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"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."—Paul.

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"SMART MINISTERS."

One of the troubles of the church, and not the least of them, in these times, is the passion for "smart ministers." Able ministers, learned, eloquent and devoted, capable of instructing, moving and edifying a people, are of a different class from those generally esteemed "smart." The term is suggestive of the sensational, and has its proper application to men of surface-show, quick-witted in devising means of attracting attention to themselves, and ready to sacrifice the essential interests of religion, to maintain their reputation. And strangely enough, there are congregations blind enough to prefer such ministers. The *Advance*, in one of its numbers, has some thoughts on this subject worthy of being read by others than Congregationalists. Speaking of the perils of churches ambitious to secure a "smart minister," it says:

The temptation is not to be content with an intelligent, well educated, and thoroughly devoted minister, whose preaching will be interesting, instructive and edifying, whose character will be balanced and free from eccentricities, whose judgment will be sound, and whose methods will be wise and far-reaching. No, they must have a more attractive, captivating, and sensational man; who will draw a crowd speedily, become the town talk, and "please the young folks." This holds forth promise of rented pews and easy finances, of pleasant sociables and general popularity—an alluring prospect, when there is a heavy debt and a deficient income, and when rival churches are presenting strong attractions. But viewed from the spiritual side there are serious objections to securing such a class of ministers in our churches.

First of all, such men are often unsound in the faith, or have a tendency to become unsound. It would be very instructive could we have the chronicles of the churches on this point for the past fifty years, or even twenty years. Genuine original power is rare, but a reputation for something; approximative is easily gained by imitating the methods or repeating the peculiar ideas of men of undoubted talent, who may have stepped aside from the beaten track of thought. In such a case, however, we would sooner trust the leader than the followers. His work is the more natural and genuine, and his faults and reasoning are more apt to be balanced by excellencies of personal character. We should have more confidence in a Bushnell than in a conceited Bushnellite, who would have the phraseology without the accompanying spirit, and who would soon run his master's ideas out to their most destructive consequences unrestrained by his caution. The second and third generations of loose thinkers generally give the ripe harvest of error and mischief. In these days an ambitious minister, who longs for the reputation of "smartness," is strongly tempted

to gain his end by a dash of heresy in his opinions—as if he were "an independent thinker," a man of "liberal views," a "progressive theologian," a foretaste of "the church of the future." And if he is oratorical and popular, the church is disposed to tolerate the unsoundness, if not to be actually pleased with it.

Then the tendency to seek this class of ministers operates to blind the churches to the true idea of their mission and work. It leads naturally to the lyceum style of preaching and of hearing; to sensational topics and *ad captandum* methods; to money-gathering rather than soul-saving. Thus gradually the conception of a church comes to be that of an ecclesiastical society, which erects a tasteful building, secures entertaining, moral and religious lectures on Sabbaths, and provides agreeable sociables during the winter and delightful picnics in the summer—in all which enterprises the lead is taken by a "smart minister."

These "smart men" are apt to "strike twelve first." The crowd, which throngs in the beginning, after a while thins out; the spiritual and orthodox members drop away; the "liberal" element, which comes in to applaud, proves to be more liberal in opinion than in a self-denying use of property for religious ends; the platitudes of the minister about "breadth" and "progress," and his criticisms of the "narrowness" and "bigotry" of orthodoxy, grow stale; the audiences become small; the income runs down; and the "smart" preacher is compelled to betake himself elsewhere. An experience of eight or ten years will usually show a decided loss of strength, of all kinds, by yielding to the temptation in question. Will the brethren think of these things?—*United Presbyterian*.

ANY WORK FOR ME.

It is a great error to suppose that we are doing the Lord's work only where we are engaged in devotional exercises, or laboring for the conversion of sinners, or for the edification of Christians. That which a man does heartily, as unto the Lord, is the Lord's work. The farmer when he is carefully and wisely cultivating the soil, is doing the Lord's work. Ploughing is as truly a religious act as praying. The merchant when he makes an honest exchange is doing the Lord's work. Dealing justly is as truly a religious act as warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come. A man is doing God's work when he is doing that which pleases God. A man is doing the Lord's work when he is faithful to his employer—does a fair day's work; when he takes proper care of his health; when he governs his temper; when he is careful to speak the exact truth; when he is courteous to strangers, and lends a helping hand to the needy; when he has a word of encouragement for the desponding; when he sets an example for industry and honesty; when he returns good for evil; when he leads such an upright, benevolent, God-honoring life, that men take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. Religion does not consist solely in reading the Bible, praying,

attending church, and laboring for the conversion of men. These are important duties, but they do not include the whole of duty. God's will has reference to every act of our lives.—*Sel.*

THE ARROW THAT HITS.

It was not the splendid argument which the skeptic had just heard from the pulpit which broke through into his heart, but it was a loving, personal word for Jesus, uttered by the crippled woman he helped down the church door-steps. The minister's argument was met step by step as it fell upon the skeptic's ear. It was answered in his mind, and he left the church as firm in impenitency as ever. But the arrow that went between the joints of the harness was what the poor woman said. She never dreamed she was breaking through the rock-crust of an infidel heart. She only said a word out of a heart all full of Christ, and the proud sinner became a Christian.

It was not the sermons of a city pastor that moved a gospel-hardened hearer to turn to Christ. But it was the pains he took one night when he went through snow knee-deep, to express his pastoral anxiety and love. The parishioner was not at home, but that made no difference. When he returned and heard that his pastor had been there on such a night, he at once concluded, as he afterwards stated, that if anybody would do that for his soul, it was time he set about caring for it himself.

It was not, again, the able and tender preaching of a Vermont minister which broke the pride of a very wicked man. But one day the profane teamster broke a wheel of his wagon. The minister was passing. He stopped and helped the man to tie up his wheel and start his wagon. That was the arrow that hit, though neither minister nor teamster knew it at the time. Some time afterward a bright Christian child was dying near the teamster's home. The rough man went into his neighbor's house on the instinct of humanity. He found himself in front of the dying child. "Oh Mr. —!" said she, "won't you meet me in heaven? I am going there." "So am I," the man replied, "ever since the minister helped me to start my wagon."

A young man once went to bed full of anxiety for the salvation of a friend. He could not sleep. He rose and dressed, and went half a mile to the door of that friend to warn him and invite him to Christ. He did not get entrance to the house. But the errand was known. It held an ardent longing for the soul of a friend, and God wrote it down as a burning prayer for the salvation of that soul. It was after fifty years of persistent ungodliness that the friend so loved and longed for, and ever prayed for, told first of all to this friend of his youth that he had opened his broken heart to the love of Jesus.

Arrows like these are ones that hit. And the best of all is this, that every consecrated life carries a quiver full of them. Remember those golden words of James W. Alexander, "In the matter of converting a human soul to God, all human power is reduced to zero."—*Ex.*