

faith, of feeble spirit, of a low tone of character, he makes the religion which he represents obtrusive and offensive at its truest vantage moments, at the very time when it might gain a holding ground which it would never lose. What is intensely needed at such seasons, and is craved, even if dumbly craved, is "the Most High God as a refuge, and underneath the everlasting arms," and it is only as the minister himself feels that sustaining pressure, that enfolding embrace of the Eternal Love, that he can make it felt. He can give only what he has. He can bear efficient testimony only from his own profound experience.

Of more general yet hardly less specific importance is the reputation which the minister has in the outside world,—a reputation which will seldom diverge essentially from actual character; for though a popular idol may sometimes disgrace the pulpit which he is thought to adorn, and a really good man may encounter transient obloquy, in most cases a minister, like any other man, is rated for what he is actually worth, or if misrated, is so only for a little while.

The old term *parson*, now almost disused among us, has in the English law a legal sense,—the minister being the *persona*, or person of the parish, holding its property in his name, and being the party recognized in all suits at law. The term has a still closer appropriateness as regards the spiritual interests with which it is allied. The minister is the *persona*, parson, or person of religion, which in him is honored and loved or degraded and vilified. There is in many quarters an impression that Christianity has done its work, has become effete, and must yield place to positivism or secularism or biology, or to the reigning phasis of physical science, whatever it be. Who will say how largely the clergy are responsible for this tendency of the popular mind? In suggesting this question we by no means place a low estimate on clerical character. We believe that in all our denominations it is prevailingly respectable. But has it the eminence which it ought to have as a representative character? We can call to mind in every denomination ministers in whom has been discerned a singular Christ-likeness,—men not negatively, but positively good, whose lives have a far-shining radiance, and yet look still brighter on nearer view. Suppose such a light in every candlestick of the Lord, such an impersonation of the Gospel as the *parson* of every parish—one walking with God as visibly as among men, and holding every human relation and duty as sacred as if he were burning incense in the holy of holies—could a dog be found to wag his tongue against a religion thus represented? But what a contrast to this picture, when we have seen arraigned on a criminal charge the very man of whose cosmopolitan fame as a preacher the whole nation was proud, and of whom we believe nothing worse than that he made himself at home in a social medium so low and with manners so coarse that an archangel would have had his wings singed and soiled by such companionship! That very trial, whose rightful issue undoubtedly was acquittal, has done more to discredit Christianity