

The evil results of secular and sensational preaching are legion. It destroys all reverence for sacred things. How can men and women continue to believe that they are in the house of God and at the gate of heaven, when they are more highly amused than in the circus by the clerical jester who has taken the place of the clown. They hear the giggles of their fellow worshippers (?) all around them, and they are shocked a little at first, but they are soon hardened by the flippancy treatment of the themes which they were once taught to revere. How can they maintain that deep veneration, that spirit of awful reverence and adoring homage which is the essence of true worship? The very thought of worship amidst such surroundings is only a mockery. It is little wonder that congregations can be held by this method only for a time. Good earnest Christians are pained, chilled and starved, and are driven to seek a church home elsewhere. And even the careless crowd, who laugh for a time at the minister's witty sallies, regard him in their hearts as a pitiful mountebank who has degraded his sacred office for a miserable dole of applause. When they are dying and the things of time and eternity appear in their true proportion, they will no more think of sending for him than they would of asking spiritual advice from their boon, blaspheming companions. Under the influence of such preaching the minister himself deteriorates mentally and spiritually. He misses more and more the true conception and aim of his office. He loses all taste for visiting the sick and comforting the dying and for grappling personally with the sinner, in earnest warning and solemn appeal. He wishes to move only in the excitement and applause which his strange words produce. In some instances his own trust in God fails him and the last act of the sensational drama is to fling himself from the Tarpeian rock for the delectation of his hearers, and abjure the faith which he was ordained to defend and proclaim.