

## "A SPARK FROM MY PASTORAL LIFE."

M. W. Knapp.

"My first charge was a country appointment, with a village as its center.

"At one of these outposts we had no building, worshipping in a church of another denomination. Our people were in fair circumstances, but did not want to build. I was young and inexperienced, but got my message from God, and proclaimed His truth. Soon He showed me that it was His will that our people build a church, as neither society had enough religion, so but what there was constant friction between them. They were very reluctant to accept a proposition which touched their pocketbooks so strongly, and I felt it my duty to explain to them what the consequences would be, and advised them to obey God in this matter, or disband.

"This position, cumbered with my lack of gifts and experience, determined them to ask for a change at the close of the year.

"I had been preceded by a preacher of larger pulpit gifts, and they felt that the 'good of the cause demanded a more experienced man.' Feeling this way, they sent their request to the authorities. In the meantime myself and my wife felt that our work on the charge was not done, and received the assurance that we were to be returned. 'We committed our way to the Lord, and waited patiently for Him.'

"The protest to our return failed to reach the presiding elder, and we were returned to the charge. All this time we were in total ignorance of the opposition.

"As was my custom, I soon began calling on and praying with the people. It was not long until my labors found me among these dissatisfied members. I called upon the leader, not knowing there was a ripple on the storm-tossed sea. He was in the field working.

"He had been very cordial, and his house often our temporary home. He seemed so still and strange and cold! What could it all mean?

"Finally he broke the suspense:

"'Did you not know that we requested a change of pastors?'

"'I knew nothing of it.'

"'Well, what are you going to do?'

"'Do? Why, the Lord and the Conference sent me back, and I am going to stay.'

"'But no one will hear or support you.'

"'I can't help that. I'll be on hand at my next appointment.'

"I returned home with a sad, pained heart, and told my wife. We prayed over it, and God comforted us and assured us of His presence, companionship, and support, and, strong in His strength, we decided to patiently do His will, and trust Him with the consequences.

"At our first appointment to the seat of this secession a funeral interrupted, so we could not go. At the next a quarterly meeting kept us away, so it was six weeks before we were able to enter the pulpit where our absence was so much dearer than our company.

"When nearly there, we met the leader of the revolt going away to another meeting. His head hung low, his look was sad.

"He was in the main a good man, had a noble wife, and his better nature and loyalty to the Church were conquering,

and 'twas hard for him to thus run away.

"I never blamed any of them for the way they felt, as I was young and unskillful. The marvel was that any rallied and God was on our side.

"God, as usual, had given a text and message for the occasion. He gave me comfort and assurance that my text was of Him.

"It was, 'None of these things move me.' I did not once refer to the existing dissatisfaction, but tried to show that Bible religion, the kind Paul had, would put one where their souls would be so staid on God that they would be unmovable.

"I was not fully sanctified at that time, but my heart was tender and sensitive to Divine impressions, and God blessed the Word.

"While at first doubtless some thought I was going to preach on 'None of these things make me move,' they were disappointed and they were tender. The outsiders said, 'The little preacher has got more religion than the members.' God knows about that; but the members came and shook hands with me, and from that hour all was changed. A revival soon broke out, and the church enterprise was taken up, and at the close of the year all were urgently in favor of our return.

"We were sent back, and remained as long as the law of the Church would allow. The church building was completed and dedicated. After entering the evangelistic field, we returned, and God gave a revival of wonderful power, over one hundred professing conversions.

"The above incident hints the following lesson:

"God changes forbidding circumstances into welcome victories, when His servants follow Him."

## LETTERS TO A YOUNG PREACHER.

Rev. H. C. Norrison, D. D.

I recently attended service in a great city church; great in building, great in number of its congregation, great in the number of its intelligence and wealth of its membership; great in the education and culture of the preacher. The church contained one of the largest organs I ever saw. They had a choir of unusually fine voices. The order of worship was thoroughly "orderly." There was not a bobble in it.

I judge it was the same order that had been used Sabbath after Sabbath for fifty years. It ran in a well worn groove without a jostle, and I may truthfully say, without a thrill. The faces of the singers were as fixed and as quiet as mummies. As for any indication of feeling or emotion those faces had as well been carved in marble. The singing was perfect and mechanical as if it had been sent over in records from Paris or London. I have heard music from machines that moved and produced more feeling or devotion than the very perfect performance of the choir.

The preacher was a man of learning, of fine poise, with a good voice. It was as even and smooth as the most drowsy man could wish. It had neither rise nor fall. I could not say there was any piercing or unction in it. The grammar was perfect, the logic without a kink, the matter was good and no doubt was the truth, but there

was something sadly lacking in the service. There was nothing to thrill the heart of a believer to praise and adoration. There was nothing to stir the heart of a sinner to reflection on the danger of his course, or to suggest the importance of repentance. There was no reference to the perilous times in which we are living, to the need of a revival, of the demand for consecrated Christian life to salt and save the moral decay in the world. The sermon was utterly without appeal or exhortation. There was nothing in it to stir or awaken men to cry to God for help.

God was referred to in a way that would convey the impression, if any impression was conveyed at all, that He was an easy-going, good-natured, rather inactive God who might be relied upon to help one out of a difficulty in case one could not find some other way out. I could but feel that the preacher missed a great opportunity. There was nothing in the man's voice, action, or manner, that would have suggested that he felt within his soul that the church should be aroused, that sin should be rebuked, that multitudes of men were lost and hastening to a judgment bar where they could hope for, or expect anything, except condemnation and eternal punishment.

I do not want to be severe in the judgment of any man, at the same time I do want to hear men preach who mean something, who feel intensely, who give every evidence that they are longing to help their fellow beings into right relationship with God. I delight to hear a man who has a message, who feels the power, who is burning with it, to whom God the Father, Christ the Son, the Holy Spirit, the powerful agent, are realities, are an awful and glorious presence. A man to whom heaven and hell are definite places, to which multitudes of his fellow beings are hastening. I want to hear a man preach who loves to preach, who feels the holy fire burning, who is consumed with great longings, who sees the ruin there is in the world, and realizes that Jesus Christ is the only possible hope for a lost world.

Please do not think hard of me for urging you to be an earnest preacher, to speak with authority, to say something that counts, to arouse men to thinking, to make the Christians feel that they must render an account to God for their stewardship, to make the sinners feel they must flee from the wrath to come, to make every one who hears to feel that he is the messenger of the Almighty, that he is pressed and bowed down with the importance of his message, that he is inspired and lifted up with holy conviction and courage. O, for preachers who feel in their own souls the power of our mighty Christ, and who delight to preach Him mighty to save to the uttermost.

The American Bible Society announces that a new translation of the Bible has been completed for the Chinese, the culmination of the efforts of many workers, both Chinese and foreign, during more than a quarter of a century. It will be known as the "Revised Mandarin Bible."

"The great commission, 'Go preach the gospel to every creature,' is also a great permission."