

HEART RELIGION.

Into the recesses of personal spiritual life it is difficult to enter. The chamber of the heart is a sacred enclosure. The deeper joys and sorrows of spiritual experience are sacred things. Christians feel that they are not matters for free and familiar converse. In every human soul there are depths that no father confessor can sound. Only by quiet meditation and secret prayer, by a devotional use of the Word of God, can the divine life be maintained in the pious soul. Mere registering of evanescent feeling and changing emotions on the pages of a diary, not of course meant for publication, cannot be a safe guide. Earnest daily communion with God without human intervention is to true spiritual health and progress a felt necessity.

Is this direct and immediate endeavour after a higher, fuller and larger Christian life as general among professing Christians as it ought to be? Are existing conditions favourable or unfavourable to its promotion? Our age is one of boundless activity in every direction. Ordinary pursuits are more relentlessly engrossing than ever before. The value of time for wordly business was never so fully recognized as it is to-day. Steam communication even is chided for being too slow; science and engineering are eagerly seeking appliances by which speed in travelling by land and sea may be accelerated. In religious, social and philanthropic movements there is restless activity and ever new organization, in many cases admirable in design and result; in all most admirable in intention. The time left for calm retirement, meditation and self-examination has been greatly abridged. With fading opportunities has there been a corresponding desire to strengthen those that remain? This is a matter that does not admit of statistical tabulation. It cannot be represented in periodical returns, yet it is of transcendent personal importance.

Between earnest, direct and immediate personal communion of the soul with God and the dreamy vagaries of a luxurious mysticism there is a wide difference. In the one case you breathe the pure, healthful, bracing air of heaven; in the other spiritual tone and vigour are enervated by the sickly and heated vapours of a lazy sentimentalism. The claims of duty are too urgent in these days to afford opportu-

nities for such purposeless trifling; all the more reason, therefore, for the diligent and conscientious use of the means at disposal for the continued and regular maintenance of a living, personal piety.

Secret prayer has in every age been commended as a necessary part of religious life. Not merely the spiritual heroes and heroines of past times, but countless thousands of busy but obscure men and women, engaged in the commonplace duties and drudgeries of daily life, have found it an unfailing solace and source of strength, bringing courage and hope to the heart in troubled moments, and filling their serener hours with a rare joy. The most impressive of all teaching is the teaching of example. He who went about continually doing good, who was always about His Father's business, spent many solitary hours in fervent prayer on the lone mountain side.

Greater cultivation of the devotional habit would lead to marvellous results. It would develop personal elevation of character and influence. Home life would be made sweeter and brighter by its presence. The bitterness and rancour so painfully apparent in the eager race of competition would be greatly lessened. Things seen and temporal would assume their relative proportions, and the unseen and eternal would increasingly become present realities. It is told of Sir Robert Peel that, no matter how late the sitting in the House of Commons, it was his regular habit on returning home to spend some time before retiring to rest in the pursuit of works of devotion. No matter how exciting had been the debate in which he had previously been engaged, the devotional hour always had a tranquillizing effect on his moral and spiritual nature.—*Sel.*

The year 1888 completes a century since the establishment of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The present Assembly has taken order for the celebration of this anniversary—the General Assembly is to meet in Philadelphia and the Church is to be called up to raise a fund of \$5,000,000 for the advancement of its interests at home and abroad.

After studying six years at Stockholm, a nephew of Cetawayo, the late Zulu king, is about to return to his own country and to establish a mission among the Zulus.