

how much a word of good cheer is worth to the man who occupies the pulpit. He is always distrustful of himself, and seldom sees whether the Gospel shots he is firing hit the mark or not. Unless the people who stand near the target, or, better still, the people who are themselves the target, tell him that his marksmanship is good, how can he find it out? Nothing so wrenches a minister's emotions as to see the congregation, which has perhaps listened respectfully to his words, file silently out of church with the apparent intention of avoiding the preacher, because they don't want to hurt his feelings by expressing their real opinions. Its effect on the clerical mind is like that of an extinguisher on a candle.

If the people would take some pains to recognize the work of their pastor, would linger long enough to take him by the hand in friendly greeting, they would thereby insure more effective sermons; for, after all, the preacher must not only minister to his congregation, but be ministered to by them. Good preaching is always an act of reciprocity. It consists of giving the people the food which they have shown a desire for. "I like what you said," remarks some poor soul that is wandering in darkness, and at once the minister puts another loaf of the same kind into the oven. If the people's attitude, instead of being indifferent, is one of friendly interest, the pastor catches the magnetic influence, and is borne upward as on the wings of an eagle. He outdoes himself in teaching when they outdo themselves in listening.

I used to tell my own people when they chanced to praise my sermon, that they preached it, not I. No man can help being eloquent, in its best sense, when the people's hearts as well as their ears

are open. If he loves them, and they love him, it is easy for all to love the Lord. There is nothing so suggestive to the speaker as the upturned faces in the pews. Many and many a time I have left my notes and followed the mood of some man or woman, applying the text to what was evidently his or her condition of mind. In that way my own soul went out in sympathy to that other soul, and we two travelled in confidential company until the Doxology was announced. I say, therefore, without hesitation, that congregations are responsible for the majority of poor sermons with which they are afflicted. If the minister is apart from them he becomes dull and perfunctory; if they are a part of the minister, and give him the stimulus of a kind word, he becomes earnest, pointed, and pungent.

John Jessig wandered into Hiram's little shop on that Monday morning. The shoemaker had heard him preach the day before, and would doubtless have something to say.

"No, I can't talk with you now," said Hiram cheerfully, "but I'll get through with this job in half an hour. You see, parson," and he held the shoe up for John to inspect, "that's a very bad rip, and the poor woman who wears that shoe can't afford to buy another pair jest yet. It's pretty close business with her to make two ends meet. I shall find some way to patch the thing up, but I've got to put my whole mind to it. Now look here, parson, I'll tell you what to do. Jest go over the way to Jane Jenks, and have a chat with her. She's a right up-and-down Christian, is that woman. She's got religion enough to do housework with, and look after her children. It takes a good deal to do that, parson," and he looked through the dingy win-