Our Contributors.

PREACHING OUTSIDE OF THE PULPIT.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

For what purpose did I enter the ministry? is a vitally important question which every conscientious minister will keep constantly before his mind. The answer which he will make to this question will be—I became a preacher in order to bring God's messages to my fellow-men, to awaken those who are careless, instruct those who are ignorant, comfort those who are in trouble, help those who are weak, and lead immortal souls to Jesus Christ; in short, my aim is to make bad people good; and good people better. To attract people to the house of God is of far less importance than to attract them to Christ; the making a good sermon is mainly of value that it makes a good man. A wise minister will not belittle his pulpit by neglecting to make full preparation for it, nor will he cheapen it by putting there anybody and everybody that he can lay hands upon. At the same time he recognizes that he can spend only about three or four hours in that pulpit on only one day of the seven; and whether in the pulpit or out of it, he is everywhere Christ's ambassador.

The Bible is the best theological seminary, and in that he learns that his Divine Master delivered two popular discourses which the Holy Spirit has preserved for us; one of them was delivered on a mountain, and the other by the seaside. The great body of our Lord's instructions were in the form of personal conversations with individuals or with his little band of disciples. That quiet evening talk with Nicodemus has shaped all Christian theology and molded myriads of human characters, and will continue to until the end of time. The apostles pursued the same methods with their Master; and the book of the Acts is largely the record of personal labors for the conversion of the spiritual benefit of individuals. Paul preached public discourses when he had the opportunity; but I question whether his sublime discourse on Mars Hill has ever brought as many souls to the Saviour as his brief talk with one poor awakened sinner in the prison of Philippi. The danger with us ministers is that we look at our flock too much as a totality; the word "masses" is a misleading word. We preach on Sunday to a congregation; but God's eye sees only individuals. Guilt is a thing appertaining to an individual conscience; and conversion is the turning of a single soul to Jesus. If we preach to a congregation for an hour or two on the Sabbath, it is a joyful thought to an earnest soul-winner that he can preach outside of his pulpit for more than a hundred hours during the week.

One of the unanswerable arguments for thorough pastoral visitation is that it brings a minister within arm's length of his parishioners. He needs this personal contact for his own benefit. A good library is a good thing; but there is a great difference between a lifeless book on your shelf and the vitalizing and fertilizing study of a book in boots; for every life is a biography. You and I, my dear brother, are helping to make these biographies. Our sermons are addressed to everybody; a conversation is addressed to a single soul. "Thou are the man" is the meaning of every loving appeal, every kind rebuke, and every personal invitation. A man may dodge a sermon; he cannot dodge a personal conversation conducted in the right spirit. A faithful sermon ought to set your people to thinking. In one mind it may suggest difficulties, and when that person meets you he may wish to have the difficulty explained; the door is thus opened for you to remove an obstacle, or to press home a needed truth. In another mind your sermon may have awakened a conviction of sin. The impression may fade away, or it may be deepened if it is followed up by a personal interview. Much of many a pastor's best work has been done in an "inquiry meeting;" but even when no such method is used, there will be opportunities for every wide-awake pastor to find out who in his parish is an "anxious inquirer." You ought to have a fixed time in every week when persons can call on you; and if anyone breaks into your study during your morning hours for spiritual direction, you ought to rejoice to throw aside books or sermon notes and give him the right of way. The man that wants you is the man that you want. It is an excellent method also to request your congregation to send a request to you if they desire an interview in their own homes. Remember how cordially the Master met every one who came to him for light or for healing, and what a long journey he took in order to bring relief to one poor woman in the coasts of Canaan. In dealing with awakened souls nothing can take the place of personal contact. To reach all such from the pulpit only is almost as absurd as it would be for a physician to read his prescriptions from a desk in a hospital instead of going from one bed to another to feel each pulse, and to examine each fever-coated tongue.

No pastor worthy of the name will need to be reminded how strong are the claims on him of the Lord's "shut-ins" whose faces are not seen in the sanctuary. Whosoever you neglect, never neglect the sick—especially those who are in the by-lanes of poverty. There is no more Christlike work than that, and none that will grip your people to you more strongly. The hours you spend in the ministrations of comfort to the sick and the sorrowing will often subject your nerves and your sympathetic sensibilities to a severe strain. The most celebrated pulpit orator in America once said to me: "It consumes more of my nerve force to spend an hour with people who are in trouble than to prepare two sermons." That may be so; but is there any more Christly office in this old sobbing and suffering world than to "bind up the broken-hearted?" What your people want is the ministry of sympathy; and the rich often need it as truly as the wretched poor.

I have indicated some of the ways in which a faithful minister may preach outside of his Sabbath pulpit. There is one style of preaching that is vastly more effective than any other, and that is the irresistible eloquence of a poor, manly, noble and unselfish life. "My pastor's discourses are not very brilliant," said an intelligent lady, "but his daily life is a sermon all the week." The "living epistle" of Paul was as sublime and convincing as any words that fell from his lips on the hill of Mars; for Jesus Christ lived in him. Our people look at us when out of the pulpit to discover what we mean when in our pulpits. Piety is power. Your aim is to produce Christian character, and what argument so strong, so constant, so pervasive, so heart-reaching as the beautiful example of a life copied even imperfectly after Jesus Christ?

INTERNAL TROUBLES.

Russia has other troubles than the Japanese. Recent reports tell of serious internal disturbances. Disquieting reports come almost daily from Poland, from Finland, from the Caucasus. Recent risturbances in Warsaw are said to have been followed by wholesale executions by administrative order without civil trials. It is stated that over six hundred persons were hanged in Warsaw alone. There is frequent intelligence of persons suddenly disappearing from various towns, presumably on suspicion of being implicated in political plots. There have been executions under military law at Cronstadt, it being alleged that the persons executed were connected with attempts to injure the forts. The writer says there is a nervous feeling abroad.

The war is said to be seriously affecting commerce and industry throughout the country. The stoppage of Siberian trade, owing to the monopolization of the Siberian railway by the military, has had a disastrous effect. The closing of the Far Eastern market added to the distress. Fifteen thousand persons have been thrown out of work in Lodz alone. A number of manufacturers at Odessa have either dismissed their employes or placed them on half time. Altogether the industrial depression prevailing before the war has been greatly intensified, and the assurances that Russia would bear the strain of the war lightly were not justified.

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A PROHIBITION TOWN.

An Ohio paper tells of a town in that state in which prohibition of the rum traffic has produced the best results. It says:

Pennsburg, a town of about 1,500 population, is the healthiest town in the United States, according to the health statistics just published. During the last year there were only twelve deaths, which is less than one per cent., and of these two were due to old age and three to infant disorders. Pennsburg had a remarkable year. It had not a single unemployed person, no strikes, lower taxes than ever before, no arrests, no lawsuits, and no scandals. The cause of this is plain. There are no saloons. But the town has three churches, a public, high and private schools, three newspapers, many small factories, street lights and a water plant. Every resident is a church member and almost everybody lives in his own house. What a prosperous and happy world this would be if the liquor traffic were abolished and wiped out root and branch. It is a consummation worth striving for.

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