

PASTORAL VISITING AN AID TO
SERMONIZING.

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(Read before the Cheboygan Conference,
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Pastoral visitation is one of the most important duties connected with the Christian ministry. It is a most powerful medium through which a pastor may bring himself in true loving sympathy with his people. If we must touch the secret springs of everyday life by our preaching we should know where, when, and how to do it.

Whatever may be the topic of our discourse, it may be so utilized in order to be made profitable to the hearts of our hearers. The wants of each are distinct, yet there should be a constant sympathy between the pulpit and the pew. As ministers of the Gospel we may know the wants of the souls of men, yet we may be in ignorance in regard to their struggles, trials, and temptations. The duty involved upon the pastor is to bring himself into contact with his flock in their everyday life.

What secret springs are hidden within the sacred enclosure of the family circle? What crosses, what cares, what disappointments and responsibilities? We should be able to see the traces of all these in the faces of our flock from Sabbath to Sabbath. Yet how can they be seen except they be known.

We are ambassadors for Christ, sent forth to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

There is about as much dead formality in pastoral visitation, as in preaching. A specimen will not be out of place.

Some few years ago I was invited by a brother minister to spend an afternoon with him in pastoral visitation. I was delighted, hoping that I might gain something that might prove useful to me in my ministry. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when we started on what I supposed to be an errand of mercy. The first call made was at the residence of Dr. W. We were ushered into the drawing room. After a few moments the lady of the house entered, when the following conversation took place during the interview:

Pastor—How are you to-day, Mrs. W.?

Ans.—I am quite well, thank you.

Pastor—We are getting beautiful weather now.

Ans.—Yes, it is delightful.

Pastor—We have had quite an exciting time over the election.

Ans.—Quite so.

Pastor—Did you go on the excursion the other day?

Ans.—No, I did not.

Pastor—I see that you have got a new tenant.

Ans.—Yes, I am glad the house is occupied.

Pastor—Well, I must be going. I have a few more calls to make this afternoon. Good-bye.

Out once more into the street. We made our way to the residence of Mr. B. We found Mrs. B. seated at a work-table in the sitting-room.

Pastor—Well, Mrs. B., I am glad to find you at home this afternoon.

Ans.—I was not feeling very well to-day, so I thought I would remain indoors.

Pastor—Do you feel yourself getting any stronger?

Ans.—Very little.

Pastor—Have you much of an appetite?

Ans.—No, I have not.

Pastor—Do you rest well at nights?

Ans.—My rest is very much broken.

Pastor—You have no servant girl now?

Ans.—Well, no. I am trying to do my own work.

Pastor—How is business with Mr. B.?

Ans.—Well, not very good. Its rather a slack time just now.

Pastor—[Pulls out his watch. Expresses a desire to go, having another call to make upon—st.] I'll bid you good afternoon.

Once more into the street making our way to another member of his flock. The would-be pastor saying, "This pastoral visitation is a great tax upon one's time." After a brisk walk we came to a gate-way, which led to a neat little cottage. We soon found ourselves by the bed-side of an afflicted one.

Pastor—How are you to-day Mr. S.?

Ans.—Very little better.

Pastor—I am very sorry to learn that, as you sit up any at all?

Ans.—Very little.

Pastor—How long is it since you were first confined to your bed?

Ans.—Six weeks ago yesterday.

Pastor—That is a long time, but I hope you may soon recover.

Ans.—I hope so.

Pastor—[Takes out his watch, seems somewhat confused, at last expressed his sympathy for the afflicted in the following words:]—Well, Mrs. S., I will not weary you by reading the Bible, but will have a few words of prayer.

Dead formality was the sum and substance of it. His words were cold and lifeless, not adapted to the occasion.

Thus ended the pastoral visitation.

No wonder the pastor felt it to be a task. It was something more. It was a burden. Dead formality is a great oppressor; to all who are servants thereto. We must not forget that

"His love that makes our cheerful feet
In swift obedience move"

We will now lift the veil and see the golden opportunities that lay in the path of his pastoral visitation. The first visit with Mrs. Dr. W. She was an earnest Christian, faithfully devoted to her husband and her God, but alas! the former was a drunkard. Her cross was heavy; her cup was bitter. *How she needed sympathy!* She was ready to sink, and needed support. The pastor might have led that weary one in those few moments (wasted) to the Saviour's breast might have taken a different theme, which would have comforted and cheered her afflicted soul.

The second visit with Mrs. B. who had within the past few weeks taken up her cross to follow Christ. She needed all the sympathy that a pastor could bestow. She was sorely tried with an ungodly husband—weak in body by reason of infirmity. She was left to the rude blast, and exposed to the scorching heat of severe temptation, whilst the pastor went on his way, instead of sheltering her beneath the Eternal Throne in prayer to God on her behalf.

The third visit was to Mr. S., a man who had professed to serve Christ for many years. He had a name to live, but was dead. God in his mercy laid him on a bed of affliction. Alas! I was afraid unprofitable thereby.

There was sufficient material in each of these cases (if sought out) to have stored the mind of the pastor. Such material that would have been profitable, and that would have enabled him to clothe a few sermons with precious gems drawn forth from life's conflict.

Blessed be the Lord God Almighty who hath in His mercy given us a Gospel that can be adapted to any circumstance in life. *It never fails*, when wisely applied. Its adaptation will be made manifest, if we seek guidance from Him who readeth all hearts.

(To be Continued.)

News of the Churches.

WHITBY.—A very successful "Oyster Social" was held on Tuesday evening, the 21st December, at the house of Mr. Wm. Johnston, in aid of Church funds.

About 100 persons were present, representing all the current denominations, including Roman Catholic. Quite a number of prominent citizens put in an appearance, and all seemed highly pleased with the entertainment, which consisted (in addition to the oysters and other edibles) of readings, recitations, and vocal and instrumental music. The evening's proceedings were conducted by the Pastor, Rev. Prof. Wrench, who took occasion to give a religious tone to the meeting, and gave as a scripture reading, the parable of the prodigal son. The sum of \$25 was realized over and above all expenses.

FRANKLIN CENTRE.—I have much pleasure in telling you that at our S. S. Annual Entertainment, held on New Year's eve, my congregation kindly presented me with a fine fur coat, worth between twenty and thirty dollars; also a purse to Mrs. Wright, containing \$10. Our meeting otherwise was both pleasant and helpful.

JAMES C. WRIGHT.

OTLAWA.—Last night brought together a large number of the parents and children of the above church, to join in the enjoyments of the annual Christmas tree. Through the kindness of Mr. Topley, some very interesting stereopticon views were exhibited, accompanied by explanations and music in harmony with the scenes. This was followed by some selections of vocal music by the choir, and recitations and dialogues by the children. A piece of poetry, composed for the occasion, in which was blended the names of the officers of the church, was recited by Miss Edith Rice. At this stage some very interesting presentations took place. The first was a handsome large quarto volume of "Tennyson's Poems," to Miss Gallagher, organist. The second was to Mr. T. Mingard, consisting of an unabridged edition of "Worcester's Dictionary," by the members of the Bible Class. Miss Underwood's class presented their teacher with their photographs in a group, handsomely framed. The Rev. Mr. Wood was then presented by the church with an elegant library lamp and a three light chandelier, Mrs. Wood receiving a handsome worked table cover and a harmonium cover. The following address accompanied the present to the Rev. Mr. Wood.

CHRISTMAS, 1880

To Rev. John Wood

DEAR SIR, We feel that we cannot allow this joyous season this time of giving and receiving of gifts to pass by without in some way acknowledging with gratitude to God and to yourself your earnest and patient labors among us during the past year.

And while begging your acceptance of certain small tokens of our esteem, we would ask that these be valued, not for their intrinsic worth, but for the spirit of love and good will that has prompted the offerings.

We trust that God may spare you in bodily and mental health for many years to come, that you may continue the same interest in the spiritual welfare of your people that has been evidenced by the work of the past.

We ask all God's good gifts for yourself and for your family, and pray that He who rewards the faithful may bless and keep you

"Till the 'well done' of the Master
Welcomes to eternal day."

On behalf of the Church and Congregation,

JOHN LAMB,
JAMES JARVIS,
A. J. STEPHENS,
CHAS. MUMFORD.

The rev. gentleman was taken completely by surprise, and was quite overcome by the unexpected expression of regard. He made a very feeling speech in acknowledgment of the same.

The children were all well supplied

with presents from the Christmas tree, and the entertainment closed with the usual services, the general verdict being that it had been one of the happiest occasions that has ever occurred in the church.—*Citizen*, Dec. 29th.

A PLEASANT SURPRISE.—The choir of the Congregational Church gave a delightful musical entertainment at the Protestant Hospital last night. The choir was composed of Messrs. Mingard, Moody, P. Rice, A. J. Stephens, H. Wood, Georges, E. Rice; Mesdames Mingard Stephens and Swaffield, and Misses Leggo, E. Gallagher and Fisher. Miss Hattie Gallagher presided at the organ. Rev. Mr. Wood was present and made a few remarks. The following is a list of the pieces rendered by the choir:—"Cry out and shout;" chorus, "Glory to God;" solo by Miss Wood, "Silent Night;" chorus, "Merry Christmas Night;" quartette, "Lo Descending," Messrs. Mingard, Moody, and H. I. Wood, and Miss Wood: solo, Mr. Stephens, "While the days are going by;" chorus, "The little folks are dreaming;" duet and chorus, "What mean these bells," by Misses Gallagher and Wood; chorus, "Good night." The inmates of the institution expressed themselves highly pleased at the unexpected kindness of the choir and Rev. Mr. Wood, through whose efforts an agreeable evening had been spent.—*Free Press*, Dec. 28.

PLAZA OF ST. MARK'S.

MR. RUSKIN'S BEAUTIFUL WORD-PICTURE OF THE CELEBRATED CHURCH.

Beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away—a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure heap it seems, partly of gold and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory, sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together in an endless net-work of buds and plumes; and, in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, scintured and robed by the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the wall of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry, and deep green serpentine spotted, with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their bluest veins to kiss" the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross, and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labors of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above these, another range of glittering pinnacles mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers, a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's Lion, lifted on a blue field, covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.