

cases out of ten that the germ of the higher life had passed into the soul from personal conversance, more or less direct (including the public preaching of the Gospel), with a soul already consecrated—that is, from a vision of the beauty of holiness already incarnate and manifest. The germ was indeed fructified by direct communion with Jesus. But the disciple was first led to Him by one already with Him.

Wherever there are conspicuous specimens of what Christ can do for the soul, their power may be clearly recognized by the frequency of fresh births into the divine kingdom, and by the prevalence and growth of the religious life in the surrounding community. But in a community or congregation deficient in men and women who bear resplendently the Master's imprint, there may be all outward means of grace (so called) in the fullest affluence; essays may be read from the pulpit to admiring hearers; the Sunday scholars may go through their mimic worship, have lessons in the geography of Palestine, and enjoy charming summer picnics and Christmas festivals; there may be abundant boasting of freedom from bigotry and scorn—good-natured or virulent—of zeal not according to knowledge; but we shall not see Christians raised in such an atmosphere.

Now, if personal influence be thus essential, is not the minister's prime duty defined by this necessity? It is admitted, of course, that the highest blessedness of the human being is that he be in heart and life a Christian; that the formation and growth of the Christian character are the final cause, the supreme function, the chief aim and end of the Christian ministry, and that all its other offices and duties, compared with this, are of insignificant worth. Let us then pass in review some of the ways in which the minister's personal character must necessarily be the chief element in his professional usefulness.

We would first refer to the occasions on which the minister is brought into the most intimate relation with his flock,—in their sicknesses, in their sorrows, by their death-beds, at precisely the times when the barriers that fence out soul from soul are removed, and there is a mutual inflow of thought and feeling which words cannot measure. At such seasons there is a felt power of character too subtle to be defined or analyzed. As the electric forces pass in noiseless currents, yet with pulses laden with the joys and sorrows of a world, so in these crises of painful experience character transfuses itself, one knows not how, in look and mien and tone, in modes of effluence which one can suppress only by suppressing his own identity. A silent presence is thus often the most intimate communion, making itself either uncongenial, irksome, repulsive, or fraught with strength and comfort. If the pastor be a man of firm faith, pure spirit, and holy life, he may make of such a season an epoch to be remembered with gratitude through eternity. In the soul moistened by the fertilizing dews of an afflictive Providence he may plant the germs of the new life, or may stimulate them to so rapid growth that the tares of the busy world shall have no power to blight their harvest. If he be a man of wavering

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