

Yours until He come

Robert F. Sample.

~m~

THE PULPIT TREASURY.

AN EVANGELICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. IV.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER, 1886.

No. 6.

→ SERMONS ←

PROVIDENCE INTERPRETED.

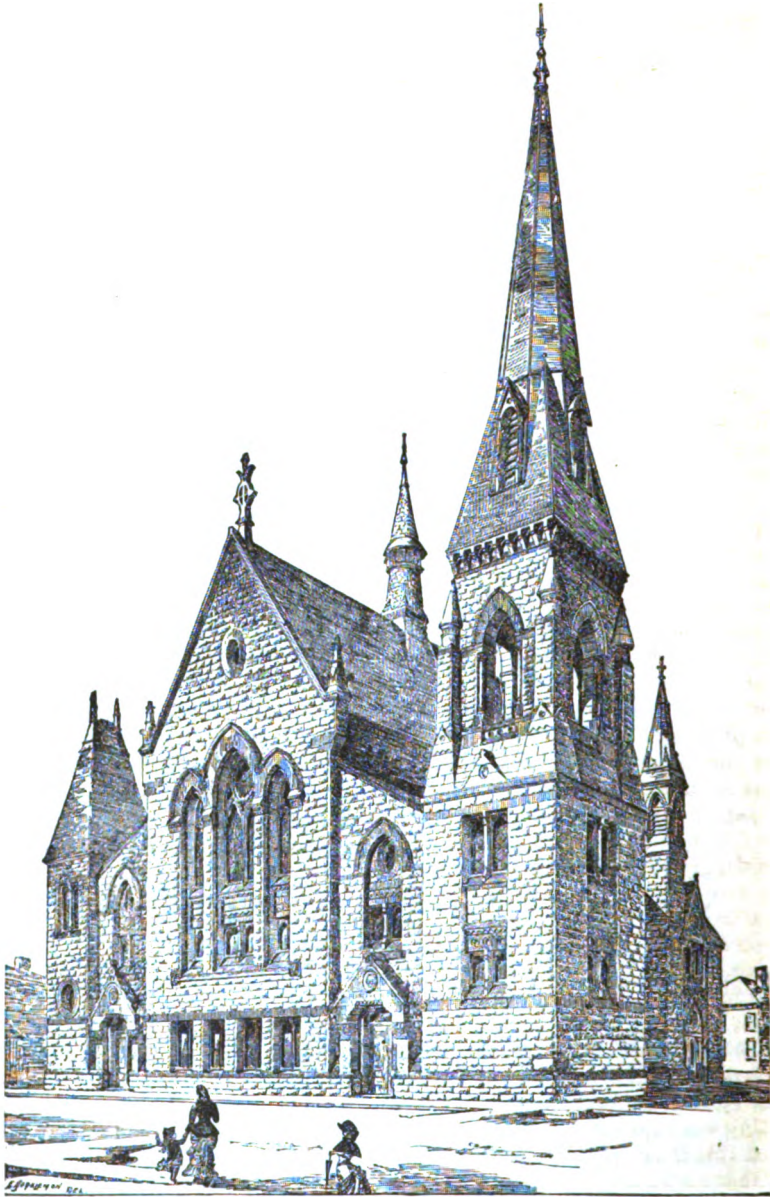
BY ROBERT F. SAMPLE, D.D., WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.—JOHN xiii., 7.

JUST before the institution of the Holy Supper Christ washed the feet of His disciples. The design of this symbolical action was at first concealed, and Peter, grieved at the thought of his Master engaging in so menial a service, enquired with evident surprise, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" Christ replied, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." For the interpretation of this seemingly inappropriate action the disciple must wait. It is his duty to submit to the Master's will, though it be contrary to his sense of propriety, and a seeming degradation of his Lord.

The reply of our Saviour has a wider application than was primarily apparent. It extends to the whole range of the providential economy, so far as it lies beyond our comprehension. It is not to be supposed that our limited intelligence shall be able to read the divine mind, or interpret all the events it controls. The very opposite is to be expected, and has been realized in every age.

It is true that the relations of sin and suffering may be apparent. As in the cases of Gehazi, Ananias, and Simon Magus, the punishment may tread on the heels of the offense, and although we may be unwilling to admit it to others, we know at what sin the rod points. But in many instances the footsteps of God, as they relate to ourselves, are not known.



WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA.

Corner Nicollet Avenue and Seventh Street.

Church organized August 23d, 1857, with a membership of eight persons. In 1860 a building was erected on Fourth Street, between Hennepin and Nicollet Avenues, and was twice enlarged. The corner-stone of the present edifice laid July 13th, 1880, and the completed structure dedicated, free of debt, March 11th, 1883. The material, Lake Superior brown-stone; seating capacity, 1,200, with broad spaces on the main floor and gallery for additional seats when required. Dimensions, one hundred and thirty-four feet by eighty-nine feet. The Lecture-room furnishes sittings for 800. The cost of building, \$150,000. The General Assembly met in this church in May, 1886.

ROBERT F. SAMPLE, D.D., Pastor.

→* NOTED PREACHERS *←

Robert F. Sample, D.D.

By **ROBERT CHRISTIE, D.D.**

The Rev. Robert F. Sample, whose portrait appears on the opening page of *THE PULPIT TREASURY*, was born at Corning, New York, October 19th, 1829. He is descended, through his father, from a Scottish family of historic prominence, which was located at Edinburgh in the time of John Knox, one of whom was the author of a somewhat celebrated ballad on the death of Regent Murray. Both of his parents were devoted Christians. But his mother died when he was only eight years old. His inherited qualities and immediate surroundings were well fitted to cause his life to take the direction and attain that development which has made it one of exceptional usefulness.

Dr. Sample once related to the writer with profound feeling two incidents that gave him his earliest lessons in the value of prayer and the power of faith. And as their moulding influence must have been felt through his whole after life, they are fittingly inserted in this sketch. He told how when four years old he was taken suddenly ill with what was pronounced by the physician a fatal sickness. The day following this announcement was spent by the anxious father in fasting and prayer, pleading for the life of his boy, and covenanting, if his request was granted, to dedicate him to the Gospel ministry. The father's absence until evening was explained when the physician stated that the child's disease had yielded, and that his recovery was but a question of time. The prayer of faith had healed the sick. The second incident was to the effect that while in college, studying with the medical profession in view, the unconverted youth was suddenly roused by the words of the preacher one communion Sabbath, and he could find no rest till he found it, one week later, in Christ and consecrated himself to the work of the ministry. A letter, partly written and

partly dictated by the father on his death-bed, told how he had set apart a certain hour for prayer in behalf of his son that he might be converted and consecrate himself to the ministry. This was on the Lord's Day. And on one occasion, during the hour set apart for this prayer, on the second Sabbath, the father's assurance became too strong for doubt or question that his prayer was answered. On comparing this letter with those received from his son, it was found that the hour in which the father began his prayer coincided with that of his son's awakening, and the hour in which he became assured that his prayer was heard, was identical with that in which his son dedicated himself to his Master's service.

In the prosecution of his studies Dr. Sample attended in succession the Lyceum at Geneva, N. Y., the Academy at Milton, Pa., and graduated with honors at Jefferson College in the class of 1849, while Rev. Alexander B. Brown, D.D., successor to Rev. Dr. Robert J. Breckenridge, was president of that institution. Having completed his course of study at the Western Theological Seminary in 1853, he at once entered with ardor on the pastoral care of a large congregation in Mercer, Pa. After a successful ministry of three years, health required a change to Bedford Springs, Pa., which was the beginning of ten years' rich experience and fruitful labor. During the latter part of this period an extended revival occurred which resulted in bringing all the young people of his congregation into the Church. Several who were gathered in at that time entered the ministry, among whom, as I recollect, were the Rev. Lawrence M. Colfelt, D.D., of Philadelphia, and Rev. W. B. Noble, D.D., of Norristown, Pa.

In 1866 considerations of health led him to remove to St. Anthony Falls, now a part of Minneapolis, where he was supply over the Andrew Presbyterian Church for nearly two years. At the end of that time he became pastor of Westminster

Church, Minneapolis, where he still remains. This pastorate of nearly nineteen years has been characterized at every stage by proofs of strongest attachment on the part of the people, but this found marked expression when in 1870 they sent him to Egypt and Palestine and, in 1884 to northern Europe as far as to Moscow.

In 1876 he received the degree of D.D. from the University of Wooster, Ohio. His unassuming life and earnest devotion to pastoral labors have no doubt limited his efforts in the field of authorship, but four volumes prepared for the young and published anonymously, give evidence that he is admirably fitted to take high rank in the department of literature. He is also the author of a biography of the late Rev. J. C. Thom of St. Louis, besides numerous sermons and addresses that have found their way to the general public in pamphlet form. For twenty-five years he has been a constant contributor to our Church papers, and all who during that time have read the articles of *Itasca* in *The Presbyterian* will not be surprised to learn that the same graceful pen is known in the field of poetry. Most of his poems have been published without name. Some of them have already taken their place in our hymnology, whilst others are incorporated in publications of the Presbyterian Board. Having been sent as a delegate to the Presbyterian Alliance at Belfast in 1884, he presented one of the important papers of that occasion.

As might be expected the ripe experience and ready zeal of Dr. Sample have been pressed into the service of several of our colleges and seminaries in the management of their affairs. But the chief results of his work are to be found in the lives of those to whom he has ministered. Westminster Church numbered one hundred members when he began his pastorate; it now numbers over nine hundred. From this constantly enlarging hive have gone out as colonies, Franklin Avenue, Fifth, Bethlehem and Hope Churches, each having a membership of from seventy-five to one hundred and twenty-five at present. Westminster has at the present time a school for

Chinese, and a large and prosperous mission at Riverside among the Bohemians and Scandinavians. The peculiar relation sustained by the rapidly growing city of Minneapolis to the empire of the northwest has brought under Dr. Sample's voice and influence throngs of transient hearers from every quarter. And many of these, now laboring in other places, date their awakening to the earnest words of the Westminster pastor that reached them while they journeyed. A touching example of this was brought to light when the Doctor was entertained at Belfast by a gentleman he had never met, but who attributed his spiritual quickening to a sermon heard while passing through a strange land. From this church also have gone out two foreign missionaries, one to Africa, the other to China, and some half dozen secretaries of Young Men's Christian Associations.

A prominent journal published in Minneapolis gives evidence that he is not without honor in his own home. We subjoin a paragraph from its columns:

"No more worthy representative of Presbyterianism in this city and State can be found than the well known preacher, whose familiar features are represented in the above cut. Dr. Sample has very intimately endeared himself to the large congregation which has grown to its present proportions chiefly under his charge, by an earnest faithfulness and spiritual fervor in the discharge of his duties. His theological opinions are eminently positive, and he is unswerving in his adherence to all principles which are in accord with his honest convictions; whether or not they are in harmony with the theories and practices of the multitude. In personal character he is very unassuming. His sincerity has won for him the universal and high respect of all classes of citizens irrespective of creed, and his scholarly ability has been greatly admired and called into exercise upon many occasions. Commencement exercises of Bennett Seminary and various other institutions, as well as public, temperance and social gatherings have been made especially memorable by Dr. Sample's timely and sensible remarks. The chief

characteristics of his pulpit discourses are a deep and forcible earnestness, direct presentation of the pure Gospel, the use

of polished language, effective imagery, and frequent illustrations drawn from history or personal experience."

✻ Leading Thoughts of Sermons ✻

The Church's Duty to its Young Members.

By REV. H. A. TUPPER (BAPTIST),
LOUISVILLE, KY.

Feed my lambs.—JOHN XXI., 5.

The life and usefulness of babes in Christ, who have been received in the church family, depend largely upon the nurture and training they receive from their more experienced brethren and sisters. How often is it the case that the church pays marked attention to those who are not within her ranks; strives earnestly to secure their names for membership in the church; and then alas! when these newborn members are enlisted, they are soon forgotten; are left, many of them, to grow cold and drift back into the world; and others to drag out a puny, unhappy career within the church. Are we troubled whether these new members are advancing in the Christian life? whether they are engaged in active work for the Master, and whether they are meeting the sacred obligation of their divine calling? "Feed my lambs."

I. Strengthen the younger membership of the church by your consistent, inspiring example. While it is true that "the words of the wise are as nails fastened by the masters of the assemblies," yet their examples are as the hammers that drive these nails home. One example is worth a dozen precepts. Precepts point out what things are right to do: examples show us that these things are possible to do. One correct example worked out on the schoolboy's slate is worth much more to him than many unworked rules; and one good example worked out before the fresh pupil in the spiritual life is far more helpful to him than a budget of good advice. Here we see the blessedness of the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus.

He lived out the truths that He taught. New converts will necessarily in their spiritual life be affected by the spiritual condition of the membership. These young Christians are born with their eyes open, and these eyes are fixed on the older brethren and sisters. What examples are they setting them in the social life, in the business life, in the religious life?

II. "Strengthen these babes in Christ" by your tender, loving sympathy. How many in our churches are entirely unknown by a large number of the membership—brothers and sisters in the same family who have not a speaking acquaintance; and how many more have never received a kindly word of inquiry and help from their brethren and sisters since the day by a formal vote they were admitted into "fellowship" (so called) of the church. You wonder why these young converts often become cold and indifferent. Perhaps it is only a disease that they have caught from you. I do not think that the Lord intended to build an ice-house where he built his church, or an ice manufactory either. If the Sun of Righteousness shines into the soul, there is no place there for ice. Let the reflected light of this divine sunshine in our lives brighten and warm our home church for the babes in the household.

III. Strengthen these lambs of the fold by your wise counsel and watchful care. The responsibility of preserving the convert in his faith and experience is as great a work as working for the salvation of a soul. The young Christians in the early Churches were called catechumens and the greatest care was manifested toward them. These have left old companions and pleasures; they should find others in the church. Now that they have taken a stand for God, many new temptations will beset them.