the right good from a book." *

I cordially agree with this noble sentiment; I think that we parsons and embryo parsons need to be reminded of it. We are not mere quarantine officers, to whom literature has to be submitted, to see whether it is safe from the plague. We are not a separate priest-caste, looking down from our dignified elevation upon weak and inferior races. We are men and brothers, knit together in the great fraternity of the human race, throbbing

* Mrs. Barrett Browning.

with the pulse of its varied life, sharing its joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, feeling our hearts heave and swell with the pant of its intellectual labour. We are elder brothers indeed, through our office, commissioned by our Father to help and guide, but brothers still, and the more brotherly the better helpers ; so we like to share with our brother-men our common heritage of thought and knowledge.

But we must take care that literary knowledge and culture do not interfere with what the Apostle calls "simplicity and godly sincerity." Not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, souls are won for Christ. If you read the thoughts and opinions and speculations of the day so much that you can no longer truly say, "I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified," if the Lord Himself—His love and His service—becomes to you one of the many things you want to teach, instead of the "one thing needful," to which everything else is subservient, then your books and your studies have become to you noxious weeds, entangling thorns, choking the celestial seed. And there is another danger. "Knowledge puffeth up." You might easily pride yourself on being accomplished and well-read. And then there would come a

tone of show-off into your language. You would use your culture, not to make your message better known, and its beauty more deeply felt, but to dress yourself up more prettily for people's admiration. Your quotations would be not for the purpose of illustrating truth, but of adorning the preacher. Ah, my cultured friend, it would have been better to have remained an honest dunce than to have become a conceited pedant.

The difference between literary knowledge as a snare or as a help depends on the motive and spirit of your study. St. Paul was an eminently cultured man, and used his knowledge with a master hand ; but he used it as nothing in itself, but just as a means for that great labour in which he "travailed in birth" for his spiritual children, "till Christ should be formed in their hearts." Whatever learning or culture he had, he counted it, as well as everything else, "but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, by whom the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world." In our reading of literature, then, as well as in every other branch of our work, we must earnestly pray that the "love of Christ may constrain us." Lord Brougham has suggested that it is important for every reader, who would read with profit, to aim at *unity* in his

studies. There should be some one subject or branch of thought kept prominent in his mind. No matter how varied his reading, there should be a constant under-current of endeavour to make it bear on this one *specialité* of his. Thus desultoriness in study will be prevented; and as many blossoms are strung by children's hands on one twine, so all the books he reads, and lines of thought he pursues, will be kept from waste and dispersion by their connection with his one leading topic. A noble unity is given to all the reading of a minister of Christ, by the one great object that dominates his life. He wants to bring men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. He wants to be a real helper to human hearts. In all his reading of all kinds he should keep this well in mind. I want to be a helper; is there anything here that will help me to help? In theology, in history, in essay, in poem, in fiction, in whatsoever book he takes in his hand, the same search should be prosecuted. Is any light thrown here on the working of my brethren's hearts, on their dangers, their difficulties, their mistakes, their delusions? Can I get any hint here as to how I might reach them more directly, or bring to bear on them more effectively the glorious revelation of God? Thus manifold lines of reading do not

distract his mind or dissipate his mental energies. The varying notes are attuned to one harmony, the many-coloured rays are concentrated into one focus. All he reads, whether light or serious, religious or secular, is made subservient to one end, and that end is the great object of his life, to bless and elevate his fellow-men, to help them to know the true and do the right, and fulfil their great human mission to "minister in the temple of immensity.'

VIII. Before, however, passing away from the subject of the clergyman's reading, I should like to suggest, as a practical hint, that to prevent desultoriness, it is well to have always one good solid book on hand. The subjective unity I have spoken of would hardly be a sufficient safeguard without some external help. There may be varieties and light delicacies of many kinds at your table, but in order to make a wholesome meal you require a sufficient allowance of plain substantial food. See that it is the same in your reading. The review, the poem, the pleasant essay, are very well in their way; but if you have not some book that will call out your mental energies, your soul will soon "loathe the light food." One really carefully written work, either old or new, one book that has in it thought and materials for thought, and that will need concentrated attention

ought to be part of your daily study. And the advance of your mark in this book, or the reproach of its long residence in nearly the same place, will help to remind you how far you are steadily studying, or how far you are letting yourself grow into a mere literary *dilettante.*

CHAPTER VII.

WORK ON THE KNEES.

WE are now leaving the quiet study, and about to sally forth on the practical work of our parish. This is the best time, therefore, to speak of the great tie that binds together the outside and the inside work. I do not know whether it is itself carried on most out of doors or indoors. I do not know whether there is most real prayer under the vault of heaven, in the momentary pauses during the anxious work of life, or when we enter into our closet, and shut the door, and there pour out the yearnings of our hearts to the Father which seeth in secret.

The work of our ministry is a tremendously arduous work. Its sphere is that region so difficult of access from without, the human spirit, the human will. How hard it is for one man to make another man better!

> "Each in his hidden sphere of joy and woe,
> Our hermit spirits dwell, and range apart."

The solemn, lonely, separate individuality of each soul is such that even the Omnipotent One was obliged to say, "How often would I, . . . but ye would not." Miserably powerless we feel at the door of this impregnable citadel—another human being. It is one of the disappointments of ministerial life to find out this powerlessness of words. We feel deeply ourselves, our convictions are strong and intense; we think that our enthusiasm must carry all before it: "If I can but speak to that man, if I can tell him what is in my heart, if I can plead with him face to face, and talk to him of the baseness and misery of sin, and the glory of righteousness, and the mercy of the Saviour; if I can beseech him with the passion of love and longing for his salvation that I feel within me, he must yield —it would be impossible for him to resist." I make my attempt full of triumphant anticipation. The man stares at me stolidly—he does not understand me—or he moves uneasily away. He gives a polite assent that means nothing. I see that I have not moved him in the least. Though I were to speak to him with the tongues of men and angels, it would not divert for a moment his interest in the odds on the Derby, or in the rise or fall of the price of bullocks.

And it is not only my stolid friend that is un-

moved by my eloquence. I begin to find, as I go about among men and women, how hard it is, in the press and hurry of life, amidst its thousand interests, and pleasures, and pains, and eager desires, and daily companionships, and habitual setting of the thoughts into time-worn channels—how hard it is to get any practical influence on any one. And emotions change so fast, and other influences come so quickly, that for my influence to be a permanent power in changing the current of a life seems almost impossible. And truly, to any large or decisive extent, "with men it is impossible." Therefore, he who would carry out ministerial work with any effect is driven to *prayer*. His experience of powerlessness sends him to the Omnipotent Power.

In order to have praying and working effectively combined, it is of paramount importance to believe in the reality of prayer. It is easy to believe in the reality of work. We see it. We see it, in spite of many a failure, still manifestly a real power. Self-complacency sometimes, perhaps, leads us to exaggerate the value and effectiveness of our own work. But prayer—it is an invisible mysterious agency. I cannot conceive how it works. Nothing can enable me to be certain that it is a reality, except that faith which is

the "evidence of things not seen." If I am to pray, I must believe that there is a Power above and beyond human will and thought that works on human will and thought. I must believe that my will can reach and influence that Power, and that It can reach and influence others. But that is only another way of saying that I must be a believer in God. And unless I am, unless I know Him to be as real as my own soul, I have nothing to teach mankind, and am as little capable of working as I am of praying. And I need not rely less in the reality of prayer, because the more I think of it the more inconceivable it seems. The same is true as to all the phenomena of that mystery of mysteries—life. The connection between my volition and the substances of which my bodily nerves and joints are composed defies explanation. That a desire in my heart should "move the arm that moves the world" is indeed an inscrutable mystery, but that it should move the muscles and bones of my own arm is in reality as entirely beyond explanation.

Let me then believe, as a matter of faith, that I have a God that heareth prayer. Let it be a deeply felt conviction underlying all my life that every whisper of my heart to Him reaches

His ear, and becomes an infinite power ; so shall I feel that when I am praying I am employing the mightiest conceivable agency. In proportion as by faith, by standing face to face with the unseen, I realize this great truth—in that proportion shall I become a man of prayer, a man who holds free and loving intercourse with the King of kings, a man whose poor human efforts produce effects beyond what could have been thought of or dreamed of, because they are accompanied by the power and blessing of the Omnipotent One.

With this conviction as to the reality of prayer strong on our hearts, we shall endeavour always to make our praying keep pace with our working. It has been said that a good sermon is always prepared "on the knees." I believe it is the same with all our work. It is only well done "on the knees." Before the work is undertaken, it is commended to God for His blessing. While it is being carried out, though the body may be active, and the mind with all its energies at full stretch, yet the spirit is in the attitude of prayer. And when the work is done, it is followed with renewed beseechings that its weakness and faults may be pardoned, and that through its stumbling efforts a real benefaction may be conveyed.

Thus the daily parochial round becomes a walk with God. Before we start, as we lay out the programme of duty in our minds, we spread it before Him in prayer. We tell Him what we are going to do, whom we are going to see. As we knock at each door, the heart is knocking at heaven's gate, that it may be given to us what to say. As we kneel by the bedside of the sick and dying, we speak for them with happy confidence to the known and trusted Friend who is standing between us and them. As we mount the pulpit stairs, the hand may cling to the railing with a tremble of natural nervousness, but the heart clings in childlike trust to the hand stretched out from on high, and strong in His strength we speak to the few or the many, the learned or the unlearned, the great or the humble, the message He bids us speak for Him. And then, when the evening comes, and we kneel in the solitude of our chamber, we tell Him the story of our work, and one by one we bring Him the names of those whom we have seen and spoken to; and those whom we have toiled for in the day we pray for now; and we tell our Father of our hopes for them and our fears for them; and believing that He loves us, and hears our prayer,

we lay out their cases before Him, and plead for them, that they may be pardoned, strengthened, and comforted. And so the sacred bond between pastor and people grows closer and dearer as it is embodied in the golden link of sweet communion between the pastor and his God.

But nowhere probably is the strength and sacredness of that bond between people and pastor and Father in heaven brought into greater prominence than in the place where pastor and people generally meet first, and meet most often. If prayer is the golden link, where does it flash and shine so vividly as in the "house of prayer"? Wearing the vestments that mark him out as a minister of the sanctuary, the pastor takes his place there among the people to whose help his life is to be dedicated. There, in that building hallowed by so many associations—where the bride and bridegeoom have been joined together in holy union, and the young mothers have brought their babes to the font, and the mourners have laid down their dead for a little while, to let the solemn hush of sorrow be broken by the words of Christian hope and triumph ; there, where those whom God entrusts to the pastor's keeping are so often to meet in prayer and praise to the Father in heaven, he kneels with them now to lead them

in worship. Much of his ministerial work will have to be carried on in the same place. Henceforth the solemn worship of the people, and their reception of the Sacraments of the Lord Jesus, and the most sacred epochs of their lives, will be associated with him in that church. Is it not well then that we should dwell for a little while upon the tone in which this part of our praying work should be carried on?

I think that the principal notes in the chord of feeling which should be struck in the sanctuary ministrations are Reverence, Love, and Joy. God is everywhere; every spot in heaven and earth is holy with His presence. Reverent God's child should strive to be wherever he is; so reverent as to crush every feeling, and to silence every word, that would be dishonouring to the glorious Being who is ever by his side. But He who said, "I am with you always," said also, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." He meant something real by this saying. Therefore the reverence which we should strive to have in our hearts wherever we are we should strive specially to express in voice and look and manner when we come into the house consecrated to the purpose of meeting together in the name of the Lord. We need not puzzle

ourselves with the question, in what sense is He with us here more than elsewhere? We want to worship Him in a very solemn way here; we want together to lift up heart and voice, and express our homage and devotion to Him; we want to make our reverence and loyalty known to our brethren and to the world. He surely sympathizes with our wish, and meets us as we come to Him. In all our demeanour, then, we, as the leaders of our brethren's worship, should show that we believe our God is in our midst. Prayer to Him is a very sacred act; voice and gesture should show that we feel it. We are gathering round a King; we are speaking to a King, even the King of kings. Are lounging attitudes and gabbled words and careless glances suitable expressions of our approach to His majesty? Reverent then, with a simple but humble reverence, should be every posture, every word, every look. Reverent, not with slavish awe, but with sweet, filial respect. We are in the presence of a King; but the King is our dear Father in Christ Jesus. We are not afraid of Him; we do not want to propitiate Him. We know He accepts and loves us. Prostrations and grovellings upon the ground are not suitable to our mutual relation. We and our brothers and sisters are joining together to

hold communion with our royal and honoured Father. We do so in a spirit hushed and subdued, but with the calmest confidence, and without any burden of awe or fear upon our consciences.

And *love* should be very present too. We are a company of brethren joined together by the closest and dearest bonds. Our united worship is one of the means by which we express our fellowship one with another; and as we speak together to our Father, we learn more and more how sacred is our companionship and identity of interests. The Father whom we address is very dear to us. Dear to us also should be the brethren who are speaking to Him with us. The clergyman is not a functionary doing something *for* the people. He is their elder brother leading them to the common Father's presence, and saying aloud in their names what they are saying in their hearts. Sometimes they join with their voices; sometimes they speak, and he is silent. But always it is a company of brethren with one brother solemnly ordained and appointed to be the leader of the rest. A certain tenderness and unction there should be in the way he leads their devotions. A dry, hard, official tone is miserably unseemly for one who is not a mere clerk paid for his reading, but a brother praying with his brothers. I say there should be

a certain loving unction in his manner. But great care must be taken that it should not degenerate into *unctuousness.* A greasy, hypocritical, vulgar unctuousness, with drawling of voice and rolling of eyes, is most detestable. Whatever else we are, we must be simple and unaffected. Let us not try for affectionate manners and affectionate looks, but let us try to remember we are in the presence of a Father whom we love and honour, and of brethren with whom we sympathise. Unconsciously, and without effort, the outward manner will reflect what is within.

And *joy* is to be our other note. Our worship of our Father is a glad and happy employment. We must try to feel this, and make it be felt. Some clergymen seem to think it pious to be dismal: they read in a slow, mournful, moaning tone; the more slow, the more pompous, the more unnatural they are, the more reverent they suppose themselves to be. There is no reverence in being either slow or sad. It makes some of the congregation sleepy; it drives some of them wild with impatience; it makes others, I fear, titter at the "drony manner" of their "solemn and stupid parson." Very slow reading is tiresome and difficult to follow. The operations of the mind are instantaneous, and your fellow-

worshippers have mentally run to the end of your sentence while you are still drawling on in the middle of it. They have to stop and wait for you to begin the next. If reading is too quick, the ear cannot catch it. The hearing of poor people and aged people is sometimes a little blunt. But more time should never be spent in reading a sentence than is necessary to make it distinctly heard; any slowness beyond what is needful for this distinct utterance produces fatigue. If you try to appear reverent by your slow manner of conducting service, you will really be only tiresome.

Let us be "glad to go into the house of the Lord." Let us feel it to be good and pleasant to praise Him; and then, though we have to bow in humble confession, and pour out eager beseechings and cries for help in trial, and for comfort in sorrow; still in our Father's presence, believing that He forgives all our sins, and remembers them no more, believing that He knows our wants, and will give us more than we ask or think; believing that our brethren are around us, sharing our feelings, the predominant tone in our hearts will be happiness and spiritual refreshment; and this inward note will reflect itself in a certain calm brightness of manner and aspect even in the midst of our deepest reverence.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE PULPIT.

Part I.—The Sermon Matter.

THE Christian preacher comes to his congregation as a herald or authorized messenger from God. His first and principal duty is to see that his message is really delivered. He is not fit for his office, unless he understands in his heart what that message is. Why should the messenger run, if he has no tidings? *

There may often be the question in the young preacher's mind, *How* shall I speak? But "What shall I speak about?" is a question he should never need to ask. What on earth shall I say next Sunday? How shall I ever fill up my twenty pages of sermon paper, or my fifteen minutes of sermon time? Is not this a pitiful question for one who comes as a messenger from the living God to immortal souls? Why did you ask for

* See "Rest Awhile," by Dr. Vaughan.

authority to preach the Gospel in the Church of God? Why did you declare your trust that you were inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to your office and administration, if when you come face to face with your people you do not know what to say to them?

What shall I say? Yes. How shall I find words to express the glorious things I want to say? How shall I put them so that they may come home fresh and real to my hearers' hearts? How shall I bring them warm from my own heart without cooling and stiffening them in conventional forms of speech?

But what have I to speak about? Surely that which is in my thoughts from day to day and hour to hour,—that which is the comfort and strength and joy of my life,—that which is the most familiar and precious thing in my heart, though so great and marvellous that my tongue can hardly utter it. If I do not know what this is, no matter how well I might be able to speak, I could not be a Christian preacher.

The message we have to deliver, and the substance of our teaching, may be described in many ways, but I believe the simplest and clearest description of it is that which we so often find in the New Testament—"preaching Christ." God's great

revelation to man in the Gospel was not a set of accurate propositions, nor a set of definite precepts, but a living Person. The Christian creed is the history of that Person. Christian faith is the affiance of the heart to that Person. Christian morality is the following of that Person. Christian love and hope and joy, and power to conquer, all centre round that Person. Here, then, is what we have to preach—Christ, the manifestation of God, the Saviour of sinners, the Holy Sovereign of mankind.

In order to preach Him with any reality, my fellow-workers, you have to recognize, and cause to be recognized, the meaning and awfulness of that word "sin." The conscience must be grappled with. Each man must be brought face to face with his own soul. There is no meaning nor interest in the Incarnation, nor in all the great truths connected with it, unless there is the consciousness of personal sin—sin to be hated and dreaded, sin to be pardoned, sin to be conquered. Set this before you as one branch of your great office of preaching Christ—to have the *conscience awakened.* The more you know of your own heart, the more earnestly you are striving yourself to be holy even as He is holy, the more effectively will you be able to rouse in others the sense of shame and dissatis-

faction with self. Aim at this object more or less in every sermon. Remember that there are probably many sitting in the church, looking very respectable, assenting to every religious statement with orthodox gravity, but utterly uninterested in the Gospel of Christ. They are, as to heart and conscience, fast asleep. You might preach very nicely, and only make them sleep all the sounder. Your first business is to awaken them. You must be very wide awake yourself to do it. A strong, vigorous grasp, a rough shaking, is often needed. Ah! unless you are thoroughly, I might say terribly in earnest, you will let them sleep on. Many ways you must take to awake the sleepers. They are so accustomed to be preached at, that they have a wonderful faculty of dozing on undisturbed. "It is all very right, all very true," they murmur through their apathy, "but it's nothing particular to me." You must use every device that prayerful thought and study and loving imagination can suggest, to get them to feel that it *is* something particular to themselves. Careful delineations of character, vivid sketches of human life, close and keen analysis of the heart's motives, solemn warnings, plain repetitions of Divine threats, clear exhibitions of what the Lord wants us to be. and what the Lord Jesus, our great pattern, was—

these and such-like tones must be tried in varying succession. Often there should be the pause, the startling question, the bold, earnest appeal—what are you? what are you living for? what have you done for your Lord? what is your position in His sight? are you a real penitent? are you an earnest believer? are you ready to meet your God? The eye, with its eager glance, the voice, with its tone of determination to be listened to, as well as its thrill of anxious longing, should accompany the words of the questions, and bring home to each heart the command, "You *must* give attention, you must look your position in the face, you must take this question to heart, weigh it, and give it an honest answer."

In your striving to awaken the conscience, you must not forget the importance of keeping the body awake. Take care of a monotonous tone of voice, take care of a monotonous tone of thought. What is the commonest fault in preaching? what is the greatest hindrance to its efficacy? Is it not *dulness?* "A good sermon, but rather dull;" how often you hear this criticism! What does it mean? That true things were said, but so said that they did not interest; that their truth and reality and power were not felt. A blunt sword will not cut;

a dull sermon will not reach the conscience. The sword must be sharpened, and the sermon must be sharpened too. The preacher's laziness or half-heartedness, want of earnest faith in Christ and earnest love to men, blunts the edge of his sermons. Ah! he needs to be sharpened himself; stirred up continually to fresh energy and communion with his Saviour, and affectionate interest for his fellow-men. Nothing prevents dulness so effectually as energy and zeal. The snore from the pew is often only the echo of the snore from the pulpit.

But pains must be taken to give *variety* and *interest* to our appeals to the conscience. Earnestness is the chief thing, but even earnestness, unskillfully expressed, may become tiresome: to some classes of mind it is particularly tiresome. "Above all," says the French courtier, "let us have no zeal." There is a selfish though polished refinement, a "man of the world" culture, that feels itself wearied and "bored" by any show of earnestness. Mere vehemence only sends such natures into the slumber of languid disgust; the more the honest preacher thunders, the sounder they sleep. Art and skill, as well as earnestness of purpose, must be used to arouse attention. The imagination

should be always busy in finding fresh and interesting ways of putting the old truth. The cunning angler whom we lately spoke of changes the dressing of his fly according to the changes of the weather, or according to the character of the waters in which he plies his craft. The sharp hook is always the same, but the glistening silk and coloured feathers will vary according as the sky is bright or grey, and the stream sluggish or rapid. The solemn truth we preach is always the same, the awful realities we have to press on the conscience are the same; but the skill of the preacher is shown in the varied aspects in which he can put the truth, the varied illustrations he can bring to make it felt and thought of, and the varied and attractive lights in which he can make it gleam and glisten to catch the attention and arouse the interest of his listeners. No doubt there are great natural differences between men in this respect. Some are quick in fancy, fertile in imagination, warm in sympathy. These are nature's orators. Great is their privilege, great their responsibility, too, to use their rich endowments for the benefit of their fellow-men and the glory of their God. But the rank and file of men have not these facilities. By reading, observation, thought, and earnest effort, we ordinary people

must try to fit ourselves more and more for the difficult task of arresting the attention and convincing the conscience. We must *study* to be interesting. We must be continually on the watch for thoughts, ideas, illustrations, which will brighten our addresses, and relieve their monotony. A young clergyman, who found that his preaching was considered rather heavy, asked me, not long ago, to recommend him some book in which he might find similes to put into his sermons. I fear I was not able to give him much satisfaction. I know of no shop where you can buy second-hand clothes to dress your ideas in. Your own thoughts and borrowed adornments seldom go well together. But though you cannot get your illustrations ready made, yet every book you read, every walk you take, every sight you see, every friend you speak to, will, if you are observant and thoughtful, furnish materials for varying, beautifying, and brightening your productions.

Try, then, by every device your ingenuity can suggest, to interest your hearers. Keep them awake; make them listen to you; change your style and method of address; do not let their attention flag, do not let their eyes close; get them to think, to wonder, to sympathize, to

enjoy; but all so that you may reach the conscience. Keep this object before you continually. You are an ambassador of God to speak to men about the Lord Jesus Christ. You must constrain them to listen, whether they like it or not. You must awaken that part of the complex nature to which Christ's message is addressed. You must perform the preliminary office of the rough, uncompromising prophet, whose voice rang through the wilderness, rousing men to the consciousness of sin, and so preparing the way of the Lord.

Oh, how we need that voice still! How we need to hear it in our own hearts, wakening us from indolence and cowardice and self-seeking! How we need to go out among our people amidst their apathy and worldliness and secret scepticism, and make the solemn voice resound in the conscience, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

But very specially the preacher of Christ's Gospel is a messenger of glad tidings. Over the dark mountains of human life, shadowed by so many uncertainties, roughened by so many difficulties, he comes with the beautiful tread of one who is sent to publish peace. Never should the Christian preacher forget this glory of his

office. As he stands in his pulpit, and sees before him the assembly of his brothers and sisters—sinning, suffering, toiling men and women—he should feel that he stands there to bring them comfort and help from the great unseen Lord.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. His whole work on earth was a work of remedy. Amidst man's mistakes and failures, sins and woes, He brought guidance, knowledge, comfort, pardon. This marvellous remedy of His the preacher has to proclaim. Plainly, simply, earnestly, with loving reiteration, he has to make known Christ's salvation. This is the essential business of his office. He is not a mere moral policeman, a clerical beadle, to keep people in order. He is an authorized witness to the great work God in Christ has done for men. He must bear his witness, or there is no use in his preaching.

Christ's love, Christ's sympathy, and pity; the pardon of sin there is through faith in Him—pardon full, free, immediate; the grand gift of His Holy Spirit; the glorious hope for His Church in the future; the old, yet ever new story of how God in Christ Jesus has come to the rescue of sinful men; this is what Christ's minister

has to preach. It is, indeed, a delightful office. It is angels' work. There may be sneers here and there about old-fashioned theology and tiresome repetition of worn-out doctrines. But the messenger of God, strong in his knowledge of men's wants, strong in his knowledge of God's provision for them, can afford to let the sneers pass unheeded.

The simple Gospel of the Lord Jesus can never be old-fashioned. Music of waves on the sea shore, carol of birds in the summer sky, sweet songs from our sisters' voices,—can these ever be old-fashioned? The good news of Divine love and help and pardon; can any change of men's ways of thinking and speaking diminish its sweetness? As long as there are the same great needs in human nature, "as long as the heart has passions, as long as life has woes," so long will the message that God has sent to man's soul in Christ Jesus have undiminished freshness.

The preacher may be tiresome, but the Gospel never can. His way of putting things may be uninteresting; dulness of faith and coldness of love may give the drone to his voice and the monotony to his style. But the proclamation of what God is, and what God has done, and what God promises in Christ Jesus, can never be

anything but a wonder and a glory to men and angels. Whatever may be your peculiar views of doctrine on special points, whether you be High Church, Low Church, or Broad Church, if you want your people to be happy, if you want them to be good, if you want them to be earnest, preach to them with all your heart the good news that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

If you want your people to be good and earnest, I say preach to them Christ's gospel. And this is the end we have to set before us in all our teaching and preaching—to help our hearers to be good. Christ came not to save from the consequences of sin, but to save from sin itself. Moral evil is the great calamity from which man needs rescue. Sin indulged is hell begun on earth ; whatever the awful future may be, it is but the outcome and the carrying on to its terrible consequence of base and selfish conduct now. We preach Christ to waken men's conscience, to comfort their hearts, but very specially to stir their wills to holy action. Motives for righteousness and strength for righteousness we strive to bring them through the knowledge of the personal God and Saviour.

In every sermon I think we ought to have before

us this practical aim. We should take "the Word" in its highest sense as the Revelation of God to man in Christ Jesus, and use it to lift men up above their natural worldliness and self-seeking to a nobler platform of desire, aspiration, and effort. How best to carry out our purpose we shall consider presently; but the purpose itself should be very definitely and very constantly before our minds. I have to preach Christ as the Light of the world. I have so to display the light, that the shadows may flee away. I have to try to make it so shine in every heart that foul thoughts may be abashed, and that longings and strivings for holiness may take the place of worldly tastes and sinful pleasures. I have to cause the Lord Jesus to be so felt as a reality, as a real Presence, a real loving Lord, a real Deliverer and Friend, that all the enthusiasm of the heart may be awakened, and all the spiritual energy of the soul put in motion to spurn the evil, and struggle for the good.

When Demosthenes finished one of his orations, the murmur that ran through the people, and swelled into irresistible acclamation, was, "Let us go and fight against Philip." That was what he wanted. If the people had spent their energies in applauding the beauty of his speech, he would

have felt that he had failed. He spoke to waken their patriotism, to inflame their martial ardour, to rouse them to undying hate of the invader. All his art, all his powers of persuasion, all his fierce and passionate eloquence, tended to this one result—the fight against Philip.

So it should be with us Christian preachers. If men go away from our sermon saying how eloquent it was, how sweet the language was, we have failed. If men go away saying, "I must try to lead a new life," we have succeeded. Therefore we grapple with their consciences, therefore we tell them of redeeming love, therefore we strive to make the Lord Jesus live before their eyes as a personal Saviour. We want them to be loyal to the good and true; we want them to cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye rather than yield to the evil; we want them, in the great world-wide strife between right and wrong, to be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE PULPIT.

Part II.—The Manner of our Preaching.

WE have seen what should be the matter of it; now we have to consider what should be its manner—by what practical method we can best bring this all-important matter before our people. Let us think first of the structure of a sermon. It is a short address. It generally comes after a long service. Brevity is an essential element in its success. If it goes on so long that the body of the listener grows weary and his attention flags, the result is not only that what is said after the weariness has begun is useless, but that what was said before is forgotten. The long flat end sweeps away the impression of the keen, bright beginning. Be the sermon good, bad, or indifferent, it ought to be short. If it is dull, the less of it we have

the better; if it is interesting and profitable, it is a pity to spoil it by that last tiresome ten minutes. Modern doctors do not insist on such great doses of physic being swallowed as their predecessors did: their patients, I suspect, get well all the quicker for the change. The march of intellect is leading modern preachers in the same direction. Whether their sermons are more or less agreeable to the taste, they are, at all events, shorter. I suppose we may take from fifteen to thirty minutes as the limits of an ordinary sermon. This necessary brevity gives its peculiar character to the address. There is no time for rambling from topic to topic. There is no time for elaborate explanation. A great work has to be done. Men's consciences have to be roused, their hearts touched, and their will stirred to some practical result—all in about twenty minutes. It is evident that you cannot speak at random. Care must be taken to say the things that are the very best to say, and to leave out all that is needless.

A distinct *unity* in each sermon is therefore an important element in its construction. You must not try to say many things, but one thing strongly and well. There may be various thoughts and ideas, but they should be all

gathered up around some one leading subject. They should be used to bring that subject into prominence, to have it understood distinctly, thought of with interest, and left ringing in the conscience. Every one ought to be able to tell what the sermon was about. The subject should be so used as to touch different chords in the heart, and produce different results according to the different needs of the hearers—to inform the mind, to rouse the conscience, to comfort, to encourage, or to warn ; but it should be still the same subject. If this unity is not kept up, the *effect* of the sermon is interfered with. One subject drives out another. The hearers' minds are confused. And though they may be interested by the various separate parts of the sermon, no definite impression on the conscience and will is left. It is better to drive one nail at a time well home, than to give random taps to a great many.

In order to bring out this effective unity, there should be careful arrangement. I prefer the word arrangement to *division.* Divisions may easily become snares. The large Roman figures, I., II., III., and the smaller arabics, 1, 2, 3, may look very nice on the paper, but *in the pulpit* we must beware lest they cut up the sermon into little bits,

and destroy its oneness. There are some lenses that make the rays of light diverge, and some that make them converge upon a point. Bad divisions in a sermon are like the former, wise and skilful ones like the latter. You take a text, and find in it three or four truths that lead the mind in quite different directions. Your divisions are very clear; what you say on each head is very nice and true, but your discourse fails in *effect.* If it had been a commentary that you were writing, it would have been good, but as a sermon it is bad.

In thinking over our text, we must not be satisfied with finding what are the ideas suggested by it, and putting them down one after another; we must earnestly consider how they can best be brought out so as to support each other, and lead all together to one spiritual result. We must consider which may be touched upon lightly, which left unnoticed for the present, which brought into strong prominence, which placed first, which kept for the end. It is necessary to have definite divisions, so as to be able to think the subject out thoroughly in our own mind beforehand, and make it more easily remembered by the hearers afterwards. But the divisions need not be always expressed. It is often better that they should be felt as they follow each other in orderly succession, than that

attention should be distracted from the spiritual thoughts to the mechanical "firstly, secondly, thirdly." There are times when this mechanical precision arrests attention; but it should not be done too regularly and habitually, lest, instead of a help to memory, it should become a help to somnolence.

There should be caution in the expression of divisions, for fear of monotony, also for fear of an appearance of artificiality. In preaching as well as every other laborious human effort, *ars est celare artem.* You do require great thought and care and mental arrangement to carry on your work for God; but the traces of your labour ought to be well swept out of sight. What you say to your people should come from the heart, warm, fresh, and simple.

Expression of division must be used with caution, and division itself must be used with caution, lest it should be a scattering of thoughts rather than a grouping of them. But used it must be very really, if effect is to be produced. It is well to consider from the beginning what is the last thought to be pressed home. Sometimes you may think it best to have it a thought to comfort and cheer, or to lead on to the heavenly future. Sometimes you may think it better to have it an

urging to a definite practical duty; sometimes a final grappling with souls, an intensely earnest setting before them the eternal issues to be chosen. The whole order of the sermon will depend a good deal upon what is to be its conclusion. If the conclusion is to be comforting, the appropriate place must be determined on for warning. If it is to be a practical appeal, the doctrinal exposition or spiritual invitation should be placed in a due position. If it is to be the close, earnest, life-or-death wrestling with souls that we spoke of, the rest of the sermon, step by step, through explanations to the understanding, and motives for the heart and conscience, should lead up to the solemn ending. Thus one part of the sermon is so dependent on the others, that the order of thought needs to be carefully laid out beforehand. I need hardly say that this order and careful pre-arrangement should be used to help and strengthen the preacher, but not to bind him. He may occasionally feel it necessary, as he speaks, to deviate considerably from his prepared order, or even to throw it aside altogether. If he is a man of faith and prayer, a diligent student of Holy Scripture, he need not be afraid sometimes to let the rush of fresh thoughts that have come into his heart, as he looks at his people, carry him

over and beyond the boundaries he had marked out. But the stream will generally be strongest and most efficient for its work when it flows in the channel that prayerful forethought has traced.

Needful as it is to have variety in the matter of our sermons, it is equally needful to have it in the arrangement of them. Our thoughts might easily take a kind of stereotyped pattern, and every subject be pressed into its unchanging mould. How easy it is to tell beforehand how a certain kind of preacher will treat any text! To-day's text is not the least like last Sunday's; but we may be sure that the sermon will be almost exactly the same. And no matter what texts the preacher takes, he contrives to squeeze them all into the same mould, and turn them out in the same shape. And in reality the temptation to run thus into a regular and always recurring order is very great. Your own mind and natural character always remain the same; the objects you want to attain in preaching are always the same, or nearly the same; and the wants of your people are the same. But if you try to supply those wants always in the same way, the appetite for your nourishment will pall, and the efficacy of your medicine will wear out by repetition. You must be very determined, therefore, to change and vary from week to week

your method of approaching and striving to influence souls. And the book from which your teaching is drawn is a wonderful help in this effort. What a marvellous variety there is in the Bible! If you strive to bring out faithfully, and cause to be felt in your hearers' hearts, the thoughts of the inspired writer, and not thoughts of your own, which you can manage ingeniously to hang on to them, your way of addressing men, and the arrangement of ideas you bring before them, must have constant variety.

One sermon should vary in its method of structure from another, and one part of the same sermon should vary in its tone from other parts. If you are too intense all through, attention becomes fatigued, and effect is lost. There should be in a picture repose as well as movement, and so there should be in a sermon. Part should be calm and deliberate, instructing the understanding and persuading the judgment; part should be fervent, impassioned, bold, shaking men's hearts with its vehemence, wrestling with their conscience, and refusing to let them go till they hearken and yield. A famous old Welsh preacher (Christmas Evans) puts this important principle in arrangement with such an apt illustration, that I cannot conclude our consideration of the structure of a sermon

better than by describing it. I do not remember his exact words, but what he says is to this effect: "There is no use in striking cold iron. You may hit away and make plenty of noise, but you make no change in the shape of the metal. Even so there is no use in fervent appeal and thundering words to a congregation, before their hearts have been brought up to the proper heat. You make a noise, and fatigue yourself and them, but you do not influence them. Observe how the smith deals with the iron; carefully he lays it in the fire, gently and deftly he draws the coals all over it, then gradually the bellows blow the embers into a warmer glow; quietly he stands by; the great hammer is idle in his brawny hand till he sees that the white heat is reached; then the glowing iron, all hot and sparkling, is laid on the anvil, and blow after blow falls upon it irresistibly. Harder and harder he hits, and never stops for breath till the iron is plunged into the water, beaten into its proper shape. So should the preacher deal with the human soul. Quietly and gently he should put him in contact with the truth of God; with care and skilful exposition its meaning should be brought out before him; closely and more closely it should be brought to press on his conscience, till the heart begins to burn and glow, and interest

is felt, and consciousness of sin, and hopes and desires for better things; then, when attention has been thoroughly roused, and the sympathies enlisted, then let the great sledge-hammer blows strike home; then let yourself loose in all the fervour of longing desire to save; then pour out your appeals, your warnings, your eager invitations; and the terror of the Lord, and the foulness of sin, and the love of Christ, and the cross of Calvary, and the beauty of holiness, and the glory of eternity, and every emotion that the heart can feel, should be used to bring it to the personal, individual question, 'What must I do to be saved?' and to the definite resolve of the will, 'I will arise and go to my Father,' or, 'Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.'"

These remarks upon the structure of a sermon show pretty plainly that its *preparation* must take much time and thought. In one sense, all your life is a preparation for your preaching. Your inward life of communion with God, your outward life of service, your intellectual life of study, thought, and observation—all contribute to make you full of matter, and more and more strong, earnest, and wise to bring that sacred matter to bear in your great work of winning souls. And if from time to time you are called

on unexpectedly to preach, you cannot be said to be unprepared. Knowing your Lord and Master personally and (may we not dare to say it?) *intimately*, knowing well the wants and needs of your brethren, familiar with the teaching of Holy Scripture, you may perhaps at such times preach with a power and warmth that surprises yourself. The instinct of the loving heart and the well-stored mind will be better than any rules of rhetoric. Yes! may you not in such a case take to yourself the promise of our Lord, "The Holy Ghost shall teach you in that hour what to speak"? But special preparation for each sermon should certainly be your rule. Whether you write or preach "extempore," as it is called, the preparation is equally needful. There are certain advantages in each plan. But the writer should study and prepare, so as to attain as much as possible the advantages of the speaker, and the speaker should study so as to secure the advantages of the writer. I do not think the two methods need be compared with each other, or put into competition. I think the same person may with benefit to himself and his people adopt both. Careful writing will make him a more thoughtful and accurate speaker, and frequent speaking will make him write with quicker

movement and a more bright, lucid, and attractive style.

In preparing a written sermon, the first thing to be done is to have it thoroughly thought out from beginning to end. The leading ideas, the point of highest intensity, the conclusion, the main thought intended to be driven home—this should be carefully arranged in the mind before beginning to write, even as the ship-builder draws out all the lines of the ship before a timber is laid down. Otherwise, as you write, you may be tempted to stray away into tempting collateral thoughts, and have your paper all written over before the principal lesson of the sermon has made its appearance at all.

And in writing it is very important to keep in view the people to whom you are to preach. If you are speaking, as you look at people's faces you instinctively suit your words to the people you address. When you write, you are in danger of merely expressing what you think and feel yourself, or of addressing an auditory of the same mental tone as your own. So it often happens that what in one sense might be called a good sermon is practically a bad sermon. It does not fulfil its object. It does not enlighten, persuade, or move the people to whom it is addressed.

The children do not listen to it at all. The farmers think it mighty fine, but too learned for them. The ladies think it dull. The country gentlemen wonder what on earth that young parson is driving at, and the scholars and theologians who might be interested in its discussions are not there to hear. The thoughtful, carefully prepared sermon is preached, but none of its hearers are edified. It has not done its work. It is a failure. The preacher in his study thought of his subject, but did not think of the hearts and consciences to whom his subject was to be medicine of Divine healing.

The remedy for this fault is to have vividly before the mind as you write a picture of the congregation. Fill the church pews with their accustomed occupants. Put the fat farmer into his corner, and the poor widow with the shabby bonnet, and the bustling shopkeeper, and the lounging young men, and the fashionable ladies, and the red-faced squire, and the footmen and housemaids, and the schoolboys and schoolgirls, and the anxious and earnest faces every here and there that you know so well, and that seem to gaze on you with such a hungry desire to get some real food, some comfort and strength for the hard battle they are waging—put them all in

their places. Look at them before you kneel down to ask for guidance in planning out the sermon. Look at them as you are laying out its divisions. Lift up your eyes from your desk, every now and then, as you write, and look straight into their faces. How do they return your look? Does the fat farmer understand? Does the footman care? Does the fine gentleman stop twirling his moustache for an instant to attend? Are the hungry and anxious ones soothed and satisfied?

Instinctively, as you ask yourself these questions, the style of your writing is modified. It becomes more flexible, more lifelike. Stilted and formal sentences are scratched out with scornful impatience. You are a man and a brother, speaking to men and brethren, and not a student writing a theme. And when you come to preach your sermon on Sunday, you will find yourself able, not merely to read it, but truly to preach it. You will feel it to be a real address to the very people before you. Their attention will be aroused, their sympathies kindled: your written sermon will be poured out from your heart into theirs with the same kind of warmth as if it came from the impulse of the moment. You will be able to speak it *to* them because you wrote it *for* them.

And if your sermon is not to be written out, all the more necessary it is that it should be well thought out. The temptation to careless work is then very great. It is so easy and natural to save yourself trouble and accurate thinking by leaving the hard parts to chance, or to the inspiration of the moment in the pulpit. This temptation should be conscientiously resisted. Every detail of your subject should be mastered. The whole sermon should be mentally preached to the mental audience. The divisions and subdivisions should be clearly impressed on the mind. The substance of all that is to be said, from beginning to end, should be well digested. Here and there, on important or difficult points, it is well to have the very words pre-arranged.

Great care should be taken about the conclusion. A good beginning, it is said, is the half of all, but a good ending is, to a sermon, almost the whole. It is just the part that is most apt to be slurred over—left after the other thoughts to a kind of mental "etc., etc.," left to be finished with the pious hortatory words that come up to the mind at the moment. Very likely, by the time you reach the conclusion of your sermon, your body will be tired, or your feelings so excited that you have lost something of your presence of

mind, and your last words, if not well prepared, ramble off into vague generalities, and the part o your address that ought to be strongest, most incisive, most calculated to live, is the weakest and most commonplace of it all. The child has been brought to the birth, but there has not been strength to deliver. The arrow has been drawn to the head, but the hand has been too nerveless to speed it forth on its flight. In preaching, it is specially true that "the end crowns the work." The plant that God makes grows higher and higher with its tapering stem ; it throws out its rich leaves from side to side as it rises ; but it finishes its course with the expanding petals and glowing colours of its flower. In that with which it ends is gathered up the strength and glory of the whole. Something like this should be a really well-organized address—growing, gathering strength, increasing in intensity and loftiness of thought, and culminating in its earnest, loving, and happy peroration.

I trust it is hardly necessary to repeat here what we thought of together some little time ago —that the sermon should be prepared "on the knees." If in any part of our work we should feel our weakness and insufficiency, if in any of it we should feel the need of casting ourselves en-

tirely upon the guiding and support of our Father's arm, surely it is in this, the most solemn and the most difficult branch of it all. This must be indeed "begun, continued, and ended *in Him*." In choosing our text, His advice must be sought in a childlike spirit. In thinking out its meaning, in trying to feel the force of its teaching in our own hearts, in deciding on its most profitable arrangement, in thinking over the persons to whom it is to be preached, and considering how its truth will best help their various spiritual needs, guidance, wisdom, strength must be supplicated from the same Source. The preparation of the heart, as well as the answer of the lips, is from the Lord; and if the preaching of the sermon is to be an earnest wrestling, as for life and death, with men's hearts and consciences in the church, the making ready for it must be another wrestling, the wrestling in spirit with our God, wrestling with Him in a very agony of prayer that He may give us the right thoughts to think and the right words to say, and above all, that He may give us the souls to whom we preach for our hire.

And now, the preparation over, the sermon ready, thought out clearly in our minds, or written out in our hands, now as we stand in the pulpit, how are we to deliver it? Perhaps the best

answer to this question would be, "Do not think about delivering it at all, only think of the subject you have to speak of, and the people you have to speak to. Let your mind be full of your message, and your heart full of your flock, and let the delivery take care of itself. In other words, the most important part of good delivery is *self-forgetfulness*." Wise advice this is to give, but not so easy to follow.

> "Less of self, and more of Thee,
> None of self, and all of Thee"—

How we need this prayer at all times! how specially we need it in the pulpit! All eyes turning to us, all hearts expecting something from us, all minds, we fancy, judging and criticising us,—how hard to forget self, how hard to put away the shyness and timidity on the one hand, or the self-conceit and swagger on the other hand, that arise from the same source—self-consciousness.

A real love of our people, fostered by acquaintance with them, and by familiarity with their troubles and temptations; a real love of our Master, fostered by close and constant communion with Him, and an habitual sense of the reality and awfulness of the great subjects on

which we speak, are the powers which drive away self-consciousness. As the souls of the people come into the foreground, self shrinks into the background. If you are trying to rescue a darling child out of a fire, will you care about how you look? You think of the little one sleeping in its cradle, you think of its piteous cry, and the fierceness of the devouring flames; you have no thought about yourself, except that you will press through smoke and fire and falling timbers, snatch your babe from its peril, or perish in the attempt. This may be an exaggerated picture of what we do feel when addressing our congregations, but it is an exaggerated picture of what we ought to feel? I believe that there is eternal life or eternal death before each of these people on whom I am looking. I believe that there are dangers round each of them, more really awful than the scorching flame. I believe that God allows me now an opportunity of rescuing them from their peril. Can I stop to think of what kind of appearance I make, or whether my words sound pretty or ugly? How can I help these souls? how can I deliver them? that is the only thought worth thinking of. Anxiety for our people, and forgetfulness of self, then, is the

first qualification for the efficient delivery of a sermon.

It may sound inconsistent with this, and yet I believe it is true, that *self-possession* is almost equally necessary. Nervous fuss and flurry must be put away. The preacher should be calm and at his ease, though intensely earnest. A horse soon knows if his rider is afraid of him. A congregation quickly discover the same with regard to a preacher. If they see he is nervous, they become nervous too, afraid he may break down, and cause an unpleasant sensation; or else their sense of the ludicrous is awakened, and they are amused at the fidgety movements of their frightened instructor. Do not be afraid of your congregation, then. The grim old lady with spectacles, who stares so solemnly, looks formidable, no doubt, and so does the portly squire, and the supercilious young officer, and the stolid churchwarden. But they are not so terrible as they look. The old lady will have to take off her spectacles, and put her wrinkled face within the frills of her nightcap; she is only a poor, weary, worn human pilgrim, after all; and the squire knows the pinch of care and sorrow; and the smart officer has his hopes and fears and disappointments, very much like

yourself; and even the churchwarden has somewhere under that capacious waistcoat a human heart that beats and throbs like your own.

Stand up, then, like a man before your congregation, to teach them, and not to tremble at them. They can do you no harm, but you can do them great harm. You can send those who have come to be fed by the Word of God empty and hungry away. You can send them away more deeply steeped than before in spiritual slumber, more comfortably satisfied with themselves, harder henceforth to be awakened and touched. If you give them only empty commonplaces, if you do not really speak straight and true, home to their conscience, you hurt them grievously. Pity the poor people if you preach badly. Tremble for them, but do not tremble at them. Standing in your responsible position, put away from you the fear of man. Be deliberate in your speech. Take your time to say what you want to say. If you have not made it plain, stop and say it again. Do not think it a calamity if you have to pause a moment to think, or if you have to hesitate for an instant for the choice of a word. It is much more important to get the right word, than to flow on in an uninterrupted stream. It is not the

smoothness of your speech, but its force, that touches the conscience.

Closely connected with self-possession is the habit of looking at your congregation. Look them straight in the face, not with a nervous flickering glance, but steadily, quietly, deliberately look from one to the other. You know how disagreeable it is in conversation when the speaker will not look at you; he looks down at your waistcoat buttons, up at the ceiling, his eyes waver restlessly hither and thither, but you never can calmly and peaceably meet them. It is hard to feel that he is really speaking to you, and wanting you to listen to him. Beware of this fault in preaching. You want to speak to those people down in the pews. You have something to say to them, that you are anxious they should listen to. Look at them, then, before you speak. Look at them while you are speaking. Let your eye attentively pass from face to face, not staying too long on any one, but resting on each deliberately. It will help you in your speaking, it will help them in their listening. Your heart will catch the response of their unspoken sympathy. They will feel that you mean what you say, and that it is to their own very selves you are speaking. If their attention is flagging, if you are beginning to weary

them, you will perceive it at once. You can change your tone, enliven your manner, and waken up both yourself and them in a fresh start of reviving interest.

And looking at them will help you in another important part of delivery, the management of the voice. Be the matter of your preaching ever so good, it is not likely to be of use if it is not heard. And if it is heard as a shout or a roar, it will be so fatiguing and irritating to the ear, that it will hardly touch the heart. To modulate the voice, to speak so loudly as to be heard by all, and yet not loudly enough to weary any, is an art of prime necessity to a public speaker. Nothing facilitates it so much as the habit of looking at the people to whom you speak. Without effort, without premeditation, the voice, that wonderfully sensitive and wonderfully obedient messenger of the soul, adapts itself to its work, and knows the best tone in which to deliver its message. If the church is large, and the congregation crowded, it is well to address yourself chiefly to the people who are farthest away. Look pretty often at the sitters in that corner behind the pillars. Be sure that the shabby old man close to the western door can hear what you say. If your voice carries well to the far regions, it is sure to be heard by those who are near. In trying to

make yourself well heard, be more careful about the distinctness of your utterance than its loudness. It is not at all easy to listen to shouting. The noise is heard only too plainly, but not the articulate words. A distinct whisper will carry farther than a gruff roar.

But in trying to speak distinctly, beware of an artificial utterance. Do not make the consonants sound in a different way from what they do in ordinary speech. The sonorous smack and pompous mouthing, with which some speakers try to make themselves heard, is as contrary to good sense as it is to good taste. Be careful to finish your words, be careful not to drop your voice at the end of a sentence, be careful not to hurry your utterance, and to give sufficient time between your sentences. But see that you do not exchange the manly and straightforward speech of a Christian gentleman for the vulgar declamation of a second-rate stage player. Be on your guard also against tricks of manner and gesture in the pulpit. In the excitement and eagerness of your efforts, these might easily steal upon you unawares. Sawing the hand up and down, shrugging the shoulders, swaying the body to and fro, raising and lowering it in a kind of curtseying motion—these awkward and ungainly habits distract attention, and take away

from your hearers something of the sense of the dignity of your office, and of the "sweetness and light" of your message.

Let whatever action you use be natural and simple, but let it be guarded at the same time. It is better to err on the side of quietness than of exaggerated gesticulation. The movements of the body, the movements of the hands, as well as the movements of the countenance, naturally go with the emotions of the heart, and help the voice to utter them. But a certain amount of self-restraint may be necessary in order to prevent their hindering, instead of helping, expression. If you are naturally inclined to vehemence of movement, to work your body and hands as your mind is in its travail pangs, you must take care lest in your eager labour you should make yourself tiresome or ridiculous.

We conclude, then, this matter of delivery as we began it. Think of your people, think of your subject, think of your Master. Pray, as you enter the pulpit, that you may be helped in speaking, and that your words may be a real blessing to the congregation. Look at your people as you stand there, and think of the eternal destinies that are before them; think of the eager human hearts represented by all those quiet faces; think of the

many perils, and temptations, and difficulties, and anxieties, and trials that press upon them. Think of the awfulness of having one of those souls lost, the joy and delight of having one of them rescued from sin, and saved for evermore. Think of the Lord Jesus and His yearning love for those immortal beings. Remember that He sends you to those individuals to teach them, to warn them, to invite them, to plead with them in His name.

Then, lifting up your heart to Him for help, lift up your voice and speak what you have thought and prayed over, and what you believe it is best for you to say. Speak it boldly and without fear of man; speak it with a tremble of solemn awe at the same time, feeling your own insufficiency and the sacredness of God's Word; speak it quietly and deliberately; speak it so that it can be well heard; speak it with straightforward, manly simplicity, as something you know ought to be listened to; speak it with solemn earnestness, as something you know it would be dangerous to neglect; speak it with affectionate, even passionate, vehemence sometimes, longing to help your brethren, longing to rescue them from their perils, and to win them for everlasting life. And then, in the hush that follows the close of your earnest address, commend yourself and your hearers to God Almighty, that He

may forgive you your faults in preaching, and forgive them their faults in listening, and that the dew of His Spirit may water the sowing of His word, and that you and your people may rejoice together in the harvest thanksgiving on high.

CHAPTER X.

REACHING YOUNG HEARTS.

THE clergyman's mission is to the soul of every human being in his parish. But his work among young people is specially important. In youth are formed to a great degree the habits of feeling and acting which give the permanent set to the character. Human hearts are more easily reached and influenced then than in after-life. When a man has grown old it is hard to rouse him to new feelings or to stir his will sufficiently to make him break through long-established habits of life. Something of dulness, something of obstinacy perhaps, something of easy-going indolence, makes him rather deaf to the voice that tries to charm him be it never so wisely. There used to be an idea that when young people had "sown their wild oats," and had grown graver and wiser through the lapse of years, it would be easier to get them to be religious. It may be easier to get

them to look religious, but all experience has shown us that it is infinitely more difficult to lead. them really to be religious. The wild oat that has been sown has a knack of growing. The habits of self-will and self-indulgence and disregard of duty may change their form, even as the green blade changes into bearded grain, but they remain in their evil essence and their ugly root the same, only harder to overcome.

God's infinite grace may touch and soften and transform into new life the stupidest and most hardened old sinner, but, humanly speaking, the chances of doing him any good are small. We may minister to the old, we may comfort and cheer them when they know the Lord, and cause their declining days to be gilded and glorified by the heavenly sunlight, but I fear that our converts among them are not likely to be many. We must not indeed slacken our exertions among them or presume to judge who are or are not within reach of the Gospel power. Our business is to preach it and teach it with all love and earnestness to all whom we can get to listen. But while in our work among the old and the middle-aged we have often to hope against hope, our work among the young is full of hope. We are sowing in the spring; we are dropping

our seed beside the soft-flowing waters ; our labour is a labour of joy as well as of love, because we can have every reasonable expectation of seeing its fruit.

Our ministrations among the young, therefore, should be looked upon not as a matter of secondary importance, but as the most momentous portion of our work. It is the work that is most urgently needed, and that has the greatest likelihood of leaving after it real and permanent result.

And surely no part of our ministry carries with it so manifestly its reward of joy. We have good hope of winning the children's souls ; we are sure of winning their affections. They always love the clergyman who takes an interest in them, and who is cheery and affectionate in his manner to them. How the eyes of the little ones brighten when the pastor comes into the school. With what shy pleasure they look up at him from their slates and their books ! How merrily the little footsteps trip over to him, and the little fingers clasp his hand and hold him as their own especial property, as he draws near the house where the children live.

Hard indeed must be the heart that the joyous child-welcome does not gladden. And in after-years how pleasant it is to feel the cordial grasp of the young men greeting their pastor as trusted

guide and honoured friend, and to know that he has the confidence of the gentle maidens whose souls have been awakened by his teaching to the thrill of heavenly life. There are often discouragements and long, weary, unappreciated efforts in other branches of our duty, but our dealings with the young are full of delights.

Labour it is, nevertheless, real labour, calling forth all our energies. It requires care, and thought, and patient perseverance. Very fallacious is the idea that we must take pains with our sermons and addresses to grown-up people, but that anything will do for the children. If we want really to help them, we must give them our very best. Dull sermons may bring the more visible punishment of empty pews and grumbling parishioners, but dull teaching brings its punishment, almost sadder, in wandering glances, vacant countenances, and poor little hearts sent empty away.

Let us brace ourselves, then, with the most earnest vigour to do our work among the young, recognising it as the most important, the most hopeful, the most happy, and yet in some respects the most difficult branch of our pastoral duty.

When we speak of work among the young,

we embrace young people of various ages and various classes, who require to be dealt with, of course, in modes adapted to their varying circumstances.

There are the daily schools containing the children of the poor, from the infants who sing and clap their hands to the big boys and girls who humble and terrify us with their knowledge of arithmetic and geography. There are the boarding schools situated in our parishes where weekly classes can often be held by the clergyman if he tries to establish them, and where the children of our upper ranks are found not seldom considerably inferior in religious knowledge to the children brought up in the parish school. There are the Sunday Schools, which ought to comprehend not only little children, but young men and women in the opening of their lives under earnest and sympathising teachers. There are the vitally important classes preparatory for Confirmation. There are the children's services in church, where the young of all ages and ranks should be marshalled side by side. There are also organizations of various kinds to enlist young men around the banner of the Cross, and to give help and guidance to young women at service and in business amidst the difficulties and temptations that

surround them. All these are spheres for the clergyman's work among the young.

For the present, however, I think it will be most useful for me to suggest some thoughts as to the best way of teaching and influencing young people in general, and to leave to another opportunity the details of the various special efforts we have spoken of.

I will suppose, then, that you have before you an assemblage of children of various ages and ranks whom it is your duty to teach. There they stand in their youthful freshness,

> "The bright and ordered files
> Like spring flowers in their best array,
> All sunshine and all smiles."

You recognise that you are God's messenger to these immortal beings at the outset of their life's journey. You breathe a prayer to the heavenly Father for them, that He may teach and guide them, for yourself that He may teach you to teach, and guide you in guiding. Then you stand up among the little ones and begin your lesson. An important question arises,—What have you to teach? Readily the answer rushes to the lips, "I have to teach them the Bible. I have to teach the Catechism, the formularies of the Church." Such an answer is no doubt right to some degree, but

it is shallow and insufficient. You have to teach chapters and verses, Catechism or collects. But they are only the instruments for your work. The knowledge of them is not the end you have in view. It only furnishes tools to accomplish the real end. What you want these children to know is not any book or document, but a living Person. You want them to know God Himself, to know His will and how to please Him. You want to have their hearts drawn into union with the great Divine Being. You want to make the children good and happy, and to lead them on the way to the heavenly home. Religious teaching is vanity and delusion if it is not meant for this.

As you pray remember the object of your work; as you teach keep it firmly in mind.

Instruction is often vague, tiresome, and utterly useless, for the simple reason that the teacher has no definite idea of what he is trying to do. He wanders over chapters of the Bible and answers in the Catechism. The brains of the children are puzzled and their hearts are wearied by elaborate distinctions and definitions, and dry enumeration of historical details. If you ask the man, "What are you doing? what are you aiming at?" he is as puzzled as his pupils. It did not occur to him that he had anything particular to do beyond

hammering into the children the words of the Catechism or the facts of Jewish history.

Keep in mind then, first, what you are there to teach.

And as you teach exert yourself to make the lesson pleasant. Whether it is or is not possible to make learning generally more pleasant than we are accustomed to think may be a subject for educational theorists. But it cannot be questioned that the teaching of the glorious gospel of God should be made bright and happy. It has been sent as "glad tidings of great joy." Take great trouble, then, to make your lesson interesting. If ever you shake off dull sloth, shake it off now. Don't be sleepy or languid. Be wide-awake yourself, and keep the children awake. Do not think it necessary to wear too sober a countenance. Do not be afraid of a merry smile on the children's faces as you teach. The smile or even the rippling laughter of enjoyment is very different from the grin of irreverence or insubordination.

One great instrument for putting down the turbulent spirit of juvenile rowdyism, which shows itself even in a Bible-class, is to bring in the element of pleasure. Weariness in a child produces fidgets, fidgets quickly turn into turbulence, and turbulence is fatal to instruction. You must

keep your class well in hand, or else you had better stop teaching. There must be order, attention, reverence of demeanour. Anarchy can be no more tolerated in a class than in an army. But one of the most effective means for producing order is to make the teaching agreeable. If you are a martinet, always checking smiles and whispers, if you are stern and hard in your manner, you will not only injure your usefulness in deeper ways, but you will arouse (among the boys, at all events) a spirit of opposition. They see you are personally annoyed by their fidgety movements; they will use them as weapons to wound you, and to carry on a secret war of rebellion against you. Those little hosts are easily induced to take their side against the teacher. When they do, their arms are ready at hand, and their insubordination is hard to be quelled. "We do not like that solemn teacher; he is hard upon us; we'll pay him off." Then begin the countless forms of restless motion and inattentive gestures, and disturbing noises which harass the instructor, and make it impossible for the quiet and well-conducted children to attend to what he says. Turn the flank of opposition by making teaching bright and pleasant. Let the little people find it more interesting to listen to you, and to answer

you, than to interchange their whispers and their pinches. This may seem an achievement beyond the power of ordinary humanity. I admit that it is difficult, and that it needs art and effort; but I think there are few clergymen who could not accomplish it if they tried.

If you want to be a useful teacher, then, let it be your first ambition to be a pleasant teacher. If you are unpopular with the children, if they look upon you as tiresome or cross, you do them very little good. If, on the other hand, you have made yourself the friend of the young people in their homes or at their play, or by the part you have taken in their ordinary lessons, your task of pleasing them in the religious instruction will be much easier. When they are fond of you they will like what you say. I have spoken before of the importance of loving feelings and loving ways in our dealing with human souls. But in no part of our work, perhaps, is this element so essential as in our teaching of the little ones. We must come among them in the spirit of Him who took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them. We must come with a yearning desire to be a real blessing to them, to lift them above the snares and dangers of earthly life, till their young faces look up into the Divine

Face that is looking down into theirs. We must come to them with affectionate human sympathy. And what is sympathy with a child? Is it not sympathy with its love of mirth and gladness, sympathy with the feelings that make it delight in a frolic, that bring the laughter so quickly to break up the rosy cheek into those merry dimples, as well as sympathy with the tender heart that makes its stormy grief so passionate, and with the solemnity of its position on the verge of such momentous possibilities of endless destiny?

But that charming art, "the art of pleasing," is, I need hardly say, only a step towards something further. You put the children at their ease, you get them to feel happy, and then you have to interest their understandings. You want to have their minds active, not passive. With all their liveliness, they are lazy little things, those children, and, like yourself, they shrink from any difficult mental exertion. It is your business now to make them think, whether they like it or not. Merely telling them things, cramming any amount of knowledge into them, is useless. Nothing will make a permanent lodgment in their minds, or have a permanent effect upon their character, except what they (more or less) work out for themselves. Make them work now. Stir them

with lively questions. Get them to wonder, to puzzle their little brains, to recognise their ignorance, to wish to know, to try to find out, to succeed in finding out, and to delight in discovery

It has been said, and I think well said, that the golden rule in teaching is, "Question the knowledge into the children, and then question it out of them." Your questions must be rapid, varied, skilful. If the first form of a question is not answered, change it into another form, then another, lead up to its answer by simpler questions, but never stop questioning till you get your answer. Pass the question quickly from child to child, from the younger to the elder, fragments of it or echoes of it back again from the elder and thoughtful ones who have understood it and elucidated it to the younger ones who were puzzled by it; but see that it does its work, that somewhere or somehow it causes to be known and understood the point it was framed to make clear. Count it always as a disgrace and a defeat if you cannot get your question answered without answering it yourself.

Get the minds interested, the understandings busy and active; this is your second step. Get important knowledge, great truths, precious facts to be thus taken into the young people's mental

consciousness, and recognised as things that really are or actually have been.

Then, as your third duty, strike home to heart and conscience. What you have led the children to understand help them to feel. The truths you have taught them to know strive to range as urgent motives for practical action. Do not be satisfied unless you can hope you have in some measure done this. Picture to yourself the children's daily life. Try by the use of your imagination and remembrance of your own childish feelings to realize how they are likely to feel. Use all kinds of illustrations, anecdotes, supposed cases, so as to make them perceive the practical bearing of what they have been learning upon their own intentions and conduct. You cannot, indeed, by any amount of effort certainly secure this result ; your business is to sow the seed, another Power than yours can alone make it grow. But your object in sowing is that it should grow. It is your business to sow in such a way as to facilitate growth. The seed may indeed lie dormant for a long time. Not till after many a drenching storm, it may be, and many a long dark winter's night, will the green sprout appear over the surface of the ground.

But however this may be, what you have to

aim at and strive for is that the teaching of God's revelation may have its effect at once, and may begin its working from the first. You picture to yourself the children's homes, their plays, their lessons, their companions, their joys, and their sorrows ; you try to realize to yourself how they feel in daily life, their eager impetuous desires, their bounding spirits, the forms in which evil temper, self-will, meanness, greedy self-seeking, cowardice, idleness, and other childish faults tempt and beset them. You direct your teaching so that amidst all these outward circumstances of child life, and inward emotions of child hearts, the Word of God may be a power for righteousness, pressing with very urgent force upon all the springs of their being. Thus every lesson is an endeavour to lift your pupils into a higher moral and spiritual atmosphere.

You must not turn your teaching into preaching. The weary yawn and wandering glance will soon tell you, if you are sufficiently on the alert to mark such signs, that sermons do not suit the little ones. You must continue teaching and questioning and keeping your class awake with sharp and lively home thrusts. But through all, your final aim is the heart and conscience. And you feel an intense longing that all your

questions, and illustrations, and little anecdotes, and short earnest appeals, should lead to this one result, the bringing the children's souls into closer contact with the great unseen realities, and thence the formation of Christian habits, and the development of a Christian character.

The foregoing remarks apply specially to the instruction of little children. But they may be useful, I venture to hope, in teaching young people of various ages. Whatever kind of class he has before him, it is needful for an ambassador of God to keep prominently in mind the nature and object of the teaching he is commissioned to deliver; and then, as he teaches, he must try to make his lesson pleasant and interesting, he must awaken the activities of the understanding, and above all he must press the lesson home, so as to touch the conscience and influence the will. In short, he has to endeavour to carry out the three rules given by the ancient master in oratory.—"*placere, docere, movere.*"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SICK-ROOM.

IF there is any spot in the parish where the pastor should feel thoroughly at home, it is in the sick-chamber. "The world," it has been well said, "is a room of sickness, where each heart knows its own anguish and unrest." Into this wide sick-room our Master came as the Great Physician to bring consolation and remedy; and like Him, and on the self-same mission, His ministers are to come into the narrower rooms where poor sufferers now lie. Christ's gospel was especially meant to be "glad tidings." It is our privilege to bring those glad tidings just where gladness is most wanting. And truly it is a privilege and a joy unspeakable to be a comforter, a bearer of light, soft and sweet, into the darkness.

Our work among the sick and suffering is of two kinds—efforts to comfort and efforts to profit. The efforts are in practice so blended together

that we cannot draw any sharply defined boundary between them. But our work will be more useful if we keep in mind that it has this twofold object. Pain is a wound which we must try to soothe and heal after the example of Him who came to bind up the broken in heart. It is also a stroke from the Father's rod: we have to try to make its teachings and warnings be taken to heart. I speak first of efforts to comfort, for I am sure that he who comforts most lovingly will profit most effectually. The eyes must be somewhat dried before the lesson can be read. And in this branch of our work success, almost more than we dared to hope, generally meets us. Whether we succeed or fail in profiting our parishioners we often cannot judge. We have to wait for the manifestation of success or failure, to wait to know whether the success were as real as we thought, whether the failure were as complete as we feared; we have to wait for this till the books are opened and the secrets of all hearts made known. But we have not to wait so long to see the resul of our endeavours to comfort. Eyes brightening as we enter the room, faces shining with soft peace as we finish our prayer, restlessness calmed, weariness soothed, even pain of body forgotten as we sit by the bedside and speak of

the Saviour, all these symptoms tell us plainly enough that our brotherly sympathy and our message of consolation are successful in soothing pain and bringing some real joy in the midst of suffering. Very often the clergyman's visit is the one bright spot in the patient's long dull day. There are times, indeed, when the wisest and most loving pastor fails to comfort. There are wounds so sore that the sufferer can bear no eye to look at them, no hand to touch them but God's. There are pains of body sometimes so acute, illnesses so stupefying, that human ministry can bring the heart no help. But these cases are exceptional. Generally in sickness pain can be more or less soothed by the two great powers the pastor wields—human sympathy and Divine truth. If he goes into the sick-room, indeed, without either of these, he fails. If he does not feel for his brother's trials, if he does not believe in the reality of God's revelations, he can do no good. Under such conditions his visits tire and hurt. Ah! the mere official clergyman just doing what he is paid for, saying words whose reality he does not feel, putting on a grave or sorrowful manner just as he puts on his surplice in the vestry, what a hard intrusion is his visit in a sick-room! People send for him and endure him when a man

is sick even as they send for the undertaker when a man is dead, because it is the "proper thing." Go in, you clerical hireling, with your solemn manners, and read your chapter, and say your prayer, but don't think you bring the poor man any more of help or comfort than will the black-coated mutes by-and-by when they walk beside his hearse. If you want to succeed in comforting, you must come with real fellow-feeling. You will not find it of much use to put on an appearance of sympathy that you do not feel. If you do not feel for the sufferer, you had better not pretend you do. You had better humble yourself in the dust before the Saviour who died for you both, confess to Him your selfishness and hardness of heart, and then, coming from that throne of pity and love, go back again to the sufferer's bedside as a real brother. And where there is love and sympathy for him in your heart, the voice, manner, and countenance will unconsciously testify to its presence without special endeavour to put on sympathizing looks or sympathizing tones.

And coming thus from the Saviour's throne to the bedside of your brother or sister, you will come with gentleness and meekness as well as with affection. You will treat the poorest invalid with honour and respect. Pompous bearing,

authoritative tones, condescending airs, how impossible they are to a messenger who feels himself sent by the Crucified Master to comfort one for whom He has died. Your entrance into the sick-room should bring with it a light from Him who came to be the Light of the world. But is there not a light shining on that pale face too? "I was sick" (the Judge is to pronounce), "and ye visited *Me*." Each sufferer is to you a representative of the great voluntary Sufferer. If the Lord Jesus were lying on that bed, what honour would you not pay Him? What a privilege you would feel it to be allowed to come and minister to Him! When you are tempted to be overbearing in a sick man's house, to be sharp and fault-finding, to ask questions in a magisterial tone, will it not humble you and soften you to think for a moment of the Divine sentence—"Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these, ye did it unto Me"?

You come to comfort, then, with sympathy really felt, but you must come also with the Word really believed in. A message has been left by Him who tabernacled among us to bind up the broken in heart. This message is the true medicine to heal their sickness. The skilful application of the Word is one of the most important branches of the art of consolation. Sympathy makes you

weep with him who weeps, but only with God's truth can you dry his tears. You must not indeed cry "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. You must be earnestly on your guard against fictitious consolation. Your teaching must not be a mawkish reiteration of soft half-truths. It must be honest courageous, faithful.

But into the sick-room you do come with a message from the invisible world just when the visible is most darkly clouded. You want that message to bring, as it was meant, gladness and peace. Even when conscience has to be probed, the slumbering heart awakened, when the terror of the Lord and the awe of eternity have to be vividly brought forward, the end of it all is consolation. The godly sorrow is to issue in tears of joy. Reproof and rebuke are to lead to rest in the Redeemer. In order, therefore, rightly to divide the word of truth in a sick-room, you must remember that you come into that darkened chamber as a consoler: and you can only efficiently console by the consolation with which you yourself are comforted of God. Try to feel the reality of His consolation in your own heart. You believe in a Father in heaven; try to grasp firmly the great truth that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without Him, and that He makes all things

work together for good to those that love Him. Your words about this will sound empty commonplaces, tiresome platitudes, unless they come from a deep conviction of the ever-present fact they express.

You believe in the Saviour's human tenderness and Divine omniscience, and, resulting from both, His exquisite sympathy for every detail of man's suffering and sorrow. Dwell on this in your own heart. Recognise that it is true with yourself, that He knows, and is interested in everything that pleases or pains you. So will you be able to bring the Bible declarations of His love and pity with the ring of delightful reality to the ears of your patient.

You believe in the forgiveness of sins. Take home the blessedness of it to your own heart. Remind yourself of how surely, in spite of all your faults, you are for Christ's sake pardoned and "accepted in the Beloved." So will you be able to bring the glad tidings to the anxious and troubled penitent. Your declaration of God's absolution will sound in his ears not as an ecclesiastical form, but as the very voice of the Saviour thrilling over the storm, and saying, "Be of good cheer."

You believe in eternal life. You believe for yourself that, whether you weep or whether you

rejoice, the time is short, and the fashion of the world is passing away, and that, whether you gain or lose more or less here, you have a treasure in the heavens that faileth not. With this faith strong in your own heart, with this prospect constantly gleaming before you in your own life, you will be strong and confident in the sick-chamber to re-echo God's promises of eternal happiness. To the sick man, amidst his agonies, you will be able to say, without any misgiving or any sense of hollow unreality, "The sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." To the friends who stand by, suffering with the sufferer's pain, trembling in dread of the awful separation of death, you will be able (without fear of being a "Job's comforter") to whisper words of faith and hope and courage.

But you do not come into the sick-room only to comfort. You have another task. God is wielding the fatherly rod; it is your duty to help the sufferer to learn his lesson. You have to be faithful as well as sympathizing. That season of sickness is a great opportunity; you must try to have the opportunity used.

The sick man is forcibly withdrawn from the bustle and hurry and excitement of the world.

He has time for thought, self-examination, and prayer. The "eternal and the spiritual" are, from his circumstances, made to stand out before him more vividly than usual. Sometimes, indeed, there is so much pain and bodily exhaustion, that the mental faculties are almost or entirely stupefied. Cases like these teach us how, after all, health is the only reliable opportunity for preparing for eternity. The coming of a painful or prostrating sickness is often the practical closing of life's probation. But still, as a general rule, it is found that sickness, with its retirement and its warning call, is an opportunity for special thought and spiritual exercise.

It is an opportunity for the patient, and it is an opportunity for the clergyman too. It is often hard to meet your parishioner, hard to get close to him, to be able to speak distinctly home to his conscience. If you are admitted to the sick-room, these difficulties vanish. The man is there. He cannot bustle off. He expects you to speak to him. He generally likes you to speak to him. His circumstances incline him to listen with special interest to what you are sent to say.

Take care that you do not let this opportunity slip. Seize it, and use it. It is well to be on the watch for sickness. Do not wait to be sent for.

People seldom send for a clergyman unless there is supposed to be danger of death. But lighter sicknesses are generally better opportunities for heart work than those which are more severe. So when you hear of your parishioners being confined to the house through sickness, go and see them if possible.

Be ready, I need hardly say, to respond to any sick call, whether by day or by night. The call may be unnecessary or unreasonable; it may come from a superstitious feeling, or from morbid nervousness; but when you are called never hesitate to go. Whatever may have been the motive on the part of the sender, there is an opportunity for you to do your Master's work, and deliver your Master's message; for His sake earnestly seize it. If the illness is infectious, you must no more shrink from it than must the soldier from the enemy's guns.

In trying to comfort we saw what an important power is brotherly sympathy. In trying to profit it is equally needful. Do not be too eager to lecture the poor sick man. Do not show a fussy desire to discharge at him your clerical artillery of texts and prayers. Come to him as a man and a brother; sit down beside him. Listen to him with friendly attention. Do not think your

time is being wasted while he tells you of his diseases, or of the doctor's remedies. They are the great events in his world now. If you really care about the man himself, you will take an interest in hearing about them.

Then when a friendly relation has been established between you and him, go on to your deeper work. Try to get the man to speak to you on spiritual subjects. Lead him to open his heart, and to tell you about his life, his hopes, his fears, and his difficulties. It will be easier for you then to direct your conversation, and to choose your Scripture thoughts, so as to suit his wants.

Be very careful not to fatigue the body. Take care not to let the nervous system be either over-excited or wearied. Watch the face, and if you see the hectic flush coming, or the eyes gleaming out too eagerly, stop the conversation as quickly as you can. Sometimes the patient ought not to speak much; sometimes he is not able to listen for more than a few minutes; loving tact and careful watchfulness will make you graduate your visit accordingly.

But perhaps you think you must deliver your soul whatever condition the man may be in. He is drawing near to eternity, and you must speak your message even though it fatigues, excites him,

and aggravates his disease. It is hardly kind to deliver your soul by killing your neighbour's body. And though you may satisfy your own conscience, you are not likely to do your patient any real good when you have begun to tire him. Once fatigue has come, and the restless pulse and the jaded attention, the opportunity of helping has passed.

It is well to have one definite lesson, if possible, for each visit: one short passage of Scripture, one verse embodying one aspect of truth and duty, so that after you are gone the patient may have something he can easily think of. The exhortation in the Service for the Visitation of the Sick gives an example of the kind of lesson to teach. It is short, plain, and definite. It takes one short passage of Scripture, and in simple, loving, and earnest words points out its teaching. It leaves behind the definite echo; suffering is God's fatherly chastisement; what is to be the attitude of the chastened child towards the loving but rebuking Father?

A certain order may, I think, be with advantage observed in the lessons we bring: at first, for example, thoughts of humiliation, penitence, self-examination, then teachings as to God's love and free pardon through Christ Jesus, then

lessons as to faith and patience and the bearing of burdens as our work for the Master, then brighter and more joyful teachings as to the heavenly reward and the glory that is to be revealed. We are not, indeed, to bind ourselves to this order or to any previously prepared scheme of treatment. Praying that the Holy Ghost may teach us what to say, we should watch in the patient's feeble and hesitating words, in the very lights and shadows that flit over his face, for every indication of what is passing within his soul, so that we may provide accordingly out of the varied treasure-house of God's truth. But our visits are likely to produce a more real and permanent impression if, instead of vague and general words of comfort and exhortation, we can lead on, step by step, one precious truth at a time, through the various elements of thought and feeling on which the Christian character rests.

When our conversation is done it should be followed by a short prayer. There should be no bonds of formalism in our brotherly visits at the bedside, and so sometimes we may feel that the few words we have had together are as much as the sick man can bear, and that we had better leave him to pray over them in his own heart But as a rule we must keep in mind the inspired

injunction that the elders of the Church are to pray over the sick. Accordingly when we come into the sick man's room we should feel that we have come there chiefly to pray, to pray with him and to pray for him, to lead him and his friends in their petitions to the throne of grace, and to join them in wrestling in prayer for blessing both to his soul and body. Here, too, we may take the Visitation Service for our model. It is well to know some of the prayers in that service by heart, for often we shall feel that no words could carry up our desires more simply and accurately than they do. Young clergymen often find a difficulty in praying "extempore." Even at a sick-bed the intellectual effort to put thoughts into definite words interferes with the free course of prayer. These beautiful collects, known by heart, will prevent the necessity of what to some people seems the chilling form of taking a book out of the pocket. Most clergymen, however, find it better to use no specially prepared form of prayer. If ever it is easy to say simply to our Father what comes into our heart to wish, it is in the quiet, the privacy, the solemnity of the sick-chamber. Self-consciousness, thoughts of the effect produced on others by our words, these things which interfere with freedom and simplicity of

speech elsewhere, can hardly intrude much as we hear in our ears the struggling breath of the sick or dying man, and beseech our Father to help him in his sore need. Our prayer should be, as I have just suggested, very short. It should correspond to the tone of the conversation that has gone before. That prayer will be most easily prayed that expresses to God the emotion or desire most prominent in the heart at the moment.

When illness continues for any length of time arrangements should be made for the patient to receive the Holy Communion at regular intervals, not as a preparation for death, but as a sacred duty for life and a Divinely appointed means for strengthening and refreshing the soul amidst the shadows of sickness as well as amidst the bustle and distractions of health. And never perhaps is the sweetness of communion with our Lord, and with one another, more vividly felt than when two or three are gathered together in the quiet chamber, and, with hushed voice and soft footstep, the pastor goes from friend to friend till he stoops over the wasted form upon the couch and puts into the wan hand the pledge of the Redeemer's love.

There are two ends to sickness—recovery or death. The preparation for both is, in the deepest

sense, the same. The awakening of soul, the humiliation, the approach to the cross of Christ, the clinging to the Divine Master in trust and love and joyful hope—these, which are the preparations for meeting the Lord in death, are just the preparations needed also to go forth for a fresh start in life. But it is of preparation for death I want now to speak a few concluding words. All your ministry, if it is real, is a preparation for death. From the time you begin to teach the infant to lisp the sacred name of Jesus, through all your teaching by classes, by sermons, by books, by private conversation, you are striving to make the soul God has committed to your care fit for its eternal destiny, meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. But now you are called to attend on one just at the brink of the grave. At first perhaps there was uncertainty as to whether he would recover or die. You tried to make him ready for either alternative. Now the struggle between hope and fear is over. It is plain that he must die. The passage may last a few days or a few weeks, but there is no doubt as to the dark door to which it leads.

Oh, how solemn it is to stand beside a man who is so soon to be in the presence of the secrets that lie "behind the veil." What an earnest

supplication should be breathed to the Father that guidance may be given in the solemn task of making this immortal being ready for such a crisis in his fate!

But we know that there is only one real readiness. If the man is united to the Lord Jesus by living faith, he is ready. If he is outside Christ, if he has not come to Him in spirit, if he is not clinging to Him by faith, he is unready. If he is forgiven, he is ready; his robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb; he is fit to take his place in the dazzling procession of the "saints in light." If he is impenitent and unforgiven, his last gasp in death brings him under the awful sentence, "Depart from Me into the outer darkness." With what intensity should the pastor who watches for his soul, as one who must give account, strive both in prayer and personal exhortation that this great question should be settled with the dying man—in Christ or outside Him, forgiven or unforgiven!

Your striving is to be in order that it should be really settled in the man's own heart. Do not harass him with questions that he is to answer to you, or to answer so as to be heard by the bystanders. The danger of unreality and of conventional professions does not pass away even amidst the shades of death. The important thing

is not what the man says to you, but what is the attitude of his soul to the Saviour. You want him to be a penitent; you want him to know and trust the Saviour. Labour with him that he may recognise his sinfulness; labour, above all, that he may know the love, the tenderness, the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus. It is well when a dying man can give a clear testimony as to Him in whom he has believed. It is a consolation to his friends. It is a confirmation to Christ's people in their faith. But after all the great thing is not what a man says, but what he *is*. Press your teaching continually, so that he may *be* a believer in Christ Jesus. Try to tear from his eyes all veils of self-deceit. Try to break down under him all supports of self-righteousness or conventional religion, so that he may rest on "Jesus only." Try to strengthen his feeble faith, and to cheer his trembling heart by describing to him what Jesus is and what Jesus has done. Roman Catholic clergymen hold the crucifix or figure of Christ upon the Cross before the eyes of the dying. Let your endeavour be to hold up before the dying man's heart and conscience the Saviour Himself; strive to make him see Him beside him in His love and tenderness, and in the power and plenitude of the pardon He

has purchased on the Cross. So will he be ready to go forth into the solemn shadows without fear, knowing that to "depart and be with Christ is far better."

CHAPTER XII.

FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE.

HOW many pictures rise before our minds as we use this phrase "from house to house." The stately mansion embosomed in woods; the little cottage far up the mountain side, hardly distinguishable from the rocks and the heather amidst which it seems to grow; the dingy hovel in the back lane of the country town; the respectable house in the city street or fashionable square; the busy and bustling farmhouse; the lonely little cabin where some poor old woman spends the evening of her days; the loathsome attic, up the creaking and broken staircase, in the foul alley of the city; pictures like these stand out before the imagination as we speak of visiting from house to house.

We think of the solemnity of passing through grand park gates, and the slight awe inspired by tall powdered footmen, and the light and colour

and fragrance of tasteful drawing-rooms, and the rustle of silken dresses, and the soft music of gentle ladies' voices. We think of stuffy front parlours, and hard-headed men of business immersed in work and care. We think of rough kitchens, with great pots boiling on the fire, and women scrubbing churns, and workmen and children and fowls and four-footed animals crowding in and out. We think of prayers by wretched pallets, interrupted by the heavy breathing of the dying, and whispers of hope and peace listened to in quiet bedrooms, where the roses look in through the latticed windows on the fair face whose own roses have gently faded away. Varied, indeed, are the scenes suggested by the words "from house to house."

But they are the scenes where our work has to be carried on. And different as may be the scenes that shift as we go from home to home, the drama that is acted amidst them all is nearly the same. We soon find that between "my lady" and her cook there is no very great difference. In the castle and in the cabin, in the softly carpeted library and in the blacksmith's forge, the human hearts of the inhabitants go through wonderfully similar experiences. Joy and sorrow, hope and fear, sin and repentance, faith and service, show in their history and their successions no respect of

persons; and the minister of God can show no respect of persons either. The only distinction he has a right to make in his visits is grounded upon the thought of who may need him most Those who are most tempted, most tried, most in danger, or most perplexed, are those to whom he has to show most attention. He, the messenger of God's good news, has, like another sterner messenger, to knock equally at the doors of rich men's palaces and of poor men's huts.

It has been, perhaps, the fashion of late rather to depreciate visiting in comparison to other branches of ministerial labour. Fashion has its changes in ecclesiastical matters as well as in the other affairs of life. It is not only the cut of the clerical garments, and the shape of the clerical hats, that are influenced by its laws, but even the views and ideas of clerical duty. And it requires considerable strength of mind and earnestness of purpose in a young man to keep himself uninfluenced by the ebbing or flowing of clerical fashion, and to look upon things as his understanding and conscience tell him they really are, no matter what ideas on the subject happen to be "in" or "out" among the majority of his fellow-curates.

But any fashion that would depreciate house-to-house visiting is certainly a foolish fashion. No

other instrumentality can fulfil its office. It is not to be a substitute for other and more regular branches of work, but it must be an accompaniment to all work. If it is neglected, all other work will soon flag. Schools, classes, services, sermons, meetings, clubs, guilds, corporate efforts of all kinds, require to be stimulated and supplemented by the separate personal action of house-to-house visitation. It is only one of the tools needed for our work, but it is one for which no other can be a substitute, and which we can never leave long out of our hands.

It will help us in our visiting to present to our minds, as distinctly as we can, the objects we want to accomplish by it. The first of these objects is to become acquainted with our people, to acquire a personal knowledge of them as friends, brothers and sisters, to know what kind of thoughts they think, what difficulties and temptations they have to struggle against, what ideas are current among them, what are their mistakes, their needs, their pleasures and troubles. Only by going in and out, and mixing with common daily life, can this knowledge be obtained. Even if we had the confessional of the Roman Church, it would not supply it. The outpourings of hearts in the enthusiasm of religious excitement, or the mechanical repeti-

tion of habitual and routine acknowledgment of sin, would not enable us to understand what people are amidst the rough realities of daily life. Want of this knowledge makes much of the preaching and teaching of young clergymen useless. They are eager about the controversial points they used to hear discussed in college. They ardently take this side, or that side, in theological disputes; but the needs and the ideas of Thomas the footman, Hodge the ploughman, Mary the kitchen-maid' Mr. Sharp, the country attorney, or Mr. Sharp's bustling wife and fashionable daughters, are as unknown to them as the habits and customs of the Sphinx.

If we want to speak as men and brothers to our brethren, if we want to speak to them simply, directly, earnestly, we must go to their houses and sit down by their firesides, see the cook in her kitchen, walk with the ploughman beside his horses, and listen to the farmer as he discourses of his bullocks. In this, as in everything else, the Great Pastor should be our model. He mixed freely with human life, spoke to His people in their homes, by the wayside, in their rough fishing boats, as well as in the synagogues and under the arches of the Temple. And mingling and sympathising as He did with common human life, His words

came home to His hearers with the ring of reality And wherever there aremen who sow and reap, buy and sell, marry and give in marriage, there the simple teaching of Jesus of Nazareth is still felt as a power that reaches straight to the heart. From house to house then, like our Master, we must go, in and out among our brethren, so that we may know them, so that we may feel with them, know their needs, and be able to address them in language they understand.

And we go from house to house, not only to fit ourselves for our work, but to do our work. The Lord Jesus went about "doing good." And such must be the character of our visiting: we want to do good to our people, to help them in every way we can. Sometimes we can do good to them with regard to their material concerns. We find them in destitution, poverty, perplexity, and we are able either to give them substantial relief, or put them in the way of obtaining it.

We come to the poor and needy as real, brotherly friends; and we must take an interest in their bodily condition, and really try to be of use to them with regard to it, otherwise we shall hardly do much for their souls. If we say in bland and solemn piety, "Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled," and do not stretch out a hand

to help, it will be difficult to persuade them of our friendship. No doubt we shall have to exercise much watchfulness and discretion lest we should encourage mendicancy, and give, as is not at all uncommon, a clerical premium to imposture. In large parishes it is well to follow the example of the apostles, who appointed helpers to "serve tables," while they gave themselves to the Word of God and prayer.

Still the clergyman who watches for the souls of the poor must take a real hearty interest in their bodily condition also. There is an instinct which drives the poor to the clergyman as their natural helper. It is not a mistaken instinct. The business of the pastor's life is ministry to others. He comes among the people to do good. The soul and body are so closely linked together, that the spiritual helper cannot leave the bodily condition unregarded. He may not have opportunity, means, power to help as he would wish; but he will always have sympathy for the distress, often valuable, practical counsel, and sometimes from himself or from Christian friends relief for the present necessity.

But our direct business as ambassadors from God is with the soul rather than the body. We have a message to deliver, great truths to declare,

warnings, promises, invitations from God to make known to men.

One important way of carrying on this work in our visiting is by gathering in our people to the public means of grace. It is not enough to have the bell tolled for service. Many an ear will be deaf to its chime which can yet be reached by the loving voice of the pastor. From house to house we must go, and really see who go to church, to school, to classes, to Holy Communion, who stay away, and for what reasons. We cannot be inquisitorial or impertinent, but it is necessary for us to be very careful and earnestly searching in our inquiries. We must not let ourselves be put off with vague and evasive answers, but must exercise a certain firm and honest persistency, although respectful and gentle with the very poorest. We have to make ourselves acquainted with the real facts. Servants must be thought of and inquired after as well as their masters, children as well as their parents, the men among our parishioners even more carefully than the women. The shepherd has to go and seek the lost sheep over the mountains. Much of our visiting has to be of this seeking character, looking for the erring and the straying. They will not come to us. We must go to them. The Gospel has no attraction for

them. Though they need it so sorely, they have no wish to hear it. They are absorbed in the bustle, or toil, or care of ordinary life. They are busy and half sceptical perhaps; they are gay, thoughtless, and absorbed in sport or amusement; they are poor, badly dressed, and wholly occupied in the struggle for existence. If left to themselves, they would never come within the sound of God's Word. Out into the highways and hedges we, as God's messengers, have to go, and compel them to come in. We must invite them, urge, press them to the services of the Church; but, above all, wherever we find them we have to press home God's call to their souls. Our language should not be, "Come to-morrow, and I will preach to you about Christ," but "He is here now. He promises you eternal life; He asks you for your heart." By touching the conscience, by awakening the sense of guilt and of longing for better things, the strongest argument for church-going will be applied.

But as pastors to tend and feed our flock, we go from house to house, as well as to look for the straying. We want to encourage the individual members of it by personal sympathy. We want to find out their needs, and supply them by the ministry of the Word. If they are perplexed

and puzzled, we want to give them, as far as we can, the clue of Divine truth that may lead them through the intricate maze of mental difficulty. If they are hampered and weakened by what we believe to be mistakes or narrow-minded traditions, we want to loose them from those bands. If they are in special temptation, we want to nerve them to steadfastness. If they are indolent and lagging in their Christian course, we want to urge them forward. If they are disappointed, sorrowful, or lonely, we want to comfort them with Divine consolation.

Great charges are laid upon us to "feed the flock of God, which He has purchased with His blood," His "beautiful flock," which He will require at our hands. We have to tend, guard, and guide its members scattered through "this naughty world." We have "never to cease our labour, our care, our diligence, till we have done all that lieth in us to bring all such as are committed to our charge unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there shall be no place left among us either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life." The prophet Ezekiel describes the shepherd's duty as "strengthening the diseased, healing that which is sick, binding up

that which is broken, bringing again that which is driven away, seeking that which is lost."

Only by following the members of our flock into their homes, and dealing with them there personally, face to face, can these various and difficult offices be fulfilled. It is very hard to fulfil them even thus. The human soul is very sensitive, and shrinks up into itself at the approach of a stranger. It is hard even in people's homes to come into close quarters with their hearts. They often keep us at arm's length. With marvellous ingenuity, and with most voluble chatter, they contrive to put all kinds of obstacles between us and their souls. And the many interruptions of home life increase the difficulty of close and open personal intercourse. But with all its difficulties, this watching, tending, pastoral work must be carried on by seeking our people as best we may from house to house.

Appreciating then the importance of visiting work, and realizing to ourselves the special objects at which it aims, let us go on to consider the spirit and manner in which it is to be carried out. If it is to be done effectually, there must be, as was suggested before, with regard to all our work, regular order and method in our doing of it. There is no part of our pastoral duty in which

the temptations to impulsive and spasmodic action are so constant. There is no external pressure. One day would seem to do as well as another for each visit. Some people are pleasant; some are dry and unattractive. There are places from which we are apt to shrink, because it seems so hard to do any good there. There are other places where we are welcomed so heartily, where our coming seems to be felt as such a comfort and profit that we should like to go there often. And so those who want us least might easily be attended to at the expense of those who want us most. The places where our Master sends us might be passed by for those to which our own desires and fancies lead us.

And if our parish is large, and its inhabitants numerous, no unassisted memory can keep count of where we have been and where we are wanted. One of the first things necessary, therefore, for regular parochial work is a carefully drawn-out list of our parishioners, so arranged that entries of our visits can be made after each name. It is well to have as full information as we can collect recorded in this book—the number and names of the children who are confirmed or unconfirmed —who have died, married, or gone away since we knew them. Thus, at a glance, as we prepare for

our visiting, we can be reminded of the condition of the family we are going to see.

Another list, as was suggested in a previous chapter, should be kept of those who require our special attention—the sick, the aged, the infirm, the lonely, people who are not able to attend the public ministrations of the Church, and to whom, therefore, the Church is bound to minister individually with thoughtful and diligent regularity.

What an interest this list should have in the eyes of the pastor! It tells him of the members of the flock who are in a very special way committed to his care. They are the weakly and tender ones whom the Great Shepherd "carries in His bosom." The under-shepherd should surely feel that they have a very sacred place in his heart. And as he passes his eye from name to name, and there arises in his mind the picture of the desolate, bed-ridden old woman, or the confirmed invalid in the dreary monotony of the one dull room; as he thinks of the saddened, joyless lives, and the weary faces, and the plaintive voices; or as he thinks of the courage, faith, and patient hope, still gleaming in sunken eyes or glowing on wasted cheeks, that dry list becomes to him a manuscript illuminated with glistening colours, a beautiful and touching record of sorrow and endurance, of the

world's trials, and of the Divine strength that gives the victory over them.

This human interest should gild and glorify all our parochial statistics; otherwise our lists and our entries will become a snare to us. Some clergymen are in bondage to their parish books. It is not the souls of their parishioners they are anxious for, but the regular and orderly keeping of their visiting lists. When the day is over, the questioning is not as to how many fellow-creatures have been helped, how many tears dried, how many consciences touched, how many brothers and sisters drawn to the Saviour: it is simply as to how many entries there may be for the diary. Their rejoicing is not for names written in the book of life, but for names written in their own petty memorandum books.

There should be the desire and determination to go with orderly method all through our parish; yet that desire must be always subservient to the great object of our ministry—doing *real* good. We are methodical because we can thus do the most good to the greatest number. But sometimes we can do more good by interrupting our method for a while. On the field of battle the army advances in line. But every here and there the line must be broken, the forces concentrated

on some special point of advantage, the position gained by a fiery charge, and then the line formed again and the regular march resumed. In our battle against evil, there are occasions on which we must disregard our regular parochial plans. We are particularly needed here or there. Opportunities come when by going out of our way and giving all our attention for a while to some special efforts, results can be produced which could not be produced by our ordinary routine. We must hold ourselves free for these movements. We are not visiting machines, to be wound up and set a-going like clockwork. We are thoughtful and careful watchmen, watching for the souls of our people as those who must give account, trying, as far as we can, to think of each individual with his wants and needs, and ready, whenever duty or kindness calls, to leave the ninety-nine who are in comparative safety in order to go over the mountains and seek for the one lost and wandering sheep ever till we find it. So our visiting is to be on the whole regular, but with an elastic regularity which guides without binding.

We saw, not long ago, how one of the most important agents for being of use in our visitation of the sick is the spirit of sympathy. The same may be said with regard to all our visiting. We go, not as clerical policemen or census collectors

but as men and brothers. We go to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice. We must put away our red-tape and our mannerism, our hardness, dryness, official airs of superiority or official severity. We must try to forget self, and go in and out among our brethren full of interest for their interests and care for their cares. The loving heart of which we spoke before, warmed by our union with the centre of love, will supply the fountain from which the sympathy will flow. This will make our visits pleasant to ourselves, and to those on whom we call. As we knock at the door we shall not have the secret feeling, "I hope the people are out, so that I may be saved the trouble of talking to them," but "I hope they are at home, for I want to see them, and know all about them, and have some interesting intercourse with them." Then we shall enjoy seeing the old folks, the little children, the young men, and the maidens. And as we sit down in their midst, many a pleasant word will be said, and many a pleasant smile will brighten the faces both of visitor and hosts, and we shall go on our way cheered and gladdened ourselves, and feeling that we have left a pleasant ray of brightness behind us. We shall all feel happier because we have had a little Christian sympathy together.

But though we wish to come with the genial warmth of human sympathy, we must come at the same time in a spirit of earnest watchfulness. Every faculty is to be on the alert. We have to observe all the indications of the state of mind, character, and life of our people. As the old woman moans, and we feel for her desolation, we have to consider whether her religious expressions are true and honest, or only pious conventionalities. While the lady of the manor house talks on so graciously, it is our business to try to discern whether her heart is awake to the great spiritual realities. While we walk with the squire through his demesne, or with the farmer over his fields, while we sit with John in the harness room or Mary in the kitchen, while we lean over the wasted form upon the bed of suffering, or look into the eyes of the dying, we have to seek for the answer to the same grave questioning—What is the spiritual condition here? Is the soul waking or sleeping, thriving or languishing, busy and earnest for God, or careless, indolent, and self-indulgent? We are not judges, indeed, but we are watchmen. It is not our business to pass a sentence, either of acquittal or condemnation, on those to whom we minister. We may be thankful that it is not so. Sorely puzzled should we often

be in deciding between contradictory appearances. It is a great rest to remember that not judgment, but teaching, is our office. Still, in carrying out our pastoral duty, very careful and prayerful observation is needed, so that to each the suitable teaching may be given. What does this one want? How can I best help him? Is it by encouraging and comforting, or is it by setting his conscience to work in solemn self-questioning? There should be the diagnosis of the patient before the application of the remedy.

And in our visitation watchfulness must be kept up, not only over our people, but over ourselves. We are not angels coming down on gentle wings from purer spheres. We are men of like passions with those whom we visit. And the temptations that assault us "from house to house" are legion. The daily battle that has to be carried on by a Christian man against vanity, self-seeking, indolence, impurity, and evil temper—does it cease as he goes on his pastoral rounds? Does the enemy give him a truce at such times? I fear we shall find that he is just then especially busy.

"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," is our Lord's direction to His chosen apostles. We must try to carry out that direction as we go our way at His bidding. If tempted to magnify self,

to put self forward, to have our own ministry and our own influence thought of instead of our Master's love; if tempted to flatter the great, or to despise the poor; if tempted to look too much on woman's beauty, or on man's grandeur; if tempted to be cross or angry when our vanity is wounded, or our opinion contradicted, then the prayer must be earnestly lifted up, and the vigilance diligently used, lest by the yielding of the will, even for a little moment, to the downward drawing, our Master be dishonoured, and the holy office of His ministry be defiled.

I hope it is almost unnecessary to suggest the need of thoughtful tact and careful politeness in our visits to the very poorest as well as to the upper classes. A clergyman ought to be, in the deepest sense of the word, a *thorough gentleman.* Whatever may have been his social position by birth, he should have learned, in order to be fit for his work, that delicate consideration for the feelings of others, that chivalrous honour to womanhood, and deference to the weak that gives the true "sweetness and light" to the real gentleman's manners. So in the cottage and the castle, in the old woman's hovel and the sick maiden's bedchamber, he will be alike a welcome guest. The most sensitive feelings will not shrink at his

presence. His manner will have the grace and attractiveness that come not from artificial polish, but from kindness, modesty, and loving thought fulness.

But along with his sympathy and watchfulness and thoughtfulness, the pastor must have a steadfast determination to do his work and deliver his message. Otherwise he might as well stay at home. No matter how well drilled and how well dressed a soldier may be, he is of no use unless he is ready to fight. As we knock at each door, as we sit down in each room, as we look into each friend's face, we must have the resolve thrilling in our hearts, "God helping me, I will try to do some work for Him here."

I do not think that it is either needful or expedient for a clergyman always to read the Scriptures or to pray when he visits. Such a rule would seem to me to savour of bondage, if not of superstition. To hold a meeting for exposition and prayer is one thing; to pay a pastoral visit is another thing. The special objects of visiting, although kindred, are not the same as the objects of a prayer-meeting. Often when occasion offers, when there is likely to be no interruption, when the conversation leads up to it, when there has been expression of strong

emotion, when there is mourning or anxiety in the home, a short and earnest prayer to God will be felt as a comfort and a help. Watch for such an opportunity, and gladly seize it. But do not make any hard-and-fast rule on the subject. The reading of a "chapter" is almost always formal. I think it is better to have in our mind as we go our rounds some one pregnant and impressive verse, short, striking, and easily remembered, and if no other spiritual thought has been brought out in conversation, to press that earnestly home before we leave.

These, however, are only matters of detail. How to do our work best we must ask our Master to show us in each visit, but the great thing is to be earnestly determined to do it. We must bind ourselves to no stereotyped plan. We must let ourselves be used by our Master on each occasion just as He wants us. But as we go on His message from house to house, we must try to feel in each house, "Lord, I am here as Thy messenger. Thy will I am determined to do. Thy word I will endeavour to speak; Thy people here, the souls for whom Thou hast died, the souls whom Thou hast given into my care, I will strive by some means or other to help, to warn, to guide, or to comfort." Surely He sees the resolution. Surely

He hears the heart cry for help. Surely it will be given us in that hour what to speak. And the word that, in His name, and at His bidding, we have spoken, though with stammering lips, shall not return to Him void. Echoes of it shall doubtless thrill in living hearts long after we have been laid in our graves. And not till the "great day" shall we know the train of results that have followed our feeble but faithful endeavour to proclaim our Master's message.

THE END.

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