

INCIDENTS OF EXTRA-PASTORIAL
WORK.

III

BY AN OLD NOVA SCOTIA PASTOR.

The following occurred in the course of ordinary pastoral duty, but as the person referred to was during the most of his life outside my congregation, and was only incidentally brought into connection with it, and that but for a short period, the case may have a place among these sketches.

After I had been some years in the ministry there came into the neighborhood a young lad, rather, I should say, a boy, from abroad. He was of Scottish descent and, I believe, of Scottish birth, but if I recollect right, came to us from the neighborhood of Chicago. One, or both of his parents were dead and he came to live with a relative, upon whom he was depeudent. Here I heard of him, but as his friend, though residing only four or five miles from my house, belonged to a neighboring congregation, I was not then brought in contact with him.

But after attending school for a time he undertook to teach, and the terms on which license for that purpose could then be obtained being easy, he was duly authorized to assume that office at an age, at which persons would not now be admitted to teach in any of our schools. His first school was in my immediate neighborhood, and he was thus brought under my ministry. I and my people paid him the ordinary attention that we would show to a stranger coming among us, perhaps feeling a little more interested in him from his dependent position. I confess that we did not entertain any high expectations as to his future career. Perhaps we judged him by his physical frame, for he was small of stature and of slender make. Had he possessed greater thews and sinews, our anticipations regarding him would probably have been higher. Indeed, in our estimate of him I fear we did him injustice. But still we showed him kindness, and I was glad to hear lately that he retained a kindly recollection of his residence among us. He at this time made a profession of religion, but I have no recollection of the circumstances, and cannot say that it was through my ministry that he was led to the saving knowledge of the truth.

After one, or at most two terms, teaching with us he left and soon after went to live with some friends in the neighborhood of Chicago. From this time for some years I lost all trace of him. I never had his address, and if he had correspondents in province I did not know them, so that for a good many years I heard nothing from him,

and he had almost passed from my mind, when, to my surprise, some friends, who had emigrated to California, told me of a minister of the name who, after proving useful and successful in one of the Western States, had come to take charge of an influential Presbyterian congregation in San Francisco, and on enquiring he was found to be our friend.

I have since heard of him several times as sometimes in delicate health, but always as the popular pastor of an important city charge, a position which he maintained at the time of the last accounts I had of him. I may add that one of the American colleges has honored him with the degree of Doctor of Divinity.*

This case shows the importance of ministers watching for promising young men, drawing out their gifts and helping them forward to the ministry or other important positions. Mr. Chiniquy tells us that the priests in going their rounds are in the habit of looking out the smartest boys they find among their people, and encouraging them and their parents to take the steps necessary to prepare them for the priesthood. It is a lesson that Protestant ministers might well learn, even from their enemies. Many may have the richest fruit of all their labors in some one, two or more, men that they have drawn from obscurity to exercise a commanding influence in their day and to benefit after generations.

In this case I do not take to myself the credit of having brought this brother from obscurity. On the contrary I have to confess that I did not entertain high anticipations of him, and the lesson which I would draw from the case is, that we should be cautious in forming an unfavorable judgment regarding individuals, whose capacities may not appear to be brilliant or may even seem dull. Those who can look upon the careers of those whom they knew a generation ago will have remarked, that many whose talents seemed to promise a brilliant future have made little show or even proved failures in after life, while others who were looked down upon by their companions and perhaps by their teachers, have proved good and useful men, or even have risen to the highest positions.

In regard to the ministry, there is a class of aspirants for the office for whom I have little sympathy. It is those who having failed in the grocery business or getting above labour, fancy themselves at once qualified to preach the Gospel—who regard the Church in asking any course of preparation for the office as setting up unreasonable hindrances to the work of the Lord—who, if they had been in the days of our