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THE CURE OF SOULS.

AN ADDRESS BY THE REV. F. H. MARLING, OF TORONTO, TO THE STUDENTS OF THE CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE OF B. N. A., AT THE CLOSE OF THE THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION.

After a few introductory sentences, explaining his reason for selecting "a subject of a practical rather than a scholastic character," on such an occasion, Mr. Marling said,—“By the word ‘cure’ here, transferred rather than translated from the Latin, *cura*, is not meant ‘the healing,’ but ‘the care of souls,’ of which their healing may be a part, and a large and important part, but a part only. ‘They watch for souls, as they that must give account,’ says the Scripture. ‘The cure of souls’ is a generic expression, embracing all the work of a minister of Christ, whether performed ‘publicly’ or ‘from house to house.’ Its full import, though apparently simple, is not easily mastered, and needs to be often ‘pondered in the heart,’ and kept in constant remembrance by every man who ‘desireth the office of a bishop.’ For there are many lower ends which will thrust themselves into the heart which should be entirely devoted to ‘this one thing;’ thorns and tares which choke and smother the ‘good seed.’ Self, in some of its myriad disguises—‘Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light’—aims to ‘deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.’

“The Church and the world too often regard the minister and his work only on the human, earthly side. And we need to refresh and brace up our spirits by the continual recollection of our great and simple task. This ‘cure of souls,’ moreover, is a manifold and complicated undertaking. There are many faculties included in that one mysterious entity—a human soul. These faculties are found in endlessly varied proportions, it being as rare to find two souls, as it is to see two faces, exactly alike. Educational influences—using that term in the broadest sense, as embracing all the external forces which, from the beginning, have been brought to bear on the character—have exerted their moulding power on this plastic material. The disorder and ruin arising from sin have so tangled and confused the spiritual nature, that it has become to human eyes a labyrinth without a clue. There are traces of the divine image, distorted and defaced, however, so as to appear only ‘earthly, sensual, devilish;’ aspirations after ‘glory, honour, and immortality,’ mingled with a ‘cleaving to the dust;’ alternations of audacity and remorse, of religious sensibility and worldly absorption, of high resolve and miserable failure, that make the man an enigma to himself and to all about him.

“Ah! these ‘souls’—how little we know of them! so self-inconsistent; their life so much within themselves; their capabilities so high, their attainments so low; created for the spiritual and the everlasting, chaining themselves down to the service of the body, the world and time. Every individual is a study, needs special and appropriate treatment, yet will often elude our analysis. And all are