

The Christian.

ST. JOHN. N. B. - - - NOVEMBER. 1887

EDITORIAL.

IMPRESSIONS OF CHARACTER.

We call attention to this subject because we believe there are no questions which the true Christian more frequently and more anxiously asks himself than the following: What impressions am I making upon other minds? and, How can I so impress others as to lead them to the Saviour?

"Religious character is religious power." Character is the impressions which a man's actions make on other's minds. His actions and habits are called his footsteps, because they mark the direction of his life. The aggregate of a man's actions through life is called his *walk*.—Christians are exhorted to walk in wisdom towards those that are without, for wise deportment on the part of Christians has a saving influence on others. To walk according to the Gospel, is to proceed in the narrow path which leads to life, and also to induce others to walk by the same rule and in the same direction. Paul admonishes his brethren at Philippi to walk by the same rule as he had walked, and to mark and compare by his example the conduct of others. For many walked as he had often told them, and now tells them, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. While pretending to be His friends, His cross was their greatest offence. Their appetite was their god; their own shame, their glory; their road was the road to destruction, and their influence with others was to lead them to ruin.

The Holy Spirit sets before us the character of saints as calculated to direct and influence us in the formation of our own character, and urges us to be followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises; to tread in the footsteps of the flock, and to walk also in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.

Such imagery borrowed from footprints and paths most suitably illustrate the process of forming a character. It is not one footprint that makes a path, but a series of footsteps, and it is not one habit, but a series of habits and actions that form a character. A man's doings must make an impression on the minds of others as well as upon himself before they can form an idea of the character of his mind and heart.

No man passes through this world without leaving on others traces of his habits and temper, in other words, impressions of his character. Not even an infant sojourns a day or an hour without leaving on the minds of parents or others impressions which eternity will never efface. Not only the men distinguished for their great virtues or vices, impress the history of the world, but every man makes his own impression, for "No man liveth to himself." Every man is not a leader, but a leader is nothing without followers. Every man does not mark out a path, but everyone helps to make it, and keep it open for others. Neither Cæsar, Napoleon, nor Luther, could accomplish anything without others, many of whose names never appear in history, although they helped to make history. He who notices and takes care of the sparrow, takes a greater interest in every man, and the humblest of his followers can say, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord," etc., etc.

God has endowed our nature with wonderful powers of imitation, and has adopted a system of instruction suited to our capacity. He teaches by example, and experience proves this to be the most efficient way of teaching. When He would teach us to place implicit confidence in Himself, He

does not give us lengthy lectures on faith, but points us to the life of Abraham. And lest the life of one man, however bright, should be insufficient to guard us against the easily besetting sin of unbelief, He surrounds us with a whole cloud of witnesses, who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Although the world was not worthy of this noble band, yet from their actions and habits has issued a report which has stimulated and encouraged those who have since run in the race, and shall encourage the countless millions, who shall to the end of time run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus who is so pre-eminently above them all, as to be the author and finisher of our faith.

The Bible is God's revelation to us, because it describes the good and the evil, shows the narrow path and also the broad road that leadeth to destruction; but more especially, because it points us to the characters of those who took the narrow path, as well as the characters of the many who took the broad road, while it urges us to follow the one and to shun the other. This brings God's instruction to the capacity of all, because character is a living epistle known and read of all men. We can remember how easy it was for us to read the character of those who professed to be God's children, and we ought not to forget that others will as easily read our character.

What effect would Balaam's cry have on others: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his," when it came from the man "who loved the ways of unrighteousness?" "Good instruction will not counteract bad example." When a man was teaching his child to say his prayers, he exclaimed, "Why do you want me to pray, Pa? I never hear you pray." Says Tillotson, "To give children good instruction and bad examples, is but beckoning to them with the head to show them the way to heaven, while you take them by the hand to lead them in the way of hell." Said Hume the infidel, of an earnest Christian, "There is an argument for Christianity which I cannot answer. I have, as I think, fairly answered every other argument. But that young man's consistent life is something which I do not pretend to answer." No doubt, the reason that the devil was so determined on the death of Paul, was that all his ingenuity was unable to account for his conversion and his labor in the gospel.

When a physician reluctantly told his patient, (a young Christian), that he must die, he was so affected to witness his sweet smile that he had to leave the room, and wished himself in his patient's place. Dr. Guthrie, the eminent Scotch preacher, was deeply impressed by a car driver, who, when asked to drink replied, "I am a teetotaler, I won't taste a drop of it." It went to his heart and head, he said, and if this man being an ignorant, humble Roman Catholic car-man can deny himself this indulgence, why should not a minister of the gospel?

Roland Hill met a robber who demanded his money or his life, and began to give him what he had, fifty pounds. He says, "The money is yours, but as I happen just now to need it very much, will you kindly lend it to me for a given time, and I will come here alone and return it." The robber answered if he were certain that he would not betray him he would do so. Mr. Hill said, "I am Roland Hill, and I promise you on honor that I will keep the matter a profound secret, and meet you alone and deliver the money at the given time." The money was lent, and at the time mentioned he returned according to promise. When asked, the robber said he did not like the business, and only took it up to save the lives of a starving family, as he could get

no honest employment. A bargain was then struck, Hill hired him, and he remained in his service till death. Soon after he was employed he became a member of Mr. Hill's church, who related the whole affair at the man's funeral. The impressions the robber had from Mr. Hill's character, caused him to trust his life on his promise. It was no wonder that afterwards he trusted his all to the promise of Christ.

A man of learning and an unbeliever in Christ was travelling in Manilla as a scientist, in search of natural curiosities. He was escorted by a native of rank, who, with Oriental politeness, asked the white stranger to pray to his God. On his declining the native said, "Well some God must be prayed to, and you will excuse me if I pray to mine." The impressions made by the heathen on the unbeliever was so deep and lasting that he was never satisfied till "he found the pearl of great price." His next visit to that heathen's home, was as a missionary preaching unto him Jesus. How little that heathen knew at first the impressions and the results. Let us remember that we are making impressions on others which may last forever, and often making them the deepest when we are the least aware of it!

The enemy knows full well how impressions are made and their powerful influence. Being a murderer from the beginning he knows the best ways to accomplish his end. To control the youth is to master the community, and one effectual way for this is to induce young people to meet often for vain amusements, which, when well followed, lead to greater sin. By these the minds of the unconverted are pre-occupied and strengthened to resist the appeals of the gospel. Young Christians are enticed first to attend these places, then to sympathize in them and finally to love and support them.

All Christians, and especially young Christians, should see that their influence is against such things and on the side of their Saviour, by being more determined in attending the house of the Lord, attending meetings for prayer, and reading the word of God, and using every means which the Lord has appointed to advance His cause. While they are earnest in their prayers, both public and private, and walking as becometh the gospel, they will have cause to rejoice in the fulfilment of the Lord's promise. "When the enemy comes in like a flood the spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him."

Original Contributions.

THE WORK MOST NEEDED.

Having some experience in the work and growth of the Churches in the provinces, during the last decade; it may not be unprofitable to offer a few thoughts relative to the work needed, that will secure permanent success.

We wish to avoid, if possible, mere assertions, and look at the subject in the light of reason, and also in the light of the success and failure of the past.

That the work has been successful in certain localities all admit, and that it has been a failure in other localities none will deny. To understand the cause of the failure is the first step towards success. It is well, therefore, to submit our judgment of what work is most needed to the logic of facts.

The standard or test of success is generally considered to be the greatest number of accessions. The preacher or Evangelist accepting this as the test of his ability as an Evangelist, and being anxious, as is natural, to succeed, will make this work of recruiting the important and special element of his preaching and teaching. If he has three or four weeks to devote to the work in any given locality it must be in the line of elementary