

and goodness it considers that really nothing has been accomplished: for, "except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." But when the heart has been thus gained it considers that practically everything is gained. And therefore the wise preacher will always bend his chief energies to that point, assured that if the citadel is won for God the out-works will soon yield complete submission.

It is always presumed, however, that right character will issue in right conduct. This is the only evidence of the genuineness of an inward change of heart which is quite satisfactory to the outside world. If this be conspicuously wanting no claim to religious experience, no professions of adherence to the Christian cause will be of any avail. Men will insist on doubting the reality of the change, or even worse, may doubt the value of Christianity altogether. They will not tolerate the idea of any divorce between character and conduct.

But it by no means follows that the conduct of even genuine Christians will always conform to precisely the same standard of what is right. With the very best intentions Christian men in the same community will differ in their judgment as to what is right on many different matters of great practical importance. Still wider difference will emerge if comparison is made between devoted Christians of different lands, different periods of time and different stages of culture or civilization. In spite of constant efforts to fix it and make it absolute, the standard of right by which even the best men seek to guide their conduct is one that is constantly changing. Like most other changes in the world, these changes in the ethical standard and practice of Christian people have gone through a process of development. The course of that development during nineteen centuries, and some of the laws by which it has been governed, will be briefly indicated in these papers.

It will be necessary first of all, however, that we consider the position of affairs at the starting point of Christianity.—That was by no means the beginning of the world's ethical progress. In fact the world was already far on its way towards the goal when Christ appeared, and many of the most