

VENATIONOUS MEN.—I.

SOME characteristic specimens of humanity are scattered around here and there throughout the country. Our student in his summer peregrinations never fails to encounter some of these perplexing individuals. There is, for example, the man who has a sort of an ill-disguised feeling of contempt for the youthful scion of the Theological Hall who happens to be located in his vicinity. He makes it a part of his religious creed to be conspicuous by his absence from the place of worship on the Sabbath. Disregarding the injunction, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is," he remains pertinaciously at home when the quiet calm of the hallowed day invites man "to go up to the house of the Lord." The truth must be told. His excuse is that the preacher is not heavy enough to satisfy the innate craving of his mind for profundity of thought, and subtlety of argument. He circulates this pretty freely amongst his neighbors who look upon him as a prodigy in his way. Our student visits this incorrigible man in order, if possible, to induce him to come out to church. With an air of conscious superiority the habitual church absentee informs the youthful preacher that on Sunday he derives more solid benefit from reading the discourses of an old Divine long since passed away, and, thinking that the student might as well participate in the benefits to be derived from perusing this antiquated volume, he condescendingly offers him a loan of it.

This imperturbable member of the human family professes to be a devout adherent of Christianity. His sympathies are enlisted on the side of the Church. He has a profound impression that people generally would be improved if they procured a copy of his favorite book of Sermons, and on Sabbath conscientiously devoured the contents at home. To the humble rural church, he says, some people go with whom he would not deign to associate. His companion on Sunday is the inevitable sermon-book. When interviewed by the student, he dwells pathetically upon the sinful condition of the community generally, and of the Heathen world in particular, regarding himself as an ideal, luminary shining forth in the midst of Pagan darkness. However, when the collector for Church purposes comes around, our erratic friend either has disappeared from the scene, or, if accidentally encountered, pleads poverty, and the fact that he never goes to Church, and ends up with offering the collector a loan of the favorite sermon book.

Again, there is the regular and punctual attender of church who seizes the greater part of the time for public worship to enjoy peaceful repose. The opening Psalms and prayer gradually work him into a semi-comatose condition. He blinks dreamily and intelligently at the student during the reading of the chapter and simultaneously with the announcement of the text, he passes into

a condition wherein sermons are not ordinarily heard. A specially vigorous effort towards the close of the 3rd head rouses him a trifle; but his slumber on the whole is undisturbed. The sleepy brother awakes in time to stand up for the benediction, and on the way home after casually observing to those who accompany him that the sermon was an unusually fine one, and delighted him immensely, he proceeds to give his views concerning the political situation and other matters.

Then we have the man of a slightly philosophic turn. If his early education had not been neglected, he might have done wonders in the honor course in metaphysics. The protoplasm-theory is his chief glory. He gloats with delight over his probable descent from a tad-pole. Darwin has no more enthusiastic disciple. The whole succession in regular procession from the one celled vegetable to the highest ape rises before him when he becomes properly excited and exasperated over the subject. The missing link is happily unearthed from an adjoining swamp. Let the student but mention the word philosophy, or devote a few moments during his discourse to a consideration of the stone age without criticising too heavily, and he secures the profound esteem and earnest admiration of this enthusiastic philosopher. M.

MY FIRST SERMON.

AT the time, I had no intention of entering upon the ministry. It was merely to oblige my pastor, who had endeared himself to me by the special concern he had manifested for my spiritual good, and to fulfil what he made me believe to be my duty. He appeared to have unlimited faith in my capacity to conduct the service and had, already on several occasions solicited me to oblige him by preaching in his absence. Moses-like, I had often pleaded my want of confidence in my own ability to preach at all, and especially before those with whom I spent my daily life. But he never recognized the cogency of my reasoning, nor yet the necessity for my fears. I had even once before consented, and had spent an entire week in such anticipation as the condemned criminal has of the approaching day of his execution; and, what a pardon on the very morning is to him, a heavy thunder shower was to me, which prevented the minister's departure to the neighboring parish, where he was to have preached. But this stage had now become a matter of the past, when one Saturday evening he said to me:—"I would like you to preach for me, Brother —, two weeks from to-morrow, when I shall be away at conference." Just then I happened to be upon the crest of one of the many undulations in my spiritual experience, and in view of the indefinite distance at which the Sabbath seemed to be, I unhesitatingly agreed. I felt at the moment ready to do anything, and when I was allowed the choice of reading a printed sermon or of delivering an original discourse, I selected