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MINISTERIAL INFLUENCE.

MINISTERS are frequently the target of adverse criticism. It is sometimes said they are bad financiers; at other times—and especially when there has been some signal instance of frailty—that they are lax in practice. Then they are accused of being too much afraid to alter their deliberate convictions, lest they should lose their bread; or, they speak too rashly and prematurely, not sufficiently considering the effect the words will have in unsettling the minds of their people. But we need not mention all such charges.

Lately, however, and notably in regard to the great number of alleged religious persons attending the lectures against orthodox truths delivered by "Col. Bob Ingersoll," the unfortunate ministers have in several quarters been summarily set aside as having out-lived their usefulness. By paying too much attention to theological hair-splitting, or trusting too fondly to the mere authority of their position, or considering too little the real intellectual and moral necessities of men, they are said to have forfeited their claim to be guides of the people, and lost their influence upon them.

This is a serious charge. No doubt, it is true, there are ministers who are forever priding themselves on the dignity of their position, and see in this a full and sufficient reason for the meekest submission of their flocks. And these men, judging from recent events, have of late been painfully exercised to see the impatience of their congregations with such ideas of officialism. To have their ministerial utterances subjected to the most searching criticism, and to find that they are not accepted unless they stand the tests of free and candid enquiry, is galling in the extreme.

But beliefs and opinions are no longer accepted simply because the recognized spiritual guide has pronounced them. Nor are lines of conduct followed because these leaders have commanded them. The utilitarian spirit of the age tries things ecclesiastic as well as things secular, and accepts in both only what is good for service. It, therefore, refuses to tolerate religious leaders except as they support their claims for honour by showing capabilities for efficient labours. Not profession, but service, is the secret of influence and regard. We say *service*, for it is quite useless for any to suppose that mere brilliance of pulpit declamation any more than reliance upon priestly authority will secure true ministerial influence. The building up of men, whether individually or in societies, in Christian manhood, requires more than displays of religious pyrotechny. Far be it from us to depreciate pulpit power—and a living, glowing brilliancy of style is a strong element of

power in the pulpit—still, this is only one means of pastoral work, and can never be a substitute for others more important. The churches need to-day *workers* as well as *teachers*. And they suffer, to speak advisedly, more from the want of sterling energetic work, than from the inferiority of the pulpit ability of their teachers.

In order to preserve their influence, then, it certainly behoves the ministers to recognize and act in harmony with this. Let priestly absolutism and ministerial authority and dictation, and reliance upon all adventitious supports, go to the winds. Let ministers see that in this determination of the public to criticise and judge their doings lies a grand chance of extensive and true influence. If the people only become convinced that their pastors are following the apostolic injunction "study to show thyself approved unto God," and become a "workman needing not to be ashamed," they will at once, and fully, yield themselves to their influence. There are not a few remarkable examples at the present time that such is the fact.

And, the critics notwithstanding, we are not fearful for the continuance of ministerial influence. There may have been in the past too much exclusiveness and too little regard paid to the peculiar needs of certain classes; too much pride of position, and too little self-sacrificing devotion. The ministers may not stand to-day where they did fifty, or even less, years ago. Yet we fear not for their influence. Given a devout, genial disposition, an elastic but principled adaptiveness in the use of means, and a thorough spirit of determination, in the minister, and he will have all the influence he desires. The Church and the world have too real and too true an appreciation of what is good for it to be otherwise. Piety and a discreet zeal will effectually prevent ministerial influence from becoming a thing of the past. But, meanwhile, let us not forget that the people will not accept the minimum of service at the hands of their leaders, when they themselves work at the maximum.

FAMILY WORSHIP.

Family worship is essential to a well ordered house. Where it is not maintained, or where it is observed partially and irregularly, there are two classes of consequences that may be noted. First, there is the want of reverence for the Bible, there is the neglect of prayer, there is consequent ignorance of God's law, there is the mental, moral, and spiritual degradation which is sure to follow. Then again, we will always observe in the family that has no altar such results as these: want of parental authority, or despotism taking its place; a non-obedient spirit showing itself in the children, or a slavish fear consequent upon parental tyranny; the use of irreverent words; worldly conversation, and irregularity in the household economy. This must be so,

when we consider the natural effects of a father, priest-like, bowing in prayer before God, of the Bible being honoured with a prominent place, of the Sabbath consequently coming in for more than a double share of religious exercises. There is a felt heavenly atmosphere in such a household. The bread of life is honoured above the bread that perishes. The whole household seems to be a living embodiment of the principle, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these shall be added unto you." First God, then man; first heaven, then earth; first the garment of righteousness, then the bodily covering; first bread for the soul, then bread for the body; first living water, then the water to cool the tongue—that is the divinely appointed order, and that, carried out from the domestic altar to the every-day life and calling, will wonderfully affect the entire membership of the household. Regularity of habit, economy and industry will in general mark the homes of conscientious Christians.

There is one thing which we cannot but regret in connection with this subject, and that is, the neglect of the songs of Zion as an element in Family Worship. The general practice is to observe the two parts of prayer and reading, but singing is overlooked. Nor is this confined to those who do not sing. But it is seen in families who are naturally gifted in the musical line, and whose children are being educated to sing and play at great cost and pains. How exquisite it is to see the devout father judiciously selecting a psalm or hymn, and giving it out by using the time honoured formula, "Let us worship God!"

LIVINGSTONE AS A MISSIONARY.

IT is something to be a missionary." These words form the first sentence of a remarkable paper on "Missionary Sacrifices," written many years ago by the late Dr. Livingstone, but only recently published. It appears in the first number of the "Catholic Presbyterian," having been placed at the disposal of the Editor of that magazine by the family of the great explorer. It is supposed to have been written during his first visit to Britain, after having spent several years in missionary and exploratory work in Africa. But though it may have been written at this comparatively early period in his life, no one who reads it can doubt that the convictions and aspirations expressed in it formed part and parcel of the man's mind, and ruled it to the last; that he regarded himself as a missionary more than anything else during the whole of his remarkable course; that he valued his work of exploration chiefly as preparing the way for throwing the African continent open to missionary operations; and that even after his wonderful geographical discoveries had carried his fame over the world, and made his name familiar in the king's