

those who can least afford them. Many are the instances in which the obligations contracted in the burial of the dead are unable to be met for months, sometimes for years, after the event. Expensive caskets, long trains of coaches, lavish floral displays, mean too often subsequent privation, anxiety, regret.

It is in the power of the readers of the HOMILETIC REVIEW, many of whom are in the pastoral office, to begin a work of reform in this particular, which is most needed, and will come to be regarded with gratitude by many. By encouraging the thought that simplicity and economy are a duty to the living, and so in no wise a disparagement of, but the highest honor to those who have passed away; by endeavoring to bring about such a change of sentiment in the arrangement of funeral services that it shall be regarded as becoming that only the immediate families of the dead shall be present at the interment; by reminding those whom sorrow is apt to blind to expediency and duty, that their example will have much to do with the action of those who are less fortunately circumstanced than themselves—this desirable end may be secured. Lavish display is always more or less barbaric, and rather befits the idea that death ends all than the more Christian one that Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light; while it is also most wasteful and the very unworthiest way of manifesting love for the dead or grief at their loss.

#### Ministers and Weddings.

THAT the vicious and criminal classes tend to propagate themselves is a well-known fact, and one in dealing with which great wisdom is needed. Society at large needs and demands protection against these classes. Just what that protection should be is a problem that is now engaging the thoughtful consideration of some of our most painstaking sociological students. The question is one to which the ministry should

give earnest thought, since they, as a class, have a large responsibility in the constitution of the family bond. It is true their function in the matter is mainly declarative. But they can do much to counteract the tendency of our times to a looseness in the estimate of the marital relation. We do not mean so much by their proclamations from the pulpit as to the dignity of that relation and the obligations of those who enter upon it, but by their dealing with those who apply to them for what is unworthily called the performance of the wedding ceremony. More caution is needed in regard to those who apply for this ministerial service. No little misery is often occasioned by an undue readiness to assent to the request of those who are utter strangers to the "officiating clergyman;" and no little reproach has been brought upon the ministry, as a class, by the indiscriminate acquiescence—perhaps we should say the criminal negligence—of certain of their number. As the commissioned servitors of a world's Saviour, they should regard themselves as set for the conservation of all worthy interests—and certainly there are none more comprehensive and important than those which are to be found in the life of the family, that essential and vital unit of the Church, and of the State as well.

#### Queries and Answers.

*Questions of general interest to clergymen will be printed in this department. The questions sent to us should be put in as brief forms as possible. Answers from our readers are requested. They must be (1) brief; (2) preceded by the number of the question to which they reply; (3) the name and address of the writer must accompany each answer. The name of a writer will not be published if we are requested to withhold it.*

1. What is sin against the Holy Ghost, and when committed? Please have this answered in HOMILETIC REVIEW. G. J. SCHUMACHER.
2. What is the custom in regard to *arms* and *flags* in a church during memorial services? Should *arms* be allowed in a church dedicated to God? Should the G. A. R. be allowed to hold their services, preceding the memorial services, in the church, with *covered* heads? W. T. W.