

THE VIRTUE OF CONCEALING.

By Rev. J. Hastie.

'Tis admitted that there are times when duty bids us bring to light the wrong doings of others, and however painful it may be, to mount the house-top and cry from thence the name of some transgressor. Paul "withstood" Peter, "to the face" at Antioch, "because he was to be blamed," and he has proclaimed the fact into the ears of eighteen centuries since (Gal. ii.).

But, the purpose of the present article is to emphasize the fact that there are times also when duty bids us conceal.

One of charity's chief purposes is to hide faults. Whose faults? The faults of ministers, suppose we say; or, to be more specific, the faults of ministers without charge.

It is a mystery to many a minister, and to his friends why he is so unsuccessful as a candidate in vacancies. A good preacher he is, an earnest Christian, moral character blameless, and one who has already done much good work in the Church; and yet, to the surprise of all, he goes long and far ere he is called to a charge.

The reason why? That is what we want to find out.

Here it is: The virtue of concealing is wanting. In some past time he offended some one in his congregation. To offend one was to offend a family circle. A relative or intimate of the offended party lives in some other congregation which may be a vacancy meantime. The candidate preaches there and stands not a whit behind any of his competitors, but rather in advance of all. Normally he should be called, and would but for one circumstance. Inquiry is made about him where he may have labored some time before. The informant, unhappily, is not the voice of the whole congregation, nor the voice of the fifty or the hundred there who with gratitude to God remember the good received through his ministry; but the informant is some one who is smarting under some reproof justly merited, or has taken a dislike to the man in question. "He's not the man for you at all." "He's —" etc. "He's —" etc. "He's —" etc.

That is enough. He is a spotted man. Let him preach excellently as he may, and be worthy as he may of another charge, he has no chance there. No inquiry is made into the grounds of the detraction. No account is taken of all the good features of the man. People are strangely oblivious to the fact that a man may have made some mistakes in one congregation that will never be repeated in another. They forget that out and out fidelity to God may inevitably incur the ill-will of some parishioner. They proceed upon the strange fallacy that when all men speak well of a minister, necessarily he must be the best man to call. What then?

A double duty rests upon the readers of these lines:

Let vacancies be very chary to believe any flying report unfavorable to a preacher of the Word.

And the offended ones. Let them put into practice the "virtue of concealing." There is scope for the same virtue in another direction, viz.: In the publication of the proceedings of the Presbyteries.

I avoid all names and dates; but who cannot recall case after case that was given to the public through the press, which only could help Satan's cause. As a rule, things personal and unpleasant, petty quarrels between individuals, and not a few difficulties between pastor and people, had much better not appear in print. What has the great constituency of a newspaper to do with these local feuds? What can such a jury do in the matter? Who is benefited by the unsavory tidings?

But, the harm done! It is manifold. The parties exposed in this way are not humbled but hardened the more. A resentful spirit is provoked toward the prosecutor. To the world the Church presents the appearance of a house divided against itself.

It would be much better that only such proceedings of Presbytery should be published as lovers of peace would take pleasure in; while all else be kept out of the papers.

In this age of keen competition for the latest news — this age of interviewing — this age of printing a man's words almost before he has even thought them, there is special need that in the whole range of ministerial and ecclesiastical life the "virtue of concealing" have a prominent place given to it. "He that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter."

WATCHFULNESS.

By John G. Whittier.

Shall we grow weary in our watch,
And murmur at the long delay,
Impatient at our Father's time,
And his appointed way?

Alas! a deeper test of faith
Than prison cell or martyr's stake,
The self-abasing watchfulness
Of silent prayer may make!

We gird us bravely to rebuke
Our erring brother in the wrong;
And in the ear of pride and power
Our warning voice is strong.

O Thou, who in the garden's shade
Didst wake thy weary ones again
Who slumbered at that fearful hour,
Forgetful of Thy pain—

Bend o'er us, as over them,
And set our sleep-bound spirits free,
Nor leave us slumbering in the watch
Our souls should keep with Thee!

A DIFFERENT THEOLOGY.

A correspondent of the United Presbyterian, who has been on a visit to Ireland, gives the following interesting facts respecting St. Patrick—a Scotchman and a Presbyterian: "St. Patrick was carried into the north of Ireland and sold as a slave-boy, 1,519 years ago. Later he escaped and made his way back to Scotland, where he had been born. He returned to Ireland as a missionary, and began making evangelistic tours all over the country, preaching Christ to the people whose only religion until this time had been Druidism. His labors were wonderfully successful. He established hundreds of churches, and gave to the people of the island the knowledge of and turned them to the worship of Jesus Christ. He died March 17, 465, and is buried at Down-Patrick, in County Down. Now it is popularly supposed that St. Patrick was a Roman Catholic and that he came to Ireland as an emissary of the Pope. Dismiss this belief if you have ever entertained it. His theology was very different. His books are in existence today, as are also other contemporary documents, and none of these has a word to say about any such mission. Many letters of Leo I, who was Pope from 440 to 461, are in existence, but not one of them even mentions Patrick's enterprise. In his teaching he never even mentions such a thing as auricular confession. There is no trace of Mariolatry in his teachings, or of anointing the dying to prepare them for another world, no glorification of the Mass, no mention of such a place as Purgatory. His whole spirit and teaching were as different from those of Rome as it would be possible for them to be. He was simply a consecrated Christian evangelist, a man of humility, faith, prayer, Bible knowledge and devotion."

THE BOOK OF RUTH.*

By Robert E. Speer.

The chief lesson from the story of Ruth is the beauty of love, unselfish love. Some people say that there is no such thing as unselfish love, but they have never seen love to recognize it, or they have forgotten their mothers. Love is unselfishness. It is leaving our own to follow and serve the loved one. Ruth's story is a story of faithful, simple love.

Anyone can love unselfishly. That does not mean that we can sit down and do nothing but think loving thoughts about others. We can do this for a time, or when it is beyond our power to do more, but this alone will soon grow insipid and weakening. We must be doing for them, and this is always in our power when we are near them, and often when we are away from them. If we will train ourselves ever to be asking, "What can I do for them?" not "What would I like to do now?" we would soon find that what we like to do is something for those we love. Try it for one day. Begin the day with a thought and a loving act for some one else. Keep it up all day. Close the day with such a thought and act. See what a difference it makes.

Another lesson which is close to this is simple human kindness. The world is very full of roughness and bad temper. We complain all through the day. In our homes the servants or some members of the family make a mistake, and we reprimand them often angrily. Life becomes a harsh and suspicious thing. How different it would all be if we were simply kind. Just to be kind is one of the hardest things in the world when we have grown accustomed to be selfish and rude, and it is one of the easiest and most comfortable things when we have learned to love and to be unselfish.

"I think you are mean," said one child as she arose in the morning. "You're mean y-urself," replied the other, as they quarrelled over their plans for the day. Ugly voices matched the ugly thoughts and feelings. It was kept up until breakfast. The whose household was infected by it, and the poison of the simple unkindness with which the day began ran through the whole day. The Book of Ruth is a picture of loving gentleness and common kindness in the affairs of every day.

And the whole story shows how sweet and blessed a thing life can be when men and women and boys and girls love one another, and are kind. We do need changes of laws and institutions, but we need even more changes of hearts. The world will be more like heaven, not when we get society reorganized, but when we become changed and are like Christ.

There is room for improvement in each one of us. We can each one become more simple and kind, can guard our speech so as to say nothing harsh or bitter, so as to be sure to say what is generous and good, and we can, with Christ's help, begin now to love unselfishly and be kind.

BIBLE READINGS.

Mon.—A mother's influence (Ruth 1:15).
Tues.—A mother's sacrifice (Ruth 1:6-13).
Wed.—A daughter's unselfishness (Ruth 2:14-22). Thurs.—A daughter's toil (Ruth 2:1-9). Fri.—Grandmother's of David (Ruth 4:16-22). Sat.—An ancestor of Christ (Matt. 1:1-16).—S.S. Times.

*Young People's Society Topic, Sunday, December 3, 1907. Lessons from an Old Love-Story, the Book of Ruth. Read in the meeting Ruth 2:10-20.