

I am reminded of the possibility of such limitation by the recollection of hearing a minister congratulating himself on having to preach occasionally in a suburban church in a city to which he had just been appointed, on the ground that he could try his sermons before the hungry few ere he committed his compositions to the criticism of the hundreds in the principal church. Of course there is in this but a little advance upon a mere ceremony in a ministry that can make of a pulpit responsibility so mechanical a thing.

Just fancy a man equipped for a war against the Russians stepping out of the ranks with no higher loyalty to his cause than to exhibit the perfection of his drill! Chuckling if his guards in sword exercise are faultless, or his aim at some spot in the mountains remarkable for precision; then returning to his queen satisfied if he had established a reputation for system and order, without even crippling an enemy or storming a rampart.

To my mind, the man whose aim is not to convert; whose appeal, however carefully prepared, is not directed at the fifth rib, and who merely stands to be seen or heard and not felt, is as far below his calling as the military fop I have described. And there ought to be some voice heard from some quarter, in addition to the one methinks rings through the conscience in unmistakable tones, exclaiming "GET OUT." But it may also be said that in company with the truest aim in the ministry to do good to the soul as well as the brain, the effort is made powerless by a despondency which enters the pulpit as well as the pew; and which has the effect there, as well as in the pew, of clipping the faith necessary to success. This cause of stagnation in the Church is more to be pitied than blamed, as all will admit who have suffered from a personal paralysis in religion from the very same cause. It is the very same type of moral biliousness or dyspepsia which saps the life out of the trembling sermon as that which leads to a dragging to the class or prayer-meeting in the case of individual profession. Around such the Church should rally, and by all means the arms of such should be held up till Israel prevails, and the success that results will fill the despondent with joy, and snap, and fire, and faith will soon accumulate in the sermons of such.

And it may be said also that the ministerial haste or laxity in the administration of the discipline of the Church, have either or both neutralized the moral weight of pulpit power and effect. And there is some truth in the statement. The weeds have not been as carefully pulled, and the ground has not, as the farmer says, been as faithfully cleaned, as would give promise of the desired harvest. Thorns have been *allowed* to choke the seed; and the field has become a vexation rather than a blessing.

These are *among* the causes of stagnation in the Church, and are mentioned first because it is the reasonable demand of honesty to own the faults that lurk among ourselves ere we deal with those that are as truly scattered among the pews of our churches. To these I may turn attention in a future article on this subject; this paper being already of sufficient length. But in the meantime, may we not pray that a quickening may come, and the battle rage more bravely that the world may the sooner be won to Christ?