

## Our Contributors.

### ENTERTAINING THE STRAY PARSON.

BY KNOXONIAN.

So many pastors are taking their holidays this month, and so many pulpits are being supplied by "stray parsons, that the *Christian at Work* feels constrained to tell its readers how the "stray parson" should be entertained. Our contemporary does its work thoroughly, and with an air of seriousness that almost rises to solemnity. Let all our readers who at the present or any other time kindly entertain the "stray parson" give heed while our New York friend has the floor. Here is the introductory and general statement of the weighty question.

The pastor is off on his vacation. The pulpit is in the hands of the people. A stranger, frequently unknown personally to the entire congregation, has to be provided for over Sunday. Where shall he stay, and how be treated? Some would like to do their share in the way of offering hospitality, but shrink back, feeling constrained or embarrassed at the very thought of entertaining so grave, dignified, not to say stiff and ponderous a person as the stray parson is imagined to be. Hence it happens that in almost every community the prophet's chamber is to be discovered in only one or two houses, whose inhabitants have learned by experience that ministers are not gods to be sacrificed to—as Paul and Barnabas were in the estimation of the people of Lystra—but men of like passions with themselves, and needing about the same treatment extended to ordinary humanity.

The good people who keep that prophet's chamber are not in much danger of falling into the mistake made by the innocent people of Lystra. If the chamber has ever been occupied, or if the head of the household has ever attended Presbytery meetings, the family probably know that "stray parsons" and parsons of all kinds are human, some of them very much so.

Having got the question fairly launched, our contemporary come down to particulars in this practical way:

Well, first of all, do not entertain him over much—do not "make company" of him too much. A determined mighty effort put forth to make him feel at home will surely make him ill at ease, and painfully conscious that he is very far from home; and for one thing, don't force the conversation—don't tire him out by unceasing talk. Don't make it evident that you are in mortal terror of a momentary lull by sending forth an unceasing current of words flowing at the velocity of 250 per minute. A natural, easy conversation at the table, or as suitable occasion offers, is always in order; but spare him, O spare him that volubility which characterizes the bore, and which puts the minister at the imminent risk of being talked to death, as, like the victim of the garrulous wretch of whom the poet sings, he longs for nothing so much as a cessation of the monotonous and inane gabble. Let the talk be free, simple, natural, spontaneous, somewhat careless, if you please, at any rate without effort.

Well, we think that is about the right way to talk to anybody. Free, simple, natural, spontaneous and "somewhat careless, if you please," conversation is the right kind, especially for hot weather. Everybody ought to be spoken to in that way in social life, and the stray parson has no right to a monopoly of that nice kind of talk. Some should be kept for the regular pastor.

But our New York friend sees breakers ahead. He evidently thinks some of the owners of the prophet's chambers may have a turn for discussing high points in theology. Probably he supposes that most of them are Scotch elders or Irish Covenanters. So he warns them in this way against taking the stray parson up in an aerial flight:

Do not compel him under penalty of your sore displeasure to mount the theological balloon for an aerial flight into the troubled sky of supralapsarianism *versus* sublapsarianism, or the five points of Calvinism, or too minute a discussion of the weak Andover lapses from the creed of the founders. If you see he is willing to sail away into these speculative realms, and care to listen—why let him go. It may be his gratification to air his sesquipedalian vocabularies in an empyrean chase after some imponderable entity of metaphysical rationalism. Never mind—if he be that way inclined, allow him to indulge his vanity a little, and see how delighted he will be.

Yes, do mind. If the stray parson threatens to take you on an empyrean chase this hot weather, after some imponderable entity, go out and see a man. This is not the kind of weather to chase imponderable entities.

There is a mine of good sense in the following advice which comes next:

Again: arrange so as to leave your ministerial guest a good share of his time alone. This, if you will but believe it, is the secret of ministerial and all other hospitality, which too few have learned; and yet you can scarcely do

anything that will commend you to his more grateful remembrance than to tell him at the outset his room, the house, the grounds are at his pleasure to do with as he pleases: say this, and your minister will begin to feel at home from that minute. For quite apart from the restfulness of feeling that he can do what he will with his time, the minister really needs time for the preparation of his sermons: he needs a comfortable place where he can unhand from the horrible stiffness of being company, where he can get out of the strait-jacket of the parlour into the freedom of temporary solitude, and absence from all restraint. Do let him go off by himself, so that he can, if he chose, loosen his necktie, or throw off his coat, which may fit a little too tightly, or transfer his cramped-up feet to the delicious relaxation of slippers. To provide such a place of retirement, and expect him to enjoy it, is an immense relief to him as well as to yourself. This unrestrained hospitality may well form the prelude to perpetual friendship.

Our friend winds up with a delicate point, and handles it in a common-sense fashion:

And another word. We are going to speak plainly on a matter from which some readers may dissent; nevertheless, as we want to see the minister hospitably and comfortably entertained, we shall speak plainly. Possibly you do not smoke, and possibly you think it not very becoming in a minister to smoke. Nevertheless you are not his mentor; do not, therefore, take occasion to show a narrow and cantankerous spirit in this matter. The writer knew of a so-called lady who informed the clerical supply stopping at her house, in a manner far from decorous, that if he wanted to smoke she did not object,—providing that he went out of doors to do it! Well, with all her fine house and furniture and pretentious airs, she was not a lady, as this speech very plainly indicated. A guest may want to do certain things that you do not admire. Well, unless they are morally wrong or against orthodox social etiquette—as smoking is not—it is the height of courtesy to treat him with some magnanimity, i.e., from your standpoint. Don't, therefore, make yourself a crank about a whiff of smoke. It may be his habit to indulge in a cigar. He has done it always. He enjoys it at home, and gets it in most places abroad as a part of the matter-of-course hospitality. Surely then although you may not advocate smoking, you will show yourself to be a gentle, refined and thoughtful host, by submitting, for his sake, to a little temporary inconvenience involved in allowing him what Spurgeon calls his liberty in the Lord of taking his customary whiff. To be sure, he has no right, and nobody should claim it for him, to make himself a nuisance by smoking in your parlour or dining room, unless invited to do so; but you can with pleasing good-nature let him know where he can enjoy a little quiet recreation of this kind without turning him out of doors!

Just give him a chair in a shady corner of the veranda, and the quiet recreation will take care of itself.

### OSTENTATIOUS RELIGION.

BY T. F. F.

One of the pleasantest memories of my Leipzig student days is the Saturday afternoon service in the Thomas Kirche. The spirits of Bach and Mendelssohn seemed to be hovering on the chords of the anthem. The first time I was invited to accompany a friend, and was told simply that an anthem and a motette were to be sung, I had not the slightest intimation that the performance was anything other than a sacred concert of a very high class. Linger-ing a little behind the rest after the vast audience had dispersed, I was surprised to hear a clergyman begin to intone the communion service. There was scarcely a score of persons present now, yet it was evident at once that the "sacred concert" to which we had just listened was only part of a regular order of worship, and that the congregation had honestly, but very ceremoniously, left the church as soon as the music was over. As a device for "drawing" an audience, the artistic singing was a grand success, but to call it a religious service was a transparent farce. What these blunt Germans did I doubt not many who are similarly enticed into our Churches by sensational devices would gladly imitate did not etiquette restrain them. People who come from a mere wish to gratify their musical tastes and with no love for the Gospel sung or preached, will, if they do not honestly rise and go home, only sit with averted minds and restless bodies. They are so far from being in a receptive condition that they look upon the tedious hour of worship as part of the price they have to pay for their previous entertainment. The sooner the Churches abandon all clap-trap devices and set themselves to earnest personal work, the better for themselves and for the world. Sugar-coating religion will not make it any more palatable to the natural man. The carnal mind will abate none of its enmity, but will be emboldened rather by these transparent devices. The one attraction which the Church should hold forth is the cross of Christ. Surely the truth which was spoken of old by the voice of God to human ears—declared with all the solemn dignity of inspiration by the prophets, uttered with gentle ear-

nestness by Him who spake as never man spake, preached among the nations with the fervour of a Peter, the deep insight into spiritual things of a John and the stately oratory of a Paul—does not now need the aid of a pagan ceremonial, operatic airs and fantastic, jingling tambourines in order to win an audience for itself. What the Church needs to-day is not new methods and new attractions, but a larger number who will concern themselves with the salvation of others. Not devices for producing effect and so forcing herself upon public attention, but more personal effort on the part of professed Christians to evangelize the circle to which friendship gives them free access.

Why are these lapsed masses outside of the Church? Names stand on our baptismal registers for scores of years, before we find them on the communion roll. Simply for the reason that we have not done our duty by them. A young man should not start on the downward path without being dogged every step of his way with the warnings and counsel and help which every Christian acquaintance has a right to offer him. Our Churches would be filled to the topmost seat in the gallery if every member would concern himself with those whom he can approach, his intimate personal acquaintance, and labour with them, one by one, judiciously but persistently and prayerfully, until they too become fellow-missionaries to the ever-widening circle of those who may be similarly approached. Churches cannot discharge themselves of this duty by special efforts, such as revival services. Nor can they, without resigning their divine commission, relegate it to irregular agencies, such as the Salvation Army. The Church of Christ is that body which does the work of Christ, and if the Salvation Army, or any other organization, for evangelization does this, then they have a legitimate right to the title snatched from our selfish hearts and indolent hands. We are firmly persuaded that all these sensational devices for attracting and influencing the masses are utter failures and mischievous delusions. The same result would be attained on the whole more rapidly if each man or woman would day by day watch for the souls of those with whom intimate relationship furnishes a warrant to intrude upon the privacy of their religious sentiments. The circle of influence would rapidly widen, and as it grew the religious life of the Church would increase in fervour and consecration.

### THE GREAT NORTH-WEST.

The Rev J Carmichael, M.A., Norwood, gives an interesting account of his trip to the North-West, from which the following extracts are taken:

On Tuesday morning we set out for Piapot's Reserve, distant from Regina thirty miles. Mr. Reid, Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and Rev. Mr. Flett, a minister of the Presbyterian Church, who acted as interpreter, accompanying us. The morning was glorious. The prairie one vast bed of flowers. Nature seemingly in her best mood endeavouring to make man at peace with her, with himself and with the Creator of all. We crossed the trail which was taken in bygone days by the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company in travelling with their ox-teams between Fort Garry and British Columbia. The journey from the former to the latter place and return occupied the whole of the summer, now it can be accomplished in seven days. Between Regina and the Reserve but three settlers' homesteads were met, and these miles apart. When we reached our destination a good dinner awaited us in the school house. Miss Rose, the teacher, had received instructions from the Governor to provide against our arrival, and most liberally had she done so. She expected us on Monday afternoon, and had made arrangements for our remaining over night. The Reserve lies on the south bank of the Qu'Appelle. Here the banks are fully 400 feet in height, serrated and free of rock or stone. The valley between them appeared to be about a mile wide, in the centre the river, more like a little creek than a river. The view here was the grandest I have ever seen. To my mind that from Durham Terrace, Quebec, is incomparably inferior. I have viewed the scenery on the Hudson, that at the aqueduct bridge on the Harlem, and also that of the Western Highlands, in Scotland, but for overpowering grandeur the view here surpassed everything I had formerly beheld.