

EDITORIAL SECTION.

LIVING ISSUES FOR PULPIT TREATMENT.

The Preacher and Public Evils.

And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.—1 Kings xviii. 17, 18.

IN the Sermonic Section of the May number of the HOMILETIC we published a sermon preached by the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst in the pulpit of the Madison Square Presbyterian Church, New York City. It was a direct arraignment of the public officials of that city for neglect of sworn duty. On the one side it called forth the deepest indignation, on the other it aroused the greatest enthusiasm. Never in the history of the metropolis had there been such an unveiling of the iniquities that had come to make their abode therein and to flourish there, not only without the interference, but with the consent and even connivance of the police authorities to whom was entrusted the protection of the law-abiding and the detection and punishment of the law-breaking element there resident. That the arraignment was based on the best of grounds was evidenced by the presentment made immediately thereafter by the grand jury, whose findings were in every respect in accordance with the testimony submitted by the well-known and honored preacher and pastor, and also by the fact that since that time the police forces of New York have manifested an unwonted activity, with the result that law-breakers have felt the necessity of showing a little respect, at least, for the demands of the law. With striking unanimity the religious press upholds the action of Dr. Parkhurst, though the secular press is divided on the wisdom of his action, especially with reference to his manner of securing evidence, which, as is well known by our readers, involved a personal inspection of resorts that are not supposed to be within the province of pastoral visitation. The voices of two or three of the occupants of our city pulpits have been raised against the attempt to secure the enforcement of existing law by what appears to be a sacrifice of the dignity of the ministerial office. We desire to be known as not among the number of these critics. The time, we believe, has come when ministers of the Gospel of

Jesus Christ should consent to be made of no reputation, if that be necessary, to secure the purification of our political and social life. Too long has the reproach been cast against the Church of Christ that it is indifferent to the evils that infest the body politic—evils that will continue to hold sway so long as Christian men sit inactive or hold their peace. If the law of the land is allowed to be broken with impunity; if, while holding forth the Word of Life to sinful and dying men, preachers and hearers lift up neither voice nor hand to stay the progress of vice and crime that shelter themselves behind this indifference and batten on it, what wonder that, instead of having free course, the Divine Word has an impeded course, and accomplishes but a tithe of what it might accomplish? And who, if not Christian men, should see to it that the laws that deal with the great moral evils of our social life are enforced? Where, if not with them, does the responsibility lie? If we rightly apprehend the mission of the Christian religion, it is not simply to prepare men for a better world than this, but to make this world better also, and to make it better in all respects by all righteous means.

The law of the Christian citizen is everywhere one and the same: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." Wherever the laws of the land are not in conflict with the law of God, there the Christian is under absolute obligation of obedience, for the reason that the will of those powers represents the will of God, since the powers that be are ordained of God. The State, in other words, is as truly a Divine institution as is the Church. It is a providential arrangement for the conservation of all the interests of men save those which may be termed distinctively spiritual. So that obedience to its statutes is as truly a moral obligation as is obedience to the laws that bear upon the development of personal character. But Christian obligation does not end with obedience merely. In as clear language as that which enjoins proper subjection to the representatives of law is the declaration made, that "they that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation." Those words are the expression of an injunction. The Christian citizen is to see to it that righteous laws are enforced against law-breakers. Indifference in this re-