

SOME THOUGHTS AND FACTS ON SOME
NEGLECTED ASPECTS OF
PASTORAL WORK.

CHAPTER I.

Extracts from various well-known writers, treating of the nature of private individual pastoral intercourse, showing especially the various forms such intercourse may take.

(Continued.)

BRIDGES

On the need of individual private dealing with the varied classes of a Parish.

"The Pastoral work is the personal application of the pulpit ministry to the proper individualities of our people looking upon them severally, as having a distinct and separate claim upon our attention, cares, and anxiety, urging each of them, as far as possible, to the concerns of eternity, and commending to their hearts a suitable exhibition and offer of Salvation. For this purpose we must acquaint ourselves with their situation, habits, character, state of heart, peculiar wants and difficulties, that we may 'give to each' of them a portion in due season.' The Pastor unites in himself the offices of Watchman and Evangelist. He 'watches for souls' lest a root of bitterness should spring up, to the trouble and defilement of the Church, lest un-Christian tempers should mar the Christian profession, lest a lukewarm spirit should paralyze Christian exertion, or a spirit of contention hinder Christian love. All need his superintendence. The indolent are slumbering, the self-dependent are falling back, the zealous are under the influence of spiritual pride, the earnest are becoming self-righteous, the regular formal. Then there is the inquirer asking for direction, the tempter and perplexed looking for support, the afflicted longing for the cheering consolation of the Gospel, the convinced sinner from the slight healing of his wound settling in a delusive peace, the professor 'having a name that he lives but he is dead.' These are cases that cannot, in all their minute and diversified forms, be fully treated in the pulpit. It is therefore in his pastoral character that the Minister 'watches for souls as one that must give account.—P. 348.

BRIDGES

On the various classes who need private spiritual treatment.

"The form of pastoral intercourse admits of considerable variation. . . Let them be alone with us in the presence of God. The delicacy and weakness of early impressions need this intimate intercourse. The awakening enquirer, filled, and often confounded, with the engrossing subject, want a guide, a confidential counsellor, a tender and experienced friend. He must be taken aside and made to feel himself the object of exclusive solicitude. Others again, in a hesitating suspense, need this tender confidence to have their convictions cherished, re-touched, deepened and directed more immediately to the Saviour, as the charm that dispels the allurements, and as the power that breaks the chains that still hold them to the world. The serious, humble and perplexed through the same medium, 'open their grief, and receive the benefit of ghostly counsel and advice.' In these confidential communications affectionate catechetical enquiry will be the best means of eliciting the disclosure of individual perplexities, and thus of obtaining the most valuable materials for a more suitable adaptation of our instruction"—*Christian Ministry*, p. 362.

ADVICE OF BISHOP HALL.

This devout and learned Bishop died in the year 1658. He was a voluminous writer, and was one of the most formidable opponents of the Roman Church. He was quoted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, at the Croydon Congress, as the typical representative *Low Churchman*.

"Who but the successors of the legal Priesthood are proper to judge of the uncleanness of the soul? whether an act be sinful, or in what degree it is such; what grounds are sufficient for the comfortable assurance of repentance, of forgiveness; what

courses are fitted to avoid the danger of relapses; who is so like to know, so meet to judge, as our teachers? would we in those cases consult often with our spiritual guides, and depend upon their faithful advices and well grounded absolutions, it were safer, it were happier for us. O the dangerous extremity of our wisdom! Our hoodwinked progenitors would have no eyes but in the heads of their ghostly fathers; we think ourselves so quick sighted that we pity the blindness of our able teachers; none but ourselves are fit to judge of our own leprosy."—*Contemplations*, p. 504, S. P. C. K. Ed.

THE TESTIMONY OF ROBT. NELSON.

This learned and pious layman lived about 50 years later than Bishop Hall. His devotional books are well known and very highly valued. How distinct and weighty are his words on this matter! how little regarded, how sorely needed by Church-people in these days!—

"Often consult with your spiritual guide. We are all apt to be too partial to ourselves, and are too presumptuous when we lean too much to our own understandings. Besides, the guidance of our pastor is one of the means God affords for our improvement, and his assistance is very necessary to preserve us from being imposed upon. Let him be acquainted with the state of the soul, with those temptations and difficulties that assault thee, with those doubts that oppress thee, with the sin that does most easily beset thee, and with those frailties that most frequently overcome thee. Let him know the posture of thy mind in thy devotions; how thou employest thy time; when at leisure; and when busy; how thou governest thy family; how thou dischargest thy calling; and how frequently thy mind is refreshed with devout thoughts."—*The Practice of True Devotion*, p. 62, S. P. C. K. Ed.

EASTERN CUSTOMS AND BIBLE TEXTS.

BY REV. RICHMOND SHREVE, M.A.

No. II.

In our last paper we had at its conclusion just bidden our hospitable entertainer farewell and started upon our second journey of scarce 20 miles. Being gentlemen of leisure if not of means we were in no hurry to make long distances in any one day while the weather favored us, and as it was now the dry season we felt no anxiety on that score.

While we are slowly jogging along in the cooling air we will draw upon the stock of information afterwards acquired and speak for a moment of these "dry" and "rainy" seasons. Speaking briefly, the "dry" might be called summer and the "rainy" winter. The dry season is literally deserving of its name, as really no rain whatever falls, but at times the dews are heavy upon the higher lands, as the nights are quite cold. During this season the winds are not only high but spring up with terrible suddenness, so as to destroy property and sometimes take life. Such a "great wind" it was which was the instrument of destruction in the case of Job's house (i. 19; xxx. 22; xxxvii. 9; see also Isa. xvii. 13; xl. 24). Happily in all our experience we were not overtaken by any such storm, though the dust was often very thick and heavy as it was blown in clouds, filling our eyes and penetrating the smallest crevices of our baggage. Towards the early part of what we would call autumn the soil becomes so parched and thirsty, the cisterns empty, the grass—a little remaining foliage—so shrivelled and almost brown, that we can easily understand, when remembering how at this season all Nature, animate and inanimate, looks forward with longing to the return of the rainy season; we can easily understand the justness of the wise man's comparison in Prov. xvi. 15 (see also St. James v. 7.) If during this dry season any quantity of rain should fall, it would produce a feeling little short of consternation, which makes that scene with Samuel and the Israelites, with whom God was displeased, an exceedingly striking one, as recorded in 1 Samuel xii. 17. The wet season begins about the first of November and continues for some four months of heavy rains, with only short intervals of fine

weather. At longer intervals rain still continues to fall as late as the last of March, but it is after this very rare.

By the time, however, that we have finished these meditations we are well out of the village and fairly started on our ride. Later on in the afternoon the apparently half careless manner of our chief guide became suddenly more serious, and he gazed earnestly at a cloud of dust rising in the distance ahead of us. All our guides now were looking at it with him, and from a certain set look which came over their faces we concluded that the cause of the dust gave rise to no welcome thoughts in the minds of these fellows. They, as by common impulse, looked towards a wooded knoll at some little distance to our right, and after a hurried and even excited colloquy they began to hurry the baggage horses and their own towards this wood at the most rapid pace they could manage, the sheik calling upon us to follow. As we succeeded in gaining cover the cloud of dust was considerably nearer the point we had left, and we soon saw one solitary horseman urging his horse at its utmost speed, as though his business was a matter of life and death. Every care was taken that we should not be seen and that our animals should in no way betray us. As this rider passed us and continued his journey the scowls on the faces of our guides only deepened, and when he was well out of hearing the sheik clapped his hands forcibly together, looking towards the retreating figure, and muttered something very like a curse; while one of the more demonstrative of the guides gathered up a handful of dust and stones and cast it after the horseman. This last action was easily understood by us to mean condemnation, and at once reminded us of Simeon's conduct towards David when he thought him scorn of his power (2 Sam. xvi. 13), and also of the feeling exhibited in the same way by the Jews towards St. Paul, recorded in Acts xxii. 23—an action which becomes very expressive when read in connection with their cry (ver. 23): "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." We admit that it was later on in the evening, and only when we had put our heads together after tea, that we understood the action of the sheik to be also an expression of strong dislike. He had clapped his hands smartly together so that they made a report as they met. When we talked the matter over in the evening we remembered that in Samuel ii. 15 and Job xxvii. 23 this clapping of the hands is mentioned as done in scorn and condemnation, while in other passages, as in 2 Kings xi. 12 and Psalm xlvi. 1, the expression really is "Clap your hand," not hands. This action is one of joy and expressive of pleasure, and is made with the fingers of one hand being placed rapidly but softly against the lips.

This difference, reached after some debate amongst ourselves, enabled us to explain these texts which otherwise seemed somewhat contradictory—at least in spirit.

But who was the swift traveller? Oh, he was the messenger of the Governor of the Province, and he was taking some message either to some distant official or perhaps to be transmitted to "headquarters." Our guides told us all this as we were being hurried from the road, and as he swept by us with a speed practiced by no other traveller the plaint of poor stricken Job (ix. 25) flashed upon our minds: "My days are swifter than a post; they flee away, they see no good." Whenever the people can avoid one of these messengers they do so, as in many ways these "Chappers," as they are called, can exercise absolute tyranny, and none dare resent their acts or refuse their demands. They may claim a horse if their own is wearied; they may and do claim food or whatever is needed, and apply the lash lustily if their demands are not complied with with a quickness that pleases them. It was, no doubt, to these messengers our Lord referred in St. Matt. v. 41: "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain"—as, for example, if a guide were needed by one of these messengers who was not very familiar with the country through which he was passing. We were able conscientiously to satisfy ourselves that we had not shirked obedience to this command, because when we were hurried into concealment we were altogether ignorant of what was approaching.

(To be continued.)