

God the thousand—blessed be His name!—ten thousand; but I should like to give my friend Toller his two hundred. I am sure he is not an ordinary man. No man of ordinary character could have remained for so many years in this place. * * * * *

I have had the pleasure of knowing some ministerial brethren who have had great gifts of dispersion. (Laughter.) Only place them in a chapel that was as full as this, and they would secure admirable ventilation. (Laughter.) Everybody would be able to have a seat, and, perhaps, a whole pew to himself. Those brethren have the negative or the repelling quality very prominent. My dear friend does not seem to have anything of that kind; he has that disposition of kindness and love which attracts and retains.

“But that is not all. If a man keeps a congregation together long, he must have given them some food. When I was in Venice I saw the pigeons coming into the square at St. Mark’s in great numbers just about the time when the clock strikes two. I did not know anything about their habits, but I felt certain that they were going to be fed, or that they would not come in such numbers. When I see people coming together for fifty years I am morally certain that they must have been fed, or they would not have continued to come. Have any of you tried what it is to keep up fresh matter, good matter, substantial Gospel truth, and yet give it freshness for a year? Well, take fifty times that number of years, and think what it must be. It is certainly a great feat, because the subjects that we have to handle are not so very numerous. True, there is a wonderful power of freshness about them of themselves, yet it is a feat to continue constantly to preach the same Gospel to the same people, and yet to interest them; and interested I believe you feel. Your pews do not help your minister, I am certain, except that they prevent your going to sleep, for their backs are uncomfortably straight. (Laughter.) Perhaps they were made so with that idea, and it raises my notion of Mr. Toller’s ministry to think that you have been able for fifty years to sit with your backs as upright as that. More of you would have gone to sleep, perhaps, if you had been more comfortable. My dear brother must have given you good matter to have kept you so long together.

“When riding in Yorkshire, a long time ago, and speaking to a good man in the carriage, he told me that he was a member of a certain church there. I said ‘How are you getting on?’ ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘our parson is a muff.’ I said, ‘What is a “muff”?’ He said, ‘Well, there is one of our deacons who has a mill. One Sunday, when the people were going to chapel, they saw the mill was going, and so they said, “Hullo! here is a Baptist deacon’s mill going on Sunday.” However, it appeared that they had not turned the water off, so that the wheel was going round, and it went click, clack, click, clack, but bless you it was not doing anything. Well, that is just like our parson; he goes round “click, clack,” but there is nothing at all in it.’ Then I understood for the first time what a ‘muff’ must be. (Laughter.) People won’t continue for fifty years going to hear a muff, or if they do, they must be muffs themselves. (Laughter.) * * * I think something must be said for a congregation that has put up with anybody for 55 years. It must have been a good people, Mr. Toller, and you say they are. My predecessor, Dr. Rippon, used to say that he had in his church some of the best people in England, and some of the worst. Well, that is just my experience; I have got some of the best people in England—put that down in capital letters, then add in small letters—small, ruby type—some of the worst. (Laughter.) Now, Mr. Toller fortunately seems not to have had many of the worst, but to have had some of the best people in England.

“Dear friends, I say it in all seriousness, that a minister is very much, in the hands of God, what the people make him. I feel certain that there is many a man who is discouraged by unkindness who might, if he had been in a warmer, happier atmosphere, have become very useful in the cause of God. I get letters from churches wanting a young man to fill a chapel. I remember replying to one such application that I had not a man that was half large enough. How