

Practical Papers.

THE HIGHER CHRISTIAN LIFE.

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PART I.—WHAT IT IS.

CHAPTER V.—A STUMBLING-STONE.

“Gather out the stones.”—ISAIAH lxii. 11.



HEN a ponderous train of cars is under way, rushing, roaring, thundering along at the rate of thirty miles an hour, it may indeed be thrown from the track by a trifling thing, a block or a stone, and dashed to atoms; but it can be brought safely to a standstill only by reversing the engine and applying all the powers of the brakes. But when standing all still, silent, motionless, a mere pebble before a single wheel will defy all the mighty force of the locomotive to move the train a hair. Just so when fully convinced of the reality and value of the experience exemplified and fairly on the stretch for it, though there is danger even then of being switched off thy track, or thrown from it by some malicious obstruction placed in the way by our wily adversary; yet no light matter could stop the earnest inquirer from the successful pursuit of the great object in view. Not so, however, in the outset. Then a mere trifle, a misapprehension, a doubt, a fear, a name, one word, may be the pebble on the track, will prevent a single step being taken.

“*Perfectionism!*” This one word, perfectionism, has kept, and is now keeping, thousands from examining into the matter at all. It is high time this stumbling-stone was gathered out of the way. It may indeed become a beacon light to show the mariner in his heavenward voyage the hidden rock where noble souls have struck in days gone by, and so warn him of his peril, and induce him to give it a wide berth as he passes safely on; but it has no place by right in the way. There is not the least necessary connection between the experience described and perfectionism. It is true that some have connected the two things, but they are entirely distinct and widely different from each other. The experience is a fact, and, as a fact, it has been exemplified in the instances we have referred to, and thousands besides, in which the theory of perfectionism has not so much as a thought given to it; or if a thought or a word, it was a word of denial, as in the cases of Luther and D’Aubigne. Perfectionism, on the other hand, is a theory—a notion or system of notions—which may have place in the head, either with or without the experience in the heart. Doubtless there have been many who have accepted the theory of perfectionism, and also come into the experience of full salvation by faith; but there are many also who have taken up the idea of perfection-