

THE HOME AND FOREIGN RECORD.

OCTOBER, 1861.

THE PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP.

THE office of pastor in the Christian Church, is one peculiarly sacred and involving great responsibility. The man who aspires to it ought seriously to enquire whether he has the necessary qualifications for it, and a clear call to it. Even the preaching of the word is a work in which no man should engage who does not feel that he is called by the head of the Church. And yet the preaching of the word is but a part of the pastor's duty. It is for him to adapt the message of redeeming love to the peculiar circumstances of a particular section of the field. He is also to accompany his doctrine by such counsels, admonitions, reproofs and encouragements as may be required in order that the word spoken may prove fruitful. He is bound to take something like paternal interest in the circumstances of each family of which his flock is composed; and in private as well as in public he is expected to be the monitor, counsellor and friend of all.

There is a grave responsibility resting upon a congregation in choosing a pastor, and there is an equally grave responsibility resting upon a minister in accepting a pastoral charge. Every step, on both sides, should be taken with much serious deliberation, and earnest prayer for divine direction; and when a call is given and accepted, and the pastoral tie formed, each party should feel bound by links more tender and sacred than those of any contract that is merely of this world. The Pastor should feel that the MASTER has now allotted to him a special section of the field, for the cultivation and care of which he is peculiarly responsible; and the people should feel that in the stated ordinances of religion they enjoy a privilege for which a special account must be rendered, and that in the pastor they have a person who should be esteemed very highly for his work's sake. It is only when these mutual relationships of pastor and people are duly appreciated, and their respective duties understood and discharged in deference to the authority of their common MASTER, that much fruit can be expected.

When the pastoral relationship is once formed, it is of great importance that it should not be lightly interfered with. A step is taken deliberately and prayerfully, and under the solemn conviction that it is in the path of duty, should not for trivial reasons be retraced. A relationship constituted in the name and presence of God should not for light reasons be dissolved. He who, at the bidding of the Divine Master, assumes the oversight of a special charge, should not relinquish his post even for another, unless the MASTER clearly indicate that such is His will. They who have solemnly and cordially acknowledged and welcomed their pastor as the Ambassador of Christ should