

AN INJUSTICE.

Are you a guilty reader? I hope not, and yet I hope that this article may lead to the arrest of some of the guilty parties, by the most famous of all detectives—their own consciences. And I hope also, it may keep others from following in the footsteps of those who are already guilty. It is an *injustice* of which I am to speak, but not of a financial kind. In a word, the charge to be tabled is, that certain families, and church members are in the habit of assuming that, when any one under their roof is taken sick, their minister knows all about it, and that if he is not forward to see them in a day or two, it is a neglect of duty on his part, and an intentional slight cast upon them and their families. The simple statement of the practice makes it so absurd looking that it will be no doubt regarded as a prodigy that such persons could be found in any Christian church; but although many of the readers of the *Record* may almost doubt the assertion that such a practice is followed by some of our people, I do very candidly assure them that it is neither a parable nor a fiction that I am writing.

The parties in question seem to think that the minister is the greatest news-gatherer in the place. They would not be astonished to find that some other person in the neighbourhood had not heard of sickness in their family, but that the minister should miss hearing it, is to them a mystery. And this mystery is, in not a few cases, heightened, to these persons' minds, by the consideration that the position of their families in the place is so very prominent. At least this seems to be the mode of reasoning by which some guide themselves in this matter. They would never dream of treating their family physician in this way. Him they send for at once; and without asking him, or informing him, they would not expect his visit. No doubt the two cases are not precisely parallel. The way of the minister to go unasked is more open than that of the doctor. The latter would feel a delicacy about going unasked, on account, of the fees, and therefore waits till sent for; but the minister can have no such delicacy, and is without excuse on that ground, as he gets nothing for his visits to the sick, in the shape of fees, or in any shape, except it be that the persons in question pay pew rent in the church in which he ministers. Nor do I think that a different order of things on this point in the case is desirable, or scriptural. No doubt when through a season of domestic affliction the minister has made visit for visit, with the physician, to some wealthy family in the congregation, they might, I think quite consistently with the spirit of the Gospel, acknowledge their gratitude in more than mere words—and all the more if the minister has had to provide or hire a horse and conveyance to take him to the place.

In a word, I, do not see that the necessities of the case, so far as the nature of the ministers office is concerned, require that the man who ministers to the soul, should be taken leave of in ways that contrast so very, very widely with each other, as we see at present is frequently the case—the doctor with his bill settled, and the minister without as much as would pay the tolls, which his visits cost him.

But anything like the idea of a minister's making money at the bedside of the sick or the dying, is I think, too horrible, ever to find entrance into any Protestant Church.

But while on the ground referred to the minister can have no delicacy about going whether a request has been sent to him or not, it does appear to me that he is fairly entitled to claim at least that he be informed that there is sickness in the family, and that unless so informed he should not be held responsible for any apparent neglect of the patient or of the family. This much I think it very unreasonable to deny the minister's right to expect. And unless this be conceded by the class of persons referred to in this article, it