

on the blood that paid his ransom. These I shall pass over as being too palpable to need more than a passing notice, and turn our attention in a practical way to some of the reasons that exist within the church itself.

I. And in the first place let me inquire are not we ourselves ministers chargeable with at least some of the blame for the ineffectiveness of our preaching? And if it be asked, in what way are we blameable, allow me to answer by asking,

1. Are we not conscious of a departure, or to say the least, a deviation in some degree, from the apostolic practice, in our public ministrations? We profess to be the true "apostolic succession." Ecclesiastical History gives us a place in a direct line of descent from our Lord and his Apostles. If this be true—and we believe it is,—then we should imitate as far as possible, those who received the great commission from the lips of Christ himself. They went forth depending on the providential care of God, and the hospitality of the Brethren; and "they went everywhere preaching the word." Whenever the Macedonian call was heard, and the Spirit said "go," thither they went, "nothing doubting that the Lord had sent them." But how is it at the present day? Do we not many of us, settle ourselves down within the limits of a single church, and content ourselves with supplying that people from Sabbath to Sabbath—year after year? while on almost every breeze, is wafted to our ears the cry of the destitute, starving for the bread of life. We stake off our boundaries—so to speak—and give our whole attention to the cultivation of that particular field; while all around are regions lying waste where "the feet of him that bringeth good tidings" seldom are seen,—and where souls are longing, yea even fainting for the courts of the Lord. What are the consequences? Evidently that our strong and wealthy churches, whose abundant means enable them to secure the labors of the most talented and popular ministers, are "fed to the full," satiated with gospel truth, and the ungodly hearers become gospel-hardened; while scattered and feeble churches—barren and desert wastes are left to cry—and too often in vain—for the blessings of the "gospel of peace." Far be it from me to interfere with the important relation between Pastor and people; but I do believe that if Pastors would more frequently leave their people and go forth in the name of the great Master, to "the regions beyond" and give the pure gospel to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge, they would return to their churches, not sighing over labors spent in vain, but bringing the joyous intelligence of souls saved from ruin through their ministrations. I know that it is often said that it is better to cultivate a small piece of ground and do it well. This is true to a certain extent, but it is well-known that there is a possibility of over-tilling and over-cropping a piece of land, and the farmer who has his acres of untilled land around his fields, very often finds it to his advantage to turn out the old fields and take in new grounds for cultivation, thereby increasing the profits of his farm. In like manner might not Pastors of churches increase their usefulness—do more and better service for the Master, than by undue concentration of their efforts within certain prescribed limits. Paul could say, "So that from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ, Yea" said he "so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." Why should not we follow his example? The objection is sometimes made, "If I leave my pulpit for a single Sabbath evening, I am in danger of losing some of my congregation. In the absence of the stated ministry, they are liable to drift away into other churches. There may be a show of reason here; but where is the man possessed of common rationality who would lose a valuable timber to float down the stream and be entirely lost, for the sake of saving a few pieces of drift-wood scarcely worth the time and labor employed in saving them. And is there any more wisdom displayed by a minister confining himself constantly to one locality, taxing his energies to the utmost to keep some novelty in the fore ground of his ministrations, in order to hold among his hearers some floating population who have no fixed religious principles, but are ready to grasp at something new, and as ready to lay it go so soon as the novelty wears away, who Athenian-like, spend their time in hearing or telling something new. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters" "He that getteth forth and weepeth bearing

precious seed shall doubtless return with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."

2. Again, is it not possible that some of us may have failed, at times at least, to have a full realization of the all-importance of the gospel message and our own responsibility as ambassadors for Christ? A failure in this respect must certainly weaken the force of truth, and consequently render it less efficacious. Take an illustration. A speaker may entertain an audience with a very excellent dissertation on the relation of the Sovereign to the subject, and the laws by which that relation is sustained. But if it contain no direct message from the Sovereign, though it may be listened to with admiration and pleasure, it will be destitute of point and power, and will produce no special effects. On the other hand, let an Ambassador come to a people with a message from their King. A message that carries with it the issues of life and death, embodying conditions in which every individual is personally interested, and all ears are open—all hearts are ready to respond to the claims, and to comply with the requisitions of the Sovereign. So a minister may come before an audience with an excellent sermon, rich in thought and beautiful in style, but destitute of power to move the heart because it does not come home to the hearers as a message from God. But let the preacher come before the people as Moses came down from the Mount when he had received the law written by the finger of God, and his very countenance like that of Moses will indicate that he has been in the divine presence; and the message will come with such power that many who hear will be constrained to say with those to whom Moses delivered the law, "All that the Lord commands us we will do." Yes let us come to the people feeling the weighty responsibility of the message we are about to deliver, and the fearful consequences of its rejection—feeling as Paul felt when he said "now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, we pray your in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God," and the message will commend itself to the conscience of sinners and we have a high degree of assurance that it will result in their conversion to God.

3. A defective aim in our ministry may be regarded as a cause of non-success. What is the design of preaching? Is it to please the sensitive ear, or to afford an intellectual feast? Is it merely to enlighten the mind or correct the judgement? While it may do all these, it evidently has a far higher object in view. Its aim is to "break up the fallow ground"—to "pierce, like a sharp two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." It is to unmask the hypocrite and shake the foundation of infidelity—to open the eyes of those who are "blinded by the god of this world." Is it too much to say brethren that in every sermon we preach, we should aim at and expect the conversion of souls? But are we not often tempted, some of us at least, to indulge a desire for excellence rather than effect—to aim at perfection rather than the conversion of souls? A sermon may be well planned—elaborately studied—enriched with gems of thought—adorned with the flowers of poetry—delivered in a most eloquent manner; and perhaps the only impression carried away by the people is that it was an excellent sermon and the preacher was a finished orator. But no sinner is convicted of his guilt. No Ahab is wounded between the joints of the harness—no one is heard to say with anxious voice, "Sir, we would see Jesus"—or to cry with heart-felt anguish "Men and brethren What shall I do to be saved"? And yet it may be that all the preacher aimed at has been accomplished. The artillery may be in every respect perfect—its thunders may be heard from the distant hills around and yet the enemy remain unharmed, because the aim is either too high or too low, and the shots have spent their force either in empty air over their heads, or in ploughing the ground half way to the enemy's lines. Is it not to be feared that in like manner, many of our sermons, though good in themselves are powerless for the good of others because not aimed directly at the heart. Peter's preaching at Pentecost was plain, direct and personal, and the conviction and conversion of three thousand was the glorious result.

4. Again, may not a lack of earnestness in the delivery of our sermons have a tendency to weaken their force? A minister of the gospel once fell in company with a celebrated stage performer, and in the course of conversation said to the actor, "How is it that you with fictitious subjects and under false appearances, can draw

such crowded audiences, while we with the most real and important subjects to deal with can only gather comparatively few?" The actor replied, "the reason is plain, we treat fiction as though it were truth, you treat the truth as though it were fiction." This may not be in every respect a fair representation of the case, but is there not at least a shade of truth in it? Is it not to be feared that some of us too often lose sight of the awful reality of the truth we utter, and in its delivery, fail to rise to that pitch of impassioned earnestness and enthusiasm, which the grandeur of the subject demands? The consequence is that impressions made are feeble and soon forgotten. Suppose a hundred men were floating down the LaHave river, on a rudely constructed raft fast asleep. Could we look on with indifference? Would we talk coolly of the matter while every moment they were hurrying on to inevitable destruction? No my brethren, this would be impossible. The most intense excitement would seize us, and with all our might we would run—and shout, and use every possible means to arouse them to a consciousness of their danger. And if unsuccessful with what unbounded anxiety would we follow them in imagination out on the ocean's foaming billow. We would see them—now thoroughly awakened—vainly struggling with the angry waves, and hear their agonizing cries of despair when too late to hope for any means of deliverance. Yes our very hearts would burst with anxiety—our sleepless eyes would run down with tears and from the deep recesses of our aching hearts the cry would escape, God save them from impending destruction. And shall we exhibit less anxiety and earnestness, in our efforts to arouse careless and impenitent souls, wrapped in the death-slumber of sin drifting down the tide of time, and day by day with unerring precision nearing the awful gulf of blackness and darkness, in comparison to which, the ocean's cold and cheerless bed would be a bed of roses? O my Brethren it appears to me that if our sympathies and energies were wrought up to a degree of enthusiasm, commensurate with the necessities of the sinner's case, our appeals to them would come with more irresistible power, and the complaint of the text would not be so often forced from our hearts.

5. Another cause of failure is the lack of entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that gives inspiration to the word,—that "convinces men of sin, of righteousness and of judgement." It is the regenerating, power by which the soul is begotten unto a lively hope—the Holy Dove that brings the olive branch of peace to the believer assuring him that the wrath of God no longer abides on him. It is the breath of christian life—the fire of christian love—the living, moving, acting agent in the conversion of souls, and in keeping alive the activities of the church. This is our whole dependence. Without this divine anointing, whatever other excellencies we may possess all our efforts will fail. Our hearts need to be thoroughly imbued and our sermons baptiz'd with the Holy Spirit, before we can enter upon our work with any hope of success. The unregenerate heart is compared to a rock. The rock must be broken. It may be properly drilled—the powder duly deposited and the fuse rightly adjusted, and still it remains unbroken till the fire is applied. Then the air is rent by the explosion and the rock is shattered to atoms. So with the sinner's heart. The hammer of the word must be wielded—line upon line and precept upon precept must be given—we must be instant in season and out of season—warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom and yet the heart remains unsoftened and insensible until the Holy Spirit speaks the life-giving word. Under his divine influence the "gospel is the power of God unto salvation." Now while we know all these things and we all desire to be guided by the Spirit in all we do and say, yet after all, is there not a tendency, with some of us at least, to depend too much upon our own ability and efforts while we fail to seek and obtain the unction from the Holy One, which is freely promised, and which alone can make our ministrations successful. Why was it that, under the preaching of the Apostles at Pentecost, the word went like arrows to the hearts of three thousand? Because they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. Why was it that much people, was added to the Lord through the labors of Barnabas? Because he was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." And why is it, that in these days with greater advantages of education than those men enjoyed, so many sermons, more elaborately finished than theirs, fall with so little weight upon the sensibilities of men and in so many instances fail to accomplish the desired end? Not surely because there is more learning in them; but less of that divine and holy influence without which all our ministrations are dry, uninteresting and unprofitable.

(Conclusion next week.)

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NOTES OF TRAVEL.

ALEXANDRIA—ACROSS THE ISTHMUS—SUZ—THE RED SEA—ADEN—CEYLON.

Alexandria is well worth a patient description. The Palace of the Khedive, with its fine gardens—the native Bazaars, filled with rare specimens of tapestries and cunning embroideries, and with all the curious things of the orient—will repay a visit. Let us see them, then—there is time enough, the train for Suz will not leave till six this evening, and it is only 12 M. now a barouche and two Arabian steeds await "your honor," as you are informed with the stateliest politeness, by a stout gentleman in silk trousers and gorgeously brocaded coat. You think vaguely—nothing seems impossible in the land of the Arabian Nights—it may be the Khedive himself; when a Yankee friend nudges you and dissipates all reverry with one word, "guide" Now enough has leaked out, during the Mediterranean passage, concerning the propensities of these gentlemen with brocaded apparel, to make the word "guide" unpleasantly suggestive of extortion. But the man is philosopher as well as guide; and while the travellers are looking doubtfully at one another, he has the air of one who has a prevision of the result, and is, no doubt, quietly reckoning his gains. Of course the barouche is engaged and the party start, simple souls! to see Alexandria. But it is soon discovered that something more than carriage, guide, and eyes is required, you must "make a covenant with your nose!" and, the party having failed to do this, were soon compelled to retreat. History says Alexandria once rivalled Rome itself. She is certainly without a rival now,—in the bad pre-eminence of an atmosphere whose savory qualities can almost be felt.

At the opening of the Overland Route, and for many years after, mails and passengers were conveyed across the Isthmus on camels and omnibuses, at enormous expense and with incredible discomfort to all concerned. At last, when traffic increased so immensely as to demonstrate the utter inadequacy of those old cumbrous methods of conveyance, the Railroad was built. It ran first from Alexandria to Cairo, and thence to Suz, but within the last few years the line has been changed, so as to exclude Cairo. By the first arrangement it was possible sometimes to see the Pyramids and yet catch the Red Sea steamer; but now one must abandon that pleasure, or stay over one steamer, and take the risk of being demoralised in temper by the extortionate hotel keepers of Egypt. Not even the joy of being looked upon by the famous "twenty centuries" could compensate for that, so at 6 o'clock we were "all a board" for Su z.

The Railroad is owned by the Pasha of Egypt, and all his employees seem bent upon illustrating the possibility of Egyptianising even the locomotive. Long after the advertised time for starting had arrived, the train was still in the station. The passengers flinched impatiently. The Arab orange-boys called, with plaintive monotonous "aw-ring-goes," and the vendors of various sundrifs continued to call attention to their wares, but still the locomotive gave no sign. It was hot and sultry—the evening gave promise of a stifling night. Each carriage-compartment would hold six; three Yankées and a Bluenose already occupied one. Now occurred an incident which no right-minded person could justify. While the locomotive was becoming assimilated to the requirements of Egyptian sense of fitness, the three Yanks were finding scope for the restless inventive genius of that cute nation; result,—when in the deepening twilight the conductor peered in to see if the compartment had its full complement he seemed quite satisfied with his inspection; inventive genius had put two Grenadiers into the two vacant seats, two upright umbrellas hat-ed and oated! the grenadiers were speedily resolved into their original elements, as soon as the train started.

One stretch of desert is probably so like any other stretch, that any one may be regarded as very accurately representing the whole. If so then, judging from the piece of desert which lies between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, the itinerating and camping ground of the children of Israel for forty years was not a desirable land. Sand—sand, interminable sand,—unbroken by a single object upon which the eye could rest with pleasure;

unbroken by anything, except, occasionally by a ridge of sand, mingled with gravel, which the wolfish—no other kind of wind admitted in this region—winds had thrown up. Night settled over the scene with impenetrable gloom—and were these scanty observations were possible only through the Cyclops-eye of the engineer, which streamed far out over that silent symbol of eternal desolation.

It was a night for meditation. Sleep was impossible. The wakeful eye had painted on its retina, if any picture at all, the dreary changeless monochrome of the desert. But the soul is independent of its servants—and as often disregard as it considers the retina ministrations of the eye. This night, sweet pictures of home and fireside were impressed on the interior retina of the soul. Questions connected with the desert life of Israel, were dismissed, and problems of the next semi-decade of years claimed the whole brain for their own. In this way a night on the desert—even passes quickly. The dawn revealed a horizon broken by a solitary "snip of the Desert"—a camel, strutting awkwardly over the land, a rider perched high on its ungainly hump. Camel—and rider—and Desert!—each, and all, seemed so suitable to the feeling of utter desolation which prevailed when dawn banished dream-land, and the soul returned to the dreary reality of the present.

Suez is a dismal little town. It resembles nothing so much as a bleary-eyed, debauched youth, shuffling along in shabby rags, and at the same time unconsciously possessed of the vouchers of a princely fortune,—a consciousness which gives even him an air of dignity. And to all the mean and squalid elements of Suez lose much of their effect in consideration of the stream of wealth which flows through it, and of which the magnificent steamers lying at the Pier are most significant reminders. French influence predominates here, as in all the towns on or near the line of the Canal, and though it is Sunday—all appearances would indicate a particularly busy week day.

The cars run down alongside the steamer, so that it is but a step from one to the other. This convenience is one of the earliest benefits conferred by the Canal. English engineers said so much about the impossibility of cutting a canal through sand, and of the impossibility of utilising the canal, even were it a fact,—owing to the exceeding shallowness of the water at either end,—that the French engineer seems to have been piqued to show the unreasonableness of these utterances. They lost no time in making a deep and commodious harbor at Suez where the largest steamships can lie safely.

As the "Mongolia" moves off on her Red Sea passage, reason and imagination retire, and faith assumes quiet control of the mind; for you learn that where the steamer is now churning the waves is the identical place where the Israelites made their famous passage between walls of foaming water. Query—Would not the "Mongolia" have been as great a miracle to the Israelites as the walls of water are to us?

The passage down the Red Sea is usually barren of incident. The atmosphere is hot and hazy, so that it is impossible to see anything a few miles distant. You hear with untroubled acquiescence that the outlines of Mount Sinai are clearly visible from the steamer when the air is clear. The shores of the sea are barren beyond expression. The eye seeks in vain the relief of something green amid the brown dreary desolation. It looks as if locust and caterpillar, and every other insect depredator, with blasting and riddew in all their varieties had visited the unhappy land continuously for a thousand years, and blighted it beyond possibility of recovery as long as the world shall stand.

On board the "Mongolia," however, all is prosperous and cheery enough. It is January and the thermometer only 80° in the shade, and therefore very comfortable under the wide awning which covers the Quarter Deck, which is divided between drawing-room and cricket ground. There is a good piano, and some among the passengers who can play it well. There is a missionary who has spent many years in Ceylon, and we compare notes about Ceylon Buddhism and Burmese Buddhism, and find that it is much purer and has more vitality abroad than in its own home, Ceylon.

A collection of scoria-heaps, on whose bold and arid surface vegetation is as impossible as it could be in a soil of sulphur-dust,—is Aden, one of the footprints of that mailed giant, British power. The great