

QUIET TALKS ON POWER

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Quiet talks on power by S. D. Gordon

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BY
S. D. GORDON



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CHOKED CHANNELS.

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An Odd Distinction.

A few years ago I was making a brief tour among the colleges of Missouri. I remember one morning in a certain college village going over from the hotel to take breakfast with some of the boys, and coming back with one of the fellows whom I had just met. As we walked along, chatting away, I asked him quietly, "Are you a christian, sir?" He turned quickly and looked at me with an odd, surprised expression in his eye and then turning his face away said: "Well, I'm a member of church, but—I don't believe I'm very much of a christian." Then I looked at him and he frankly volunteered a little information. Not very much. He did not need to say much. You can see a large field through a chink in the fence. And I saw enough to let me know that he was right in the criticism he had made upon himself. We talked a bit and parted. But his remark set me to thinking.

A week later, in another town, speaking one morning to the students of a young ladies' seminary, I said afterwards to one of the teachers as we were talking: "I suppose your young women here are all christians." That same quizzical look came into

her eye as she said: "I think they are all members of church, but I do not think they are all christians with real power in their lives." There was that same odd distinction.

A few weeks later, in Kansas City visiting the medical and dental schools, I recall distinctly standing one morning in a disordered room—shavings on the floor, desks disarranged—the institution just moving into new quarters, and not yet settled. I was discussing with a member of the faculty, the dean I think, about how many the room would hold, how soon it would be ready, and so on—just a business talk, nothing more—when he turned to me rather abruptly, looking me full in the face, and said with quiet deliberation: "I'm a member of church; I *think* I am a deacon in our church"—running his hand through his hair meditatively, as though to refresh his memory—"but I am not very much of a christian, sir." The smile that started to come to my face at the odd frankness of his remark was completely chased away by the distinct touch of pathos in both face and voice that seemed to speak of a hungry, unsatisfied heart within.

Perhaps it was a month or so later, in one of the mining towns down in the zinc belt of southwestern Missouri, I was to speak to a meeting of men. There were probably five or six hundred gathered in a Methodist Church. They were strangers to me. I was in doubt what best to say to them. One dislikes to fire ammunition at people that are absent.