

Winstall, "couldn't the ministers settle the whole difficulty by dividing up among themselves, without making any appeal to the people?"

"But I am afraid, Mr. Winstall," said Mr. Stuart, "that would not suit you at all. You disapproved just now of subscribing to support the duffers, as you are pleased to call them. Now if you would not help the duffers directly, would you help them indirectly? If you found that I gave the half of my salary to the duffers, wouldn't you very soon reduce my salary by half, and then I couldn't help the duffers? So the result would be that I would be worse off and the duffers would be no better."

There was a laugh against Mr. Winstall, in which he himself heartily joined. He admitted he was defeated, and requested Mr. Stuart to go to the next point.

"The next point is," said Mr. Stuart, "that there are no duffers in our ministry, or ought to be none. We do the best we can to have first class men. We do not always succeed, of course; in a church so large as ours I suppose we must get a duffer now and then, if not something worse. But taking them as a whole, our ministers do stand high as men of learning, ability, and character. I think no one will question that. Now when such men take up the ministry as their life work, ought they not to be decently maintained?"

"May I ask a question?" said Mrs. Erwin.

"Surely," said Mr. Stuart. "I wish you had been with us from the start. I have a suspicion that you can see deeper into many things than we can."

"Oh, certainly not," said Mrs. Erwin, "and this question is entirely new to me. But it occurred to me to ask this. Since you say that ministers ought to be decently maintained, and since there are poor fields as well as rich ones, is it your idea that the ministers ought to be maintained by the church at large instead of by the congregations to which they minister?"

"That is my idea exactly," said Mr. Stuart. "Thank you for putting it so clearly. The whole spirit of the New Testament is in favor of the strong helping the weak. Besides that, the church is a unit, it is one body; and if one member suffers all the members suffer with it. Moreover, as the world is not to be expected to support the church, it is the more incumbent on Christians to do so. Therefore I think the whole church ought to support her own ministry. To be sure, that is done now to some extent. The principle is acknowledged to be right. But the principle is not applied to the extent that it ought to be."

"And when Mr. Winstall spoke of ministers dividing up to support their poorer brethren," said Mrs. Erwin, "it struck me that the poorer brethren might not like that. Wouldn't it seem too much like charity? Whereas, if the whole church supported them it would seem more a matter of right."

"A good point indeed," said Mr. Stuart. "No, I don't see that such a plan would work, even if all ministers were willing to adopt it. The people themselves would need to provide the funds directly for that purpose. Then no one could feel any humiliation."

"Still," said Mr. Winstall, "wouldn't there be great inequality in such a scheme? For the best to receive no more than the worst would seem very like injustice. And shouldn't there be more justice in the divine institution of the church than in any other institution in the world?"

"Perhaps," said Mr. Stuart, "there would

not really be so much inequality as you suppose. I think there is not so much inequality in ministers themselves as is often imagined. There are men working in obscure places who are not a whit behind those in the larger churches. I think we judge them too much by their surroundings and good fortune. Besides, in the smaller churches the ministers usually need more tact, judgment, and patience than those in the larger churches. When the whole truth comes to be known, as it never will be in this world, I believe many of the real heroes will be found to be the men who worked in obscure fields, under heavy discouragements. And ought not the wealth and sympathy of the church sustain such men as well as those in more prominent positions?"

But Mr. Winstall had still another arrow in his quiver. "Think of the work your city ministers have to do," he said, "in comparison with some country ministers, even suppose you were alike in capacity. You have more cultured people to preach to, and more of them, so you need to preach better sermons. Then you have a great deal more outside or extraneous work. How could it be counted fair to pay you and them alike?"

"Well, I am not so sure that we have more work," said Mr. Stuart, "if everything were counted. We have different kinds of work—I mean especially the extras. But if we have more cultured people, or more of them to preach to, we have more inspiration, and doesn't that count for something? As to preaching better, I doubt if we need to preach any better. It is my experience that on the great themes of our sermons, country people are quite as well informed as city people—present company of course excepted. And then think of the toils and hardships of so many country ministers who have to drive long distances in all weathers to keep their appointments. And when they do get through the mud, or rain, or snow, quite often there are but a few people to hear them. Then when the service is over they turn and go through the mud, or rain, or snow again. I wish Mr. Winstall was a country minister for a while. Then we might hope to have his aid in advancing this needed reform."

"Oh, I venture to think," said Mr. Erwin, "you will have his aid. I feel indebted to him for putting you on your mettle in unfolding this subject. And it is a serious subject. I wish it could receive some attention in my church where the evil is much greater than in yours."

"Well, the churches act and react on each other," said Mr. Stuart. "If we are able to do anything in such a reform the benefit will not be confined to ourselves. The sentiment will grow, and at length be crystallized in action. If we do right we help each other, whether we will or no."

"Oh, I suppose," said Mr. Winstall, "as the reform gets ripe, if it ever does, we shall get ripe for it. I feel the force of many things you have said. And I do think I would rather help the country minister a little more than take his place as you suggest. It is hard work and no mistake."

"Yes," said Mr. Stuart, "and there is one other point I did not mention, though perhaps it is the most important of any. We have to remember that no minister is actually paid for his work. Spiritual work can not be paid for in money. It can be paid for only in Spiritual results. Hence a congregation does not undertake to pay a minister for his services. He undertakes on his part, apart from all remuneration, to do the best work he can; and the congregation, on their part, undertake to keep him above

worldly care in providing for his wants. Now I think that is the right principle. And you see how it glorifies the minister's work. He does not do so much work for so much pay. No man should go into the work for pay. But the people to whom he ministers should keep him in a fair condition of comfort. That principle, it seems to me, obliges us as a church to look after all our ministers in the same way. None should be in want, and none should be in affluence. But I must ask you all to forgive me for talking so much. You must blame Mr. Winstall for starting me and keeping me at it."

"All right," said Mr. Winstall, "blame me all you like. We have had a good lecture, free, gratis, for nothing. I begin to doubt whether we should let it go at that. Ought we not take up a collection?"

"Oh, you will have a chance the Sunday after next," said Mr. Stuart, "we have our Home Mission collection then, and that is just the beginning of this larger scheme."

Continued.

If They Could.

If potatoes could see with all their eyes,
And if corn could hear with its ears,
They'd grow in one season so wondrously wise
They'd never be eaten, my dears!

One of the most delicate replies ever made was that of a Frenchman who had not found "a life on the ocean wave" all that could be expected. He was sinking pale and disheveled, into the steamer chair, when a passenger asked cheerily: "Ah! Good morning, monsieur! Have you breakfasted?" "No, monsieur," answered the pallid Frenchman. "I have not breakfasted. On the contrary!"

Decadence of Great Britain.

Apropos of Great Britain's decadence, there is a most thoughtful and statesmanlike article in the present number of *The Fortnightly Review*, whose title, "Will England, Last the Century?" would be more characteristic if it read "Will England's Predominance Last the Century?" The author, who signs himself "Calchas," evidently believes that she will last the century, though not in her present commanding position. Although it is not distinctly so stated, the author is evidently of the opinion that the struggle of the century will be a scientific, industrial and commercial one. Starting out with the assumption that the decadence of France is inevitable, attention is turned to three countries which are as certainly upon the ascent, namely, the United States, Germany and Russia. Leaving out the third, whose full development cannot be reached in one century, if, indeed, in two, it is asked, as compared with the assured progressiveness of these three expansive powers and the settled decline of France, at what point between decided decadence and spontaneous development does England stand? The British are judged to be a nation in jeopardy, but not in decadence. The efficiency of the nation has been vitiated by the sense of ease that has followed an unexampled prosperity; but in the opinion of the author the drowsiness will disappear when the comfortable cause is gone, and the pressure of American and German competition becomes more constant and pinching. The exact want of the nation is deeper and more scientific cultivation. The material is not exhausted and it exists to be developed; since there is a stronger smack of the vigorous barbarian than any suggestion of morbid exhaustion in the English character.