

AN EARNEST MINISTRY.

"Whatever you have to do, do it with all your might."

This is an injunction applicable to every sphere of labor, and necessary to the success of every undertaking. Enter the workshop of the mechanic whose fame has travelled beyond the boundary of his native district, and you will invariably find an unwearied worker—an eager enthusiast in his trade, full of knowledge, yet unsatisfied with its possession, and ever anxious to add to his accumulating store. He is thoroughly in earnest, and sooner or later will be triumphantly successful. What is the history of discovery and invention, but a history of patient labor, of entire and unceasing devotion to the matter in hand? A man may perform his duties with a cold conscientiousness to the end of time, without rising once above the dead level of commonplace, and he will leave the world, so far as he is concerned, pretty much as he found it, of whom all or nearly all that can be said is that he was born, he lived, he died and was buried. The world closes over him, and he sinks into oblivion like a stone thrown into the water, which though parted for a moment closes over it, as if it had never been disturbed.

So it is with man, in every profession, in every position, under every possible circumstance—but in no profession and in no position does the fact stand out in stronger relief than in that of the minister of the Gospel, whether his duty calls him to fight the fight of faith as a missionary in heathen lands, or as a fearless and faithful preacher of the truth in the crowded city. We do not believe that there ever was a really earnest minister who was not a popular and successful teacher of divine truth; not that mushroom popularity which is won by empty show, "often gained without merit and lost without blame," and which is but too apt to perish in the using—but that abiding popularity which is made up of self-denying labor, of heart-felt sympathy and love, of strong and earnest conviction of duty—of a duty which identifies itself wholly and completely with the material and religious interests of those committed to his charge. Such a popularity is unlikely to wane; its growth will be generally slow and gradual, but time will only deepen and consolidate it.

These thoughts suggested themselves to us from the perusal of a short memoir of the late John Angell James. Few ministers of the Gospel have for the last forty years occupied a larger space in the public eye—few have been more successful in doing good, and very few indeed have labored so abundantly for the cause of Christ, in the pulpit, on the platform, and still more through the press. To him the cause of his Master was all in all—it was his one engrossing thought, and to it were devoted his time, his abilities, his labors in season and out of season. He

was eminently an evangelical minister, and a very slight sketch of his career, may here not be altogether without use or interest. James was a minister of what is called the Congregational body—a section of the Church of Christ, feeble in this Province and in Scotland, but both numerous and influential in the sister kingdom of England. Born of poor, but respectable parents, he was not intended for the ministry, but was apprenticed by them at an early age to a linen draper. In this humble situation, the earnestness of his Christian character was made known through the letters he was in the habit of addressing to his sister, and through the influence of a neighboring clergyman and the consent of his father, he was placed in an Academy to study for the ministry. His true course was now taken, destined to be a blessing to himself and to the cause of Christ throughout the world. His abilities and earnestness soon made their natural impression, and several places sought his services. He fixed upon Birmingham, from which, during more than half a century he did not remove. At first, his congregation was very small, consisting of not more than 200 people, or 40 families, and though he preached three times every Sabbath, visited, instructed, exhorted, prayed with and for his people, little or no increase took place during the first five years; yet he neither repined nor complained; the members were few and the pay was small and other and more eligible places were clamorous for his services, but like a good soldier he stood firm to his post, and in due time he had his reward. In seven years his chapel had to be enlarged, and in another six years it had to be rebuilt, so as to contain 2000 people. From that time till the end of his long and useful life it continued to be filled. From the very first, his aim was high—fidelity and earnestness having been cultivated and practiced as the leading principles in his public ministrations. His preaching was eminently evangelical, Christ and him crucified, was the leading idea in every discourse. Like every successful minister, he prepared for the pulpit with great care, and though naturally a fluent and ready speaker, he never appeared even at a public meeting, without having carefully arranged and considered his thoughts. As a natural consequence there was a freshness in his style which not only commanded attention but made him a most powerful platform orator. His appearance at the meetings of the Bible Society was always hailed with delight, and for many long years he was its ornament and pride.

In his own congregation, he was the ardent advocate of every scheme which had for its object the advance of the Redeemer's kingdom, and his own statement gives the following interesting result.

"When I became pastor of my church, more than fifty-three years ago, the only object of congregational benevolence and action