

VALUE OF A CHARACTER

FAR REACHING IMPORTANCE OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

PREACHER'S UNUSUAL THEME

Society At Large Influenced By the Consistency and Conscientiousness of the Individual On His Daily Walk and Conversation - Unconscious Influence Exerted By the Character and Life of Even the Lowliest of Men.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1904, by William Baily, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Los Angeles, Cal., Dec. 11.—In this sermon the preacher treats of an unusual theme and shows the value and far reaching importance to society at large of individual character and a consistent, conscientious, Christian life. The text is Acts v, 15, "That at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."

The struggle of the chronic invalid after health is woefully, heartrendingly and overwhelmingly pathetic. To see a child born to a life of inevitable physical pain and torture; to see a young man in the grip of cancer or with bones and joints twisted out of shape by that fiend of inguistatist torturers, inflammatory rheumatism; to see a young woman slowly fading away with consumption, going from place to place for a change of climate, trying first this doctor and that doctor, and then, finally, as a drowning man grasps at a straw, going to the "sure patent medicine cures" and trying the nostrums of quick doctors—ah, these, to me, are among the saddest of all the sad sights of human life.

Yet we may see these pathetic tragedies everywhere. "I cannot live here and die without making an effort to be cured," said a once great lawyer to me in the city of Brooklyn. "There was a time when I had a large income and many friends. But now that I am old and without money and dying with a cancer nearly all my friends have left me alone. The doctors come and say, 'Judge, how do you feel to-day?' Then they propose to cut me with a knife, saying: 'The cancer is growing; Judge, the cancer is growing. It must be cut out.' Then when I say, 'Doctor, if I submit to the knife will I get well?' they simply shake their heads and answer, 'Judge, you must die.' It does not seem strange that when a man is fatally ill he will go anywhere and to anybody who promises to make him well.

Poor Robert Louis Stevenson! The doctors said he had to die. But Stevenson said, "If I can only go to a warmer climate I shall get well." So he went. He traveled south. He traveled west. He lived here and there. He was traveling, not for pleasure, but for health. He tried to flee his fatal illness, but sickness kept on his track. It crossed the seas with him. It dwelt with him in boat, in hut, in tent. At last, in far off Samoa, it climbed the mountain with him, and among those tropical woods Death said, "Come, Robert, come." It was a hemorrhage, a little gasp, and poor Robert Louis Stevenson was no more.

The health, what a treasure it is! When it is once lost, how men strive to regain it! In every age the medical profession has been honored and its members held in high esteem. I suppose there was as much disease in Judaea in apostolic times as we have in our day; perhaps more, for diseases which our physicians can cure were then pronounced incurable. We can imagine what a sensation there would be in those times, in every home, where there was a lame child or a cripple or a father or mother suffering from disease, when it was told that Peter, who had cured the lame man of the temple gate, was curing all who came to him. No wonder that sick people sought him and that those who could not leave their beds begged their friends to carry them to him, for we read that "they were healed, every one."

These crowds of chronic sufferers instead of decreasing kept growing larger all the time. At last the numbers of the sick became so great that they could not get near to of

have an audience with the famous apostle. They were too many. Then the friends of the sick said among themselves, "If sufferers are cured when Peter lays his hands on them perhaps they may be cured when his shadow passes over them." So the Bible says these believers "brought forth the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about into Jerusalem, bringing sick folks and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed, every one."

The Bible does not distinctly state whether the sick were healed by Peter's shadow; but, reading between the lines of these two verses, it implies it. We know that under the power of the Holy Spirit it would be no greater miracle for Peter's shadow to heal the sick than it would for the handkerchiefs and the clothes which had once touched the living body of Paul to heal the sick. We read about this miracle in the nineteenth chapter of Acts and of the miracle of Peter's shadow in the fifth chapter of the same book. I think that cures must have been wrought in this way. Perhaps Peter himself was unconscious of it and did not know what his shadow was the means of doing until he was told of the cures afterward. As he passed through the streets touching this one and that and rejoicing that through his touch healing was given his influence reached farther than he knew. We know it so with our lives. The Christian does not know how far his influence does reach. There are some whom he strives to help, but farther off there may be some with whom he never comes in contact who are affected by his very shadow, by the unconscious influence of his Christian life.

Examine first the direct results of a Christian's work. Every man, if he is a true man, has consecrated his mental and physical and spiritual energies to some great purpose. The Christian man, as a minister, is trying to build up a church; as a lawyer, to build up a courtroom or an office practice; as a physician, to have a large number of families as patients; as a merchant, to have a big store. That pulpit or office or store is to the man his chief thought. He works for it by day, he dreams of it by night. If he goes off on a summer vacation his mind and heart are still anchored to that workshop, even as a ship out in harbor tugs at its chains, though it is unable to break away from its moorings. But though a Christian man may work night and day for his professional or mercantile purpose in life do you for an instant suppose he is able to see the infinite spiritual results that may come from that life's work? Do you suppose that physician has any conception of the amount of misery and family trouble he saved when he persuaded that young wife and mother to go to a warmer climate and save her physical life predisposed to consumption—saved it for her husband and her children? Do you suppose that lawyer, when he drew up the will and last testament, had any conception of the amount of family trouble he averted by making that last testament so strong and true that it could not be broken in the courts? Do you suppose that a minister has any true conception of the vast amount of good a simple sermon may do when he arises to preach? Of course some people after a single sermon may praise it to his ears, as some parishioners are almost sure to do, but the greater work of a sermon, as with an author's pen, is never seen or heard by the preacher or writer. Like Peter with his shadow, most of the spiritual results of a sermon appear when a minister has gone back to his home, his bed or his study.

The direct results of a Christian's professional work can never be fully estimated by the agent of a gospel miracle. Let me illustrate my thought from my own experience. I remember some years ago when preaching in Pittsburgh there came up one Sunday a terrific storm. The wind blew and shrieked through those city streets. The snowflakes were piling themselves up so that traffic was impeded. I came out from my study that afternoon and said to a member of my family: "It does seem absurd to preach to-night. No one will be there. If I do preach, I have half a mind to save that sermon I have been so busily writing for the past six days. It does seem a shame for

me to practically throw it away." "No," answered my wife; "you had better preach it. You have always made it a rule to give your people the best you had. If any one comes out to-night he deserves your best. Besides that, God has always most blessed your work on stormy nights." I said: "Yes, that is true. I will give them the best I have. I will preach the sermon." That night the audience was very small. But while the few people were gathering I saw one woman enter the church and come down the aisle to the left of the pulpit. She seemed to be intensely interested in the sermon. When it was finished and the benediction pronounced she came to the pulpit and said, "I will send you a letter soon." Then she passed quietly out.

I went home feeling that the night was wasted. But some time afterward I heard of the result of that sermon. That woman that night was deciding whether or no she should desert her home. Her tempter even then was by her side, urging her to a life of sin. That one sermon on that stormy night, under the power of the Holy Spirit, turned the tide. She says to thank me for what I had said. That letter was one of the most impressive lessons I ever had, for it taught me that no Christian man's work is unimportant, even under the most unsatisfactory and discouraging conditions. Our unsuspected and unreported influences are so great for good that only God's recording angel has a ledger big enough to keep the records. Never, oh, minister, lawyer, physician, neglect your work because of its seeming insignificance. As with Peter's shadow, it may, all unknown to you, reach some whose sin sick soul may be healed by the Holy Spirit's power working through it. The public man has his shadow. The private man has his unconscious influence also. The Christian lawyer, doctor, merchant, minister, have their direct influence when they are doing their public work. They also have their unconscious influence when they are walking through the streets, and sitting in the elevated trains, and eating in their home dining room or in public restaurants, when they think no stranger's eye is watching them and no stranger's ear is overhearing what they say. They have their unconscious influence when, unknown to them, people are weighing them in the balances as they are standing before a jury or prescribing in the sick room or preaching in the pulpit. They have their unconscious influence even when they are "out of harness" and think they can do as they please and that no one will ever know what they do.

Oh, the unconscious influences of every Christian's private life! Like the snowflakes, they bank themselves up into great drifts. Like the grains of sand, they lift themselves into the mighty mountains. Like the little drops of water, they slake the thirst of many valleys and meadow lands. These little influences of private life as despised by some so-called Christian workers, but in the end they result in mighty avalanches for good, in mighty tidal waves of blessings, in mighty east winds that dam back the Red Seas which as impassable barriers, keep the children of Israel from fleeing the Pharaoh hosts and marching on to the brightness of God's promised land.

But I find the Christian's shadows or unconscious influences not only in a man's own gospel seed planting, but also in the Christian example he sets for those who are trying to raise the same kind of gospel harvest. I find a minister's influence, like Peter's shadow, within the four walls of his church. I also find a minister's unconscious influence over ministers who are working in adjacent churches. I not only find a physician's unconscious influence over his patients, but also a doctor's influence over doctors, and a lawyer's over lawyers, and a mother's over her children, and an unconscious influence over her children. I find here that a public school teacher has her unconscious influence over her fellow teachers as well as over the scholars in her own class room.

A Christian man always, to more or less extent, makes or mends the success of men of his own ilk. When I wander among the hallways of history I do not find there the picture of a great soldier which differs in every way from all other soldiers of his day and generation. I do not find in a country's history a great lawyer or poet or statesman or scientist, a man of his own ilk. When I find the greatest warrior of the ages, Napoleon, I find that the French Emperor was a maker of great marshals as well as great armies. I find flanking the "Little Corporal" a Ney, a Bertrand, a McDonald, a Lannes, a Marmont, Napoleon Bonaparte also was a maker of great marshals which developed a Wellington and a Blucher. Great soldiers have an unconscious influence over men of their ilk as well as over those who have not brains of the same calibre as themselves.

The unconscious influence of a Christian man over the people of his day and generation is very great, no matter how humble the position he occupies. But if the unconscious influence of a living man upon his contemporaries is great infinitely greater must his influence be upon thousands and tens of thousands of men and women and children after he is dead. How multifold must be

the eternal results of an action long after the speaker's lips themselves have been sealed in the unbroken silence of the tomb!

There is a beautiful Indian legend about the "Land of the Shadows," which relates how the living are influencing those who struggle and fight on this side of the beautiful "river of death." A young warrior was about to be married, but just before the wedding his bride-to-be passed away. Her lover was almost insane with grief. He would not be comforted and could not be comforted. As he was grieving his life slowly away he heard by the camp-fires of his tribe that there was a path leading to the south which if followed would bring a traveler to the land of spirits. No sooner did the young chief hear this than he decided to go and seek his lost love. He journeyed on and on until he left the snow covered mountains of the far north. He journeyed on and on until all the trees of the forests were full of singing birds and all the fields were fragrant with the incense swinging flowers.

In that southland instead of the elk and the moose and the grizzly bear the fawns came out of the woods to lick his hand. He journeyed on and on, until he came to a great gulf of still water. There he found a shining white canoe, into which he stepped and began to paddle out into the deep. No sooner did his canoe leave the shore than another white canoe just like his own came alongside, in which was she whom he loved. They paddled on and on toward a beautiful island, where there was a palace in which dwelt his departed bride. As he came toward the island and was about to land an angel stepped forth and said: "Nay, nay! Thou canst not come as yet. She whom thou lovest will here wait for thee. Go back to the land from whence thou camest. There thou must live and rule over thy people for many years. Live as she would have thee live; then, when thy work is done, and well done, thou mayest return to thy loved one, who here will wait for thee." As in the Indian legend, so it must be with us. If we are here as a minister, an Indian warrior; let us live as our departed ones would have us live. If we are taken away, as was the Indian maiden to the "Land of the Shadows," then those whom we have left behind will be living out the teachings and the examples of our earthly lives. A redeemed immortal's earthly unconscious influence never dies. May Christ help us all to do the work he has given us.

What Sulphur Does FOR THE HUMAN BODY IN HEALTH AND DISEASE.

The mention of sulphur will recall to many of us the early days when our mothers and grandmothers gave us our daily dose of sulphur and molasses every spring and fall. It was the universal spring and fall "blood purifier," tonic and curative, and mind you this old-fashioned remedy was not without merit.

The idea was good, but the remedy was crude and unpalatable, and a large quantity had to be taken to get any effect.

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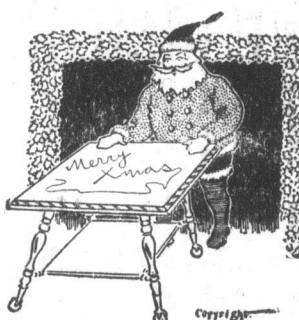
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