

THE FIELD AND THE MEN FOR IT.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE CLOSE OF THE SESSION TO THE DIVINITY STUDENTS OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, AND NOW PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

Gentlemen,—You are aware that it has been the custom with me at the close of the session, to direct your attention to some practical topic, which cannot very naturally find a place in a series of lectures on systematic theology. The topic I have chosen for the present occasion is—*The field and the men for it.*

The Gospel has from the first been substantially one system. The object of its announcement has been from its first announcement in Eden, the same:—the salvation of men. All its true ministers have regarded this as the grand end of their mission. Their chief aim has ever been so to present the Gospel, that through their instrumentality sinners might be converted to God and built up in faith and holiness,—and just so far as they have been successful in this, they have felt, that they were successful in their work. And I may add, that the qualities necessary to ministerial success have been in all ages essentially the same. All true ministers of Christ have felt, that a full and clear knowledge of the Gospel, a firm faith in its truths, and great diligence and prudence in proclaiming these, were indispensable to their success. All reflecting men must ever thus feel. For while the most gifted never can forget, that a “Paul may plant and an Apollos water” “in vain, unless God gives the increase” yet as God works by means, all wise men realize the obvious truth, that they have no warrant to look for the increase, unless they go forth to the work with gifts and graces suitable to it. This is strikingly taught in the qualifications which Paul lays down for ministers in several of his epistles. But while it may be safely assumed, that no man in any age could be an efficient minister of Christ without knowledge, faith, zeal, prudence, and diligence, yet it may be just as certainly assumed, that there have been and still are portions of the vineyard, that require a peculiar adaptation of gifts and graces, in order to ministerial success. No one can suppose, that although Paul's message, “Repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ,” was substantially the same, yet that his manner of presenting it was *precisely the same* to all persons. There can be no doubt, that his method of presenting the truth in Arabia, was not precisely the same which he employed at Athens, Corinth and

Rome. We see from specimens of his sermons which we have, as well as from his epistles, his consummate wisdom in exhibiting the truth in a way adapted to the intellectual capacities and the moral condition of those he addressed. It was in this sense—without ever sacrificing one principle—“that he became all things to all men that he might gain the more.” Now, this is what every minister will do, who wisely aims at winning souls. His message is one—“the Gospel of the grace of God.” This he must preach to the learned and the unlearned, to the polished and the rude, to the rich and the poor, for as guilty and depraved men, they all stand alike in need of the remedy which the Gospel provides. Yet while the herald of the Cross will never forget this, still, if a wise man, he will “rightly divide the word” so as to give each a portion as he may be able to receive it. He will strive to preach not at random, “or as one that beateth the air” but with such an adaptation of the truth to the peculiar condition of his hearers, as may make it tell best on their understanding and conscience. But to do this effectively, he must to some extent be a discerner of the signs of the times,—or at all events, must have a nice appreciation of the intellectual condition and the peculiar moral habits of those he addresses. Many have been very useful in the ministry, who had neither genius nor a high order of talents; but no man was ever useful who had not talents suitable to his field and who did not well understand the nature of the field in which he laboured.

Assuming, that you are looking forward to the employment of your talents in this Province, let me notice briefly some of the characteristics of that field in which you are to labour.

Of the people to whom you are to minister, I think it may be affirmed, *that there is a pretty wide diffusion of intelligence among them.*

Men may not think profoundly, nor reason very clearly on many subjects and yet possess a fair share of education and general knowledge. It is fashionable with certain parties to speak disparagingly of the intelligence of the people of this country. I think this an error—and an error which if found in clerical persons may in different ways prove extremely hurtful. Every candid and observant man must admit, that