

CREED AND CHARACTER.

✕ What I shall have to say this evening bears upon its face a strong impress of the past. It breathes the spirit of the early part of the present century—a period, according to our modern thinkers, of credulity and old-fogyism. It is quite common and quite popular at the present time to say that our grandfathers spent their time in haggling over doctrine and quarrelling about theories instead of applying themselves to the practical problems of their day, and that they have thus left to us as an heirloom an accumulation of moral and social problems, the solution of which is of such paramount importance that we have no time for the consideration of mere religious theories. In other words we are told that the present age is so practical that there is no place for doctrine. In the face of this popular contention, I propose this evening to plead the importance of doctrine on the ground of the intimate connection that exists between Creed and Character, or between doctrine and personal life.

If such a connection does exist, if our characters are to any important degree dependent upon our beliefs, we can not over-estimate the importance of making such a careful selection of doctrine that the very best results in character may be produced. When we consider, as one writer has said, that "Character is the only reality in the universe," that the structure we are rearing is to stand "amidst the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds," surely it becomes us to see to it that nothing shall enter into or influence the form of the structure that shall in any way destroy its usefulness or mar its beauty.

In order that we may more fully appreciate the importance of character building let us first briefly consider this thing called character, as to its nature and the manner of its growth.

Its distinguishing feature is *individuality*. Every man who has character has within himself a power to re-act upon his surroundings in a manner that is peculiar to himself. No other man placed in exactly the same circumstances would act in exactly the same way. If he makes but a feeble impression upon his surroundings, he is said to be a man of little or no character.