

2. OUR PASSIVE STATES OF MIND GROW WEAR BY REPETITION.

It is necessary to explain and illustrate this law and to show how it acts in relation to the work of the teacher.

Passive states are those induced by impressions made upon us through our bodily senses, and without any effort of will on our part. The more frequently these impressions are experienced without any exertion of will power, the feebler they become. For example, we witness a spectacle of abject poverty and deep distress, and the impression made upon us the first time is strong and vivid, but we do nothing, exercise no volition, to relieve the distress. Let this be repeated a sufficient number of times and the impression becomes so feeble as to be almost imperceptible. By this process being continued long enough our sensibilities become slowly but surely deadened, and we become so hardened by the sight of distress as to be almost past feeling. Look now at a correlated law.

3. OUR ACTIVE MENTAL STATES ARE STRENGTH- ENED BY REPETITION.

Active states are those into which we pass by volition, the exercise of our innate will power.

Look again at the case of unmistakable distress. By a deliberate act of the will you overcome a feeling of disinclination to deal with it, and you exert yourself to afford relief. That is to say, by an act of resolute choice, you turn to proper account the passive state into which you have been thrown by the sight of misery. You do it again and again, ten, fifteen, twenty, times. What is affirmed is that these repetitions give greater strength, a larger measure of ability to grant relief. Such actions become easy and natural, because a habit of virtue is gradually formed in the direction of benevolence, and thus you escape the serious danger of personal deterioration, by having your feelings weakened and destroyed through frequent appeals to them without corresponding action on your part.

It is under the action of these laws, I go aside to say in passing, that excessive readers of sensational novels, and habitual theatre-goers inflict irreparable mischief upon themselves. Their emotional nature is stimulated to the last degree by exaggerated representations of imaginary woes over which they weep in their boxes or on their luxurious couches, while they do nothing to relieve suffering humanity at their doors. Practical action is wholly lacking with them. Their feelings are being worn out, so that a stronger and still stronger stimulus is required to reach and move them, while no manly or womanly vigor is being gained by the cultivation of active habits of virtue.

But what has all this to do with teaching, or with the teacher being reproduced in the pupil? Very much. These three laws now stated and illustrated, viz: that touching the diffusion of strongly dominant ideas, that under which our emotional nature may be weakened and virtually destroyed, and that by which we can gain mental strength and rise to true manhood, are all operative during the process of teaching, and success depends in a very large degree upon the wise and skillful compliance with them. Rightly used they enable the teacher to imprint his own image, and the views of truth which he holds, upon the mind of the pupil. But this will be more apparent when we consider

III. THE OPPORTUNITY AND DANGER INVOLVED IN THIS FACT THAT THE TEACHER IS REPRODUCED IN THE PUPIL.

Generally speaking, privilege and responsibility

go hand in hand. It is obviously so in this case. The teacher of spiritual truth has grand opportunities of stamping his own character, views and convictions, upon the minds of his pupils. Acting under the first law as to the propagation of dominant thoughts or desires, he may, through the power and working of the spirit of God, become to them, not only the instrument of instruction, but also of salvation. How so?

Let me suppose that he is first of all earnestly bent upon the intellectual task by means of correct logical argument, lucid statement, and apt illustrations, to make the meaning of the lesson in hand, clear, convincing and memorable. This is a commendable aim, and when faithfully pursued usually result in holding a class together, whether junior or senior, and evoking their interest in the study of divine truth.

But while thus intent upon the work of instruction it is only a means to an end. He has one strong, over-mastering desire ever present in his heart, that through this truth and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the members of his class may be led to trust in Jesus Christ for pardon and eternal life. This feeling is so constant and so vehement in his heart 'that he cannot conceal it. It is seen in his countenance, heard in his voice, breathed in his prayers. Without perhaps making any formal announcement of it, in various ways which it may be impossible to define, he convinces his pupils of the existence and intensity of the desire. The feeling spreads among them, pervades their minds, or, in other words, they respond to his dominant desire, and the result is that it rises to God as the united wish of all in the true spirit of prayer. He not only prays for them but they pray with him. They are agreed touching what they ask. His desire has so penetrated their hearts that it has become theirs.

What then? Then we have the word of the Savior for it that "if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven." Do not doubt the possibility of making your pupils share your feeling in their behalf and thus drawing them after you into a praying attitude that will result in their eternal good.

Witness the power exercised through intense desire in behalf of others by the Apostle Paul. You recollect how he said to the Philippians:—"I have you in my heart. For God is my witness how greatly I longed after you all in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ"; and to the Galatians:—"My little children of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you."

And this intense spiritual solicitation, this agony of soul, this ruling passion of the heart was so reciprocated by them that he declares:—"I bear you witness that if it were possible ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me"; so completely were they carried away by his travail of soul in their behalf.

In another instance, you may remember, that Precilla and Aquila, his fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, for his life, actually "laid down their own necks." And listen to what he says respecting his Jewish fellow-countrymen. "For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ, for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

A man thus governed by one mighty, irresistible desire could not help being influential for good among his countrymen, and far beyond them. And as a matter of fact, he reproduced himself as to thought, energy, courage and conduct, in Barnabas, and Apollos, and Timotheus, and Titus, and hundreds of men and women who caught his mighty spiritual enthusiasm to enlighten and save souls.