

PASTORAL VISITING AN AID TO SERMONIZING.

BY REV. JAMES DAVIES.

(Read before the Cheboygan Conference, Dec. 22nd, 1880.)

(Concluded from last week.)

As ministers of the Gospel we need more faith in prayer. We should prize it as the highest privilege to plead with and for those of our flock. The mercy seat is the place of memorial. Before it, souls have been prostrated in all ages. Before it the dead have been quickened. Before it the weary have found rest; and the tired and the tempted have found comfort and relief. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, aether is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength."

Brethren, wherever you go on pastoral duty, go with your hearts filled with the love of Christ. Whether in the drawing-room, or in the kitchen, strive to speak a word for Christ. It is your mission. Glorify your Master in your pastoral calling. I would sooner go into a kitchen than in the most richly furnished drawing-room: I would by far rather stand by a woman's side at the wash-tub preaching Jesus, than stand in the circle of the gayest society. I always like to take families as I find them. Go on the wash-days, the baking-days, the ironing-days, or any other day, if you feel prompted, but never go unprepared for duty, real pastoral duty, or else you are sure to drift into the stream of gossip. When we go forth, it should be with the desire to do good, and to get good. I have spoken the simple truth of the Gospel with more force and power to a woman on her knees scrubbing the floor, than ever I did in the pulpit.

It's not in the beautiful valley where gold, silver, and precious stones, are to be found. Here possession is only obtained by hard labour, down in the heart of the earth. Therefore we must not shrink from going into the very heart of life: the real life, not the artificial life, which is made so prominent before the eyes of ministers.

Beware, my brethren, of falling into this dangerous river, of drawing from artificial sources, and clothing your sermons with the same. A sermon thus prepared, to say the least of it, is a flabby thing, full of sordid piety. Let your sermons abound with precious gems, drawn forth from the heat of life's conflict. If they are void of freshness, they will soon become stale, and have no power, or influence, only to send men to sleep.

We should strive to make it our life's study to clothe our sermons with something more effectual than the prophet's staff on the face of a dead child. It's the ministration, not of death, but of life, which has been inaugurated by the Saviour of men. It's a glorious ministration, we should see in it our highest joy, and like the great apostle be enabled to say "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

One of the grandest specimens (which is in itself perfect) of pastoral visitation, was given by Christ, at the well of Jacob. The analogy was sublime. If the truth of God could be brought home to that woman's heart at Jacob's well, as it has been done by our Lord, may it not be done by the Lord's servants, but we must follow our Lord's example. Draw your analysis from life, present the truth of God to your hearers from life's common scenes.

Faithful visitation supplied the demand. We may be always adding to our store of knowledge. The man who faithfully performs his pastoral visitation, will be able to sound the deepest abyss of sorrow, and also climb the highest peak of joy whilst going in and out amongst his flock.

Christ, when upon the earth, took the fishes of the sea, the grass of the field, the birds of the air, the clouds of the sky, and the winds of heaven, and by these analysis impressed the truth with greater power on the hearts of his hearers. Even so; "Every Scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." It becomes us as wise master-builders in the temple of the living God, to gaze into the analysis of truth. We must go out from our study, into the homes of our flock, and like exploring parties, return heavily laden with knowledge gained to enrich our hearers from Sabbath to Sabbath.

For this power let us toil and pray, and learn to prize our sermons for the life-giving truths which they possess. It is our duty to gather historical facts, and by these present the truth of our gospel. It is this that will draw out the hearts of men in sympathy to one another.

We must be able to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Not standing isolated in the pulpit, but come down in sympathy to your people and your words shall touch their hearts. It is worth a life's study to know how to touch men's hearts. Some simple narrative will do. How many scenes do we witness, which if made use of, would enable us to command a great power in pressing the truth home. The word of God is powerful if rightly handled. The voice of the living preacher shall rouse men from their lethargy. A spirit shall prevail, the spirit of life and truth shall brood over pulpit and pew, speaker and hearer: and by it a whole congregation may be moved in glorious unison.

With an angel's joy you shall stand upon the walls of Zion, and from you as from a fountain of living waters shall flow living streams to quench the parched ones on the desert plains below.

MEETING OF THE CENTRAL ASSOCIATION IN PINE GROVE, ONT.

The Association met on Tuesday afternoon at 2:30 p. m. in the Congregational Church. After devotional exercises the roll was called, and the order of business for the next session declared.

A paper was then read by Mr. W. Reed, of Whitby, on "The Holy Spirit, the present need of the Church."

In the evening a sermon to the unconverted was to have been delivered by the Rev. S. Unsworth, of Georgetown, but owing to his unavoidable absence Mr. Wrench took his place, and gave an address on the subject of "Unfruitfulness." Topic: The Barren Fig Tree. Rev. H. D. Powis opened with prayer.

On Wednesday evening an hour was spent in a service of prayer and praise, led by Rev. A. F. McGregor, B. A.

Rev. E. D. Sikox read a paper on the subject of "Christian giving." He drew special attention to these facts: "That great grace follows generous giving; that systematic giving was commended in the Old Testament and commended in the New Testament. "Every man as he purposeth" that voluntary contributions alone are pleasing to God.

In the afternoon a paper on "Holiness" was read by Mr. Ebbs, also a paper on "The Progress of Missions in our own Times," prepared by Rev. J. Burton, B. D.

In the evening the public meeting was addressed by Rev. Messrs. Hindley, McGregor and Ebbs. The two latter were called upon to take the place of the previously appointed but absent brethren.

- Subjects. Speakers. Our work..... J. J. Hindley. Our means..... } A. F. McGregor. Our difficulties..... } Our hope..... } E. Ebbs. Our reward..... }

The Association then adjourned to meet in Oro next May.

Ministers present—Revs. H. D. Powis, J. J. Hindley, Dr. Wild, E. D. Sikox, — Wrench, D. McKinnon, M. S. Gray, R. Hay, A. F. McGregor.

News of the Churches.

SOUTH CEDON observed its annual Sunday School entertainment on New Year's Eve. The attendance was good notwithstanding the intense cold. After tea addresses were given by Revs. Grant and Campbell (Baptist) and Jos. Unsworth. The New Year's tree was then unloaded, much to the satisfaction of the young folks. Jan'y 11th, 1881. F. WRIGLEY.

TORONTO.—(Northern Congregational Church).—The annual meeting was held on Wednesday evening, 12th instant. Reports were presented by the pastor, Secretary-Treasurer, the Superintendent of the Sunday School, and the chairmen of the different working committees of the church, after which refreshments were served, and the remainder of the evening spent in social intercourse. A large gathering of the friends was present. The reports for the past year show advancement and progress. The church is in full working activity.

REV. JOHN BURTON, B.D., late pastor of John St. Presbyterian Church, and now pastor of the Northern Congregational Church, Toronto, has been, by the Senate of Albert University, appointed to preach the annual Baccalaureate sermon before the University in June next. The many friends of the rev. gentleman will be pleased to learn of the appointment, and the University is to be congratulated on his acceptance thereof. We might mention that this appointment is regarded as the highest in the gift of the University. —Ontario, Belleville.

NEW DURHAM.—The supporters and friends of the Congregational Church, New Durham, met on the evening of the 12th instant, to consider what steps should be taken towards the erection of a church. Considerable enthusiasm was aroused, and a resolution adopted to erect a building, and a committee was appointed to secure a site and canvass for subscriptions. The Rev. W. J. Cuthbertson was present and threw out a few practical suggestions on the subject. The heatness with which the matter has been taken in hand has afforded great encouragement to the pastor, the Rev. C. I. Pedley. His people at Kelvin also are talking of erecting sheds. 14 January, 1881.

REV. THOS. HALL.—The following are good words from an outside source. "We regret to hear that the Rev. Thomas Hall is about to leave this country for a new sphere of ministerial labors in Canada, and that the reverend gentlemen goes by the Allan steamer now due, his wife and family having already preceded him. Bro. Hall has been actively and successfully identified with the Temperance movement ever since his arrival in Newfoundland, was a zealous promoter of our principles among the Sons of Temperance and Templars' organizations and among the young in Bands of Hope, both within and outside of his own congregation. He was largely instrumental in bringing to a successful issue the Temperance (Permissive) agitation which culminated in the Temperance Act of 1871. As a Christian minister, the reverend gentleman was not only successful in building up the interests of the particular Church with which he was identified, but was always ready and willing to aid other Christian bodies in the promotion of their work. He has been a frequent and welcome contributor to the Journal in past times, and we shall feel and regret his loss, in common, we are sure, with the general community. We wish Mr. Hall a hearty welcome, abundant labors, and a continuance of success in Christian usefulness, in the wider sphere to which he goes. Also we hope that the good cause of Temperance will still retain its hold on his sympathies, and engage his active support."—Temperance Journal, St. John's, N. F.

DOUGLAS held its annual soiree on the 1st of Jan, proceeds \$68. The church's indebtedness is now only \$11. And the Treasurer has just reported 10 cents as the balance on hand in the account for current expenses. All this seems to make our Douglas friends happy.

GARAFAXA FIRST CHURCH had a delightful Christmas Concert and Tree in connection with the Sunday School.

St. CATHARINES has just had her yearly Tea Meeting at which some fifty dollars were realized.

Denominational News.

While Congregationalism is not according to our idea of Church polity, and while the denomination nurtures, or at least allows, elements of thought and religion that we think ought to be cast out; yet it is a noble denomination after all, and one that adds strength to the kingdom wherever it sets its feet.—United Presbyterian.

So far as reported, there were 105 new Congregational churches organized in the United States during the year 1880 against 67 in the year 1879. There were 205 ministers ordained or installed against 173 the previous year, and 70 dismissed against 99 the previous year. These facts seem to indicate that the climax has been reached and that the pastoral relation is at length becoming more permanent rather than less so. The number of Congregational ministers who died in 1880 was 76 against 71 the previous year. Their average age, so far as given, seems to have been nearly 65 against an average of 67 the previous year.

The Christian Endeavor Church in Brooklyn, over which Rev. W. F. Crafts has just been installed, once had the largest Sabbath school in the world, numbering above 2,000, and it is still large, with an average attendance of about 750. Recently there has been added a black-board review by the pastor, in the closing exercises. The pastor also gives an exposition of the lesson in the Friday night prayer meeting, which is regularly published in the Brooklyn Times, and at nine o'clock, following the prayer-meeting, a teachers' meeting is held in the church parlor, conducted by Mrs. Crafts.

The accession of fifty by confession to the church in Salt Lake City, Utah, Rev. W. M. Barrows, pastor, is largely the result of the two weeks' union services held there recently by Messrs. Moody and Sankey. Most of the number are adults, thirty of them heads of families. Twenty five have been Mormons or are of Mormon parentage, and some of the best elements in this city of those who have come out from Mormonism, are among the number. Many more additions are expected at the next communion.

The Boston Congregationalist says:—"We congratulate our churches and Sabbath Schools most warmly on the fact that Rev. A. E. Dunning, of this city, has accepted the position of Sunday School Secretary of the Congregational Publishing Society, having resigned his pastorate at Boston Highlands last Sabbath. We believe that the right man for the work has been found, although we cannot but commiserate his church upon its loss. We look for a thoroughly efficient and fruitful administration by him of the duties of his position. The need of such an official has long been confessed. We hope that Mr. Dunning will be given the most earnest prayers, sympathy and co-operation of our pastors and superintendents, and that all will remember the fact that his work is wholly new and hitherto unattempted by us, and will have to be developed by degrees. Too much in the line of prompt and manifest results must not be expected at first. In the end we are sure that the value of such an officer and the eminent fitness of Mr. Dunning for the position will be demonstrated fully. At present also he is to have general charge of the work of the Society, for which he is well adapted by both tastes and experience.

Madagascar has 70,125 church-members, nearly seven-ninths as many as the Congregational churches of Massachusetts. The London Missionary Society has thirty agents there, but nearly all the pastors are natives.