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DIOTREPES.

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It is an unfailling mark of the true artist that he can with a few touches of pen or pencil produce an outline that shall be at once recognized as a faithful portraiture. This is true, not only of face and form, but of mind and character. In the light of this rule, what a wonderful book is the Bible. Its picture gallery contains a large and varied collection of likenesses, each of which admits of instant identification, so true are its delineations to nature and to life.

The interest with which we study Scripture portraits is greatly heightened by the fact that they not only exhibit to us the historical persons of the past, but the living and acting beings of the present. They are not illustrations of the fossils of a by-gone age—they are not representations of extinct religionists—but pen pictures of actually existing characters.

“Behold the picture! Is it like? Like whom?”

There is no difficulty in answering these questions, as we roam through the Bible picture-gallery. And the strangest thing about it is, that in this collection each connoisseur cannot fail to recognize in some one or other of the portraits his own reflected self!

A few strokes of the inspired pen give us a full-length sketch of the man whose name heads this article. Indeed it is virtually done with one stroke: “Who loveth to have the pre-eminence.” It is all there. The outline is complete. What is further stated is but filling in. It adds nothing material to the already finished picture.

The constant aim of a good speaker or writer is to get just the word to express his idea. Often there is but one word that will do it, and it is not unfrequently the case that it refuses to come when it is wanted. But inspiration can always command the right word. That word “loveth” unlocks to us the whole character of Diotrepes. His great aim and highest gratification centred in “pre-eminence.” It was the mainspring of all his religious activity. For this he gave liberally, worked incessantly, sang melodiously, prayed fluently. He aspired to be the “bell-sheep” of the flock.

It is by no means to be inferred that he distinctly proposed this end to himself. Most likely not. Zeal for the Church, the paucity of workers, and the gifts graciously bestowed on him, conspired to dictate his course of action—left him indeed no option. Necessity was laid upon him. There were things to be done, others were indisposed to exert themselves, and he was willing to sacrifice himself to promote the good cause. It was thus, in all probability, that Satan transformed himself into an angel of light. Very seldom, indeed, does he permit the horns and hoofs to show themselves.

All forms of self-love and selfishness assume disguises. Love of pre-eminence