

allows; but the pastoral visit is something more than this. Such friendly and social visits may be made to any member of the community, and not involve the religious element more than a regular business visit of a pious man.

In rural districts the pastor is frequently entertained with accounts of the crops or conditions of the market or weather prospects, and sometimes he is taken about the farm to view the stock. While all this may be very interesting to one whose tastes are so inclined, it is surely evident that this is not in the direct line of pastoral visitation. It may be made helpful in the hands of a wise pastor; but frequently it takes up too much time, and sometimes destroys or reduces to the least amount the difference between the pastor's visit and that of a neighboring farmer or a cattle drover.

Pastoral visitation is what the name indicates, the act of the minister or pastor coming to deal with the members of his flock one by one, or, at most, in their family relations. The shepherd at regular seasons deals thus with his flock, no matter how large the flock may be. The drover inspects each member of his herd at certain times, no matter how large that herd may be. In a similar way the pastor, at certain times, comes into personal contact with the individual members of his charge, no matter however numerous these may be. And in such meeting he appears as the Man of God. His influence as such must be felt. He comes as the man of prayer—not for a moment supposing that any member of his flock may not pray—but praying with them and for them as their friend and spiritual instructor. In such visitation his standing must not be mistaken, nor should he allow another, much less endeavor himself, to obliterate the lines marking off his position as pastor. This does not require austerity of manner, nor an icy barrier of formalism between the pastor and the members of his flock. On the contrary, there should be the utmost gentleness and warmth of sympathy. A kindly interest in the affairs of the family and their business may be shown, such an interest as will bind all the closer together pastor and people. But along with this there must be that quiet, holy dignity which shall ever preserve the proper relationships.

It cannot be doubted that in the performance of this duty many and serious *difficulties* are to be met. Some of these arise from the nature of the minister himself, while others spring from that of the people or the circumstances of his field.

It may be supposed that all feel more or less a certain shyness in close conversation on religion. With many it is a comparatively easy matter to stand before a crowd and preach; but when brought face to face with the individual, and especially when this one is much more advanced in age and experience, it is no easy task. This timidity is often a great hindrance to the young minister, more particularly if he be nervous and retiring. But a more serious difficulty lies in the way of one who is destitute of this shyness, and likewise of tact or prudence. Some men—even some ministers—are born blunderers. In a certain congregation there was a minister at one time of whom it was said, "If he could be boxed up in the pulpit, he would do very well; but when he gets out among the people he spoils all." To deal personally with all the different shades of character to be found in any ordinary congregation, requires great prudence; to discern the various motives actuating the people, the pastor needs great shrewdness; to apply the right remedy in the several cases of trouble he meets, and give sound advice, demands excellent judgment. Even the wisest and most experienced find difficulties, for the mastery of which they desire more wisdom.