

womanly influence, viz., TACT, AUTHORITY and KINDNESS.

Tact is evidently the characteristic of one who "openeth her mouth with wisdom." She is not one whose garrulity proves the truth of the proverb, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin," for she has a sufficient sense of the seriousness of life to avoid utterances which are idle and thoughtless. Her words are the dictates of that wisdom the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord. Nor does she merely speak wise words, but with true wisdom she recognises that "there is a time to speak and a time to be silent," so that her reproofs and encouragements live long in grateful memories.

But *authority* is quite as important as *tact*. Skill in management is of little value unless there be strength behind it. In our Sunday-Schools, for example, there are many failures which may be traced to a want of that authority which knowledge of Divine truth, and conviction concerning it, are able to give to a Christian teacher. Children, with their half-formed characters and partially-developed powers, must learn submission to a higher and wiser will, to obey because obedience is expected, to be under the law because that law is for their good. If we allowed our children to follow their animal instincts, or to neglect the simple laws of health, or to disregard rules which we have proved from experience to be good, they would grow up to be a curse to themselves and to those about them. They must be controlled by others if hereafter they are to control themselves; and first they must learn to submit to the authority of womanhood, which can only be asserted when there is courage, dignity and firmness on the part of those who seek to exercise it. God never meant that women should be always yielding to other people's opinions, or that they should be swayed hither and thither by every passing breeze of emotion. As much as men they need firmness, the royal power of rule, in the kingdom which is peculiarly theirs, for, in the sick-room and in the class, they have a veritable kingdom in which to exercise authority for God.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the authority here spoken of is the law of *kindness*, which is obeyed because it evidently springs from love, and is enforced by love. When there is forgetfulness of this true secret of power, when an unnatural harshness of tone is assumed in an unwise attempt to imitate man, then womanly authority is resented. But the wife who quietly talks over a question with her husband, the sister who, pleading with her brother, can tacitly do so on the ground of many a past kindness and sacrifice, the mother to whom her boy's heart turns with yearning even in his wildest moods—these have an influence which is deep and lasting. Gentlest influences are by no means the feeblest. The spring crocus can be crushed by a stone, but, unlike it, the crocus can push its way up through the stiff, hard soil, until it basks in the sunshine. The light of the sun falls so gently that it does not displace a single grain of sand, or disturb the dust on an insect's wing, but it can waken a whole world to duty. Those who have been able to win or to retain the affections of others exercise a power which angels might desire. Many a noble Christian man can remember the time when, as a lad, he was a sort of Ishmael, his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him, but just when defiance of the world, and even of God, was getting the mastery, there came the tender touch of womanhood which checked him. He felt the stirrings of a new hope, the longing for

a better life, because that sudden touch had suddenly revealed to him that there was one, at least, in the world who cared for him, and pitied him, and loved him, for Christ's sake. Recalling the influence of such an one, many can say:—

"Blessing she is, God made her so,
And deeds of week-day holiness
Fall from her, noiseless as the snow,
Nor ever hath she chanced to know
That aught was easier than to bless."

In accordance with repeated requests from subscribers in different parts of the very large field over which the *GUARDIAN* circulates, that we should publish, at least occasionally, a Sermon, *in extenso*, we appropriate the space ordinarily occupied by the "Family Department" (p. 10) to a sermon lately preached in this city by the Rev. J. S. Stone, B.D., Rector of St. Martin's Church. It needs no words of ours in commendation, and we feel sure that our readers will be pleased to have the opportunity of perusing it at leisure.

THE NEW ENGLISH BISHOPS.—It has seldom, if ever, fallen to the lot of a Prime Minister of England to nominate three Bishops in a single week, but this has been done by Mr. Gladstone since our last issue, and in a manner which, we believe, will command the approval and gratitude of the great majority of English Churchmen. The only feature of these appointments which is likely to meet with any adverse criticism is the translation of Dr. Temple from Exeter to the great Metropolitan See of London. Many of our readers will remember the strong opposition which was offered to Dr. Temple's appointment to Exeter, on the score of his association with the authors of "Essays and Reviews," and his subsequent admirable career as a Bishop has not entirely removed from all minds the suspicion of heterodoxy which that unfortunate proceeding occasioned. All must admit, however, that Dr. Temple has been, in many respects, a model Bishop, and that his administration of his diocese has been remarkably able and successful. The Diocese of London needs a strong man at its head, and Dr. Temple is both physically and mentally one of the strongest members of the English Episcopal Bench. On the whole, we are inclined to regard his promotion as a wise and judicious step.

There are few names better known to the Church public, whether as preacher, speaker or author, than that of Dr. Edward Bickersteth, who has just been nominated to the See of Exeter, and it has been a matter of surprise to many that he was not made a Bishop years ago. For 22 years Dr. Bickersteth was Archdeacon of Buckingham, and while holding that office he enjoyed the rare distinction of being four times in succession elected Prolocutor of the Convocation of Canterbury. He was appointed to the Deanery of Lichfield in 1875. His published works are numerous and valuable. The new Bishop is in his 71st year, but is still alert and vigorous in both body and mind.

Canon King, who succeeds the venerated Bishop Wordsworth in the ancient See of Lincoln, is, like his predecessor, a distinguished scholar and theologian. He has for several years been Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, of which he is regarded as one of the brightest ornaments. In Dr. King are combined great learning and deep spirituality of character, qualities which cannot fail to make his episcopate a blessing to his Diocese and to the Church at large.

AGNOSTICISM AND SUPERSTITION.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH, SUNDAY
EVENING, JANUARY 25TH., 1885,

BY THE

REV. J. S. STONE, B. D., RECTOR.

"For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole."—ST. MARK, v. 28.

There are extremes in most things. Even Faith may lapse into Agnosticism on the one side and into Superstition on the other; and as extremes sometimes meet, so the agnostic may be superstitious. It is as though a road ran through a marsh; keep in the way and all is well, but turn to either hand and you sink in the mire. Faith rests on a firm, solid highway of reason and revelation; the bogs of agnosticism and superstition which border it are without foundation, and render further progress impossible and destruction certain.

Yet, to look at one of these extremes, agnosticism claims to be the very outcome of reason, of sound and well-developed thought. It poses before the world as the only theory that is sure and certain. It undertakes to deal only with facts, with positive things. It does not know anything about matters beyond the senses. It says one must not ask about that which the eye cannot see nor the ear hear. If you ask, Is there a God? the agnostic answers, "I do not know." If you ask, Has man a soul? the agnostic answers "I do not know." If you ask, Is there a future life, and immortality, a resurrection, a judgment? the agnostic answers, "I do not know." He knows nothing; that is his creed. And for a man that knows nothing, the agnostic has a great deal to say. But the position he takes is untenable and illogical. He says we must deal only with facts, and yet there is one fact that he utterly ignores. It is this: in every mind there is a tendency to enquire into causes. Why are things as they are? is the question that will come up, no matter what restraint you place upon yourself. You cannot rest with saying, "I am alive," but you ask the why and the wherefore. In all ages and in all lands men have been diving into the causes of facts. We have had red sunsets; and everybody asked, why? We have had earthquakes; and again everybody asked, why? Even the agnostic is not satisfied with his "I do not know," when the whole world is bent on finding out the cause of the red sunsets and the earthquakes. Yet we have a more startling fact before us than aught the physical world can display—the fact that ever and everywhere men have guided their lives upon a something which was not seen; and that that something has moved them on to wonderful deeds and noble sacrifices; and more than that the world asks, "what is that something?" What is it that makes man better, truer, happier, holier? In vain does the agnostic say, "I do not know." The mind cannot rest in that. It must know. It faces the problem again and again, and demands to know. Even the agnostic, at the price of consistency, seeks to find out. And there is a fact for those who have run off the highway of Faith into the quagmire of agnosticism to look into. Agnosticism is not destined to a long life or to great expansion. Its very essence, to know nothing, is contrary to the bent of the human mind. It is unnatural. But the bog which lies on the other side of Faith, though equally illogical and untenable, is natural and commends itself to the natural mind. Be as true, honest and thoughtful as you will, and you retain the tendency to step out of faith into superstition. There is something attractive in superstition. It is a marsh covered over with green moss and decayed leaves and branches. Time has showered its dead wood upon it; poetry has spread its beautiful mantle over it. So that it does not look black and barren