

WHY SOME CLERGYMEN FAIL.

BY RICHARD FERGUSON.

"THE race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong." Where one clergyman fails from lack of ability, force of character, spirituality or zeal, at least ten do so from a neglect of, or a contempt for what we may call the lesser proprieties of the ministerial office. This applies to every other profession in varying degrees. Doctors, lawyers and merchants are with a very few transcendent exceptions, successful or unsuccessful, just in proportion as they conform to that universal instinctive public sentiment as to the fitness of things, which expresses itself in the proverb "Every man to his trade." The public have an instinctive respect for a man who sticks to his trade, be it what it may. Consistency is a jewel, and the man who professes to follow a certain occupation and gives himself up entirely to it, is rightly regarded as a useful reliable citizen, who does his best by the public, and is deserving of all respect while on the other hand the man who in any degree scamps his profession or fails to identify himself with it, be his abilities what they may, inevitably arouses in the public a feeling of exasperation, contempt or distrust, as a man who is more or less living upon false pretences. This is true of every profession and occupation under the sun, but perhaps more especially of the ministry, because of all classes of professional men, clergymen are more uniformly expected to stick to their calling, and in proportion as they conform to or defy this rule, so is the measure of their success or failure.

It may be thought to be taking rather a low view of the ministerial office and profession to apply to it the rules which govern secular callings. It might be urged that a clergyman should be above such considerations, and that success in the ministry is not dependent upon prim consistency, and pernicketty professional "correctness" of deportment, and that no man of abounding zeal and good average abilities can fail of success as a clergyman, even if he does in his walk, talk and conversation express an undisguised contempt for the petty proprieties—not of life, but of the ministerial calling. "This sounds fair enough, and time was in our salad days when we should have enthusiastically endorsed every word of it, and a good deal more besides. Without an effort we distinctly remember when our beau ideal parish priest was "a man amongst men," a robust despiser of conventionality, a promiscuous mixer upon equal terms with all sorts and conditions of mankind, in fact a sort of sanctified Bohemian who could slap a parishoner on the back, tell a good rollicking story, laugh a hearty burly guffaw, and never talked "shop," and could withal retain the respect and affection of his flock. But an ounce of experience is worth a pound of theory, and this is a theory that won't stand fire. Remember we do not say that some exceptional men cannot do this. There are women handsome enough to defy "colors," and men strong enough to sleep the sleep of

the just upon Welsh rarebit, just as there are successful parish priests who can systematically outrage all the clerical proprieties. But such individuals, male and female of our acquaintance, can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Ninety-nine hundredths of men and women succeed or fail just in proportion as they keep severely to the beaten track. When you come to look into it, this is a rule that applies to all men and women, ordinary and extraordinary. A transcendently handsome woman is all the handsomer for correct colors. A man of cast iron stomach is at least no healthier for supping upon boiled cabbage and fat pork, and the parson, who, while setting professional propriety at defiance, is a grand success, is so in the teeth of what, when only taken advantage of would render his success symmetrically perfect, and symmetry is not to be despised by any means. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line, and if phenomenally long legged and long winded men, can make the journey by a curve overtaking the straight forward plodders, well and good, but for men of average wind and limb to attempt to do so is simply going out of their way to ensure failure.

The great trouble in and out of the ministry with a large number of men is, that while they are just clever enough to feel an impatience of conventional methods, they are not clever enough to dispense with them, and so they fall between two stools. Our profession is one which possesses its exceptional conditions no doubt, but the same general principles which apply to every other vocation we apply to it, and we have had forced upon us by personal experience and close observation, that more men fail in the ministry, or at least halt upon the threshold of success, from a lack not of moral consistency as of professional consistency, not because they are careless, indolent, unspiritual and mentally deficient, but simply because in the petty matters of deportment, conversation, pursuits, and even dress, they don't stick to their calling. On the other hand we have had just as forcibly impressed upon us the fact that comparatively inferior men often attain a measure of success more than respectable by careful attention to these details. Every diocese on the continent numbers in its ranks types of both classes, of men who preach well, work well and are popular after a fashion, but who yet are either disastrous failures or are never able to do anything more than barely hold things together, and men who, while only escaping downright mediocrity by the skin of their teeth, do nevertheless, attain a comparative measure of success, totally inexplicable upon any other grounds than those already indicated.

"The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong." Not a clergyman in five hundred can afford to despise public opinion in these small matters of professional propriety. American public opinion as to what a clergyman should be in his walk and conversation may be a little censorious, but if it errs it errs on the right side, and after all it demands no more from clergymen than what it demands

from doctors, lawyers, et id genus, and what it is swift to appreciate and reward in all cases. It must also be remembered that the church herself is responsible for public opinion on this point.

Of other causes of clerical failure we hope to speak later. But this too common disregard of the public respect for the fitness of things, we have placed first, as probably being the commonest and at the same time most insidious cause of clerical failure.

THE PARISH.

BY THE BISHOP OF EXETER.

THE word "Parish," derived from the Greek, means literally "a sojourning;" and in this sense it is frequently employed in the New Testament as applying to the Jewish people. When the Jews moved about, and dwelt for awhile in any district, they still kept their nationality distinct; and so they were called strangers or sojourners, as distinguished from the original inhabitants of the place. In the same manner, in the earliest times of Christianity, Christians, whether converts from Judaism or from heathenism, lived separate from others, and so were regarded as "sojourners and pilgrims," and thus the term "parish" was expressive in the first instance of a community or people, rather than of a place, the person set over the community or congregation being called its Bishop; and hence it was that the Greek word came to mean a Diocese, a distinction which it retained for the first three hundred years of Christianity. We thus see how out of this use of the word there grew a spiritual and metaphorical meaning. Whether Jews or Christians, they were in the earliest ages literally "sojourners and pilgrims" in the places which they occupied; and so this, their temporal condition, as citizens of the world, found its higher meaning in their spiritual condition, as "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth, but with the prospect of the full privileges of the "abiding city" in heaven.

The idea of a "parish," in the latter use of the word, grew out of the organization of the Roman Empire. Sometimes the district surrounding a great city was governed by the magistrates of that city; and sometimes independent communities, having their own rulers and their own territories, were formed in rural districts. Here, then, was a foreshadowing of the mode of government of the Christian Church. And so it came to pass that as Christianity advanced and prevailed in the world, the Ecclesiastical divisions followed the Civil divisions of the Roman Empire.

In this country, as elsewhere, the Church was at first a mere collection of missions, unconnected and independent. Separate parishes grew up slowly; and they were not infrequently created in this manner, namely, that the landed proprietor in any district having himself embraced Christianity, would build a church and endow it, perhaps with a grant of land, perhaps with the tithes of his estate. In this latter case, the estate and the parish would