

HOW TO KEEP A GOOD MINISTER AND MAKE HIM BETTER.

BY THE REV. DR. HUMPHREY.

"Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake." Though he should not be so popular nor so great a scholar as some of his brethren, if he loves his Master, and loves his work, and loves his people, and preaches good, sound doctrine, treat him as an "ambassador of Christ," sent to beseech sinners in his stead to be reconciled to God. If he is young and inexperienced, make such allowance as to show him that he is surrounded on all sides by friends, who expect less than they would from one of a riper age, and more power of physical endurance. This will encourage him to do the best he can, and he will grow as fast as you can reasonably expect. If he commits some mistakes (and who that sustains any difficult and responsible office does not,) overlook them; or, if they are of such a nature that he needs to be put upon his guard, let the duty be discharged in such a way as to convince him that he still retains the confidence of his people, and has only to be more careful in future.

Attend punctually upon his ministry.—Let no frivolous excuse detain you at home either part of the day. It is very disheartening to a minister, when he has spent the week in laborious preparations for the pulpit, to look around upon a spare audience, and to observe how many are absent from their pews, whom he had hoped to benefit by shaping his discourses to meet their spiritual wants. How can he help feeling that much of his labour is lost? When the weather is inclement, or the skies are overcast, instead of looking out half-a-dozen times to find a plausible excuse for staying at home, just recollect that your minister must be as punctual in storm as in sunshine; that many of the congregation can not safely get out in very bad weather, and that if you are well enough to go abroad upon business, you can have no valid excuse for absenting yourself from the house of God.

Encourage him to deal very plainly with you. When he preaches what are called "hard doctrines," which you admit are found in the Bible, don't lay your heads down in token of your disapprobation, nor unmistakably show by your restlessness how much you wish he would let such subjects alone. Remember that he comes to you under a sacred commission, as an ambassador of Christ; and that he may not "shun to declare unto you all the counsel of God, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear." It is true, if he has the spirit of him who said, "Wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel," he will "obey God rather than man;" but if you constrain him to circulate, "Who hath believed our report?" you will discourage him, and render yourselves unworthy of his faithful services.

Give him a chance to grow. In addition to the few books which he may be able to purchase, provide him with a good theological library, that he may have wherewithal to enrich his mind, and to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old. And having furnished him with the necessary tools, let him have time to use them. If he is disposed to appropriate his forenoons to study, as a good minister of course will be, don't interrupt him, except from necessity, or where the call cannot be postponed till afternoon without great inconvenience.

Give him a comfortable support. "The labourer is worthy of his hire. Even so hath God ordained that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel." To say nothing of the injustice of it, half starving a good minister is the poorest economy in the world. If you don't give him and his family enough to eat, and drink, and wear, how can his mind be free from those worldly anxieties which must unavoidably interfere with the duties of his sacred calling?

Don't grudge him some few weeks, four at least, every year, for visiting his friends, and recruiting his exhausted physical and mental energies. You will be gainers by it in the long run. He will render you more and better service than he would if you would allow him no vacation. No profession is so incessant in its demands, and so exhausting, as the work of a preacher and pastor. If now and then a constitution can bear up, year in and year out, without taking any time to recruit, the great majority of really working men in the ministry cannot. Many will inevitably break down when young, if you keep them all the time at the wheel, and those who hold out longest will inevitably suffer more or less.

Rally around him, when he is either openly assailed or clandestinely undermined. Meet the few restless spirits in the congregation at the threshold, and give them to understand that your beloved pastor is not to be ousted in this way; that you will stand by him to the last; that if they choose to withdraw, let them withdraw, and you will support him without their aid.

Pray for him "without ceasing." Bear him always upon your hearts, when you come to the throne of grace. He needs all the help you can give him in your daily family prayers, and in your closet devotions. There is nothing which he so highly values, as "the effectual, fervent prayers of his church."

If, then, you would have him an able minister of the New Testament; if you wish him to grow in grace, to be "mighty in the Scriptures;" to "feed you with knowledge and understanding, and your children with the sincere milk of the word;" give him books and time for preparation; attend punctually on his ministry; receive the ingrafted word with meekness and fear; as he "sows unto you spiritual things," let him "reap your carnal things;" rally around him when assailed, whether by "foes without or foes within;" be careful of his health, by allowing him time to recruit; and remember him daily and fervently at the throne of grace.

DOING AND GETTING GOOD.

A desponding Christian lady frequently called upon her pastor, to consult him in reference to her spiritual interests. All his advice and prayers appeared to do her no good, her spiritual darkness seeming to gather thicker as she struggled against it. Finding that she had been living a life of spiritual idleness, he advised her to go to work, to try to save others around her from that awful perdition to which she felt herself doomed. She at first rejected the thought as abhorrent to her sense of propriety, that one who felt herself a reprobate should attempt to warn others to flee from the wrath to come; but after reflection, it struck her, as a very proper course, that her own case might be held up to others as a beacon, to warn them against the great danger of grieving away the Spirit of God from their hearts. She went to work in the Sabbath-school, and gradually extended her labors amongst the poor and neglected outcasts in her vicinity; light soon beamed into her heart, and filled it with joy and peace in believing. She experienced the truth of that promise which declares, that those who water others, shall themselves be watered; and now she is one of the happiest and most useful Christians in the church of which she is a member.

This little incident is one of instruction to those who profess to be the people of God. Whoever would enjoy the comforts of religion, must endeavour to extend them to others within the reach of his influence. An indolent Christian cannot be a happy one. Said a Christian brother, the other day, in our hearing, when urged to desist from efforts to reclaim a class who seemed to be hopeless, "I cannot cease to work for Christ, for my own sake, even if I see no fruits of my labors upon others." There was sound theology, wise philosophy, and practical wisdom in the remark. The way to get good is to do good. The church, or individuals, who calmly fold their arms, and settle down into a state of slothful indolence, will soon find their own comforts in religion gone. The Spirit of God will desert them, and they will be left, a temple without an inhabitant, ready to be taken possession of by the first evil spirit that passes. Reader! are you saying, "Oh, that it were with me as in days that are past, when the candle of the Lord did shine upon me?" Go to work for Christ, in whatever sphere he hath placed thee. See if spiritual health does not again course through thy veins, as thou dost exercise thy faculties in his service. Then shalt thou experience the truth of that saying, which now thou dost not believe in thine heart, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" and then shalt thou thank him who opens to thee an opportunity to do good.

Influence of Holy Living.

A truly Christian life is better than large contributions of wealth for the propagation of Christianity. The most prominent instruction of Jesus on this point is, that we must let men see in us that religion is something real, something more than high-sounding and empty words, a restraint from sin, a bulwark a-

gainst temptation, a spring of upright and useful action; let them see it, not an idle form, not a transient feeling, but our companion through life, infusing its purity into our common pursuits, following us to our homes, setting guard around our integrity in the resorts of business, sweetening our tempers in seasons of provocation, disposing us habitually to sympathy with others, to patience and cheerfulness under our afflictions, to candid judgment, and to sacrifices for others' good; and we may hope that our light will not shine uselessly; that some slumbering conscience will be aroused by this testimony and excellence and practicableness of religion; that some worldly professor of Christianity will learn his obligations, and blush for his criminal inconsistency; and that some in whom the common arguments for our religion may have failed to work a full belief, will be brought to the knowledge of the truth by this plain, practical proof of the heavenly nature of Christianity. Every man is surrounded by beings who are moulded more or less by the principles of sympathy and imitation; and this social part of our nature he is bound to press into the service of Christianity.

Access to God.

However early in the morning you seek the gate of access, you find it already open; and however deep the midnight moment when you find yourself in the sudden arms of death, the winged prayer can bring an instant Saviour near. And this wherever you are. It needs not that you should ascend some special Pishgah or Moriah. It needs not that you should enter some awful shrine, or put off your shoes on some holy ground. Could a memento be reared on every spot from which an acceptable prayer has passed away, and on which a prompt answer has come down, we should find *Jehovah-shammah*, 'the Lord hath been here,' inscribed on many a cottage hearth and many a dungeon floor. We should find it not only in Jerusalem's proud temple and David's cedar galleries, but in the fishermen's cottage by the brink of Gennesaret and in the upper chamber where pentecost began. And whether it be the field where Isaac went to meditate, or the rocky knoll where Jacob lay down to sleep, or the brook where Israel wrestled, or the den where Daniel gazed on the hungry lions and the lions gazed on him, or the hill-sides where the man of sorrows prayed all night, we should discern the prints of the ladder's feet let down from heaven—the landing-place of mercies, because the starting-point of prayer. And all this whatsoever you are. It needs no saint, no proficient in piety, no adept in eloquent language, no dignity of earthly rank. It needs but a simple Hannah, or a lisping Samuel. It needs but a blind beggar, or a loathsome leper. It needs but a penitent publican, or a dying thief. And it needs no sharp ordeal, no costly passport, no painful expiation to bring you to the mercy-seat; or rather, I should say, it needs the costliest of all: but the blood of atonement—the Saviour's merit—the name of Jesus, priceless as they are, cost the sinner nothing. They are freely put at his disposal, and instantly and constantly he may use them. This access to God in every place, at every moment, without any price or personal merit, is it not a privilege?—*Rev. James Hamilton.*

Prospect of the Second Death.

What the second death is, none but God fully knows. About it we know nothing, except what we see, and feel of the effects of sin; and what God has told us. Finite minds, in the course of finite duration, can know about it comparatively but little. Yet we know enough if we believe God, to make us feel, and that deeply, that it is something overwhelmingly dreadful. It is, he tells us, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord; going away into devouring fire; into everlasting burnings, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And who can dwell with devouring fire; who can inherit everlasting burnings? The bare prospect of it, has made the hardened sinner, in this life, curse his existence; and cry out in agony, "Oh the insufferable pangs of hell, and damnation. Could I, by lying a thousand years in that flame escape! But ah, millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer the end of my torment, than one poor hour.—Oh eternity! eternity! who can fathom the abyss of eternity, or paraphrase the words for ever and ever." To this amazing suffering that poor sinner, before she repented, was eve-

ry moment exposed. Her ways were ways of death, her steps took hold on hell. She walked wherever she went, over the bottomless pit; and nothing but the brittle thread of life, which angels knew, might be sundered in a moment, kept her from endless perdition. She hung as on a single thread, while the flames were flashing all around her. But glory to God in the highest, she is snatched as a brand from the burning; and saved, through grace, by repentance and faith, from the second death.—All the misery that she would have endured, amounting in the course of endless being, to more than all that has ever yet been endured by all creatures from the creation, is struck out of existence; or rather is prevented from ever coming in. No wonder there is joy in the presence of the angels. God himself rejoices. All holy beings rejoice, and will forever; for she is saved from the second death.

Personal Christian Effort.

The godly Baxter says of himself, "I confess, to my shame, that I remember no one sin that my conscience doth so much accuse and judge me for, as for doing so little for the salvation of men's souls, and dealing no more earnestly and fervently with them for their conversion. I confess, that when I am alone, and think of the case of the poor ignorant, worldly, earthly, unconverted sinners, that live not to God nor set their hearts on the life to come, my conscience telleth me that I should go to as many of them as I can, and tell them plainly what will become of them if they do not turn, and beseech them, with all the earnestness that I can, to come to Christ, and change their course, and make no delay.—And though I have many excuses, from other business and from disability and want of time, yet none of them all do satisfy my own conscience when I consider what heaven and hell are, which will one of them be the end of every man's life. My conscience telleth me that I should follow them with all possible earnestness night and day, and take no denial till they return to God."

How to Judge of the Industry of Ministers.

A farmer is apt to suppose, if he does not see his minister at work in the field every day, he must be idle or lazy. A mechanic, wants to see him in the shop. The merchant in the store. The professional man thinks he might be attending to some profession. So many persons judge of his industry by the amount of labour he performs in the field, the store, the shop, or in pursuing some profession. But none of these are his appropriate work. Judge him on the Sabbath. If he comes with his mind well stored with Divine truth, and is prepared to present to the people well arranged, well digested sermons from Sabbath to Sabbath—sermons that are calculated to interest and edify the church and congregation; don't charge that man with being idle or lazy, he is at his work when you are asleep.—*Journal and Messenger.*

Pulpit Eloquence.

A more sickening and disgusting exhibition can nowhere be witnessed, than to see a minister of the Gospel forgetful of his high duties and holy calling, prostituting the pulpit by preaching himself. Any attempt to play the orator on such an occasion, sinks the ministry into contempt in the view of any individual of cultivated taste or piety. The minister should be forgetful of himself, and think only of his hearers and his subject. He stands between the living and the dead. His mission is of the last importance of man; and he should fill it with singleness of heart. If this be the spirit of the preacher, he cannot fail to be eloquent. The eloquence of the pulpit consists in the greatest simplicity of style and manner, in the dignity and sublimity of the topics discussed, in the awful interests involved in the overwhelming manifestations of a Redeemer's love. Let those fill the soul of a speaker, and he will be sufficiently eloquent.—*Judge McLean.*

Charity and Mercy.

Children should be enured as early as possible to acts of charity and mercy. Constantly, as soon as his son could write, employed his hand in singing pardons, and delighted in conveying through his mouth all the favours he granted. A noble introduction to sovereignty, which is instituted for the happiness of mankind.

Since we were borne for mutual help, we should know the world.