

PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION.



HOWEVER imperfectly the doctrine of entire sanctification may be understood by many, as an article of the creed, it is in no danger of being neglected, as an experience of the heart, for want of teachers. Some of the ablest preachers, and the most successful evangelists of the day, teach the experience of it as a specialty. They are, in more senses than the most obvious one, *professors* of sanctification. This experience has been the exclusive topic of a number of the largest and most influential camp-meetings. Perhaps, since the reformation of Luther, no one doctrine of Christianity has enlisted mightier agencies for its exemplification.

This is well. It will, as much as anything else, help to preserve the church from sinking into a mere formal religion, without any living experience of the vital doctrines it embodies in its creed. Of this there is great danger, in the Methodist as well as other branches of the church, in this very practical age, with its progressive ideas, and its activity in thought on all religious questions. There never was greater need of a strong preventive agency, in the shape of a clear testimony in favor of experimental religion. There can be no doubt of the need of a wholly sanctified church. The absence of revival power—the feeble influence of Christianity on the masses of gold-blinded men of our time—the want of enthusiasm in the great financial schemes of the church—may all be changed to the low ground occupied by professing Christians in relation to spiritual religion.

But is not the question worthy at least a thought, whether the ground which the church needs to occupy with a high spiritual religion is not more in practical life? We do not ask for any less sanctification as taught and experienced in the prayer and camp-meeting, but for more in the household, the field, and the work-shop—for a high type of spiritual life which can live and thrive in the one place as well as the other. The circumstances of our time demand from the church something more than emotional experience. The sanctification which can be exhibited to the world outside the class-room, in sweet tempers at home, and the exaltation of Christ in connection with the business of this world, will go farther toward making Christianity a universal religion, than all professions of higher life in connection with exciting religious services can possibly do. Indeed, in the present temper of the world, its attention is most likely to be drawn to experimental religion, by first witnessing its superior fruits in daily life, and being then forced to enquire after the cause, it will be led back to the class-room and the closet, to find the inspiration of this practical holiness in the wonderful experiences of the soul in the love of Christ. By this process will the world come to respect inward religion, more than by hearing strong attestations of purity gained by an experience in the warm circle of a devotional meeting,—which purity so often fails entirely when subjected to the trial of pressure in daily life.