

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWSTHE MONEY SIDE OF THE  
MINISTRY.

(By Walter E. Weyl.)

I have preached to my congregation for twenty-six years. I have baptized all the children and married many who are now grandparents. I know them all—the good men and the good women, and the young people growing up to manhood and womanhood. I have preached thousands of sermons to these friends of mine; but I have never cared, or perhaps never dared, to speak to them about salaries.

And yet of late the thought has been much on my mind. To-day, when I am invited to talk to the great world of good people whom I do not know and who do not know me, I feel freer to speak openly about this money side of the ministry.

I am a Presbyterian minister. I live with four of my six children in a quickly growing middle western city, with a present population, I am told, of almost one hundred thousand. My married life was exceedingly happy. My children have been, and are, all that children could be. My congregation is friendly and kind—almost too kind. As I look back upon my past I realize that something like a shock that my only troubles have been money troubles, and these, although sometimes harassing, have been, as the poet says, "trifles light as air" compared to those of many better but poorer-paid men in the Christian ministry.

If my father were to return to life, and learn that I was a minister of the gospel, with twelve hundred dollars a year and a manse, he would think that my journey lay in easy paths. For one hundred and fifty years we McLeods (this is not my real name) have been Presbyterian ministers, and for one hundred and fifty years we have been poor. There have been thirty-seven pastors among us, and, man for man, we have not during all that time earned four dollars a week.

But my ancestors lived on the frontier. They could use a spade or a plow (or, for that matter, a rifle) as well as a Bible. They drew most of their salary from their gardens and farms. My father, a pious, learned man, saved during the Civil War in the Christian Commission, and spent thirty years in a poor, backward village in the Northwest. He never earned over three hundred dollars, and rarely received what he earned. We McLeods have always been a little proud of our poverty—when we have been conscious of it.

The frontier, however, has been reached; our villages are growing into cities; we are surrounded by new conditions and living has become an exceedingly complex thing. To-day you must pay for things in money instead of in labor as before. Even from the poorest among us things are demanded that in an earlier, simpler, and, I believe, better age would not have been expected.

Extravagance has grown. I remember how, a quarter of a century ago, the female portion of my congregation rapturously admired the plain black silk of my wife, when, after our honeymoon trip to New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, we returned to our manse. I remember how my dear wife, who to her last days loved in her heart all manner of trappings, trimmings and feminine finery, longed to wear her lavender silk. I expostulated that so much luxury would shock our congregation. Why, to-day there is hardly a woman in my congregation who would not turn up her nose at that old lavender silk. The finery of a generation ago is now a discarded shabbiness. The standards of the city and of the congregation have risen.

My salary in those early days was six hundred dollars. It was ample. The manse, of course, was free. It cost us only two hundred dollars for food, and we had a country girl as help, to whom we paid one dollar a week. Our clothing cost little, for we lived simply, and a coat or a best dress went further in those days. We always had a small surplus on hand with which to help out our more necessitous neighbors.

Then Esther came (she is my eldest), and after her Mary; and thence one every two years—my four nieces. Meanwhile my salary rose to nine hundred dollars, and later to twelve hundred. It was while earning twelve hundred—which I still earn—that I found it hardest to live.

Two may live cheaper than one, but eight cannot live cheaper than two. My wife was a good manager—no women are such wonderful managers as ministers' wives. A pastor who makes half as much as a steamfitter lives, thanks to his wife, twice as well. But expenses increased. We strove to live more plainly than our congregation, but, for the sake of our people, we were compelled to maintain some standard. The children could not run barefoot, and shoes and clothes cost money.

Then, of course, the children had to be educated. It is a tradition among the McLeods that no poverty can excuse ignorance. All my brothers went to college, and I myself worked my way under favoring chances through college and seminary. My oldest boy is now studying engineering and the three other boys will be prepared for some useful occupation—although none of them, unless their inclinations change, will go into the ministry.

I speak of these matters here merely for the purpose of showing one item of expense in a minister's family.

It would have been far easier had my salary been regularly paid. The congregation meant well, but somehow my stipend was always two or three months in arrears. The collector of the church was a busy man. He was a wholesale hardware merchant, who supplied retail stores all over the state. He had the reputation of discounting all bills, and of never being a minute late in any business transaction. But the church was not a business organization, and the minister was above—or below—the rules of business ethics. So, while the janitor was paid on the day, and the soprano received her check monthly, and the coal bill for the church was met promptly, the minister's salary waited.

I never received money without asking for it, and I never asked until I was in debt. I would rather dig sewers than ask for money.

One whole month my family lived on potatoes and cornmeal because Mr. Anderson, the church treasurer, was away on a trip to the Yosemite. I remember how, meeting the treasurer's wife on the street, I asked rather shamefacedly how Mr. Anderson was enjoying the West and when he expected to return. I must have blushed, for during the whole month I had thought of little else. Even while I worked out my sermons (I never write them) the thought kept constantly knocking at the gate of my mind, "How soon? How soon?"

That month I had more demands than ever before. My daughter Esther was stricken with pneumonia, the doctor came every day, and the druggist's bill rose to almost twenty dollars. My life-insurance premium fell due, and I had to borrow money to meet it. Then, a month before, I had foolishly determined to put a bathtub in the house, and that bill also had come in. There was no hurry about these bills, for no one presses a minister, but my

wife always had strict ideas about debts, and I felt uncomfortably.

At last, one bright morning, Mr. Anderson returned, and after waiting until late in the afternoon I went to his store (he has a large grocery establishment) and broached the subject of salary. He was all apologies. "It was entirely my fault this time," he admitted, "but usually you know it is the congregation—the people are always late in paying up their subscriptions." With that he handed me a cheque for the full arrears—it was for four hundred and ninety-seven dollars and sixteen cents.

It is said that love of money is the root of all evil, which I think is not a fair statement, for in proper hands money is the instrument of much good. For me, at least, it is not well to have an excess of money, for I am prone to give it away, not out of generosity, although my people think so, but rather from a weak inclination to what is often "the vanity of giving visible pleasure. I should not be fair if I did not admit that I have squandered more money through lack of a stern and measured sense of justice than would have been sufficient to meet all fair demands upon me.

Outside the bank, to which with secret elation I had just carried my unprecedented check, I met an old friend, Tom Blaine, the ragman. Blaine at this time was an unprepossessing and unkempt man of sixty. He had a grizzled beard, much stained with tobacco juice, small black eyes, and a scar across the bridge of his nose, which he received, he told me, by falling upon a stone step. His hand being crippled with rheumatism, he was forced to earn a scant livelihood by driving about the countryside collecting rags. But his horse—poor, broken-down beast—had just died, and now Blaine came to me for a loan of thirty dollars to buy another animal. "I will surely pay you back this time, sir," he assured me.

I reflected. I reviewed hastily the bills I had to pay and the necessity of saving a little money for a rainy day. The man deserved nothing. He was occasionally coarse-mouthed, and he neglected his ragged children; but then—that was because he was poor. Still, I had once given him my overcoat and he had pawned it. But then, he had honestly confessed it later. I believed that at bottom he was a good man, although a weak one. Perhaps this might be the turning point in his career.

"Very well, Blaine," I said; "for the last time."

At the moment I felt generous, but, later, I realized that the mainspring of my action had been simply the money burning in my pocket. I had not had the moral courage to prefer the welfare of my own family to the satisfaction of Blaine's necessities. So, what with foolish gifts and bills and new delays by my congregation, I again fell in arrears, where I remained until a year ago, when my daughter Esther began to contribute monthly to the expenses of the family.

In handing me the check, Mr. Anderson, the treasurer, had said smilingly, "Your credit is always good at this store." Since that day we have lived largely on credit. My church usually owes me two to three hundred dollars, and I owe the grocer and the butcher and other tradesmen a like sum. We do not buy at the cash stores, although they are cheaper. We do not ask prices. We know that the tradesmen who sell goods to us, and who are also our people will charge justly and benevolently.

My daughter Esther, whom I love devotedly but with whom I rarely agree, condemns the whole system. Esther is twenty-three, with a mind of her own, with more cleverness than her father, and of a revolutionary attitude, which I think ill fits a minister's daughter. Nevertheless, I enjoy talking with her