

Perish the thought! If she break her back in the slow process of molding the refractory things into shape, or scorch her face frying them, the croquettes she will have if Madame La Mode so ordains, even though, if they told the plain truth, the chances are that not only she, but her husband, and her children, and the stranger within her gates would be forced to acknowledge that they decidedly preferred the hash.

Is not this servitude of the worst description,—to say nothing of the folly of it,—this spending of precious strength and golden hours in doing what in the long run does not add one iota to our own happiness, or to that of any other living being, merely because somebody regards it as “the thing” to do, or to have it?

Undoubtedly, whether one lives in city or country, it is well to follow, as far as one can without the sacrifice of higher things, the customs and usages of so-called polite society. As a rule they have at the bottom some wise foundation. But when we are gravely told by those who speak with authority that “self-respect” demands of us this or that,—the observance of the merest trifles as to the etiquette of table service, or of anything of a like nature,—is it not time to pause and to take a fresh start? The loss of self-respect is a terrible thing. Its preservation is so vital a point that it seems hardly wise to set up standards that are absolutely out of reach of the vast majority of American housewives and home-makers.

Is it certain that the new ways are always better, and wiser, and more refined than the old ways? Then again, have we not all read something about the folly of putting new wine into old bottles?

There is such a thing, alas! as losing all the strength and dignity out of a life by ill-considered attempts to change its current. The broad, full stream is apt to dwindle away in numberless small channels, and its power dwindles likewise. After men and women have gone much beyond the middle mile-stone, sudden changes as to style of living, household service, and the like are not apt to add greatly either to their dignity or to their happiness. In short, there are many conceivable circumstances under which one tuck is infinitely better than fifty.

Julia C. R. Dorr.

“The Right Man for Our Church.”

ALTHOUGH some of the clerical abilities and accomplishments expected to be constantly in readiness at a moment's notice for the use of Christian congregations and the general public are to be found chiefly in the imaginations of inconsiderate and not over-intelligent laymen, the demand for them is none the less difficult to meet. As proved in the letters written by expectant committees, they sometimes mount up in number and variety till they reach the summit of absurdity. The professor of a theological seminary, receiving one of these epistles which enumerated the long and discouraging list of talents and requisites necessary in the character and attainments of one who should be fit for the pastorate of “our church,” replied to the committee to the effect that “we have no man now in this seminary such as you describe, and doubt if we ever had one.” Manners, dress, voice, elocution, public spirit, magnetic attraction for young people, wife, num-

ber of children, extravagance or parsimony in living, executive talent, interest in education and temperance, gracefulness at weddings, appropriateness of manner and speech at funerals—all these, besides those many qualifications which are really needed to make a good preacher, come in for a share of criticism, and form important factors in the layman's ideal of the clergyman he would like, or thinks he would like, as the pastor of his church.

It is here submitted, therefore, that in no other occupation is so much expected in things which are really non-essential to it. That a minister should be a good man, sound in the Christian faith, and an interesting and sensible preacher goes without saying. Every congregation should look for these things, and be thankful for all else that may chance to go with them; but is it not true that so much more than these is often demanded that it can truthfully be said that the follower of no other occupation is subjected to so many and so severe tests concerning matters which lie outside professional requirements? The carpenter, or plumber, or mason is simply required to do his work well; his opinions, and dress, and social powers, together with the qualities of his wife and the number of his family, are not subjects of public inquiry. We do not ask whether the lawyer has a pleasing voice, or the physician a becoming and stylish dress, or the architect a taking manner, or the army officer a charming wife, or the school-teacher a magnetic bearing in a drawing-room, although these may be desirable possessions: we ask whether the man understands his business in its essentials, is learned in its details, and skillful in the practice of it.

These demands made upon the ministerial profession are often more exacting among the less intelligent than among the educated, so that it is sometimes said in clerical circles that those who know the least concerning the long and laborious preparation required to fit men for the modern pulpit, and concerning the proper characteristics of a good preacher, are the most emphatic in their insistence on a great number and variety of qualifications in their minister. A small country church in Massachusetts, many years ago, criticised quite sharply the services of a man whom they supposed to be preaching for them as a candidate, and were much surprised afterwards to learn that he already occupied a position as pastor much more prominent and influential than they would have believed possible. I remember also a case where a small city congregation that had among its members scarcely a man that was even fairly well educated heard a man preach several Sabbaths. He was a graduate of a New England college and of one of the best of our theological seminaries, a man of good address, scholarly and gentlemanly in his pulpit manners, a careful, thoughtful sermonizer, and a fluent speaker. He was disliked; and when some of the chief men were questioned as to the cause of dissatisfaction, they replied, “He does not have a commanding presence.” The readers of this letter will recall one of old of whom it was said that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible; but they will be forced to admit that Paul was, after all, something of a preacher. This congregation in search of a “commanding presence” were a feeble folk, numerically and financially; and though the Lord's people, however poor and weak, ought, theoretically, to

have the very best in the way of spiritual food, yet as things are in the church, as well as in the world, it is a question whether they were wholly wise in looking for perfection in the Lord's vessel, and whether they were not too slow in appreciating the Lord's grace contained in it; and although ministers ought not to be rated by the amount of salary that they receive, still this incident will remind many of the man who said, concerning an underpaid servant girl, "You can't expect all the Christian virtues for two dollars a week."

In proof of the singular demands sometimes made upon the minister, not only for needful qualifications not looked for in other professions, but also for those which do not really form a part of the clergyman's necessary outfit for his work, I offer for perusal a letter written less than five years ago by a member of a church in one of the largest and oldest and—will it be believed?—most cultured of our American cities. It was written by one layman to another. The writer was a member of the "supply committee" appointed to "look for the right man" as pastor, and the epistle is one of inquiry into the fitness of a certain minister who had been recommended to him for the position. Leaving out dates and proper names and a single sentence, which might furnish a clue to identification, I give the letter *verbatim*, without correction of rhetoric, grammar, italics, or punctuation.

MR. ———.

MY DEAR SIR: I have this day read your letter directed to my friend Mr. relative to Rev. Mr. of My church relation is with church, chairman of the committee &c.—delegated to find just the man for church. We have enjoyed the opportunity in listening to several fine speakers—but very few of them are considered what is needed—or fitted for this pulpit and people,—a defect in *voice*—physique or mannerism. It requires a strong full rounded voice—to be heard in the auditorium of the sanctuary—we can seat 1200, & everybody must hear in our church. Our congregation during the time Dr. . . . has been with us has averaged 700 or 800—We must have a man who has the make up *temporally & spiritually*, who will bring in 1300 & fill us to overflowing—Our church membership is 400—we want a membership not less than 1200—We think with God's help & the right man—who is a good seed sower, can do it—we have a good operative force—and there is material in abundance—needing to be *square-hewed & numbered* for the building. The streets are full of houses on both sides & there are to be found rough ashlers to be hammered—We need a master workman in the gospel.

Will you please give me the exact measurement of Mr. . . . (confidentially if you say so) that is to say

Is he a man of deep piety? & yet a social & ready man—an original man? in thought & utterances—a real student of God—man & nature? Are his illustrations forcible & impressive? &c. &c. Does he use a manuscript? What is his salary? How much family?—where did he graduate, in Theology? How does he stand on the Andover question? &c, I am satisfied that some are born to be Teachers. If my request is granted and the reply is satisfactory I feel sure that some of our committee will go and listen to Mr.

Fraternally yours

These can hardly be termed modest demands. To say nothing of the requirement that the minister should draw a hundred more people than the church will accommodate, and also convert and make communicants of the exact twelve hundred which the church does accommodate, the particularity of some of these questions is certainly interesting. One wonders why the inventory did not include an inquiry as to the cut of collar or style of boots worn by the aspiring seeker

for a pulpit. As if a minister should be expected to tell a committee or a church what he thought of the complicated phases of the Andover matter; or was answerable to a church committee for the number of his children! But things still more singular are sometimes the subject of criticism. "We cannot allow a man to preach as a candidate here," said the shrewd deacon of a New England church. "He must be accepted on his record; for should he preach as a candidate, Dr. Blank might object to him on the ground of his lack of gracefulness in taking off his overcoat." Not long since, in an Eastern city, a candidate for a pastorate was rejected after being heard, and inquiry elicited the fact that one of the objections made to him was that he wore a "fly tie." No defense of this hapless seeker for a pastorate will be here attempted. Doubtless our brother was verily guilty in wearing a tie that fastened itself to the shirt button with a bit of rubber; but it ought to be said in partial extenuation of his offense that although he had not, like one of whom we have read, given his whole mind to his neck-tie, it might have been for the reason that he was somewhat preoccupied in the attention bestowed upon the spirituality and helpfulness of his sermon, and the appropriateness of his prayers.

When one considers the many different tastes and preferences to be found in a large modern congregation, and remembers that these tastes have reference so much more largely than in former years to external and non-essential matters, it will be readily apprehended by those outside the ministry that the business of "candidating" is admirably adapted to strike terror to the heart of a minister of ordinarily sensitive nerves. The radical idea of it is false to begin with. That idea is, when stated in plain words, that a church, by hearing a man preach for a single Sunday, can learn sufficiently of his character and abilities for the work of the ministry to decide off-hand whether he is the man they want, or rather, whether he is the man they need, to live with them and be their minister week after week and year after year. Suppose a great corporation should insist that its employment of a lawyer as its permanent solicitor should turn, not on his general record as a lawyer, but on the impression he made on the directors by the delivery of a single plea before a jury. Suppose a medical institution should allow its action in the appointment of a physician to a responsible place to be decided by the management and result of his practice in a single case of fever. The comparisons are not wholly false or inapt. In many respects the lawyer or the physician put to such a test would have the advantage of the minister. The deeper and more subtle qualities of character, the sources of power and influence, the secret fountains of social and spiritual strength which are so largely elements in the success of a pastor, might manifest themselves but faintly in a trial sermon. The candidate in many cases comes to the ordeal a complete stranger to the congregation; he is perhaps unaccustomed to the order of service, or the pulpit is not of the proper height, or he is not as well as usual—has taken a cold on the long journey made to keep this appointment, or is suffering from headache. Any one of these may seriously affect a preacher, especially in our non-liturgical churches, where so much depends upon the personal appearance of the speaker; and on a critical occasion like this, where success is likely to turn on appearances, a seemingly

insignificant circumstance may disconcert a sensitive man and unfit him for his work. A slight physical ailment, or the unaccountable loss of the preaching mood which sometimes afflicts a minister of nervous temperament, may cripple the mental energies and so abate that vigor and alertness of mind which are necessary to the proper outfit of the preacher for his work, especially where much of that work is extemporaneous, that he may fail to show his real power as a preacher. The choice of a theme is difficult at such a time, and may be unfortunate for that particular congregation or that particular time, on account of certain local circumstances of which the preacher is ignorant; or it may fail to give a proper idea of the average range and kind of his usual discourse. But he is here, and he must be heard. No matter what the drawbacks, he must preach; and preach as a man to whom the assembly is looking as their possible pastor. He must make his "impression," and the action of the parish is to turn on that impression.

To a sensitive man, the whole business is repulsive; to a man with a fine moral sense, there is a certain feeling of the insincerity of it. It seems to him as much a "performance" as the solo of the gallery singer is sometimes said to be. He is here professedly to preach the gospel and to do good to the souls of men; he is here really to show these people how gracefully and impressively and eloquently he can do it. The whole business carries a hollow and unreal look. He feels instinctively that comparatively few will be impressed by the depth, beauty, truth, sweetness, or soundness—if such there be—of his discourse, or by the simplicity and reverence of feeling in his prayers; and that the large proportion of the assembly will be thinking of the manner rather than the matter, of form rather than substance. His face attracts one, his voice another, his pathetic tones another, his "manner" another, his comments on the Scripture another, his undemonstrative method another. But other people are repelled by the same things. A ministry of months and years might correct these bad impressions and confirm the good ones; but the minister is here for only one Sunday and then flits to other fields, to pass through the same ordeal. The "impression" must necessarily be imperfect as a correct idea of what the candidate is as a preacher and pastor. Moreover, the minds of all being so largely engaged in taking what strikes the eye and makes a temporary impression on the ear, the service as a religious service is a failure. It is not a service sincerely conducted by one unconscious of himself and aiming at spiritual effect alone, nor one in which the hearers heartily enter, or can heartily enter, with the simple desire that they may worship God, and receive thereby spiritual benefit to themselves. The obvious conclusion is, that the more refined or sensitive the man is who submits to this ordeal, the more likely will he be *not to do* his best, or *be* his best. He will find more difficulty than some other men of less refinement of character, because he will be more conscious of the false and unreal position which he has allowed himself to fill. The practice must be more or less demoralizing to a church that Sunday after Sunday keeps up this business of listening to candidates, and it must be more or less debasing to the ministers who accept invitations to enter into the arrangement.

If this letter shall awaken the desire of any to seek some more reasonable plan of securing pastors for our churches, following out perhaps the excellent suggestions offered by Dr. Gladden in a recent number of *THE CENTURY*, its purpose will be fulfilled. At any rate it can do no harm to call attention to the immoderate desires and expectations of laymen in their search for imaginary and impossible ministers, and to that emphasis which they too often lay upon tests and qualifications which are not really necessary to a faithful and successful ministry.

Forrest F. Emerson.

NEWPORT, R. I.

"Aunt Martha" Grayson.

IT seems to me fitting to the story of "The Graysons" to publish a little incident connected with "Aunt Martha" that came under my personal observation.

The incident of which I speak occurred when Lincoln and Douglas were making their famous tour of Illinois, and were to speak at Havana, Mason County, Illinois.

About 6 o'clock on the day previous there came to the house of the friend with whom I was stopping an old lady who had walked I do not know how many miles to see "dear Old Abe." She wore a calico sun-bonnet and a clean dark calico dress of rather scant proportions and was toil-worn and withered, but withal had such a kindly face that one forgot her homely attire and backwoods manners.

She talked incessantly of Mr. Lincoln, always calling him "Old Abe," and was so eager and trembling in her desire to see him that I could not help wondering what possible interest she could have in him, or he in her. I learned that Lincoln, years before, had saved the life of her son, who was accused of murder, and no scrap of evidence seemed possible to save him from the gallows. Here, then, was the mother of the young man whose story I had so often heard.

The next morning the old lady was up long before the rest of us, nervously roaming about, and scarcely able to control her agitation. "I am going to be the first to greet 'Old Abe' when he leaves the boat," she said over and over again; "and I want to tell him how glad I am that he has become so great."

She did not wait for the steam-whistle to herald his coming. With trembling fingers she tied the strings of her sun-bonnet under her chin, lighted her pipe,—I'm sure I'm not mistaken in this,—and hurried nervously away, saying as she left, "I must be the first to take him by the hand." And sure enough she was. The whistle blew, the crowd surged down to the landing, but the old lady was already there. No sooner was the plank thrown out than "Aunt Martha" stepped upon it, and was indeed the first to meet and greet "Old Abe."

She came back to the house shortly after, her face radiant with joy, the tears still coursing down her withered cheeks, and cried out between intervals of hysterical sobs: "I've seen him—he was not ashamed of me—he took my old hand and wrung it with a will, saying, 'Howdy, Aunt Martha? How are all the folks? I'm right glad to see you.'"

Mrs. H. L. Tobien.

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