

From the Christian Guardian.

HINTS FOR THOSE WHO NEED THEM.

There is too much ground for the apprehension that a feeling is becoming increasingly prevalent respecting the kind of ministerial talent required to supply the wants of churches in certain places, and especially in the cities and large towns. In many of these places the idea is entertained that a particular kind of popular talent is required to attract and maintain the congregations; and it is to be feared that this is too frequently sought after as a primary qualification, while other and more important requisites of ministerial character are entirely overlooked. Churches and circuits that are moved by such predilections, sooner or later have their reward. The great end of the Christian Ministry is the salvation of the world; and where there is sincere piety and love for the souls of perishing men, a sufficient acquaintance with scriptural truth, and ability to explain and enforce the doctrines of the Gospel, for the conviction of sinners and edification of believers, every Divinely called minister will be rendered instrumental in a greater or less degree, in the accomplishment of the gracious purposes of God in the institution of a gospel ministry; while the absence of these essential qualifications will be but poorly supplied by the most attractive popular talent. These remarks have been suggested by a letter in the last number of the *Watchman*, which contains thoughts which every Methodist, and all official members in particular, would do well to consider attentively. There is one part of the letter which refers to the stay of ministers three years on the same circuit, which requires this explanation; that three years is the ordinary term of a minister's stay on the same circuit, and the longest that the laws of the Wesleyan Church in England allow. The following is the letter to which we refer:—

ITINERANT REMOVALS.

Gentlemen,—After the last Conference your "Correspondent" made some admirable criticisms on the too prevalent clamour for popular and attractive Preachers. He remarked:—"My own conviction is, we have had sadly too much of this anxiety manifested by the Circuits. Every species of ministerial excellence, such as high Christian character, sound doctrine, a chaste and scripturally simple style, or diligent pastoral habits, seem to have been greatly lost sight of, in comparison with popular talent."—*Watchman*, Aug. 15, 1855.

I fully concurred with these remarks when I first read them, and lately their truth and importance have been more strongly impressed on my mind. I should be glad if a few remarks from my pen might serve to call forth some warning more powerful than any I could give, against the evil of estimating our Ministers chiefly with regard to their popularity and attractiveness in the pulpit.

It is to be feared that this is a growing evil, and one which threatens to undermine the spirituality and usefulness of our system. With this impression I beg to submit to your readers the following observations against too frequent changes of Ministers. There can be no doubt that an undue anxiety for a popular and attractive style of preaching engenders a restlessness and love of change, which cannot be too strongly guarded against. The following reasons why unnecessary changes should not be made in our Circuits, from year to year, are given in the order, not of their importance, but as they occurred to my own mind.

1. In deference to the views and feelings of the Ministers themselves, a change should not be made,

hastily, or without very special reasons. When Ministers are happy and useful in their work, and it is agreeable to them to remain in a Circuit, it seems an unhappy measure to subject them to the pain and inconvenience of removal. Surely it is enough that a removal must of necessity occur after only three years of labour! There are duties of the people towards their Ministers, and among them must ever hold a prominent place, the doing all in our power to avoid wounding their feelings.

2. For the sake of the reputation of any Circuit, no change should take place unless from actual necessity. If a Circuit wishes to have good appointments, it must make itself known among the Ministers themselves, as one in which their comfort and happiness are duly regarded, and in which they may ordinarily calculate on remaining during the entire period of three years. The reverse of this must necessarily be to the damage of any Circuit. Let it have the character of containing a number of particular and critical hearers,—of frequently changing its Ministers if they do not attain a certain ideal standard,—or of assuming an unkindly bearing towards them,—and it may be put down as an axiom that Ministers will generally shrink from entering upon such a sphere of labour. There are many Circuits in our Connexion where it would be regarded, for reputation's sake alone, a great misfortune if circumstances arose requiring the removal of a Minister before the end of three years. By every such removal Circuits must lose caste to a certain extent; consequently, their earnest wish should be to keep their Ministers and to do everything which may reasonably be expected, to contribute to their comfort. Circuits, as well as Ministers, have a reputation to maintain, and I would respectfully submit that everything like caprice must be injurious to the honour of a Circuit.

3. Financially considered, it is obvious that too frequent removals must involve an unnecessary expenditure of public money. If, in the course of a few years, eighteen removals are made where twelve would have sufficed, a serious additional burden is entailed. Surely, we should not fritter away our own property in such a manner, and still more carefully should that money be disposed of which is contributed by all the members of Society. With what reason can efforts be made to raise the financial position of a Circuit, and to pay off the debts which will occasionally arise, when a large portion of the outlay has been incurred by unnecessary removals?

4. The spiritual prosperity of a Circuit is not likely to be promoted by a too frequent removal of Ministers. This is the most important reason of all. I trust I am not going too far in expressing an opinion, that the greatest good is done in those Circuits where changes do not occur oftener than our rule compels. Where people are not given to change, there is a stronger reliance upon God's providence;—they are more disposed to listen to their Ministers for the good they may obtain, rather than for the sake of oratorical display, and a closer alliance is effected between Pastors and people.

At the time of Conference, we earnestly pray that suitable Ministers may be appointed. How greatly we appear to mistrust God's good providence, if, when the appointments are made, we seek for an alteration at an early opportunity!

With these few observations, I beg to subscribe myself,

Yours, &c.,

T. HERBERT BANKER, M. D.

Bedford, May 13th, 1856.