

A Trained Ministry.

We readily comply with the request to lay the following communication before our readers, as it contains many valuable suggestions. We must remark, however, that our good brother, like many others, takes a wrong view of what is called Ministerial Education. It does not create a monopoly of teaching, but simply aids a pious man in elucidating and enforcing the truth of God. It there is a monopoly at all, Christ has created it by establishing the pastor's office, and the only difference that we can discover between filling the sacred office with learned and unlearned men, consists in the fact that the former possess very decided advantages over the latter in discussing Scripture truth. The advantages of being *trained* in the church are common to both classes, and are not as our correspondent seems to imagine, confined to the *untrained*. It is quite true that too much is left to pastors, and brethren fail to improve their gifts as they ought; but this is just as true in churches where the pastor have had limited advantages, as in opposite cases. *Training* may assist a man of God in the work of his Lord, while without it a man of God may be crippled in his usefulness.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

In the present day much is said and written about the *Christian ministry*—training for it—support for it—the *destitution* of churches who are without it—and the supply, by such means, of the *spiritual wants* of a people. It would be vain to deny that the kingdom of God is often, or has generally been promoted by the labours of intelligent faithful preachers of the Gospel; but it would be equally as vain to question that God very often works out the salvation and sanctification of men by other means; or that the Great Head of the Church has never given any occasion, by his own preferences, precept or example, to form a *very high estimate* of human training for that ministry. The ministry of the word, by the mouth of inspired apostles, when there were as yet no printed copies of the scriptures, and probably not one in fifty of its hearers had a copy of them, must not be confounded and quite identified with the fallible ministry of the Gospel in our day, when almost every hearer is possessed of, and can read the printed scriptures. If those inspired and chosen witnesses of his resurrection, assumed to themselves no power, pre-eminence or distinction in the churches, except what arose out of either their having seen their Lord, and heard the words of his own mouth, or from their self-sacrificing humility, zeal and love, as practically his exemplars and followers,—it follows that any assumed superiority, pre-eminence, authority, or distinction of uninspired men, resting upon trained intellect, and the acquisition of human literature, as qualifying them for being exclusive teachers in the church, and preachers of the Gospel, has very little, if any sanction or warrant in the New Testament.

"That which," in this, "is highly esteemed among men," is a matter of little account "in the

sight of God." In this, he has chosen, and will ever choose "the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty."

There is a universal tendency in man to apply every thing he touches to purposes of self-gratification; and this, too, he often does with most sincere professions of devotedness to the cause of God and his truth. Most strikingly is this rampant propensity in human nature seen in the devising, adopting, and extolling, of the instrumentality, which, in modern Christendom is assumed as being approved of God, as the very best for the *supplying of the spiritual wants* of churches. The ministry—the Christian ministry—an educated ministry—a trained class of men (one in a thousand) who shall monopolize the feeding of the people "with wisdom and understanding," is assumed to be the chief, the best, the most lawful and powerful means that is perpetually thrust upon our attention for the accomplishment of that end. The New Testament gives no countenance to such a monopoly—a monopoly which is based on mere human expediency and presumption, daring to improve upon the simplicity of the prescriptions of unerring wisdom; and in faithless distrust of its grace and power. Such a monopoly looks like a stipulation between pastor and people, that a concentrated volubility, and the mere verbiage of divine truth, shall be substituted instead of a common, practical, mutual, public, constant testimony of what has really been, and is daily experienced of its sanctifying power over the hearts, the minds, and the conduct of believers generally. Such a monopoly actually undertakes for hire, to relieve others, intelligent believers, from the duty and necessity of continually evincing in the presence of each other, and especially on the Lord's day, their fidelity to God, their disconformity to the world, and their ardent aspirations after holiness and heaven. Such a monopoly compromises, conceals and perpetuates the shame and sin of Christians in living very far beneath their profession,—living and labouring, rather for the success and enlargement of their worldly business, than for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom in themselves and others, since it ever serves as a screen to hide from public view that spiritual apathy and lameness, that carnal-mindedness which grows out of worldliness and self-indulgence; and would give to Christ money and parade, rather than the devoted heart and the pure incense of its liveliest predominant emotions, breathing forth love to God and man.

Whence cometh the best and most common aptitude for profitable public speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God? Is it, indeed, from the moral and intellectual "*training*," which academies and schools for "*ministerial*" education peculiarly supply? These may, and do contribute to mental culture; but the sphere, the field in which God intends the culture of mind and heart, shall be effected—(and out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.)—in the assemblies of the saints, under the discipline of His Providence in the ordinary business of common life.

Navigation, architecture, and other sciences, may be learned theoretically; but without the

practical application of the rules and doctrines pertaining to them, the speculative scholar will with all his acquired learning, be a mere tyro at sea, or at masonry, and will fall behind the experienced common sailor and builder. Much more so is it in theology. Its sublime mysteries, its glorious revelations, its transporting assurances, and strong consolations are very commonly appreciated but in an inferior degree by accomplished students from the schools. Those "are hid from the wise and prudent;"—God "reveals them unto babes." So he is pleased to abase the pride of man; and by "weak and base things, to confound" and "triumph over" "things that are mighty." Its first lesson is a very difficult one: "If any man will be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." Out of this principle will spring and grow all the education, discipline, and training, necessary for the Christian's usefulness in the family, in the church, and in the world. There needs be no other *training* for the "*ministry*" more than there is for the exercise of *every one's* intelligent solicitude for the well-being and growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of all his brethren. "Out of the abundance" of the "new heart and the right spirit," "the mouth speaketh." And all the utterance which cometh short of this, or short of *exciting, promoting, encouraging, conducting, and training this abundance* in all and every one whom associated believers (guided by apostolic precept and primitive example) consider to be taught of God, and judge to be qualified for it,—is sordid oratory. In a word, the peculiar *training*, the high *education*, the sublime, pathetic, persuasive *eloquence*, and the peculiar, and only essential *qualification* that are ever to be desired, sought and prayed for, in the exercise of what is called the Christian ministry, may be found fully explained, illustrated and exemplified in

"UNCLE TOM'S CABIN."

A work lately written and published by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stow, of New York. See there, in the case of a poor, ignorant slave, cut off from every source of spiritual improvement, excepting only his Bible, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ;—see him bereft of all other means of moral and intellectual refinement—stript of every earthly good, and crushed down with the cruel rigour of extreme oppression—a very outcast, not only from the privilege of hearing any one of the Louisianaian Christian "*Ministry*," but from all ordinary Christian sympathy and helps;—having nothing, yet possessing all things;—wiser, richer, happier, more noble, more useful than perhaps any of the well-trained Christian professors in the country.

Where the Bible is, and is duly appreciated, as in such a case, there can be no *spiritual destitution*.

CLERGY RESERVES.

The following Petition to the Legislature, with reference to the secularization of the Clergy Reserves and Rectories, was adopted at the late an-