

A HOLY MINISTRY.



HOLY ministry is the Church's greatest need. That need was never so pressing as now, for there never was a time when men looked so much at ministers out of the pulpit, to know what they mean when they are in it. There are tokens that the priestly pretensions of many of the clergy are producing a violent reaction. There is less reverence for the ministerial office than formerly, and a growing disposition to estimate men at their intrinsic worth. And while there is danger that this disposition will run into the extreme of censoriousness and cynicism, a minister who in his daily walk bears the fruit of a fully consecrated life has nothing to lose from it, but everything to gain. His holy life will give a power to his pulpit utterance that other men, however great their natural gifts, can never acquire. An eloquent sermon from the lips of a self-indulgent, company-loving preacher, may be useful to strangers, but will be positively injurious to those who know him. The wider the contrast between the preacher and the man—the official and the natural manner—the greater will be the revulsion of feeling against his teaching and exhortation. The questions asked by the Rev. Luke H. Wiseman in his late ordination charge at the Wesleyan Conference, are both asked and answered by thousands in our congregations. "Is it not a scandal and an offence if the pastor of the flock is only a babe in Christ? The believers in Corinth were complimented upon their knowledge, yet were plainly told that they were in Christ only as babes. They were 'earnal and walked as men;' for envy and strife and jealousy were among them. Let us beware lest in such things we be self-deceived, mistaking gifts for grace, and official sanctity for practical godliness. Who in all the congregation should be freest from envy? Whose tongue should be the most effectually bridled? Whose conversation should present the most perfect rebuke to impurity? Whose disposition should be the most generous and forgiving in regard to affronts and injuries? Whose temperance should be the most free from possible suspicion of excess? Whose spirit should be the most unworldly, the most free from that love of money which is the root of all evil?"

And there is another reason why the condition of the Church in this day demands a holy ministry. One of the most remarkable signs of the times is the spirit of inquiry amongst Christians everywhere with regard to "the higher Christian life." They are waking up to the conviction that there is something better for them than this weary and often unsuccessful conflict with inbred sin. They see, as they read the New Testament, that it is the will of Christ to be more to them than he has ever yet been; and now and then they read or hear the testimony of some child of God who has found the blessing which they are feeling after, but respecting which they require more light. To whom shall they go for instruction and counsel but to their minister? But do they not too often discover that he is out of sympathy with them, or at best that his advice is vague and unsatisfactory? Others, who-