

tables, or to put on airs, or to be a dandy and a puppet in the pulpit and the drawing-room; at the same time a Christian gentleman, with the culture, the attainments and the self-respect of a gentleman; a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Church for His sake, and therefore clothed with humility; a steward of the riches of divine truth, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; and therefore, neither empty-headed nor cold-hearted; a man of intellectual and spiritual resources, not needing to multiply appearances because the substance is not; a master in Israel, a master of theology, the queen of the sciences. And thus able by natural force of character as well as by depth and breadth of attainments to save himself and his office from reproach and degradation. Given an army of men of this sort and hindrances springing out of erroneous notions of the ministry would soon disappear. Hence the next hindrance I mention.

V. The lack of a sufficient number of true ministers of Christ.

This is at once apparent if we take into account the home and foreign fields. It is sometimes said that all the learned professions are over-crowded, and that there are hundreds of unemployed ministers in Britain and the United States; and even in Canada, eligible charges ready for pastoral settlements and affording "good livings," as it is sometimes expressed, are not very numerous, so that the supply of ministers seems to be equal, or more than equal, to the demand. This may be true of a certain sort men—men who are looking for "livings" rather than for souls—willing to enter upon other men's labours, but destitute of faith and courage and manliness to subdue moral wildernesses and make room for themselves.

The Church—every branch of the Church—has always men to spare of the class who have no spirit of enterprise, and see nothing to do beyond their own parish and the supply of their personal wants, and who desire to be tenderly cared for, nursed, and ministered unto, but who are not ready to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." And one of the dangers, the hindrances, our Church must guard against with firmer purpose than heretofore is the influx of such persons from other bodies. But the Church has never had too many, or anything approaching a sufficient number of such men as Duff, and W. C. Burns, and our own missionary to Formosa, men who catch the spirit of the Master's command, "go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

Why is this? How is it that the supply of the right sort of men is so utterly inadequate? How is it, we are sometimes asked, that the sons of the wealthy are not found pressing into the ministry? Do they think the office beneath their dignity? If so they are mistaken. God's Son led off in this work and he has been followed by an army of men whose talents, and culture, and purity of life and elevation of character would shed lustre upon the highest ranks of nobility. Is it beneath the dignity of any man—God pity the man who thinks that it is—to be commissioned by the King of Glory to be the co-worker with His own Son in saving souls? Are they deterred through fear of being ordained to perpetual poverty and hard work? Are they attracted—drawn away by the fascinations of business and of social elevation? Are they less devout and spiritual than those who enter the ministry from humbler ranks? Would the brain-power and the heart-power of the sacred office be materially changed and improved by the poor being all kept in the pews and the rich taking possession of the pulpit? I am not prepared to say yes or no. And I have no quarrel with either class. I claim near kinship through Adam to both rich and poor, nor do I think it desirable that the ministry should be drawn largely or exclusively from any one class, but rather from them all, that there may be no semblance of caste countenance, and that there may be broad and true sympathy with humanity and knowledge of its wants in all its multitudinous diversifications and circumstances.

The vital question is, why this totally inadequate supply of ministers? While we have doctors, and lawyers, and politicians to excess, why has this holy office to go a begging for occupants of the right sort? Is it owing to the general treatment which ministers receive? Not exclusively by any means, for after all that has been written and said about the shady side of ministerial experience, taken all in all it is happier and better than that of any other class of men, and hence their average life is longer.

Is it due to the low spiritual life of the Church, to her awful want of confidence in Christ's great enterprise of saving the world? Yes, this is the chief cause. Through this unbelief men are not willing to spend much or risk much in sending the gospel to others. As their faith loses its definiteness, its clearness, and spirituality, they become marvellously generous in a cheap way—so generous and credulous that they believe that countless millions may be saved without the gospel, and they persuade themselves that they are quite right in leaving the heathen to the sovereign mercy of God.

But when, in answer to prayer, the power of Divine grace rests upon the Church, and real revival is experienced, and the Holy Ghost arrests the worldliness of God's people, then there is no lack of volunteers for the work of the ministry. But while we thus fully recognize the Divine call to the work we are bound to say that there is one form of spiritual deadness, of practical unbelief which has kept back multitudes from the Lord's service, and that is the unguarded and mischievous tone of conversation in Christian homes.

Young persons even with the grace of God in their hearts, get their impressions and convictions and determinations for life settled very much by their surroundings, by what they see and hear. That which is esteemed high and noble and sacred by parents is usually viewed in the same way by their children; and that which is ignored and despised secretly or openly by parents is pretty certain to be treated in the same spirit by their offspring. It is here, in the household, often in the Christian drawing-room, that the mischief is done, and here precisely we must seek the remedy for the hindrance now dealt with.

Let us get Christian homes purified of the poison that infects them and acts with such deadly fatality against the Lord's work—let us get Christian fathers and mothers to do their duty, to follow the example of Hannah, and Zacharias, and the parents of young Timothy; and we shall soon hear

the end of empty lamentations over the lack of talent laid upon the Lord's altar and the insufficiency of the intellect of this country for the work of its pulpit, for this is untrue. Dr. Schaff, of New York, says in the last number of the "Princeton Review," "From long experience as a public teacher in Europe and America, I may venture the assertion that the theological students of America, as regards ability, gentlemanly bearing, and Christian character, are equal to any in the world." We claim nothing less for the students of Canada. And what we need, and wish to see, is hundreds and thousands of them throwing themselves with spiritual power into the work at home and into the great heathen world.

VI. Hindrances in the form of defective and unscriptural financial management. These, let me assure you, are most formidable.

Several methods are followed in raising money for the Lord's work which are thoroughly injurious. I have not time to discuss them, but will mention a few of them. Some congregations may be said without exaggeration to have no proper system of finance. Passing over such we may notice the following:

First, The Subscription List. In many country churches when a minister is called his stipend is provided for in the form of a subscription list exhibiting the amount which each person promises to pay. By and by the minister in his zeal for common morality, gives utterance to some plain and unpalatable truth against intemperance, or lying, or swindling, or worldliness, and similar sins. This offends one or two of the large subscribers. They sulk, they absent themselves from the church, they talk of the imprudence and impertinence of the minister, they give it out that they are not going to pay for such preaching. Others, not noted for liberality or godliness, and who had to be coaxed and urged in the first instance to subscribe, sympathise with them and quietly deplore their pastor's unnecessary fidelity and want of tact. Presently they form an influential, although numerically small, party in the church. The ecclesiastical year closes with a financial deficiency not in the treasury, but in the minister's pockets, for the treasurer's business is simply to hand over to him in dribblets what he receives, and now he is minus the big subscriptions, the price of his outspokenness and temerity, and he has been forced to live partly on credit, and to countenance that abominable curse in business, the credit system.

But what is to be done with the balance due to him at the end of the year? Members who have honestly implemented their engagements refuse to pay what they deem due from others. The Session cannot deal with the repudiators for that would be meddling with temporalities and going beyond their spiritual functions. The treasurer is helpless. He cannot collect the subscriptions, or advance the money, and, perhaps, secretly approves of the repudiation. For peace's sake, therefore, the balance is allowed to lie over for another year. But this year is no better but a little worse than its predecessor. And thus it goes on for a few years, during which the subscription list becomes more and more unreliable, until the minister resigns—the thing the repudiating subscribers wished and foretold. A Presbyterian visitation takes place. The large subscribers make speeches, and explain to the Court that it is impossible to go on as they have done for several years. They are constrained to say so as men of business. The pastoral tie is severed with appropriate resolutions touching all concerned; and the minister is commended to the Church and sent out to look for another charge. This is no fancy sketch, but something which has actually occurred more than once through that pernicious instrument of evil—the subscription list. I have not spoken of it strongly enough. It is an instrument of disintegration and tyranny. A thing which in its practical working ignores the unity of life and spirit and obligation which belongs to the Church of God—a thing which fosters the vulgar pride and vanity of not a few whose names it exhibits, which stereotypes their liberality, or rather their meanness, and which enables them to play the part of little despots in many a Christian circle—surely a thing to be abolished in connection with the Lord's business.

A second method of church finance is by pew rents. This is usually less objectionable than the method just disposed of; but the abuses to which it has given rise are well known specially in large cities.

It has proved injurious to the poor. In some places it has virtually excluded them from the house of God. Through honest industry and frugality many of them manage to make themselves respectable everywhere except in the sanctuary; but there extravagant pew rents force them to take rank virtually with paupers, and in order to escape this they absent themselves altogether. If this evil is not largely experienced in Canada it is certainly keenly felt elsewhere.

Again, the system of pew rents is injurious to the rich. The price of a wealthy man's pew, which is the same as that of a comparatively poor man who sits next to him, often fixes the extent of his giving. I do not say that it is always so, but the tendency is strongly in this direction. And what is far worse, the system brings a secular and purely commercial spirit into the church. A man buys up so much sanctuary room and pays for it as for a site on which to build a warehouse and the transaction is closed and dismissed from his thoughts.

How much better the Divine rule, that rich and poor should give on the first day of the week, according as the Lord hath prospered them. This would oblige them to reckon with the Lord in this matter frequently, and to recognize their dependence upon Him, to see God's hand in business, and to remember that the gold and the silver are His—that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and what a blessing this might prove to their own souls.

There is a third method of church finance which I mention only in a sentence or two, viz., that which depends upon soirees, tea-meetings, bazaars, fairs and even raffles. These, I believe, should have no place in the working of God's Church as means of securing support for the gospel. But, having said this, I do not wish to be understood as disparaging the efforts of women and children and virtually excluding them from the Church. No, by all means let them bring the products of their skill and industry and sell them at right prices and in right places for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Nay more. Let the work of women be properly

organized, and let those of them who are qualified for the office regain their ancient and rightful position as Deaconesses that their invaluable services may become available in many directions. And so of children and young men. I hold that the Church of God is bound to make room for them all, and not to oblige, or allow, if possible, any of them to go outside of her organization and discipline in seeking scope for the exercise of their religious energies. When this principle is not acted upon, the grossest and most scandalous abuses sometimes occur, such as having persons who have been justly excommunicated from the Church and never restored to her fellowship put themselves forward as leaders of public devotion to the unspeakable detriment of religion and the disgust of all honest men.

But with respect to the methods of securing income just named, there can be no doubt that they are often simply the means of bringing reproach, and penury, and disgrace upon the cause of God and His servants. I have spoken of the dignity of the ministerial office and have no hesitation in adding that the support of those who hold the sacred office by means of fairs and raffles is a degradation to which merchants, lawyers, and bankers would never submit. Let a raffle or bazaar be started in aid of some respectable merchants and see if they do not resent it as an insult. And why should the ambassadors of Jesus Christ be subjected to such humiliation? Sooner a thousand times let them resort to the apostolic method of working with their own hands to secure their daily bread.

But what is to be done with this great question of religious finance, and with all the other hindrances which have been mentioned? What helps do we propose?

I should say, in one word, abandon every unscriptural method. Come back to the simple teachings of God's Word. Instead of all the shifts resorted to let the Scriptural office of the deacon be brought into full activity and by its ministry let the solemn duty and privilege of giving, in which the Church is yet so lamentably backward, be plainly and constantly laid upon every man's conscience before God. Let no one be omitted, and let the offerings of all, rich and poor, be so managed, so administered, as in the great and successful Sustentation Fund of the Free Church of Scotland, as to bring out the living and practical unity of the Church and the official equality and independence of all Presbyters whatever position they may occupy. This is the remedy for a multitude of cases which now occupy the time of Presbyteries, and an end of the reign of little financial despots up and down the country who manage to make the lives of ministers miserable, to impair their usefulness and the purity and discipline of the Church. But I cannot elaborate this.

Then as to inactivity among the elders, let us try to quicken their spiritual pulse by the addition of youth and piety to their ranks, let us try to take every hindrance out of their way, to enlist their sympathies, to induce them to understand and honour their high vocation and to rouse them to holy enthusiasm as leaders in the Lord's army.

As to discipline, the ministerial office, and the lack of labourers in the field—Home and Foreign—I have already said all that time permits.

And as to the ignorance depicted. Let us remove it by diligent Scriptural and historical instruction delivered *in voce* and through the press, an instrument of power which we have not half used for the propagation of the truth. Let us show our people what has been accomplished in the past and fill their souls with the vast possibilities of the future in this great Dominion and throughout the whole world; let them become acquainted with the vicissitudes, the weakness, the strength, the failures, and the triumphs of our Church. And let us not fail to shut out from her worship, her discipline, and doctrine all that is narrow, superstitious, popish, vulgar, unnatural and unscriptural; and let us not fear to cut off excrescences that may have been growing upon our system for centuries or that may try to fasten themselves upon it now, and let us show the world that our Church is not simply Scottish, or Canadian, but catholic and progressive. Theology, in order to be progressive, must revise its old arguments, and readjust its old defences that they may fit into existing errors and destroy them. We must meet indifference, and latitudinarianism, and sacerdotalism, and scepticism, and worldliness, and the cry for fewer sermons and shorter sermons, not with hard names and frantic denunciations, but with living faith, and honest lives, and solid arguments, and sermons that are a consuming fire, a rushing mighty wind laden with Divine truth touching man's sin, Christ's sacrifice, God's justice and mercy and love. Sermons that impart a luminous knowledge of the way of life, and are full of Divine power and passion for saving souls.

In this high sense we must

Make knowledge circle with the winds;  
But let her herald, Reverence, fly  
Before her to whatever sky  
Bear seed of men and growth of minds.

LORD CHANCELLOR CAIRNS has been preaching to large audiences in Scotland. And some of the clergy are terribly chagrined thereat. One Irish Episcopal clergyman talks about some judgment that will come upon the Chancellor if he does not desist from touching sacred things. What a pity that all the world is not ordered by the priesthood.

THE Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Fraser, is always doing something characteristic. Preaching recently at a harvest festival in Preston, Lancashire, he remarked that he understood that a portion of the collection was for the completing of the baptistry and the tiling of the chancel floor. He asked the vicar if there was pressing poverty in Preston, not to undertake that work then. He spoke very severely of the strife for gain and the heaping up of luxuries which prevails in the land. The bishop is an out-spoken, practical preacher.