

THE DUTY OF THE PRESENT.

The past, present, and future, constitute our whole existence. The past was written down in our own memory, and in the Book of God's remembrance; we could not alter it, however desirous of so doing. It was irrevocable; and however much shame and confusion it might cause, there was no getting away from it. By the law of England, every criminal must be furnished—before trial—with a bill of indictment, showing all that was laid to his charge. We carried our bill of indictment within us: and, he believed the memory of the wicked to be "the worm that never dies." Geologists tell us, that the history of the earth is written within it; and naturalists say, the age and history of a tree can be read by sawing it across and counting its concentric rings of wood. There was said to be one of these for each year, and in a good year the layer was thick, whilst in a bad year it was thin. In like manner, the history of each of us was written within us. He did not mean merely in our physical nature,—though that was true, as many a poor drunkard's frame and countenance testified;—but in our whole nature, mental and moral, as well as physical. We were what the past had made us. He who indulged evil passions in youth, was their victim for life—he who indulged in excesses, had their record written upon every power of his body and soul. Everything we did left its mark, and no words of warning were more terribly correct than these: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It was thought by many that a man might go on in vice and folly as long as he chose, and reform when he liked.—This was a great mistake. There was no power in man to turn or to reform. The longer he indulged in any evil propensity, the stronger it became, and the weaker grew counteracting forces. In the course he had chosen he must, therefore, go on,

for ever getting worse and worse, unless arrested by Divine grace; and it was this consideration which gave him but little confidence in reforms which did not grow out of a change of heart. That, indeed, made all things new, and enabled a man to alter his course completely—to take a new departure—to enter upon a different voyage—to lead a new life,—and this change every one might seek and obtain now; but the longer men deferred to do so, the more improbable would any change become. He entreated, therefore, any heavy-laden, sin-stricken souls present, who knew they were on the wrong road, to feel the responsibility of giving themselves up to Jesus at once, and entering upon a new life from this day forward. This was the duty of the present, and if performed, the future would grow better and better, and brighter and brighter forever.—Speech of Rev. Mr. Marsh, Quebec.

APHORISMS FOR PREACHERS.—The same truths uttered from the pulpit by different men, or by the same man in different states of feeling will produce very different effects. Some of these are far beyond what the bare conviction of the truth, so uttered, would ordinarily produce. The whole mass of truth, by the sudden passion of the speaker, is made *red hot*, and burns its way.

It is impossible to close a sermon well, that is warmly, unless the train of thought has been so conducted as to bring the heart into a *glow*, which increases to the end.

Having chosen a subject, it is well to think over it deeply, day and night, and to read on it carefully before putting pen to paper. Take few notes, but as far as may be, let the matter digest itself in the mind.

To be worth much, a sermon must begin like a river; and flow, and widen, and roughen, and deepen, until the end; and when it reaches this end, *it is hurt by every syllable that is added*.—Dr. J. W. Alexander.