

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

CHURCH TRAMPS.

The pious and sensible J. A. James, author of a most excellent little work entitled, "Duties of Church Members to Each Other," has this to say in regard to duties which the Church owes to itself as a congregation. "The members of the Church are bound to take a deep interest in all the concerns of the Church, and to seek its prosperity by all lawful means. Every one should feel that he has a personal share in the welfare of the society (or church) of which he is a member. He should consider that having selected that particular community with which he is associated as his religious home, he is under a solemn obligation to promote, by every proper effort, its real interest. He is to be indifferent to nothing which at any time affects its prosperity. A Christian ought to be as tremblingly alive to the welfare of the religious society to which he is united, as he is to the success of his worldly affairs."

What a good thing if all church-members and professors of religion could see it in that light? Some do not appear to see it so, and have sadly neglected the local church interests. There are some who have had a kind of Christian and Church liberality that seems to have required them not to be identified with any particular congregation, so that they could claim a sort of interest in all of the religious organizations, and yet, so that no one of these organizations known as churches could claim them—a sort of liberality that seems to be exercised purposely to avoid religious responsibility—a liberality that will eventually result in the grossest and most destructive infidelity. There are those in the world who claim to belong to the great invisible Catholic Church, that has no organization, and never can have any—who go from church to church, never settling upon any definite form of religion, taking a very small amount of interest in first one and then another and still another, and so on, not stopping long enough at any one to become of any particular benefit whatever. They are entitled to be known as religious vagrants—veritable church tramps—who have so little religious energy and stability that they become in fact pious nuisances, which all truly good and devoted Christians and church-members could heartily wish abated. It seems to me it might be wise for the churches of the different denominations, all over the country, to enact a sanitary regulation for their own moral and spiritual health, and have it rigidly enforced against such characters as have been named. If the principle that controls these migratory characters should be universally adopted and applied, the local churches would soon be every one obliterated, and religion would soon become a thing of the past.

There is evidently every need of devotion to local church interests. If each member of each local church will do his duty to his church, it will insure just as much Christian liberality as is needed for the moral benefit of mankind. Because a church-member takes a lively and even exclusive interest in his own church, is no reason he should be a bigot or a fanatic. Such devotion does not make him so. If he becomes either, an interest in his own church will not make him so—it must result from something else. I feel like respecting and honouring the more highly than man who honestly differs from me in religious belief, if he devotes himself to the support of his own Church principles, than that man who indeed seems to have no principles, who fills the description of the Church tramp delineated in the foregoing, who gives the stationed minister and pastor more trouble than many others who do not profess to have any religion at all; and so does every brave and true minister of the Christian religion.—*W. P. Sison.*

WHY NOT?

Why should you make your conscience a law for other people? Why should you decide what is right or wrong for your neighbour to do? Who made you a judge over him? It is true that conscience is your supreme guide, and must be implicitly obeyed. It is true that you must do what your moral judgment, with all the light it can obtain, decrees to be right for you to do. But who gave it authority over your neighbour? What reason have you to think that it is any better conscience than your neighbour's conscience? If a man plumes himself on being always right in his

judgment on questions of expediency, and looks with contempt or indifference on the judgment of men as wise as he, we call him self-conceited. Why is he less self-conceited if he thinks his conscience is superior to all other consciences, and he looks with contempt or indifference on the moral judgment of men as good as he? Why not compare moral judgments and reach conclusions by conference and consultation?

In the home-life, among pious people, no more prolific cause of heart burnings and estrangements is there than a self-conceited conscience. The husband decides what is right, taking no illumination from the more sensitive conscience of his wife; the wife decides what is right, taking no wisdom from the larger view and broader experience of her husband. The decisions are different and the two consciences come in collision; and because, forsooth, it is a matter of conscience, neither will yield or even sympathetically listen to the other. Nay! not uncommonly this convenient word "conscience" is made to cover a proud self-will. "My dear, you know I always wish to yield to you, but this is a matter of conscience!" and that settles all. Pray, sir! why is your conscience any better than hers? Pray, madame! why is your conscience any better than his? Has your conscience been summoned up into the holy mount to receive the Tables of Law and your mate's conscience been left down in the plain?

Conscience is moral judgment. Moral judgment is no more infallible than any other judgment. It is to get light and wisdom by taking counsel of other moral judgments. There is no possibility of going happily, peacefully, rightfully through the world otherwise. What is right, as what is wise, is to be ascertained by judgment, but by judgment corrected by comparison with other judgments and instructed by the knowledge others. Is not the Bible to determine it? Yes! But in reading the Bible you are to consider and weigh the interpretations of other readers as wise, as spiritual, as conscientious as yourself.

You cannot be too conscientious. But you can have a conscience too self-conceited, too tyrannous, too papal. Your conscience is not an infallible conscience. You are not a Moses nor a pope. Take counsel of other consciences. Consider their judgments. Give them due weight. Then judge for yourself, but not for your neighbour. Why not?—*Christian Union.*

DEEDS NOT YEARS.

'Tis deeds, not years, that makes a life
Seem long upon the earth.
A man may live till fourscore years
Be counted from his birth.
But when at length he bows his head
To nature's last great call,
A marble shaft will merely tell
He lived, and that is all.

Another, living half that time,
Will fill with deeds his span;
And tho' he dies, he still will live
Within the hearts of man.
No crumbling marble to remind;
No sculptured shaft he needs;
His is a lasting monument
Of fair and noble deeds.

'Twere better if we spent less time
In sinful, idle scheming,
As planning some absurd career,
Or of a mission dreaming.
And more in doing kindly acts
To make life's burden lighter,
Thus, tho' our stay be short on earth,
Our deeds would make it brighter.

—Selected.

OLD-FASHIONED MOTHERS.

Thank God, some of us have an old-fashioned mother. Not a woman of the period, enamelled and painted, with her great chignon, her curls and bustle, whose white jewelled hands never felt the clasp of baby fingers; but a dear old-fashioned, sweet-voiced mother, with eyes, in whose clear depths the love-light shone, and brown hair just threaded with silver, lying smooth upon her faded cheek. Those dear hands, worn with toil, gently guided our tottering steps in childhood and smoothed our pillow in sickness, ever reaching out to us in yearning and tenderness. Blessed is the memory of an old-fashioned mother. It floats to us like the beautiful perfumes from some wooded blossoms. The music of other voices may be lost, but the entrancing memory of hers will echo in our souls forever. Other faces may fade and be forgotten, but hers will shine on. When in the fulfil-

pauses of busy life our feet wander back to the old homestead, and crossing the well-worn threshold, stand once more in the room hallowed by her presence, how the feeling of childish innocence and dependence comes over us, and we kneel down in the molten sunshine streaming through the open window—just where, long years ago, we knelt by our mother's knee, lisping "Our Father." How many times, when the tempter lured us on, has the memory of those sacred hours, that mother's words, her faith and prayers saved us from plunging into the abyss of sin. Years have filled great drifts between her and us, but they have not hidden from our sight the glory of her pure, unselfish love.—*St. Louis Presbyterian.*

TURNING POINTS IN LIFE.

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth and falsehood, for the good or evil side."

No one who has read biography with carefulness has failed to see certain little things, especially in the lives of great men, which have turned them away from ignorance or idleness or error, to a life distinguished for its intelligence and earnestness. Sometimes the turning point is early in life. It is said of Voltaire that at the age of five years he committed to memory an infidel poem, and was never after that able to free himself from its pernicious influence.

William Wilberforce, when a child, was placed under the training of a pious aunt; and although much was done in his early manhood to erase the impressions received from his aunt, his whole life was moulded and coloured by that training.

Hume was quite young when he took the wrong side in a debate, and embraced and defended through life the position taken at that time.

Scott, the commentator, in a despairing mood read a hymn of Dr. Watts on the all-seeing God, and was turned from his sin and idleness to a life of usefulness.

The rebuke of a teacher and the taunt of a school-mate aroused Clarke, the distinguished divine, who, up to that time, was very slow in attaining knowledge.

The turning point in Doddridge's life was when Clarke took him under his care. The first year he made great progress in study, and soon developed into a man of learning and influence.

Aaron Burr sought spiritual advice in a revival at college, but his counsellor told him that the work was not genuine. His anxieties were dissipated, and from that time his downward career has been dated.

Robert Moffat, the distinguished missionary, as he read a placard announcing a missionary meeting, was led to devote his life to the benefit of the heathen.

Thus it is that character and years of usefulness often depend on one little event or circumstance.—*Evangelist.*

TALMAGE ON NEWSPAPERS.

I tell you, my friends, that a good newspaper is the grandest blessing that God has given to the people of this century—the grandest temporal blessing. The theory is abroad that anybody can make a newspaper with the aid of a capitalist. The fact is that fortunes are swallowed up every year in the vain effort to establish newspapers. The large papers swallow up the smaller ones. The big whale eats about fifty minnows. We have seven thousand dailies and weeklies in the United States and Canada, and only thirty-six are a half century old. The average life of a newspaper is five years. Most of them die of cholera infantum. It is high time that it was understood that the most successful way to sink a fortune and keep it sunk is to start a newspaper. A man with an idea starts; the "Universal Gazette" or the "Millennium Advocate." Finally, the money is all spent, and the subscribers wonder why their papers do not come. Let me tell you that, if you have an idea, either moral, social, political or religious, you had better charge on the world through the columns already established.

THERE is enough tinder in the heart of the best man in the world to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell, unless God should quench the sparks as they fall. Boast not, then, O Christian; by faith thou standest.—*Spurgeon.*

NOTHING is easier than to doubt. A man of moderate ability and learning can doubt more than the wisest men believe. Christianity is a matter of intelligent faith, but infidelity requires no one to give a reason for the doubt that is in him.