

# British American Presbyterian.

Vol 3.—No. 24.]

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY JULY 24, 1874

[Whole No. 128

## The Influence of a People upon a Pastor.

Extract from a Sermon preached in the Tabernacle Church, New York, Sunday June 23th, by the Pastor, REV. DR. WILLIAM M. TAYLOR.

For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.—THESS. III. 8.

The general principle underlying my text is, that the character and conduct of a church materially affect the life and work of its minister. Let me seek to set that before you in one or two of its applications. You have often heard of the importance of the ministry of the pulpit as it regards those who occupy the pews. To-day my theme will be the ministry of the pews, and the influence of their occupants upon him who stands in the pulpit.

1. Observe then, in the first place, that the steadfastness of his people will have a powerful effect upon the faith of his pastor. Faith is the mainspring of the Christian's life. But even though that faith must be, cannot but be, a personal thing, it is liable to be affected by surrounding influences. Every one knows that truth reduced to practice has more power over the spectator than the same truth contemplated in a book. In chemistry one successful experiment is worth whole pages of demonstration, and in Christian apologetics one living believer, who has been seen to turn from sin to holiness, is of more real value than whole volumes in the evidences of Christianity. We all know and admit that. But it is not so commonly noted by us that the soul even of a believer is often more impressed by the sight of the effect of the truth on another than by the experience of its power in himself. He is inclined, it may be, to be oversuspicious of himself. He fears sometimes that he may be deceiving himself, and his very conscientiousness, may keep him from deriving as much support from his own experience as it honestly warrants him to take. Hence sometimes he may be desponding enough. But when he comes into contact with cases in which the Spirit of God had been clearly working through, and along with the truth of the gospel, his faith receives a new stimulus, which has its outcome in all those works wherewith the doctrine of God is to be "adorned." Thus the Sabbath school teacher's faith is strengthened by the conversion and growth in holiness of his scholars. He feels now confidence in the gospel as "the power of God;" he counts with more certainty on the fulfillment of the promise of the Spirit, and his whole Christian experience is elevated by such occurrences. But the same is true of the minister. The more frequently he sees conversions among his hearers, the more living and real will become his faith in the gospel which he preaches, and the more distinctively evangelical will his discourses be. The occurrence of such things from time to time beneath his eye will keep him from treating habitually of those side-subjects which are ever alluring him away from the cross. It is thus we account for the fact that those who are most successful as "winners of souls" are also those who are distinguished for the simplicity and fulness of their presentation of the gospel. You will say, indeed, that the nature of their discourses accounts for the frequent occurrence of conversions in their ministry, and that, no doubt, is to some extent the case. But do not forget that, on the other side, it is also true that the sight of the effects produced by God's Spirit through their labors has kept them thus near the cross, and determined them "not to know any thing" among men "but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." So, again, when one sees those who have been born again under his ministry standing firm in the face of fierce temptation, or remaining calm and trustful in the midst of severe affliction, or continuing cheerful under the loss of worldly goods, he is made to feel as if somehow, the strength by which they have been supported has been added to his own, and he goes forward to his work with new energy, saying, with Henry Martyn, "Thank God, I am Christ's minister!" Some years ago, I stood by the death-bed of a noble youth to whom my ministry had been blessed, and as I listened to his words of humility, of thankfulness, of trust, of hope of transport, I seemed to myself to be lifted up for the time to the very gate of heaven, and I came forth from his chamber with new confidence in my Master, new joy in my work, and new determination to consecrate myself unreservedly to its prosecution. The steadfastness of that beloved young man gave new life, and I entered into the experience of the apostle as described in my text. Many a time has God cheered and comforted me thus when I have gone to comfort others, and among the influences which have moulded my ministry not the least powerful have been those which have come to me from the patient suffering, the resignation in bereavement, the steadfastness in temptation, the courage in adversity, and the quiet, earnest holiness in daily life which I have seen from time to time in those committed to my charge. Many among you are eager, I know, to help your minister, if you only could find out how best to do it. Let this thought instruct you every time you resist temptation; every time you manifest your attachment to Jesus by the sacrifice of interest, or ambition, or appetite; every time you show meek submission to his will in the midst of trial and sorrow; every time you maintain your joy in the Lord undimmed by the losses, and the crosses of earth—you are in a very real sense his "helpers in Christ Jesus." The strength you evince will, as it were, pass into him and be added to his own, and he will go through among you singing, these words of Paul, "What is our hope, or joy,

or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming, for you are our glory and our joy."

2. The character and conduct of his people will have a great effect on the holiness of the minister. The holiness of the believer has its source in his union to the Lord Jesus Christ; but, while earthly influence cannot produce it, they yet do materially modify and affect it. The pure water gushing from its fountain on the mountain-side will become black and mossy as it runs over and through the soft peat swamp, and in like manner the holiness of a man will take its color from the circumstances in which he is placed and the companions with whom he associates. The atmosphere is not the source of life, yet it has a great deal to do, notwithstanding, with the vigor and buoyancy of our health. In all our cities there are certain localities in which the air is laden with most insidious poisons, and in which therefore, the general health of the inhabitants is injuriously affected. Thus may not show itself much for a time, but let some epidemic make its appearance, and just there it will find its most numerous victims. Now, there is in every church also a distinctive spiritual atmosphere by which every one connected with it is unconsciously affected. One may not realize this, indeed, so long as he belongs to a congregation in which every thing is prosperous, and all are "striving for the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." But let him be transferred from such surroundings into the midst of a people whose piety is low in type and lymphatic in character, and see what will take place. By degrees he loses his relish for ordinances, and frequently absents himself from the house of God. He takes less and less interest in Sabbath schools and in devotional meetings. He goes through his duties, as it were, mechanically and from the force of habit, but there is no longer any spiritual elasticity in his character. It seems a small thing at first, but by and by there comes to him some temptation, which, if he had been in vigorous spiritual health, he could have conquered without difficulty; but now, weakened by the enervating influence of the atmosphere which he has been breathing; he falls before it, to the consternation of his friends and the dishonor of his Lord. We all understand something of this. But the same thing operates in the case of the minister's intercourse with his flock. They make, in a very large degree, the spiritual atmosphere which he has every day to breathe. He may be at first considerably above them, but if they do not rise to his level, they will drag him down to their own, and the issue may be at length that he will sink much lower than they are. I have been long persuaded that the falls of ministers into sin have been owing, in many cases, not so much to insincerity on their part as to the deteriorating influence which their people have had upon them. In my students life, I was familiar with one Scottish parish in which three ministers successively fell in the course of comparatively few years, into the same sin of intemperance. Scoffers laughed and sneeringly said, that "they supposed that, as in the case of leprosy of old, the disease was in the walls of the parsonage; but they would have been vastly nearer the truth if they had affirmed that the unfortunate pastors caught the infection in the homes of the people of the parish, and that from their sensitive and highly strung temperaments they took the disease of the place in a more violent form than others. That may have been an extreme case but still the truth remains, that few things will more surely drag a pastor down than a low stage of holiness among his people, while nothing will more thoroughly sustain and strengthen him than the feeling that he is among brethren who live near the Lord, and who are ever radiating from them an influence that is at once hallowing an ennobling. Hence, one of the greatest helps his people can render to a minister is the keeping up of the tone of piety of the church; the infusing, if I may so express it, of spiritual ozone into the religious atmosphere which he has constantly to breathe; the securing that whenever he goes forth among them he shall feel himself, in the highest of all senses, the better for their intercourse. Beloved brethren! let me ask you to think on this. The spirituality of this pulpit is intimately connected with the holiness of your homes, and the integrity of your business transactions. Let us see to it that they be both maintained in richer measure.

3. The character and conduct of his people will have a great effect on the earnestness of the minister. Some four or five years ago I went through the extensive iron-works at Barrow-in-Furness, a town in the old country, which has risen with a rapidity almost equal to that of some of our Western cities. I was greatly in the Bessemer process, and in many other things I saw; but has not just come from the ordination of a young minister, I was particularly struck with an analogy which was suggested to my mind by the manner in which the smelting furnaces were maintained. They are blown into a white heat by the hot blast; then, at the top of each furnace, by an ingenious contrivance, the gases rising from the burning coal, and smelting iron, and other substances, are gathered and carried down by pipes which which lead beneath the boilers of the engines, by the motion of which the hot blast itself is produced. Beneath these boilers the gases come into contact with flame, and so it is that they themselves raise the steam by which the blast blowing the furnaces is produced. Thus from the fire in the furnace come those influences which in the end make the fire itself to glow with a yet intenser heat. Now, it is just similar here. From the church itself there flow into the minister those spiritual

exhalations which, taking fire in him, are to stir it to a yet nobler zeal. He gathers from his people that inspiration by which they are to be kindled to a still loftier enthusiasm. But if there be no fervor among them, there will be no life in him, and the church will soon become like a great smokeless, flameless furnace, a form without all power. In the heat of the pastor the concentrated essence of a church's earnestness moods, and if the people be alive they will keep him at work, while if they be listless and uninterested, meeting all his suggestions with callousness or opposition, then either he will be driven to a more congenial sphere, or he will sink into an indifference equal to their own. From the living church must come always, in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit, the living influence that must sustain the minister. An attentive audience will make him diligent in his preparations to address it; an eager band of willing workers will make him inventive in devising plans for utilizing their energy in the work of Christ, and when all are thus actively engaged, peace and prosperity, and progress will dwell among them.

Thus it comes that the success of a ministry is sometimes owing as much to the people as to the pastor. Many a poor minister, I am persuaded, is made a scapegoat, and sent into the wilderness bearing the sin of that coldness which was really his people's, while again many a successful pastor is praised and honored for results which are more largely due to the zeal and liberality of his congregation. In the one case, the young man has been chilled at the outset of his labors by the iciness of his flock; in the other, the enthusiasm of a youthful heart has been fanned into an intense flame by the loving energy of those among whom he labors. Suppose two such parties to change places, then the congregations would not be likely to become very much different; but there would speedily be seen a very great change in the ministers. He who had before been dull, desponding, timid, and perhaps also discontented, will become jubilant and active, while he who had been joyous and enthusiastic will quickly be found sinking into sadness, the spring of his elasticity well-nigh broken, and his heart heavy with the burden of disappointment. I do not say, indeed, that the whole matter is in the people's hands, and that for every case of failure they are alone responsible; but I do say that it is very rare, indeed, that one party is alone to blame. Sometimes an earnest minister may be the means, in the hands of God's Spirit, of quickening a dead church. But not seldom, also, a listless and indifferent church has chilled the ardor of an earnest minister. But when both are fired with zeal for the Lord God of Hosts, then the pastor will catch inspiration from the people, and the people will be benefited and blessed through the pastor, and together they will rise to nobler eminence and wider usefulness. Beloved brethren, let us aim after this desirable consummation here, and let us consider one another, and stimulate one another to love and to good works.

4. The character and conduct of his people will have an effect on the usefulness of the pastor. Every member of a church who sets himself to live out the principles which his minister enforces, furnishes a new point through which the preacher's influence comes into contact with the surrounding world. He preaches on the Lord's day to them, but they preach every day in the workshop and on the street, in the counting-room and on the exchange, in the home and in the store, while those of them who leave the locality will carry his message with them whithersoever they may go, and so it may happen that, though himself untravelled, his influence, as his pastoral advances, may be at work, at one and the same time, in far distant lands. How many are here this morning who are what they are to-day, under God, because of the lessons which they received from the pastors of their youth? In them these venerable men of God, "though dead, yet speak." If, truly, too, some of those growing up now in these pews may go to some other sphere, and from the inspiration of this ministry may there benefit and bless the neighborhood in which their lots are cast. But the iron must be itself magnetized before it will become magnetic; even so must the hearer be, spiritually, in sympathy with the minister, and both virtually united to Christ before such effects can be produced. Let us seek, more and more, conformity to Christ here. It is the "Christ in us" that alone will tell with blessing on the men around us. But He always tells with power, and if each of us were to leave this house to-day, clothed with the spirit of Him whose name we bear, a work would begin among us which, in its remoter results, might girdle the world with gladness and benediction.—*The Presbyterian.*

The new Presbyterian Church of Bay and Medont, having this Summer been neatly finished, was re-opened on Sabbath 12th July. Mr. Stewart Acheson, their missionary for the past two summers, and Rev. W. C. Windel, of Cartwright, conducted the services. These new settlers, nineteen in number, with the assistance of their kind friends, have thus built themselves a Zion to assemble from their new homes to worship God in. We desire to express our gratitude and indebtedness to our kind friends for their timely contributions. Rev. W. C. Windel, and congregation, \$45. Friends in Essa, \$50; friends in Floss, \$40. Estimated value of the Church, \$1,000. Debt, \$140.

## Contributors and Correspondents.

### Dr. Fraser's Visits.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

MY DEAR SIR,—Monday morning reminds me that I must write you again. I am much obliged to your Ottawa correspondent for his kind notice of my visit to that city. Some of my visits I feel quite sure, do me as much good as the people, and my visit to Ottawa is among that number. Some whom I met there I will not forget as long as I live. But I am at Ottawa when I should have begun at Brockville, which place I left about fifteen minutes after I finished my last letter to you. Monday had been reserved for rest, but I used it, and went down to Waddington, N. X., to hold a meeting there in the evening. Mr. Morrison, the pastor there, gave me a most hearty welcome. As the evening, however, was wet, the congregation, a country one, and widely scattered, the meeting the first they had ever held in the evening, and the farmers all very busy at haying, Mr. Morrison and I walked over to the church, "prepared for the worst." Judge of our surprise and joy, however, on finding a good many there. After the meeting was over, many of the people came and bade me God-speed in the most hearty way, and when the collection was counted, it amounted to \$45.50—a good deal the best collection that I have yet received. I came away very thankful, and glad that I had visited Waddington. I shall often think of the people there.

On Tuesday evening we had a meeting in Prescott, which was not so large as it would have been, had not there been (as there was) a very attractive excursion on the River at the same time. The next morning, before leaving, a little girl, who doesn't want me to tell her name, gave me a dollar "to help me to go to China." Her dollar was more from her than fifty would be from most of us; but she said she would rather give it for China than buy anything for herself with it. Noble little girl!

At Gananoque, the next evening, we had a pretty good meeting, but there were counter attractions there, too, as has been the case in many places. Those who came, however, were very willing to hear, and I have no fear but that the remote results of my visit will appear in future contributions. If we could but interest our people, we might have ten missionaries, instead of two in Formosa.

In Kingston, on Thursday evening, I am sorry to say, we had neither a good meeting nor a good collection. We were all glad, though, to have the presence of Professor Mowat and to join him in prayer to God, to bless His own work. In the morning, however, I was cheered by a donation of \$150, from the widow of one of our late ministers. Who, that have abundance, will strengthen the hands and encourage the hearts of our missionaries, by doing likewise? May the Lord continue to bless her! He will, for "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

On Friday I came up as far as Napanee, where we had between forty and fifty people at our meeting in the evening. I had much comfort and freedom in speaking to them; for though few, they really seemed to be much interested in what I had to say about Foreign Missions in general, and our China Mission in particular. The collection remains to be supplemented, and will be forwarded in due time.

Yesterday I preached in the morning to a congregation of between three and four hundred people in Belleville. In the afternoon I addressed a large and most interesting Sabbath School, afterwards driving west to Trenton (two miles), and preaching for Mr. Watt, our minister here.

I am enjoying my visits to the churches very much. To all the *manes* I am warmly welcomed, and some of our ministers insist upon enlarging my library at the expense of their own. I will not mention their names; but I cannot forbear expressing my hearty thanks for their considerate kindness.

Yours truly,  
J. B. FRASER.

Trenton, July 20, 1874.

Rev. Mr. Robertson, of Norwich, who has been in Manitoba during the past four months, returned to this country the early part of the present week. We understand he is to receive a call from Winnipeg, and that he may probably conceive it to be his duty to accept. Should he decide to comply with the wishes of the Winnipeg Presbyterians and take up his abode among them, the Norwich congregation will find some difficulty in finding another pastor who will prove in every respect so satisfactory.

## Presbytery of Ontario and Probationer's Supply.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—In the report of the proceedings of the Presbytery of Ontario, which appeared in your issue of the 17th inst., Mr. Ballantyne is represented as saying, "that the Assembly's Home Mission Committee had appointed three Probationers to this Presbytery for the latter three summer months, though he had not applied for any. He thought that in that way they might as well have sent ten, if they chose."

Permit me, as Convener of the Committee referred to, to make the following remarks.

One of the regulations of our General Assembly is, "Presbyteries are enjoined to furnish information to this Committee three weeks before the expiring of each quarter of all vacancies and settlements occurring within their bounds, and to co-operate with the Committee in their work." This regulation is printed, along with all others that have been adopted for the guidance of the Committee, with the scheme of distribution for each quarter, and must be well known to, at least, all those who act as Conveners of Presbyteries Home Mission Committees. More than a month before the end of each quarter a circular is sent out asking, among other things, the number and names of all vacancies in each Presbytery, and it is upon the replies received to this that the Committee make up their list of vacancies throughout the Church, and proceed to distribute the proportion of supply from the Probationers Roll. But even in the absence of such a circular, Presbyteries are enjoined, as in the regulation just quoted, to report all their vacancies. At the last meeting of the Committee, which was held on 1st July, no report of any kind had been received from the Presbytery of Ontario, nor any intimation that they did not wish to require supply for the quarter, and the Committee knowing that there were vacancies in the bounds; but thinking that Mr. Ballantyne might be from home, or have overlooked the circular sent him, agreed to give supply in the same proportion as accorded to other Presbyteries for three vacancies; so that the Presbytery of Ontario might not suffer injustice. If an intimation had been sent that no supply was required, the Committee would have given it due consideration.

When Mr. Ballantyne stated that the Committee "might as well have sent ten, if they chose," he no doubt understood that his hearers would make considerable discount, and your readers will do the same. Were you to express it arithmetically, we would say that the rate is upwards of three hundred per cent.

It will be observed from the report that the Presbytery was able, after all, to give employment to the Probationers allocated to it.

Before closing allow me to say that it is only just to Probationers that they have afforded them the opportunity of preaching to all vacant congregations.

I am, sir,  
Yours truly,  
ROBERT TORRANCE.

### The late Convention of Teachers.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—Your readers do not desire to hear any more about Dr. Sangster's case. Their minds are made up on that matter. But they are turning their attention to the teachers and others supporting him. If the parents whose children are being taught by the teachers who were delegates to the convention held in the Normal School last week could have seen the conduct of those supporting Dr. Sangster, it would doubtless have changed their opinion of them.

I do not intend to describe the behaviour of the Sangster party on that occasion farther than to remark that it outstripped any political meeting in point of boisterous talk, rapid pleading, and all the trickery peculiar to such meetings. And this kind of demonstration was confined entirely to the Sangster faction, composed chiefly of thoughtless youths, who seemed to stick at nothing in order to gain their end. On the other hand, the supporters of Prof. Smith not only acted in an orderly manner, but they had almost all the teachers of sterling worth, and mature years amongst them. There was apparently scarcely an exception to this.

The contrast was very striking, even to the most casual observers. The people want to know what teachers voted for Dr. Sangster at the late convention, and also those who vote for him at the coming election, in order to guide them in the choice of new teachers, or the retention of those they have at present, if they prove fit custodians of the morals of the rising generation. You would confer a favor on the public, and especially on trustees, by publishing the names of those who voted for Dr. Sangster. Common decency cries out against Dr. Sangster and all his would-be white washers.

Yours,  
SPECTATOR.

Toronto, July 20th, 1874.

Prior to leaving Beamsville for St. Catharines, Mr. Archibald Hodge was made the recipient of an address expressive of the regret felt by the Presbyterian congregation and Sabbath School at his removal, as well as an acknowledgment of his valued services as an office-bearer in the church and Superintendent of the Sabbath school. The address was accompanied with a handsomely bound Family Bible. Mr. Hodge replied in suitable terms.