

there are churches who want pastors who understand the happy art of giving the gospel as wide a berth as possible, who will sugar it over in so masterly a manner that it will hurt nobody, and yet be somewhat like the gospel, after all, who will let them do just as they please, and not interfere with them, who will lull them into a soft religious ease and let them pass along, in their silken righteousness, without disturbing them. Churches of this stamp are not often compelled to do without preachers, not very often!

*Lounger.* Our pastor is one of that sort, and a capital fellow he is, too: lets us all do just as we like, never agitates us nor himself.

*G.* If he should make any attempt to arouse you, you would not let him succeed, I presume?

*Loun.* Of course not. We don't desire to be disturbed. What we want is to be let alone!

*G.* By all means, sir, insist upon *that*! And in that hour when you stand before the Judge, tell Him how bravely and lordly you compelled your pastor—one of His messengers!—to know and feel the littleness of his place! Tell Him, too, *then*, that you want Him to let you alone!

*Loun.* Sir!

*G.* Sir, if you have not power enough in *that* hour, and influence enough in *that* quarter, to crush and ride over Him, where will you be? Will you say to Him, "I don't desire to be disturbed? You let me alone, and I'll let you alone!"

*Loun.* Ha, ha! Very good, very good. But I don't like such jokes. They are positively shocking!

*G.* It is no joke, sir. Making light either of Jehovah, of the Redeemer, or of the Redeemer's workmen, or throwing obstacles in the way of the latter in their efforts to rescue men from the stream which is hurrying them onward to the eternal gulf, is no laughing matter, I assure you! If you think the contrary, laugh on, encourage yourself and your friends in neutralizing the honest labors of your pastor—insist upon his letting you alone—nay *compel* him to do so; and by-and-by, when you stand together at the bar, he will say, "This, Lord! is one of them who fought against Thee and me!"

*Mr. Sly.* For my part I agree with Mr. Griscom. The pulpit is an unmitigated humbug.

*G.* Of course you do, Mr. Sly. We all understand your reason for thinking so. But one of these days when your share of flooding the world with brothel and bar-room literature is finished you will entertain views of a somewhat different color.

*G.* Perhaps Mr. Crittenden, who has never been very famous for his piety, may be wholly ignorant of the character of religious machinery.

*G.* I admit the justness of your observation, sir, and I take shame for my delinquency hitherto in those duties which every man owes to his Maker and Redeemer. But I repent me of my error, and I call you all to witness that I am, from this hour, on the side of my Master.

*Mr. Jessup.* All this is from the point. The subject is not the sudden conversion of Mr. Crittenden but of the humbings in the pulpit.

*Le.* It is a common thing for worldly minds to inveigh against the sacred profession, and to mistake irony for wisdom. I hope, Mr. Jessup, that if you have any remarks to make upon the pulpit, you will make them in a spirit of manly frankness; that you will use particulars, and generalities, and employ facts, not sarcasms.

*J. Griscom,* give this gentleman some facts. He wants facts, nothing but facts.

*G.* What sort of facts will you have, Mr. Leland?

*Le.* Those which confirm your right to brand the clerical profession with opprobrium.

*G.* You want some facts, Mr. Leland; you shall be accommodated. I always make it a point to gratify the whims of young men, because I was young myself once, and like you had an overweening desire to be considered wiser and sharper than I really was!

*Le.* All this goes for nothing, Mr. Griscom. I asked you for facts, and not personalities. If, after so learned and oracular a flourish, you have no facts to give, confess it like a man, and retreat from your position. There is no shame in abandoning an untenable cause.

*G.* My cause is both tenable and satisfactory, as you will discover to your dismay before I get done with you!

*Le.* Facts, Mr. Griscom, not threats. I am waiting for your facts.

*G.* You appear to be very *eager*, Mr. Leland. Be cool, sir; be cool, when I see a youth of your years, so very hot, I always feel a touch of pity for him. It is a weakness of mine to look with compassion upon the rashness of young blood; but I can't help it.—Now, be cool, Mr. Leland, be cool. It will do you good, believe me.

*Le.* Sir, I am waiting for your facts.

*G.* Well, then, here goes. The pulpit is a humbug, because its members preach for their congregations, instead of their Master.

*Le.* That is a wholesale charge and therefore unworthy. It is made every day by superficial wittlings but has no foundation in fact. Wholesale denunciations never come from reflecting minds. Oblige me, Mr. Griscom, by descending to particulars. Name some one of our metropolitan clergymen whom you know to be a traitor to his Master.

*G.* [To Lounger] What is the name of your pastor?

*Loun.* Mr. Gadsden.

*G.* There is one to begin with.

*Le.* How do you *know* that, sir?

*G.* You heard the testimony a little while since, I presume, sir? That was *pretty* good evidence. It came from one of the gentleman's own parishioners.

*Loun.* I take back what I said of Mr. Gadsden.—Upon further consideration, I don't think him a *very* bad minister. He preaches the gospel as well as he knows how; and he *does* know how pretty well.—And, now I think of it, he has been the means of leading a good many to repentance since he has been among us.

*Le.* Your second evidence, sir?

*G.* You know as well as I do what the general opinion is concerning ministerial unfaithfulness and—

*Le.* Evidence, sir, evidence!

*G.* Well, then, if you will have it, your own pastor, Mr. Engold!

*Le.* Mr. Townsend, you are a trustee in our church. You have known Mr. Engold for many years. Frankly, now, and as a man who is bearing solemn testimony; what do you think of his conduct as a pastor? Has he, till within the last fortnight, done his duty to the best of his ability? Has he been faithful in season and out of season, making all times his season? Has he preached like one who has appeared to feel the responsibility of his high office; like one who was in the service of his Prince; like one whose chief desire was to lead his hearers from sinful unto righteous ways? Answer, frankly, honestly; as if you were at Jehovah's bar!

*T.* Solemnly, then, I affirm it to be my belief that—bating a few suspicions for which, after all, now that I reflect upon them, I can see no just reasons—Mr. Engold has ever been faithful.