

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

WATSON FRENCH'S SERMON.

There are no sermons like those which a man occasionally preaches to himself. The minister never talks to his people from the pulpit as searchingly as he sometimes talks to himself with head bowed on the table in his study. Watson French was not a minister, though. He never even spoke in prayer-meeting. His pastor had long carried him on his heart, and had aimed more than one sermon at him. But sermons seemed to glance off from him, until he turned preacher and took aim at himself. He had been to prayer-meeting one evening where some one had repeated the words of the apostle. "Lest any of you seem to come short." Coming home, he sat down alone in the sitting-room and the text came back to him, kept coming back, no matter how many times he tried to dismiss it from his thoughts, and finally fastened fully upon his attention.

"It must mean that some who call themselves Christians come short of being Christians," he said to himself. "I wonder if there's danger of my making such a mistake. I've been a member of the church these thirteen years. I keep up family prayers, when something doesn't prevent. I pay my pew-rent every quarter. I generally go to prayer-meeting, if I can get away from the store. I did my share on the building committee and in raising the church debt. I've never been deacon; no one ever voted for me. Now I think of it I should feel a little queer if they did. 'Deacon French,' how Stewart would laugh at the idea; I doubt if he knows that I belong to the church at all. And I suppose I have smoked up two or three boxes of cigars in his office, evenings, when we have been playing chess together. Have played there sometimes instead of going to prayer meeting. There's nothing bad about chess, though. But there's the tobacco. I have had my doubts about that. It's a bad habit, and lately that text has kept coming to me, 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth.' Such self-indulgence seems too much like coming short."

"And it can't be quite the thing for a disciple of Christ to be so soaked with business all the time as I am. It's the last thing I think about before I go to sleep and the first thing when I wake up. I think about it when I am pretending to pray. I don't mean to cheat my customers. They'd generally find it out if I did, and I'd lose in the end. But I do persuade people to buy things, sometimes, when I don't really think it's the best thing for them to do. That certainly isn't doing as I would be done by. There's politics, too; since I've been on the county committee I've consented to some mean dodges to beat the other side. And I've knuckled to the saloon interest as no Christian man ought to."

"I haven't enjoyed the prayer-meetings, either. They're dry. But I never did my share to make them interesting. I come in late, and sit on the back seat, and never take part. I know what the trouble is, too; I have no relish for religious things. There's the Bible, I don't know as I open it from one Sunday to another except at family prayers. As for closet prayer I gave that up long ago. I'm afraid there's been no real Christian life in my soul. I haven't any claim on the blessing promised to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. I've been full of business, full of money-making, full of self-gratification, and empty of God. My example and my talk at home before my children have all been in the direction of this-worldness. Sunday has been a dull day to me. It's always a relief to me when Monday morning comes. Christ came to this world to save men from a life of sin. But I do nothing in the way of personal effort to lead men to Him from one year's end to another. I've felt no burden of souls. I've taken my ease. I've been content with just such a life as multitudes lead who do not profess to be Christian people at all. How I have 'come short' of the true Christian life, the Christ-like life! God help me to be a better man."

It was not a long sermon. It was a very plain one. But it dated for Watson French the beginning of a more consistent, fruitful life. His family saw it in the evident heartiness with which he conducted family worship; the church saw it in the cheerful, ready part he took in their social meetings; his customers saw it in the genuine care he showed for their interests; casual acquaintances saw it in the kindly, tender words

he spoke to them, now and then, commending Christ's service; the poor, and sick and discouraged saw it in the many helpful ways in which his Christian sympathy found expression.—*N. Y. Christian Weekly.*

THOUGHTLESSNESS.

In general, I have no patience with people who talk about the "thoughtlessness of youth" indulgently. I had infinitely rather hear of thoughtless old age, and the indulgence due to that. When a man has done his work, and nothing can in any way be materially altered in his fate, let him forget his toil and jest with his fate, if he will; but what excuse can you find for wilfulness of thought, at the very time when every crisis of future fortune hangs on your decisions? A youth thoughtless when the career of all his days depends on the opportunity of a moment! A youth thoughtless when all the happiness of his home forever depends on the chances, or the passions of an hour! A youth thoughtless when his every act is a foundation stone of future conduct, and every imagination a fountain of life or death! Be thoughtless in any after years rather than now—though indeed there is only one place where a man may be nobly thoughtless—his death-bed. No thinking should ever be left to be done there.—*Ruskin.*

THE S. S. SUPERINTENDENT AND MINISTER.

The minister should not seek to supersede the superintendent, nor to interfere with his government of the school; but the superintendent and the teachers should ever be in harmony with the preacher, and should consider themselves as but a part of his official staff.

The supervision of the minister should extend particularly to the selection of books for the library that is to be placed in the hands of the teachers and of the children of the school. It is but seldom that superintendents and teachers, engrossed with the busy cares of life, have full time to examine the multitudinous issues of the press which are sought to be placed in these libraries. Each publisher has a list of his own books, and wishes to sell them. He exchanges with other publishers, and thus may have a very large variety. He is so occupied with the financial affairs of his establishment that he may not know the precise character of the teachings of the books which he publishes. Without intending to do wrong, he recommends works which ought not to find their way into Sunday schools. A committee is oftentimes appointed by the teachers to purchase a library. It is frequently composed of men who are good and earnest and true; but they are not extensively acquainted with religious literature, and they purchase such works as have pretty titles, are well printed, are recommended by publishers, and, above all, which are of a low price. In this way books of doubtful or erroneous doctrinal teachings, or which sanction unchristian conduct, or works of fiction without either high imagination or beautiful style to recommend them, are placed in the library, and they vitiate rather than improve the taste. The books introduced into the Sunday school should contain such doctrinal or practical teaching as may be in harmony with the Church; otherwise the influence of the Sunday school may not only be of little service, but may even become of positive injury to the interests of the congregation. In this day of light and loose and skeptical publications, no duty is more imperative on the minister than to exercise a watchful supervision over the literature that is purchased by the church, and is placed by the church in the Sunday school library for the use of its children; for the young have a right to regard the teachings of such works as sanctioned by the church.

No matter how great may be the intellectual power and personal influence of the preacher, he cannot accomplish his work unaided and alone. He is the general of an army, but he cannot conquer without soldiers. He must have others to assist him. The duty of a preacher, then, is to study carefully the genius and organization of his church, and to secure all the assistance which that organization can furnish. Whatever officers, whether elders or deacons, trustees or stewards or leaders, may constitute the officiating of his church, he is to place himself in intimate relations with each and all of them. His study should be how to employ, to the utmost degree, their talents in church activities, so as to assist in church develop-

ment and in aggressive work. He should further study how to enlist the entire talent of his church members, old and young, men and women, in spheres of active usefulness. This he should do not only for the assistance which they give him, but for the benefit which results, first to the church, and then to themselves. The true teacher is ever a learner. There is no process by which our learning becomes accurate and methodical so soon as by attempting to communicate it to others; hence every one who is engaged in doing good is also engaged in self-development and culture. In different denominations church organizations vary; but, be the organization what it may, the great object is to develop into perfect Christians the entire membership, and to act upon the world as an attractive and aggregating power which constantly adds to its own magnitude.—*Bishop Simpson.*

FIRST FAMILY PRAYER.

The late Rowland Hill was once driven by a storm into a village inn, and compelled to spend the night. When it grew late the landlord sent a request by the waiter that the guest would go to bed; Mr. Hill replied, "I have been waiting a long time, expecting to be called to family prayer." "Family prayer! I don't know what you mean, sir; we never have such things here." "Indeed! then tell your master I cannot go to bed until we have had family prayer." The waiter informed his master, who, in consternation, bounced into the room occupied by the faithful minister, and said, "Sir, I wish you would go to bed. I cannot go till I have seen all the lights out; I am so afraid of fire." "So am I," was the reply; "but I have been expecting to be summoned to family prayer." "All very good, but it cannot be done in an inn." "Indeed! then pray get my horse. I cannot sleep in a house where there is no family prayer." The host preferred to dismiss his prejudice rather than his guest, and said, "I have no objection to have prayer, but I don't know how." "Well, then, summon your people and let us see what can be done." The landlord obeyed, and in a few minutes the astonished domestics were on their knees, and the landlord called upon to pray. "Sir, I never prayed in my life; I don't know how." "Ask God to teach you," was the gentle reply. The landlord said, folding his hands, "God teach us how to pray." "That is prayer, my friend," cried Mr. Hill, joyfully; "go on." "I am sure I don't know what to say now, sir." "Yes you do; God has taught you how to pray; now thank him for it." "Thank you, God Almighty, for letting us pray to you." "Amen! amen!" exclaimed Mr. Hill, and then prayed himself. Two years afterward, Mr. Hill found in that same village a chapel and a school, as the result of the first effort of family prayer at the "Black Lion."—*N. Y. Observer.*

CARLYLE'S FATHER.

Thomas Carlyle thus describes his father: "I think of all the men I have ever known, my father was quite the remarkablest. Quite a farmer sort of person, using vigilant thrift and careful industry, abiding by veracity and faith, and with an extraordinary insight into the very heart of things and men. I can remember that, from my childhood, I was surprised at his using many words of which I knew not the meaning; and even as I grew to manhood I was not a little puzzled by them, and supposed that they must be of his own coinage. But later, in my black letter reading I discovered that every one of them I could recall was of the sound Saxon stock which had lain buried, yet fruitful withal, in the quick memory of the humbler sort of folk. He was an elder of the kirk, and it was very pleasant to see him in his daily and weekly relations with the minister of the parish. They had been friends from youth. That parish minister was the first person that ever taught me Latin. The last time I ever saw my father was on my journey from Craigenputtock to London. I was on my way to this modern Babylon, with a manuscript in my hand, 'Sartor Resartus' by name, which I wished to get into print. I came up on my foul's errand, and I saw my father no more, for I had not been in town many days when tidings came that he was dead. He had gone to bed at night, as well as usual, it seemed; but they found in the morning that he had passed from the realm of sleep to that of day. It was a fit end for such a life as his had been. He was a man into the four corners of whose house there had shined through