

## How to Reach Men

### VII.—Adaptability

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**H**OW ought the minister to preach so as to reach the hearts and lives of men?

No minister, no generation of ministers, can devise a preaching which shall reach the hearts and lives of all men. Paul could not. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not. Perhaps the clearest road to true ideas upon pulpit requirements starts just there: Among other conditions for best success the minister must possess a serenity of mind concerning his preaching, as wide in the human measure as was Christ's in the divine. Such serenity will depend in large degree upon just conceptions both of what is required of him and what is not. As he that believeth shall not make haste, so of him who would persuade others to believe. Worried preaching will forever lack in power of reach. To escape worry we must avoid overstrained ideals.

Only the Word can supply subject-matter to the preaching which shall reach heart and life. Out of other material measurable success has been had in reaching the heads and hands of men, but not, influentially, their hearts or lives. The pulpit tree which is to bear its twelve manner of fruits and yield its fruit every month, and whose leaves are to be for the healing of the nations, must draw its nourishment from no lower source than the river of water which proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

But this Gospel of the Ages is to be rendered in terms of the current age. Anchored immovably in the living Godhead, the ministry of to-day must already be shaping its work to twentieth-century behests. The Gospel of the Reformation is doubtless sufficient to the need of all time; but there is room to doubt the effectiveness for the Columbian period of the Reformation method. New moral, social, and political conditions as they are continually arising demand constantly new adaptations of divine truth. The pioneer locomotive on exhibition in Chicago as really utilized the steam principle in its day as do the monster engines now hauling Pullman trains up the steep slopes of the Sierras. It could not, however, do this work. Its value is historic; its place, the curiosity-shop, not the roundhouse. The electric fluid which Edison and his collaborators are manipulating is identical in all respects with that treated by Franklin and by Morse, but these men are developing uses and applications for electricity never dreamed of by their predecessors. Like power of adaptive resource lies in the eternal Gospel, and must continually be evoked.

There is ground, therefore, for inquiring whether the ability most needed in the pulpit, especially at such a time as the present, be not, after all, adaptability—not the highest form of power, but among the rarest of pulpit powers, and, as an all-round endowment, the most serviceable for the minister. It is not in all cases the ablest preachers who realize the highest success in molding the heart and life of their generation. Not a few inconspicuous pulpits have told in that direction to a degree quite out of proportion to their ratable ability. Their secret, if it be one, lies, in some measure at least, in vital adjustment between topic and time.

Preaching which in a day like ours is to reach heart and life needs, of almost all things, to be real. A current writer upon "The Age and the Church" is quoted as saying: "The realistic age demands of the Church a Christian realism; reality or nothing has become the watchword." Sabbath congregations will scarcely be moved to larger and sweeter living under half-hours of creed-mongering or creed-mending, or by the moral dynamic of excursions into the higher criticism. Doubtless creeds are to be made and creeds are to be mended, and all things which live are to be subjected to interrogation. It were possible, however, to conduct these processes elsewhere than where hearts are crying out for the living God and lives sorely

gone astray are inquiring to be shown the way of return. Our Christ did not, when he had commanded the fasting multitudes to be set down in companies of fifty, mock their extremity by discourse upon food improvements, though in that day there was great room therefor. It was bread in the concrete they wanted then. Like concrete want is it which is lifting its sad face so wistfully toward the pulpit of to-day.

Heart and life preaching, while it is to be virile in style, comprehensible in form, and fresh in treatment, needs to be to the last degree heartful. There is danger lest, in seeking to be real and clear, an intellectual minister shall too lightly esteem the emotional in preaching. But, says Thomas Hughes of the teaching of Arnold of Rugby, "it was not the cold, clear voice of one giving advice and warning from serene heights to those who were struggling and sighing below, but the warm, living voice of one who was fighting for us and by our sides, and calling on us to help him and ourselves and one another."

*How ought the church to carry out its work—with what methods and forms of organization—so as to promote spiritual life?*

By emphasizing first, last, and always—in this day of clubs and endless brotherhoods organized for those within and as against those without—the free, outgiving principle of the Christian life. The day for churches on the religious club order is gone by. Not mere Gospel-consuming societies, but Gospel-dispensing societies, our churches must demonstrate themselves to be. Large recognition should doubtless be given in our church methods to the sociological tendencies of the time, and regeneration for society be pushed not less earnestly than regeneration for the individual soul. The institutional form of church organization is a movement in the right direction. The wisdom—except upon provisional and educational grounds—of multiplying "people's churches," distinctively so labeled, as something out of the common, may be questioned. If the common run of churches be not already people's churches, they ought to take immediate shame to themselves and become so, or, if that is impossible, go out of business. Thoroughly democratic, and, in the true sense, popular, should our churches be, in structure, appointment, atmosphere, and attitude; with buildings suited to such a conception—inviting, assuring, homelike—dwellings rather than monuments, workshops more than cathedrals. Their service of worship should be strong, sincere, attractive, elevating, spiritual, and comprehensible to the common understanding and culture. The church which would promote spirituality must give large place in its structural arrangements to Christian nurture. Regenerative, developmental, and social influences of the most vital and at the same time alluring character should be prepared for its children and young people at every turn.

The one-town-one-church idea should undoubtedly receive a profounder attention than has yet been given it—ultimately on the interdenominational scale, immediately upon the denominational. The three, or five, or twenty local branches of any denomination within the same town or city—let them regard themselves and each other, not as separate existences, but as together constituting the denominational unit for that town.

The futility of expecting one man to maintain progressive spirituality for a whole church is beginning to be felt. As well require of a single individual to combine within himself all the functions and manifoldness necessary to run a railway, a merchandising business, or a summer resort. Difference of ministries as laid down by St. Paul in the divinely given norm for the church is in our day as needful to the development of local churches as in the Apostles' day to the church at large. Apostles,

prophets, teachers, helps, governments, diversities of tongues—in that composite and cosmopolite thing, the modern American city, they may all find place.



## My Study Fire Enjoying One's Mind

Who that lives in this busy, noisy age has not envied the lot of Gilbert White, watching with keen, quiet eyes the little world of Selborne for more than fifty uneventful years? To a mind so tranquil and a spirit so serene the comings and goings of the old domesticated turtle in the garden were more important than the debates in Parliament. The pulse of the world beat slowly in the secluded hamlet, and the roar of change and revolution beyond the Channel were only faintly echoed across the peaceful hills. The methodical observer had as much leisure as Nature herself, and could wait patiently on the moods of the seasons for those confidences which he always invited, but which he never forced; and there grew up a somewhat platonic but very loyal friendship between him and the beautiful rural world about him. How many days of happy observation were his, and with what a sense of leisure his discoveries were set down, in English as devoid of artifice or strain or the fever of haste as the calm movements of the seasons registered there! There was room for enjoyment in a life so quietly ordered; time for meditation and for getting acquainted with one's self.

Most of us use our minds as tools, which are never employed save in our working hours; we press them constantly to the limits of endurance, and often beyond. Instead of cultivating intimate friendship with them, we enslave them, and set them to tasks which blight their freshness and deplete their vitality. A mind cannot be always hard at work earning money for a man, and at the same time play the part of friend to him. Treated with respect and courtesy, there is no better servant than the mind; when this natural and loyal service is turned into drudgery, however, the servant makes no complaint and attempts no evasion, but the man loses one of the greatest and sweetest of all the resources of life. For there is no better fortune than to be on good terms with one's mind, and to live with it in unrestrained good fellowship. We cannot escape living with it; even death is powerless to separate us; but, so far as pleasure is concerned, everything depends on the nature of the relation. The mind is ready to accept any degree of intimacy, but it is powerless to determine what that degree shall be; it must do as it is bid, and is made a friend or a slave without any opportunity of choice.

To enjoy one's mind one must take time to become acquainted with it. Our deepest friendships are not affairs of the moment; they ripen slowly on the sunny side of the wall, and a good many seasons go to their perfect mellowness and sweetness. The man who wishes to get delight out of his mind, and be entertained by it, must give it time. The mind needs freedom and leisure, and cannot be its best without them. A good talker, who has a strain of imagination and sentiment in him, cannot be pushed into brilliant or persuasive fluency. If you are hurried and can give only partial attention, he is silent: the atmosphere does not warm his gift into life. The mind is even more sensitive to your mood and dependent on your attitude. If you are so absorbed in affairs that you can never give it anything better than your cast-off hours, do not expect gay companionship from it; for gaiety involves a margin of vitality, an overflow of spirits. It is oftener on good terms with youth than with maturity, because young men drive it less and live with it more. They give it room for variety of interests and time for recreation, and it rewards them with charming vivacity. It craves leisure and ease of mood because these furnish the conditions under which it can become confidential; give it a summer day, and, if you have made it your friend, it will give you long hours of varied and wholesome entertainment. It has sentiment,

imagination, wit, and memory at its command, and, like an Eastern magician, will transport you to any climate or bring any object to your feet. Never was there so willing a friend, nor one whose resources are so constantly ignored.

What a man finds in his mind and gets out of it depends very much on himself; for the mind fits its entertainment to the taste of its one tyrannical auditor. Probably few men have ever lived more loyally with their minds than Wordsworth. Fame found him a recluse and left him solitary; crowds had no charms for him, and at dinner-tables he had no gifts. He was at his best pacing his garden walk and carrying on that long colloquy with his mind which was his one consuming passion. The critics speak of him as an isolated, often as a cold, nature; but no man of his time, not even Byron, put more passion into his work: only his passion was not for persons, it was for ideas. He had great moments with his mind, for he was repaid for the intensity of his surrender of other occupations and interests by thrilling inspirations—those sudden liftings of the man into the clearness and splendor of vision which the mind commands in its highest moods. He who has felt that exaltation knows not only what must have come often to Wordsworth when the hills shone round him with a light beyond that of the sun, but has touched the very highest bound of human experience. A mind enriched by long contact with the best in thought and life, and cherished by loving regard for its needs, often repays in a single hour the devotion of a lifetime. Sometimes, beside the lamp at evening, the book closes in the hand because the mind swiftly flies from it to some distant and splendid outlook; or, on the solitary walk, the man stands still with beating heart because the mind has suddenly disclosed another and diviner landscape about him.

Wordsworth found imagination and sentiment in his mind, as did the beautiful singer upon whom the laurel next descended; but Charles Lamb had the delights of wit. No men are on better terms with their minds than men of wit; one of the pleasures which they give their fellows of slower movement is the enjoyment which comes to them from their own unexpectedness. Most of us know what we shall think and say next; or, if we do not know, we have no reason to anticipate either surprise or satisfaction from that part of the future which is to take its color from our thoughts and words. A witty man, on the other hand, never knows what his mind will give him next; it is the unexpected which always happens in his mental history. Watch him as he talks, and note his delight in the tricks which his mind is playing upon him. He is as much in the dark as his auditors, and has as little inkling of the turn the talk will take next. His real antagonist is not the man who sends the ball back to him, but his own mind, which he is humorously prodding, and which is giving sharp thrusts in response. Charles Lamb found as much delight in his own quaintness as did any of his friends, and was as much surprised by those inimitable puns which stuttered themselves into speech as if they were being translated out of some wittier language than ours. It is pleasant to think of the suppressed fun that went on within him on the high seat at the India House. And Sydney Smith was another beneficiary of his own mind, whose way through life was so constantly enlivened by the gayest companionship that even the drowsy English pulpit of his time had little power to subdue his spirits or dull the edge of his wit. Who that has talked with Dr. Holmes has not witnessed that charming catastrophe which befalls a man when his mind runs away with him and dashes into all manner of delightful but unsuspected roads, to bring back the listener at last with a keen consciousness that there is a good deal of undiscovered country about him, and that he was a dull fellow not to have known it before. The truth is that he can never get himself run away with in like fashion! And yet most of us would be more inspiring, more entertaining, and much wittier if we gave ourselves a chance to get on terms of intimacy with our own minds. Old Dyer had found, three centuries ago, the delights of this fellowship when he sang:

My mind to me a kingdom is:  
Such present joys therein I find,