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I. LITERARY.

MEMORY, ACTIVITY, AND ANTICIPATION.

SERMON BY REV. DR. HOGE, OF RICHMOND.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark."—(PHIL. iii. 13, 14.)

WHEN the apostle refers to the "things which are behind," he is thinking of the experiences of the past ; when he says, "I press forward," he is mindful of the obligations and privileges of the present ; when he speaks of the "things which are before," he is forecasting the recompenses of the future ; so that when we follow him in this comprehensive sweep of vision over the whole field of existence, we have suggested to us these natural divisions of the theme under discussion : memories of the past ; duties of the present ; anticipations of the future.

Let us strive to enter into the import of these varied remembrances, activities, and prospects, until, in full appreciation and sympathy with each, we can make the apostle's resolution our own, and by God's grace at last reach the prize which animated him as he ran the Christian race, and which constituted his reward when the victory was won.

★ The subject under consideration is peculiarly appropriate at the season when we are about to make the transition from the old year to the new.

The most inconsiderate cannot fail to recognize the contrast between the pensive, retrospective thoughts awakened by the

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

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When a certain leper sought healing, Jesus, "moved with compassion, stretched forth his hand and touched him." This was the first time the poor leper had felt the touch of a human hand, unless the touch of a leprous hand like his own, since the beginning of his sorrow. There was no one else who could easily have been induced to touch him. To touch a leper was to become one with him in his ceremonial defilement; it meant to come under the same sentence of exclusion from the social and religious relations of life. Why did Jesus touch him? It was not necessary to a cure. It was only necessary as a means of giving very prompt and emphatic expression to his compassion. It laid to rest at once and forever the doubt which put an "if" in the poor sufferer's prayer. By that touch Jesus identified himself with the leper. He placed himself under the law that he might redeem him from the curse of the law. Had not the leper been healed Jesus must have shared the penalty with him. Henceforth they are partners. Either he must become clean like Christ, or Christ must become defiled like him.

When Jesus met the funeral procession at the gate of the city of Nain he had compassion on the widowed mother, whose only son was being carried forth to burial. He said to her, "Weep not"; and then, drawing nigh, he touched the bier. To touch the bier upon which the dead was borne was to contract ceremonial defilement. Why did Jesus deliberately place himself under the penalty of that law? The poor mother of the dead boy had been constrained by the necessities of the case to touch the bier. Jesus showed his sympathy by putting himself in the same category with her. By touching the bier he said to the mother: "I am one with you in this sorrow. In all your affliction I am afflicted. Does the law pronounce you unclean? Then it shall pronounce me unclean." Had he not raised the son to life he must have shared

the penalty of the law with the mother. He so identified himself with her that, whatever should befall the one, should befall the other. If grief come to one it must come to both; if joy to one, then joy to both.

The sympathetic touch in these cases is illustrative of a truth precious to the Christian heart. Jesus does not stand afar off and save sinners by a naked exercise of power. He draws near and touches each sinner through community of nature, and establishes a bond of sympathy, of love and of identity. "It behooved him to be made like unto his brethren in all things, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." "We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are." Jesus has forever identified himself with those whom he saves. In order to touch them he deliberately placed himself under the penalty of that law which excludes the polluted from companionship with the pure. By that act he said to the sinner, "I am one with you in your great calamity. Whatever its issue to one, that it must be to both. Henceforth we are coëqual partners. If condemnation comes to you, it must come to me. If glorification shall come to me, it must also come to you." It was to the poor leper a blessed thing to be healed, but the value of the cure was greatly enhanced by the way in which it was effected. He was made to feel that the divine power which wrought the cure was linked with a human sympathy more than motherly in its tenderness, and the outflow of which could not be restrained even by legal enactment. It will reach him if it must cross law and incur penalty to do so. He came worshipping the power, and doubting the willingness; he went away thinking little of the power in his joyous adoration of the wondrous compassion. He not only obtained a cure, but better, if possible, he found a friend with a heart as warm in its love, and as great in the reach of its sympathies, as the heart of God. So with the saved sinner, he is not only cleansed, but clasped in the close embrace of love. The power that saves is coupled with a heart that feels; and better, if possible, than deliverance from sin is the tie of eternal brotherhood with him who delivers.