

devotion to the place and the service, or are you, for your part, marking it with incivility, pomposity, or frivolity? That congregation is a machine of which you are a part, for doing moral work. Are you helping or hindering? You may be a very small part, but that is not the point. It makes all the difference whether it be oil or water that is sent through the joints of an engine. If oil, it will go safely and smoothly; if water, it will grind itself to pieces. And there are congregations where the oil of human kindness is so sadly lacking that every part works gratingly and harshly, minister on elders and committee, and they on the people, or the reverse, as the case may be. Even the sexton catches the spirit of the place and adds his quota to the discordant mutual misery. At the urgent call of duty men have gone among lions and bears; but the call should be very clear indeed to warrant such adventure, and, as far as you tax men's courage thus, you are scattering.

For what is the Church visible? An organised body, peculiar in many respects, for it has Divine laws, and unique in this, that it has Christ for its Head. But, in many respects, it is like any other organised body of men, liable to abuses, subject to mismanagement at human hands, and capable of being rendered popular or unpopular, acceptable or unacceptable. Whoever contributes, whether in office or out of it, to present it in unfavourable aspects, so far hinders its work, which is to bring men to Christ, and to edify His members. Congregations, religious meetings, soirees, and even Church Courts, may be pervaded by such a spirit, and marked by such a manner that men shall feel "God is not in this place." On the other hand, there may be such a character of sobriety and sacredness in these assemblies that over even the thoughtless shall steal insensibly the spirit of the place, and what was approached as a mere resting-place, may, unawares, be converted into a Bethel. Whatever contributes to this extends the efficiency of the Church; whatever hinders it weakens the Church. The one gathers, the other scatters. Which are you doing?—*Rev. J. Hall, Dublin.*

SOME THOUGHTS ON PREACHING BY A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

When a student at St. Andrews, I attended the lectures on "Moral Philosophy" of the Rev. Dr. George Cook, the renowned leader of the Moderates. He was smitten down in the middle of that course of lectures, and never lectured again. He had his lectures bound up in bulky volumes, which occupied about a week each in the reading. He used to bring out volume after volume, and sag on through the dreary waste, till we were all as tired of them as he seemed sometimes to be himself. The students of former years used to warn us beforehand of what was coming, in any case of remarkability. One of his lectures had a very peculiar commencement. The Doctor knew this; knew that the particular lecture was a sort of notoriety, and when its turn came the class-room was always full of students, new and old; and the Doctor, with a bright and merry twinkle in his clear grey eye, began, to a large and listening auditory, after the prayer,—"*Gentlemen, man is a lazy animal.*" No doubt this is really a trueism. And it is quite applicable, I doubt not to the *species* "*minister*" of the *genus homo*. And if Dr. Cook's and my philosophy be true, the system of preaching almost exclusively from texts is well qualified to fix, and deepen, and strengthen the original tendency to laziness. If a man had his texts selected for him the matter would be different. I believe it would be possible to make such a selection and arrangement of texts as would in due course bring all the more prominent Bible doctrines and Bible difficulties under review; but this is not the state of the case. The preacher selects his own text. He understands it, or sometimes only thinks he does; he sees his way to speaking sensibly the required time upon it, and there, it is to be feared, the matter ends. If the text be difficult; if it contain any critical, or