

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

A MINISTER'S HEART-ACHE

During the past few weeks I have received several sad letters from brother ministers who have a heart-ache. Not one of these brethren expresses any regret that he has chosen the ministry of the Word as his occupation for life. Not one of them talks about throwing up his high commission in despair, and escaping through some postern-door into an easier or more lucrative profession. None of them threaten to ride out of the sacred ministry on a "buckboard."

The source of the heart-ache with some of these brethren is the perverse opposition which they are called to encounter. This opposition does not proceed from the ungodly world without, but from unlooked-for quarters—from members of their own churches! One brother writes that he has endeavoured to obey his conscience and his Bible in preaching plainly against certain conformities to the world in the shape of promiscuous dancing, wine drinking, and other loose convivialities. His preaching is on the side of scriptural strictness; their practice is on the side of self-indulgent laxity. Those church members who, on these questions, seem to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of Christ, keep up an "enfilading fire" upon the pastor, and do their utmost to expel him from the pulpit. His foes are of his own spiritual household; their enmity is active and aggressive to the point of persecution. It is not surprising that a sensitive heart aches under such opposition, for no shot wounds a true soldier like the shot aimed from his own ranks.

What is a minister's duty under such opposition? To silence his tongue, for fear of giving offence, would of course be instant and irremediable disgrace. To resign his position would inflict a heavy wrong upon the loyal majority, in order to gratify a disloyal minority. He is under a solemn installation vow to "be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever prosecution or opposition may arise on that account." The divine command is to be "first pure, and then peaceable;" and in the long run there never can be a healthy peace in any Christian church without purity of doctrine and practice.

It would seem then to be this brother's manifest duty to stand manfully to his post—not in the spirit of bravado, but in the irresistible might of meekness. Denunciation of opponents would be suicidal. Strong as is the temptation to feel bitterly, or speak bitterly, he has a grand chance to save his church by conquering that minority. He must conquer them by love; by so loving them that he will not give in to their hurtful and evil practices, by so loving them that he will not allow a resentful word or act to escape him. Towards the malcontents personally he should shew the most magnanimous kindness. His conflict is not with them, but with their errors of opinion and practice. Let him remember that his divine Master both hated sin and loved sinners. Let him remember, too, that as a Christian minister he is set for the defence of Gospel truth and purity, and not for their surrender.

An eminent minister was once driven from a church in this State by the majority of that church who refused to sustain his bold preaching against balls and wine frolics, etc. After he left them, their vine was blighted, and no divine blessing attended their worship or their work. At length they recalled him to their pulpit, he preached more pungently than before against worldly conformities, and glorious revivals made that church a "fruitful field." Perhaps this article may fall under the eyes of some worldly-minded church members who are now "badgering" their pastor on account of his faithful advocacy of purity, and nonconformity to the follies of the world. If they are making their pastor's heart ache by the stabs or stings, let them beware lest their own hearts are made to ache by-and-by. If he has a vow upon him to be faithful to conscience and to their eternal interests, they too are under a vow to "receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love," and to "assist his endeavours for your spiritual edification and for the honour of religion among you." Suppose that you heal your minister's heart ache, and escape a worse one for yourselves, by asking God to forgive you, and to pour out His searching and sanctifying Spirit upon yourselves and your church. Then

some hearts will begin to sing for joy.—*Theodore L. Cuyler, in Evangelist.*

THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING.

The pulpit has this advantage over the pews, that it is its office to speak, and its privilege and right to be listened to, while the pews are not expected to talk back, whatever they think. And yet, in this age—which is nothing if not critical, when the traditional reverence which once clung like a perfume to every man who wore a clerical garb has lost much of its force, and when education is the birthright of all—the pews do find a way to set forth their views. That pulpit which aims no higher than to entertain, amuse, and satisfy the audience who sit gazing up to it, fails of its object. Its mission is still the same which Christ gave to His first apostles—Go and teach. To instruct the ignorant, to comfort the sorrowing, to reclaim the erring, to lead the wandering home, to feed the hungry, and to shew the sinner the Saviour, is the appointed work of the Lord's ministers in this weary and stricken world. Most of them honestly and earnestly strive to do it. The heart's desire and daily prayer of the large majority is to be, in deed and in truth, God's ambassadors to men. They yearn to be successful in saving the lost.

But too often the minister lives the week long in a region of abstractions. His studies, which task his intellectual powers, lead him through the maze windings of materialism and the mists of scepticism. He grapples with fierce and sturdy errors, and comes off victorious. Like a giant refreshed with new wine, when Sunday morning arrives he enters the sacred desk, prepared to combat heresies, to strangle objections, and to set up the banner of the Lord triumphant over every foe. His whole being is antagonistic to the adversary he sees before him, and he proceeds with skill, and art, and nice adjustment of phrase, and perfection of logic, first of all, to state the position of error. When he has got error fairly set up and entrenched, so that everybody can see it, he proceeds to batter it down, and he often does it well.

There are two evils, however, which appertain to this sort of preaching. The minister, without at all intending it, and often without in the least suspecting it, suggests doubts to some minds, and starts speculations which might not arise but for his mistake in mentioning them. Bright and ambitious young people resolve that they will taste for themselves some of this poison which seems so delicately sweet to the taste. They read books which they would never have thought of touching, but for the guide-post which their minister set up to shew them thither. Scepticism has had its beginning in many a heart beneath the very shadow of the Lord's temple. The presentation of error has been stronger than the charm of truth. The mind, already planning itself in its own conceit, has been flattered at being credited with the knowledge of doubts and difficulties which puzzle and baffle the scholar and the man of science, and it has straightway determined—not lost time in carrying its purpose into practice—to learn more of the delightful and specious false philosophy of which heretofore it has been in ignorance.

The other evil is, that nine-tenths of the people at church are not doubters at all, never have been, and never will be. They are men and women who are engaged the week long in a stubborn conflict with life and its hardships. They come to the Sunday morning service wearied, worn, storm-beaten, and out of repair; but they come as to a blessed port of peace. They need comfort. They need elevation of the soul. They need divine strength. They want the fountain of hope, and the fulfilment of promise. They ask, "Watchman, what of the night?" and the watchman, out of a heart brimming with love, should be able to answer them, "The morning cometh!" He should shew these men of business that there is One who takes account of their troubles, who knows when they toil hard in the rowing, when they fear the notes will go to protest, when their honour is in peril, when the yawning chasm of bankruptcy opens before them, and when the stealthy temptation lies in wait for them. He should tell these tired mothers that He who slept in mother's arms sees them in the kitchen, in the parlour, and in the nursery. Not the husks of positivism, not the grindings of the scientific mill, should the pulpit bring to feed famishing souls, but the bread of life is what they need. Technicalities are well enough,

but there is no meat in them. He who is starving must have food, or he will die.

Another way in which the pulpit misses its aim, is by veiling its message in words too florid, and sentences too involved and rhetorical. But this is a fault which mends with years. It is the common defect of beginners, and they cast it off as they grow into the heart of things, and feel for themselves the difficulties of every day.

"Young man, your sermon was very good, but you held the fodder too high!" was the criticism of an old deacon to the young gentleman who had done his very best one Sunday morning. It is not poetry we object to, nor sentiment, nor flights of lofty imagination, nor daring similes, so that they be not indulged in for mere elocutionary effect. Bombast always defeats itself. The vanity of inflated learning usually finds a ready pin to prick its bubble. But, as a noted literary critic has said, "Though bread be needful, vision is more needed;" and we must have the latter as well as the former. We long to see the King in His beauty, and to behold the land that is very far off. The minister who shews us heaven, and leads us to lift our eyes to its golden splendours and its living waters, helps us to endure and to overcome, though toil be hard and cares oppressive.—*Christian at Work.*

CONGENIAL PEOPLE.

Sympathy is the true social bond. Leaving matters of duty quite one side, why are people not justified in seeking friendly relations with those only who are agreeable to them? Is it any reason for trying to fraternize with people who are temperamentally, intellectually, or spiritually, at opposites with you, because their curbstone happens to join yours, or you choose to go to the same church? We are not considering service—that is always due whenever it is required—but social intimacy and pleasure. About a dozen people out of a thousand are all that can come really near to each other. How to form congenial groups is the much-missed secret of real sociality. Sticks laid cross-wise, the flint and steel, are good in fire-building, but not in the higher kind of house-warming.

If the law of similarities were more closely followed we should see fewer stupid companies, and have less time-wasting expedients to regret. And it is well to remember that relations are not the only related people. There are brothers after the flesh, and brothers after the spirit. Some people are apparently unconscious of this, and their social world includes only "blood relations." What sister's baby takes for the colic, or how brother's wife shall trim her fall gown, are matters of the first importance; and the little round of petty family cares and pleasures absorbs their attention. Their sky is no higher than the family tree, and its branches spread to the rim of their narrow horizon. Their religious, political, and social ties are all 'ties of consanguinity.' The pattern prayer of selfishness, "Lord bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife—us four and no more," characterizes, perhaps unconsciously, a great many homes. Blood is indeed thicker than water, but sympathy is sometimes stronger and sweeter than genealogy.

The wise Montaigne has said that there are times and matters wherein one should give himself to himself, and only lend himself to society. If he is to give himself to society, he must look for equivalents. All take and no give is a poor rule, but its reverse is apt to be exhausting. Happy are they whose lines have fallen to them in pleasant places,—whose neighbours are truly near, and whose friends are adapted to them! —*Golden Rule.*

"THERE is no greater mistake," said Dr. Bushnell, "than to suppose that Christians can impress the world by agreeing with it. No; it is not conformity that we want, it is not being able to beat the world in its own way, but it is to stand apart and above it, and to produce the impression of a holy and separate life—this only can give us a true Christian power."

It is our folly to betray our duties by our wishes; if it were thus and thus with us, we could serve God readily and cheerfully. Thou fool, there is no condition but grace can improve it to some religious use, for the advantage of some duty or other; it is thy laziness, and the blame of thine own neglect must not be charged upon Providence.—*Manion.*