

OUR GUILD.

BY PROF. AUSTIN PHELPS.

"Brethren," as the old divines used to say in their polite perorations, "permit the word of admonition."

Ought not the sense of gentlemanly honour towards "our guild" to go to the relief of our Home Missionary fellow-workers? Their privations to us would be sufferings. They do not call them such. In their reticence they resemble that class whom Dickens calls "The Quiet Poor." Their hardships have no counterpart in the life of some of us. They are unparalleled in the average experience of missionaries to the heathen.

It is more than a twice-told tale. Yet it is always new; suffering is never old. And this comes to our ears continually in some new variety of self-denial. The last which has made my ears tingle is the case of a refined and scholarly man, descended, in the third or fourth generation, from a line of scholars and gentlemen, the peer in culture of any metropolitan pastor of the East, writing sermons of which every page is ripened and adorned by good taste, in a log cabin of but two rooms and a loft above, and pausing in his work to consider, with anxious forethought, whether he can afford to spend twenty-four cents for eight postage stamps.

No money for new clothing; none for the study table, to take the place of the pine box; none for books and periodicals; none for the over-worked wife; none for the visit to the dying mother; none for the journey to the sea which failing health requires; none for the second-hand piano to cultivate the rare musical taste of the daughter; none for the room large enough to contain it, if it could be obtained; none for the education of the boy; none for the entertainment of the summer guests; none for the beef-tea, so sorely needed by the young mother; none for the "butcher's meat," or the sea-food, so often craved by the exhausted brain; none for the invalid child who ought to be in a sanitarium; none for the horse to take the place of the one that died, and without which the pastor cannot minister to two churches, as he does now; none to replace the old cow which has furnished one-fourth of the family's living; none for the journey to the council, the conference, the association, the anniversary, the college class-meeting, all of which would illuminate the pulpit with fresh ideas, and put courage into the fainting heart. These privations are endured year after year by uncomplaining men and women—women of culture and men of solid learning; our equals, brethren, in many things, and our superiors in some. We have sent to the wilderness and the prairie men who risk their lives in fording swollen streams, with Greek Testaments in their pockets. Missionary magazines are laden with their labours and successes, on the dark underground of their hardships and sufferings, of which the half is not told us.

What is our side of the story? True, our pecuniary resources are not burdensome to any of us. We know where every dollar of our income goes. We think we practise self-denial, after a fashion. At least, we none of us have more money than we want. As a class, ministers are a contented set of men. Few of us who are at work are grumblers. But we are men; and, like other men, we want all the money that we fairly earn. Perhaps the want and the need are different affairs. But we like to be paid for our labour, and we do not feel that we are overpaid.

Yet some of us have larger incomes than day-labourers and skilled mechanics, with the least of whom our missionary brethren are to be classed pecuniarily. We count up our fifteen hundreds, our two thousands, a year and more; and a few of us have risen to the dignity of paying an income-tax. Some of us are living like princes in comparison with "our guild" on the frontier and in the mountains. We are to them what the comfortable Calvinistic pastors of Holland were to the Puritan refugees from England, to whom they opened their homes and scanty purses.