

THE PULPIT AND THE PEW; OR, MORAL FRICTION.

In every relation of life there are mutual opportunities and obligations. Much of human happiness depends on a clear preception of what ought to be done under the circumstances in which we are placed, and an honest endeavour to do it. Peace is frequently interrupted by a failure in discriminating, or in performing the duties which arise out of our respective relations to each other.

Many of the duties arising from the relation of pastor and people, are plain enough; but there are others more delicately marked, numberless undefined courtesies, which can be best understood by refined and sympathetic natures.

If the people are for the most part without a delicate consideration for others' feelings, they will think, if they pay their minister his salary according to agreement, they have discharged their whole duty to him: what more can be required? If the minister should happen to be like them, not very sensitive, but what is significantly termed "thick-skinned," he will satisfy himself with preaching according to agreement, will perform general duties, visit about as much as he thinks will be required, and pocket all sorts of unpleasant things. He will get what he can from the people; and they will get what they can from him. There will be no love wasted on either side, there will be an equilibrium. Things will move on thus, until one or the other party thinks a change would be pleasant, or beneficial; then there will be no lack of reasons to justify the movement.

It is however very different where pastor and people are *unlike* in mental structure. A sensitive pastor, and an apathetic people; or an impassive man in the pulpit, and a congregation largely composed of sensitive persons. Then there will be constant friction, violations of little courtesies, thoughtless neglect of christian comity, cold and inconsiderate requirements on the one hand, and discontented complainings on the other.

The pulpit and the pew exert a reflex influence on each other. A good minister may be spoiled by an unreasonable people. A kind generous people may shrivel up in the arid atmosphere of a complaining ungrateful minister.

Many overlook or undervalue the influence of little things. Little courtesies form the warp of human happiness, a fair interchange of which acts like oil in reducing the moral friction of our mutual bearings on each other. Some ministers habitually set themselves over against the people, not as one with them, having identical interests and aims. These view the pastoral relation chiefly in respect to the obligations of the flock to their minister, as though, not the glory of Christ, but the comfort and happiness of the pastor, were the great ends of church organization. Such ministers do a great deal of managing, but sympathize very little with their people in their secular troubles, and make no allowance for their delinquencies. If the flock show them kindness, it will be received as matters of course, as the payment of a debt, but will fail to quiet the voice of complaint or to render the relation agreeable.

Some ministers consider it essential to their proper influence, not only that they maintain a dignified bearing, but that they keep up a sort of ecclesiastical caste, surrounding themselves with a mysterious sanctity, which renders them utterly unapproachable to the timid and humble, more like priests or brahmins than the Divine Master who went about among the people doing good, eating and drinking as others. Reserve begets reserve. Such ministers know little of the people, because the people know little of them. Only in the special seasons of sickness or bereavement, when others know and