

torpor of conscience on the part of the hearers, that they fail to take it in or retain any distinct impression of it. Every preacher of the Gospel (and every hearer of it also) may read and ponder profitably these truthful and pregnant words of the great Milton:

"The very essence of truth is plainness and brightness; the darkness and crookedness is all our own. The wisdom of God created understanding fit and proportionable to truth, the object and end of it, as the eye to the thing visible. If our understanding have a film of ignorance over it, or be bleared with gazing on other false glistenings, what is that to truth? If we will but pursue with sovereign eye-salve that intellectual ray which God has planted in us, then we would believe the Scriptures protesting their own plainness and perspicuity, calling them to be instructed, not only the wise and learned, but the simple, the poor, the babes, foretelling an extraordinary effusion of God's Spirit upon every age and sex, attributing to all men, and requiring from them the ability of searching, trying, examining all things, and by the Spirit discerning that which is good; and as the Scriptures themselves pronounce their own plainness, so do the fathers testify of them."

PREACHING WITH A PERSONALITY IN VIEW.—It would be interesting if ministers would give their experiences in the matter of direct preaching; whether they had in mind when preparing for the pulpit some individual, or based their application on general principles. Preachers draw from their own experiences, no doubt, much oftener than their hearers suspect; and there is nothing like actual personal experience to give point and effectiveness to preaching. A case in point is noted by a New England paper. It seems a powerful sermon was preached against the besetting sin of a violent temper. It was so potent, so pungent, so real, that the preacher was congratulated by several of his hearers, who expressed a kind of admiring surprise at such a searching and effective discourse on that subject. "Why," he replied, "I did that out of my own personal experience. It was because I knew just where I was daily sinning myself, and in the worst way, too, in that very direction, that I was able to make such a feeling sermon on that particular failing. If you will believe me, I was not preaching at any of

you, but at myself. That was actually what I wrote and preached that sermon for! I was trying to reform myself." The most effective sermons which the writer ever preached were portrait sketches of living characters in the audience before him. In one instance he had the boldness to delineate the faults of some twenty prominent members of his church, each under a letter of the alphabet. The effect was tremendous. In nearly every instance each offender recognized himself—made the right application. No one took offence. The result was eminently beneficial. Such a mode, however, calls for great carefulness and delicacy. The masters of fiction, for the most part, draw from *real life*, and so must the preacher, if he would not draw his bow at a venture.

#### AN EXPERIENCED CLERGYMAN.

#### TWO CHARACTERS.

##### FIRST.

From self alone his inspiration came,  
With gesture, voice, and pulpit pose in keeping.  
It was a flickering, uncertain flame  
Above his soul's fast dying embers creeping.  
He had an itching ear for fulsome praise,  
And seemed a very peafowl backward gazing  
Upon the brilliant hues of Sabbath days  
Upraised by him for all the world's amazing.  
The saints complained not, though they were  
unfed:  
"Be still," said they; "he may have God's  
anointing;"  
The poor and lowly, though unvisited,  
Did not rebel against the power appointing;  
But many minds had this doubt uppermost:  
"I wonder if there be a Holy Ghost?"

##### SECOND.

He was a man of very modest mien,  
Though versed in classic and in sacred lore;  
His Ego never cast a shade between  
His Master and the poorest of the poor.  
There seemed a trembling wonder in his eyes,  
That, "Feed my lambs" his ear had ever  
heard;  
And blushes gently faded to surprise  
When some one said, "What comfort in the  
Word!"  
He had no strutting dignity to guard,  
Was "Brother" called by each child of his  
fold;  
And for his work the best of his reward  
Came from the places where there was no gold.  
The people said, with faith the uttermost:  
"There is a Christ! There is a Holy Ghost!"  
New Carlisle, Ohio. JAMES STEPHENSON.