

THE  
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CHARACTER BUILDING.

MEN build characters very much as they build houses,—stone upon stone, timber upon timber, until the edifice is complete. But there is no respect in which the parallel very often fails. In house building every man has his plan, and although he may make alterations in the original design, as he progresses, yet even the alterations are all subservient to the general purpose of the edifice. But in the development of character men often build both better and worse than they know. They have no plan. They plan about business, about pleasure, about home, and family, and fortune, but about that which is of transcendently greater moment to them than all the rest,—the building up of the man, in principle and integrity and honour,—they are passive rather than active,—not builders so much as built by the force of the circumstances and pursuits to which they have given themselves up.

The prime defect is often in the foundation. They begin wrong, by trusting to the shifting sand of their own "good-heartedness," instead of the solid rock of divine grace, in the renewal and sanctification of their nature. And not unfrequently when they least expect it, that trusted good nature gives way under the strain to which it is subjected. They think *they stand, when lo! they suddenly fall, to their own confusion, and perhaps destruction, and to the grief of all around them.*

Hardly a day passes but some painful illustration of this point is furnished us. We open our newspapers in the morning almost expecting to read of some new defalcation, or embezzlement, or other rascality by men in high social position,—a bank manager, a Customs officer, or the treasurer of some public funds. They have built upon a bad foundation, or built carelessly, it may be, even upon a good foundation, and their house has fallen like a building of cards. The temptation was sudden, perhaps, and the assault most violent, but had they been daily building themselves up in truth and righteousness, according to divine plan, the shock would have been powerless,—the catastrophe would have been avoided.

Character is a thing of careful and patient building. It can never be properly built without a purpose ever before us, and a faithful adherence to the requirements of God's law. Every virtuous act, every kindly word, every resistance to temptation, places a new stone upon the foundation already laid. The habit is formed of doing right, which finally becomes so powerful as to almost ensure the continuance of the line of conduct chosen. We know a gentleman who prides himself on the fact that he has not been a minute behind time in keeping an appointment for twenty-five years!

And it is something to be proud of too! He has built himself up in punctuality. In the same way others have built up a character for integrity, for benevolence, for charity, by the careful observance of the law of Christ. While, on the other hand, the opposite results are being attained by constant repetition of acts of an improper kind.

*Obsta principiis.* Let our young men guard against the beginnings of evil. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not transgress. Let us learn to be scrupulously just and honourable in all our transactions in early life. "He that is unfaithful in that which is least, is unfaithful also in much." "Take care of the cents, and the dollars will look after themselves." Build upon the divine plan, and then character will grow symmetrical, and beautiful, and strong.

SCARCELY POINTED ENOUGH.

THE Rev. Dr. R. S. Storrs of Brooklyn preached the sermon for the American Missionary Association during its recent assembly at Chicago. The anticipatory interest was immense. Everyone wished to hear the eloquent doctor. The "Advance" had kept its readers on tiptoe of expectation for weeks previous to the gathering. The evening long-expected came. The vast church was crowded to its fullest capacity. The text was, "It is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." The theme was a grand one. The circumstances were inspiring. The sermon was a brilliant effort. It was scholarly, thoughtful, sparkling, lucidly illustrated, and ample. But there was one feature of the sermon which—in its fair criticism—the "Advance" was disappointed in. But let it speak in its own words. Here they are: "That he did not make more account of his theme—wrought out in his almost matchless beauty and elevation of statement and illustration—as bearing upon the aims and the work of the Association; that, in fact, he scarcely recognized the existence of the Society, and made no reference to the history of its work or the scope of its plans, was, it must be said, felt by many as a keen disappointment." If we understand rightly the drift of this remark, it amounts to this, that the sermon while brilliant was almost too general. It failed to make a point which the audience legitimately expected it would have made. Its stateliness and grandeur were unrelieved by a reference to the practical. Hence the disappointment.

This criticism of our Chicagoan contemporary furnishes a thought to all preachers that is worth turning over. It is this: that sermons may be constructed too much in view of what is general and abstract; and not enough in view of the practical and concrete. Generalized discourses arise from several sources. Sermonizing at college, skeletonizing for the class, may form the habit. Some men's temperament leads them to abstract themes rather than practical ones. Fear of being personal

may lead to the adoption of a generalizing style. Abstract sermons light on nobody in particular; they hurt nobody. But still, as a rule, there are no sermons so useful as those which combine in their framework both the general and the practical. Directness and point must never be sacrificed to sublime soaring. The stateliest eagle that ever soared in the ether above us must ever and anon alight on some crag. And so every sermon, soar out as it may into the upper air of ideas, must every now and then—to be useful—touch the earth of practical life. The sermons of prophet, Saviour, and apostle, recorded in the goodly Word of God abound in what is practical, special, pointed. And we cannot go far astray in our preaching, when we follow such illustrious examples.

OBITUARY.

THE LATE MR. HARLOW MINER, SR., OF GRANBY.

Seldom indeed has a death occurred in Granby so deeply felt by the whole community and which has evoked such general sympathy as that of Mr. Miner, which happened on Wednesday, November 19th. On Tuesday, the 18th, Mr. Miner had reached his seventy-eighth birthday, and as was his custom of late years on such occasions he wrote a few letters to near friends and relatives. Having posted these letters in the forenoon of the next day, he proceeded to the new Congregational church edifice now in course of erection. It so happened that at the time of his arrival the workmen were busy removing the scaffolding from the tower of the church. It is said that due warning was given to those standing near to be on their guard, but Mr. Miner either not hearing the warning or not perceiving the danger, was struck on the head and chest by a piece of falling timber, and fell prostrate to the ground. He was immediately taken up and carried to his home. The best medical attendance was promptly secured, but no hope was held out of his recovery. From the time he was struck until his death he was unable to speak, although part of the time he was conscious, as was manifest by certain feeble attempts to respond to the prayer of his pastor by his bedside. After a few hours' suffering he gently breathed his last about six p.m. of the same day.

Mr. Harlow Miner was the third son of Dr. Allen Miner, and was born at St. Armand, P.Q., Nov. 18th, 1801. He settled in Granby in September 1826. At the time he came Granby was but a hamlet, containing a very few houses, while the country around, now so thickly settled and well cultivated, was to a large extent but sparsely populated and densely wooded. Of the hardships borne by the early pioneers, Mr. Miner cheerfully took his share, and some of the most flourishing institutions of this now prosperous place were originated by his indomitable enterprise and perseverance. From certain memoranda left by himself, we learn that soon after his arrival in Granby he built a small house and tannery on the south bank of the river Yamaska. He says in his memoranda: "In tanning my few hides I used the mill pond for soak and drench, three or four tubs for the other uses, and then a corn-cracker was substituted for a bark mill to grind with a horse."

And yet that unpretending and humble beginning was the foundation of the most prominent industry of Granby to-day, namely, the two large tanneries owned by his enterprising son, Mr. T. H. C. Miner, possessing all the appliances of improved modern machinery, giving employment to quite a number of people, and turning out its daily produce of sole leather by the ton. It was to be expected that a man of Mr. Miner's activity and enterprise would be selected to serve his town in a public capacity, and hence we soon find him appointed a magistrate, and also captain of the militia, an office of no small responsibility in the