

SENSATIONALISM IN THE PULPIT.

At a time when a large proportion of our literature, and a still larger proportion of our journalism, is distinguished by that striving after meretricious effect, and that coarse and glaring coloring of ordinary facts which is aptly comprised by the word 'sensationalism,' it is not without fitness that a warning should be uttered against a possible invasion of the pulpit by similar methods. An article in the *Homiletic Review* puts the question very distinctly before us; and although it is certainly a fact, we are glad to say, that the clergy of our church do not, as a rule, adopt newspaper methods of attracting their hearers, we have noticed that among the Nonconformist preachers this rule of decent reserve is falling more and more out of fashion. If on a Saturday morning you take up any of the provincial papers of the Northern towns where Nonconformity is very prevalent, such as Leeds, or Manchester, or Bradford, you will find nearly a column of advertisements emanating from the various Dissenting places of worship of the town, setting forth the titles of the next day's sermons; titles often too evidently concocted merely with a view to producing a striking advertisement. In these towns, however, we are glad to note that, as a rule, our clergy do not adopt these methods of swelling their congregations. Apart from the bad taste of the system, we must point out that it utterly sets at nought the real and proper reason for going to a place of worship. We go to church—or ought to do so—for the purpose of attending Divine service, of worshipping in common with the great body of Christ's Church on earth, either actually or spiritually present, and of entering into communion with our Saviour Himself. We do not go merely to hear a clever preacher utter an intellectual or even a morally beautiful discourse, still less to have our ears tickled and our minds amused by the misplaced art of a popular lecturer. It is the custom, which we think is to be commended, in some churches always to announce 'evening or morning prayer with sermon,' thus pointing out that a sermon is not the main object of the service, though we are thankful to receive it as a valuable and helpful adjunct to that service, and we do not wish to minimize its importance.

But there are sermons and sermons. Or we may say there are sermons, and there are also speeches, and lectures, and spoken essays; this second division being extremely useful in its proper place, but that place is not the pulpit. And this is practically what the article in the *Homiletic Review* insists upon. The preacher, it says, 'should enliven his sermons with incidents and illustrations designed to give pleasure, or make an impression upon his audience; but this should be done with care. He may even go so far as to occasionally advertise special subjects in order to attract those who are not habitual churchgoers; but he may never, for any reason or on any occasion, resort to sensational methods. Some examples of these methods are given, all of which titles the writer of the article saw, and sermons on some of which subjects he also heard. They are remarkable from their forced ingenuity and conspicuous bad taste. Here we have preachers endeavoring to catch an audience, as the newsboy in the street endeavors to catch his half-penny customers, with titles such as *Courting—The Ugly Husband—Soul Millinery—The Wife who is Never at Home—Let go your Neighbor's Umbrella—Pull on your Bootstrap*—the last two being as mysterious as they are nonsensical and exaggerated. Some of these announcements can easily be paralleled by a selection from the newspapers alluded to above, in one of which we saw the catching heading, 'Was Jesus Christ a Socialist?' We are glad to note, however, that generally speaking, the clergy of our Church, avoid using the methods of the lower class of evening papers, and do

not attempt to give the notices of their services the appearance of the contents boards of the 'new journalism.' We confess, on the other hand, that it is with a something like repugnance that we see ministers of Dissenting chapels advertising their sermons on a Saturday morning, and striving to attract a congregation with sensational notices, or competing with other denominations—all side by side with the announcements of the rival local theatres, music halls, and circuses; for it is obvious that such methods cannot attract those who really wish to worship, and who find a delight in the services of the House of God. They attract only those who go to churches or chapels merely to hear a 'clever' or 'striking' sermon, whose object is rather intellectual entertainment than spiritual ministrations. As the writer in the *Homiletic Review* caustically puts it, 'The sensational plan attracts "religious tramps," but not solid Christian believers.' And we heartily endorse his pithy advice, 'Put things hot,' if you like, but 'never work on the sensational plan.—*Church Bells.*

XMAS HYMN.

6884884.—Tune—Ecce Agnus, Hymns A. & M. 187.

Behold, our Saviour Christ!
No room for Him was found,
In all the earth around,
Save cattle shed.
And there, the Incarnate Son of God,
Was born, to shed for us His blood,
Our Saviour Christ.

Behold, our Saviour Christ!
Low in a manger bed
Reclines His holy head,
In calm repose,
For us He came in lowly guise,
For us He made the sacrifice,
Our Saviour Christ.

Behold, our Saviour Christ!
The angels hymn His birth,
Peace and goodwill on earth
To men be known.
And as they sing the happy song,
The Shepherds see the glorious throng,
Of Angel host.

Behold, our Saviour Christ!
The Shepherds haste to see,
The babe on Mary's knee,
And worship Him.
Then wondering, go away, to tell,
The advent of Emmanuel,
Our Saviour Christ.

Behold, our Saviour Christ!
Angels attend His birth,
Proclaim through all the earth
That He has come.
And they, who on His word believe,
Shall everlasting life receive,
Through Jesus Christ.
—K. S. Massiah, Lachute.

WHAT ARE CLERGYMEN FOR?

In a late number of the *Pacific Churchman*, in a short editorial about the recent Summer School of Theology at Sewanee, you say, "It would be well if the clergy generally could have a little of such stimulus now and then. They have far too little time for reading and thought amidst their ceaseless round of parochial work." Now I am not going to controvert your proposition, it probably is true as a matter of fact, but it has occurred to me to ask several questions about it, and in the first place, why it is true, and if it ought to be true? Has the Church any right to put her clergy, or have the clergy any right to put themselves into any such "ceaseless round of parochial work," that they shall have "far too little time for reading and thought?" Is not this a most suggestive, is it not a "burning" question? Is

it not one that both clergy and laity ought to ask, think upon and answer? Is it not one of the evils of the time that ought to be remedied? One would think so, especially when it is remembered that in the most solemn hour of a clergyman's life he is asked this question, "Will you be diligent in prayers, in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh?" Answer, I will endeavor to do so, the Lord being my helper."

Now the question at once comes up, what is this "parochial work" that slips in and compels the clergy to break so constantly and fatally their ordination vow?

I am not, Mr. Editor, going to undertake to answer that question, but would it not be well for the clergy—and laity too—to consider it? What kind of work is it that takes so much time and strength of the clergy, saps their vitality, and so utterly consumes them that they have little or no time for the "studies" obligated upon them? It is "parochial work," and what kind of work, for the most part is that? It cannot be connected with the function of the Priesthood, for, as things now are, the labor of that is little, in fact altogether too little, is it not? How much of your time and strength is taken up in your proper function as a *Priest*? And how much time and strength are used in the *proper* function of *Pastor*? I know what is called "parochial work"; but in fact is not that, as exercised, largely what is known, in "Society" parlance as "social duty"? You as "Rector" are at the head of a social and business institution called a "Parish," are you not? and your chief business is to "build up that parish," I suppose; all your labor tends to that end.

There is one function of the Ministry, the prophetic or preaching or teaching function, which, in fact, logically, is the first in order, and to which the ordination vow above quoted has reference: "Go, teach all nations." How shall a man "teach" unless he be a student? And how shall he be a student unless he has time to be such? And how shall he have time if his time is chiefly taken up with social or business affairs of his "parish"? And here another question presents itself: Is this thing we call a *parish* a means or an end in itself? Do you 'preach the Gospel' in order to 'build up the parish,' or does the parish exist in order that the Gospel may be preached? This is a most important consideration, in fact it lies at the root of the whole business. I suppose in theory, you will consent to the latter proposition, but, is not the former paramount? Are you not as a preacher, compelled to shape preaching to that end? Do not all your 'studies' and labor lead in that direction? Is not this why the clergy have 'so little for reading and thought?' It is the 'ceaseless round of parochial work,' which they were not ordained to do, which is in the way: nothing is more clear than that. Under this state of things, what are the clergy coming to as a supposed body of learned, and consequently influential men? They have little time to study and think.

This is not a new question. It is a very old one. It was encountered at the outset of the Church and peremptorily settled on the spot by the Apostles themselves.

'It is not fit that we should serve tables.' Is it not about time, Mr. Editor, that we should return to first principles, and get the clergy back to the work for which they are ordained? When that shall be done, I take it there will not be occasion for Church editors to write such sentences as that of yours quoted at the beginning of this letter. Think it over, write an editorial about it, and ask the clerical readers of your paper to prepare carefully and preach, each a sermon, on Acts vi. 1-4. What are clergymen for?—D. D. C. in *Pacific Churchman*.