

PARSONS AND PARSONS.

AN army officer's wife relates to her friends that she once stood by a river in Georgia, in a miscellaneous crowd of whites and blacks and yellows and yellowish-browns and whitish-yellowish-browns, looking on at a negro "baptizing." Before leading the neophytes into the water, the negro preacher improved the occasion to make a few very solemn and "feeling" remarks to his hearers. "Now, my breddern," he chanted, in a doleful recitative, "you all 'll want to know what's de reason dat immussion is de only mode ob babtism. Well, now, my bred-dern, bless de Laud, 'taint none o' yoah business!" Behold a model and conclusive theological argument! Whiter parsons than this Georgia John the Baptist have similar "short and easy methods" with heretics. When anything unanswerable or inexplicable is offered to them they take water in serene remarks about the "presumption of human reason." I like the Georgia version of it better; there is a frank and jolly impudence in the negro's way of putting it.

An able English Congregational minister, himself a most robust and manly fellow, complained to me one day, in riding through the Trosachs, that the public had a latent contempt for parsons. The public has done its best to bring the profession into disrepute, by its system of treating ministers with patronage and what Thackeray would call molly-coddling, with dead-headism, with exemptions from jury and military duty, and in some cases from taxation. It is true that ministers render many unrequited services to the public, but to put them on the list of semi-paupers is to cut the very ground from under the feet of their influence among men. And those parsons who wear uniforms of sanctity in the cut of their coats, and those who affect clerical tones, whether of the languishing, the prim, or the magisterial kind, have faithfully contributed to bring the noblest of vocations into disrepute, and to make the undevout mind look on a minister as an undignified neuter. How can one respect a minister who announces by manners, by dress, on his door-plate or on his visiting card, that he is reverend? It may be in good form for a man to advertise his clerical title in an aristocratic country like England, where the starch-mills are ever in operation, and where every

gentleman must wear some sort of a label lest casual acquaintances should thrust him into the wrong social pigeon-hole. But the well-dressed little fellow just out of college, to whom clerical dignity was as fresh as a first pair of trowsers to a boy just out of short-clothes, and who announced himself at our door the other day, with great orotundity of voice and a very deliberate utterance as the reverend Blanky W. Blank, no doubt commanded the reverence of the servant if of nobody else. Your name being Peter Smith, do you be Peter Smith; stand on your manhood and not on your office, young minister, and when you call at a neighbor's door don't send in your business card.

But I set that black Georgian to open the door of my article, not only because it is the proper thing in good society to have a negro in the hall-way, but because, dark as he is he throws some light on the question. Persecution of men for opinion's sake by ecclesiastical bodies,—a virtual saying that in the intellectual activity of this rather modern century the clergy alone shall not receive new ideas,—does not tend to increase popular reverence for our calling. The clergy are a cultivated, and consequently rather open-minded class of men. But the more open-minded clergyman is less likely than others to be contentious; the furious Don Quixotes who will ride abroad in defense of the past against the outrageous present and the still more terrible future, with the stolid Sanchos who ride after them, are by no means types of the ministry at large. But they kick up a great dust, and a public, not very discriminating, is apt to think that all the clergy have gone out to hunt down modern science, and to dam Niagara with books of discipline and confessions of faith. I believe that the unobtrusive ministers of the country read more scientific journals than any other class of men, professional scientific men excepted.

But when a minister who has attracted a great deal of attention by one noise or another cries out to his congregation: "A religion of ideas must give way to a religion of blood," he puts burlesque out of countenance. I like sturdy John Jasper of Richmond, with his sun going around the earth, and I like the Georgia Baptist who tells me flatly that it is none of my business. There is a sincerity about these illiterate

men that makes them white by the side of a clerical actor who outrages taste and intelligence for the sake of getting into the newspapers.

It is not the simple, unlearned ignoramus that is precisely contemptible. That singular Western sect, the "Anti-means Baptists," otherwise known as the "Hard-shells" or "Whisky Baptists," have many sins of ignorance to answer for, but ignorance pure is only amusing. The man who took his text from the "Book of one-eyed Samuel" was at least interesting at the outset, and that is something. An ear-witness told me of a cantankerous Kentucky Hard-shell who read from Revelations, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman——" Pausing here, he added, "Yes, John, it was a wonder if there was a woman there. It was the first one and the last one as'll ever get there." This was a spicy and unconventional application of Scripture, and reminds one in its frankness of the better one of Owen Lovejoy, who, when he was a minister in Maine, was outraged by the persistency of the mill-owners in their habit of sawing logs bearing other men's marks. He read for his text one Sunday: "Thou shalt not steal logs," and added vehemently, "Now, do you know what that means?"

The illiterate pulpit haranguers are good burlesques—magnifying mirrors, to set off the absurdities of more cultivated men. I knew well the man—not a Hard-shell either—who explained the "tale of bricks" laid upon the Jews by Pharaoh's task-masters in telling his hearers that Egyptian bricks were made with handles of straw to lift them with, and that this handle was called a tail; hence the hardship of the order requiring the Jews to make tails to their bricks when they had no straw with which to make them. What minister will not be reminded by this incident of some more learned expositor who has got over a hard place with a like inventiveness?

He was not a Hard-shell, either, who rendered himself immortal by telling an audience in Southern Illinois that "they persecuted John the Baptist, and put him in a ca'ldern of bilin' ile, an' that ile was the ile of Patmos, wherein he writ his revelation." Though this anecdote has been printed in the newspapers, it is true, having appeared before the day of the inventive "funnyman;" a friend of mine, a minister of the same denomination as the oily orator, vouches for it. I am not so sure about that ingenious exegete who, having declared that Abra-

ham built the ark, was met by a protest from a brother that "Abraham warn't thar." To which he responded, with a courage worthy of a Boston Monday lecturer, that he was "thar or tharabouts."

A Jewish rabbi of a pedantic turn of mind came to me once with a Spanish proverb which he wished to quote in a newspaper article. He knew, somehow, the English rendering of the proverb, but wished to quote it learnedly in the original, and he did not dare do it without first learning what language it was in! He little thought what an exemplification he was of his proverb, which read: "A fool is never a very great fool until he knows Latin." But the proverb is peculiarly true of our calling; the ignoramus, pure and simple, is not the fool. It is only the one who knows Latin.

I thought of that Spanish proverb some years ago, when I happened into a metropolitan church, the pulpit of which was at that time occupied by a young man who was astonishing everybody with what one of our American humorists calls "fluidity." And I will confess that I never saw a man whose ideas—if you could call them such—were so fluid, so entirely in a state of solution. The audience listened to his really brilliant tongue-iness with that sort of admiration which small boys feel for the "professor" of legerdemain, who blows blazes and spins ribbons from his mouth. Though he was an intolerable coxcomb, much that he said was bright and vivid, and it was all highly showy and sensational. But imagine the effect when he made a grand climax by dashing to the front of the platform, and crying out, "There's a great deal of *esprit de gloria* about that!" I really thought there was. The people looked at him with breathless attention and approval. Truly, the Spanish proverb is correct.

But it is not the ignorance of a few ministers, whether in the backwoods or in the city, that produces "a certain condescension," as Lowell would have it, in speaking of ministers. Archbishop Whately said that it was unfortunately true "that our girls are not well educated; but then our boys will never find it out." The public is not always penetrating in its regard of a popular minister. The editor of this magazine touched the heart of the matter when he said recently that goodness is not interesting. Do not jump to the moral that a minister, to be interesting, must be slightly bad; though I know a witty woman who declares that peo-

ple like a minister "with the chill taken off." And therein lies a deeper truth than she means. It is not goodness that the world does not like, but conventional goodness, and that not because it is good, but because it is conventional, and consequently chilly. In the long run, goodness is the very most available quality in the ministry, or in any other pursuit, except perhaps that of a horse-jockey. Mr. Evarts is reported as saying that Dr. John Hall's influence lies in the fixed character of the man. And yet Dr. Hall is the very apostle of the conventional in belief and in usage, in matter and in manner. One cannot say, however, that he is in any bondage to convention; he is enthusiastically conservative; the whole weight of a great and sincere nature is felt in his teaching. "Words have weight when there is a man behind them." But men of smaller mold than Dr. Hall are smothered under a mass of conventional beliefs and usages; it is only the man of tremendous vitality who is able to infuse life into them. For the most part, there is nothing the world cares so little about as the minister whose piety and uprightness are cast in a conventional mold, for such goodness almost always has the air of being imposed from without. It is for this reason that heresy has of late commanded a premium, even in Scotland. The public does not like heresy, in and of itself; but when a man has a suspicion of eccentric opinions about him, there is a presumption that he does not buy of any spiritual old-clo' man. When I can pick a man out at first sight, by his air, dress, tone, as a parson, I have no further use for him or curiosity about him. Such men you can buy or sell by sample.

And yet, in a certain sense, the public helps to impress this conventional character upon clergymen. Only last week, a lady said to a gentleman of my acquaintance, in speaking of a minister: "I don't like Dr. ———; he is not a bit of a minister. If you go into his parlor he will tell you stories, and talk just like any other man." By the general acceptance of a dry-as-dust standard of propriety for ministerial character, behavior and speech, many men are bullied into a dullness not natural to them. They feel themselves shut out from all but distinctly religious circles, and thus miss that osmose process by which a healthy circulation of thought and feeling is kept up. I once knew a minister of ability and some note, but of great severity and exclusiveness of habit and feeling, who had a daughter of

rather feeble mind. This young lady was, like all the family, very strict in her religious notions, and she had barely intellect enough to make calls. One day, at a neighbor's, she told as a startling fact, that Miss Blank had called on the ladies at her father's house the week before.

"Whatever made her call," she added, "I don't know, for she isn't converted."

Profound sincerity is the true antagonist of stiff convention. A profound and aggressive sincerity is the very foundation for ministerial usefulness. I do not say by any means that it is the easiest road to popularity. If a man has a high sense of right and wrong, and a fearless self-reliance in following his convictions, he cannot miss of some sort of usefulness as a public teacher. Every such man is a conductor of divine influence, and what the teacher is is of more consequence than what he says. How different soever his creed may be from mine, the noble and unselfish man is an inspiration to me. He may be a Jew, a Catholic, a Calvinist, or a Free-thinker, but let him be nobly unselfish and pure, and he will be a tonic to the moral nature of men. And, above all, if he bear the name of a servant of Christ, let him be clean of all narrow self-seeking and full of all heroic self-sacrifice. For if he be vain, if he be effeminate, self-indulgent, pompous—if he be greedy of gain, if he be fond of clap-trap and stage-effects, how will men say that he is but a shabby servant of the divinest of masters.

Sincerity is the great antiseptic, if I may borrow the illustration. It will sweeten the narrow churchism of Keble and the narrow dogmatism of Spurgeon. It is healthful wherever you find it,—in the downrightness of Moody and in the sweet humanness of Robert Collyer. Often have I listened with delight to an obscure country preacher, whose beliefs and modes of thoughts were like the bonnets in the congregation, quite antiquated. The sermon has seemed to me like a cool spring in the mountains. But there was not a fresh thought in the whole discourse, and perhaps there was little or nothing even to agree with beyond the existence of God. But the sincere and unselfish spirit of the preacher was like a breeze from the garden of Eden. I like some preachers for what they tell me. I love other preachers for what they are. I met a lady in London of extreme radical views, who was an unstinted admirer of Spurgeon and his work. There is a free-masonry among sincere people.

Conventionality may be interesting when it is backed by sincerity and genuineness. But in most cases the man who moves in ruts is but a second-hand man. Every man is a man only when he finds his own orbit. Bushnell did not add a great deal that was permanent to religious thought; he was rather a poet than a philosopher. But he was a wonderful inspiration to others, for he was an honest and fearless spirit who found his orbit and moved therein, spite of persecutions for heresy from little big men who thought that God had lost the power to bring forth in every age fresh types of manhood. A gifted lady, whose charming conversation, alas! her friends shall listen to no more here, told me the last time I saw her of an Episcopal bishop who found, now and then, a sleepy parish clergyman that had suddenly waked up, and, in turn, had roused his whole parish. The venerable bishop, a keen observer, set himself to find out the genesis of this sporadic awakening in different quarters of his diocese. In every case he traced it to the reading of Frederic W. Robertson's writings. For Robertson, of Brighton, was a man who found his appointed orbit. When told by an obtrusive meddler of criticisms on his sermons, he answered her, you remember:

"Madam, I don't care."

"Do you know what end 'Don't Care' came to?" she inquired severely.

"I believe, madam, he was crucified on Calvary."

Sometimes a man's orbit, if I may stick to my figure, is an eccentric one. The backwoods grew many a sturdy preacher. The rough hurly-burly of the hunt, the shooting-match, the Indian fight, the corn-shucking, did not incline men to appreciate the refinements acquired in the schools. One Peter Cartwright was better for the wilderness than a hundred graceful Bourdalones or Farindons. Cartwright himself was of the backwoods in very bone and sinew. He despised all "college-made preachers" as something effeminate. He sneered at their very polish as unmanly, and the poor fellows from Princeton and Andover found themselves at first sadly wanting when weighed in the frontiersman's scales. Cartwright said that young Eastern parsons walked "like goslings that had got the straddles."

But Peter Cartwright was an extreme type,—a preacher with a dash of dare-devil in him. Old age softened none of his amusing, but almost brutal, rudeness. To

the very last his words were tomahawks. Barton Cartwright, of Northern Illinois, is living yet, I believe, and is as interesting a character as was his namesake. Eccentric he is, but never offensive,—a sweet and fresh spirit, grown wild but lovely, like a cardinal-flower. His humor is almost as irresistible as was that of the other Cartwright, and I will venture to tell here, what I have printed elsewhere, the excellent but severe repartee of Bishop Janes, spoken apropos of the venerable Barton. A young preacher of ability had been wantonly outraging Bishop Janes's prejudices by a display of gloves, canes, cigar and other things, which, to the rather austere old bishop, seemed appurtenances of a dandy. The bishop happened to praise Barton Cartwright, whom he greatly admired.

"Pshaw!" said the young man, superciliously. "Bart Cartwright's a bear."

"I prefer a bear to a lap-dog, any time," was Janes's quick rejoinder.

An eccentric preacher of the same region was Father Sinclair. I have heard that when his admirers thought to print the sketches of his sermons after his death, they were found to be merely a set of unintelligible hieroglyphics, with which the old man had arbitrarily associated certain courses of thought, incidents and so forth. He was rather illiterate, and with the growth of culture among the people found himself a little shoved aside by educated young men, albeit his natural eloquence kept him in request for camp-meetings and such gatherings. But Methodism had changed, and a university and theological school had been established at Evanston, and many good old ways were dying out. One day during the conference Father Sinclair was asked, in a group of ministers, where he was to be sent next year.

"To Evanston," he answered, dryly.

The grotesque idea of the unlettered backwoodsman in the Evanston pulpit, preaching to the eminent professors, excited laughter.

"Why, Father Sinclair," said some one, "what would they send you to Evanston for?"

"Oh! as a professor."

"Professor of what?"

"Professor of religion," answered he, with a sarcastic twinkle in his eye.

But if I were to enter on the wit of the backwoods preacher this paper would outgrow its limits. Let us turn to a Presbyterian. Dear Chaplain Joe Little, where

are you? It is years since I met you, filled as you were with philanthropic schemes for educating the poor whites of the South. There may be men more capable of carrying through a practical enterprise, but there never was a more enthusiastic, unselfish and hardy spirit. A college, a theological seminary, and a musical academy all graduated Chaplain Little, but not all together could take the freshness and the oddity of his genius out of him. When spiritual adviser to a regiment of wild West Virginians, he told them stories, sang them funny songs, adopted their dialect, and won their open hearts by manly open-heartedness. When Mosby captured Little it was in an unlucky time. Orders had been issued on the Federal side, by General Pope, I believe, that bushwhackers should have no quarter, and Mosby prepared to retaliate by shooting prisoners.

"It looked pretty solemn," said the chaplain, "when they cast lots to see who should inherit my horse."

But he took his little nondescript harmonium, and began to sing for dear life. All the droll songs that ever were invented, this doomed captive sang to the bushwhackers there in the mountains.

"I think I ought to shoot you," said Mosby, at length. "A fellow that keeps up men's spirits as you do is too valuable to the Yankees for me to let him off."

But let him off he did. Nobody could shoot such a combination of goodness and drollery as Chaplain Little.

Once, after a battle, a certain church was turned into a hospital, and wounded and dying lay all up and down the floor. It was a blue time, when men were dying not of wounds alone, but of the despair which was like an epidemic in the very atmosphere. A severe chaplain added to the terror by passing about exhorting the poor groaning fellows to prepare for death. Chaplain Little, seeing how fatal this dependency must prove, walked up into the pulpit, planted his little melodeon on his knees, and struck up a ridiculous song known as "The Ohio Girl." Sunlight came in with the rich melody of the chaplain's voice and the humor of his song. The surgeons took heart, and life seemed to come back to battered and homesick men. But the austere chaplain in the middle of the church called out:

"Chaplain Little, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to sing such stuff to men who ought to be preparing for death."

Whereupon a colonel, who had just had a leg amputated, raised his head, and addressing the last speaker, said:

"Chaplain Blank, I wish I had two legs, so that I could kick you out-of-doors."

I remember well a young frontier Methodist preacher who had the gift of grotesque but very vivid rhetoric, which in some unlettered men amounts almost to genius. In a conference of ministers, alluding to the fact that he was kept on hard frontier posts, he said cheerfully that it was his business "to drive the gospel breaking-team." (A breaking-team is one hitched to the great plow used to turn for the first time the ancient sod of the prairie.)

"Levi," said one of his friends a little later, "you ought to quit saying those odd things."

"That's so," answered the young man with sincere humility, and an evident resolution to reform. "Now, that expression about the gospel breaking-team might settle my coffee for life!"

When I say that freedom from conventional stiffness is of the utmost importance to the maintenance of a minister's influence, I don't mean that eccentricity shall be put on. The putting on of anything from without is sure to impair one's simplicity. But the men who hold the hearts of the people in this country are men who dare to do and say that which the oracles within them bid. On the other hand, nothing can be of less use in the world than the life of a minister who, neither in thought, habit, or phrase, ever moves out of tether, ever asks whether he is man or machine. An ex-minister in the town of my birth, having turned lawyer, rose to address the court for the first time. By sheer force of habit he drifted into old forms of expressions. "My brethren," he said to the jury, whereupon the court clerk, a witty old Irishman, piped out through his nose, "and fellow-travelers to eternity."

Cant phrases are proper only to poll-parrots, and poll-parrotism is one of the deadliest diseases of the pulpit.

There are many debates about the propriety of reading sermons. Nothing could be more vain. Dr. Storrs, with his fine diction and infinite memory, advocates extemporaneous speaking, while Dr. Taylor, an excellent and most sincere preacher, but hesitant when speaking without notes, is sure that it is better to read one's sermons. A man who is near-sighted, old, or astigmatic, might as well urge everybody to use

his kind of spectacles, as to try to persuade us that all preachers should deliver their sermons in the same way. I have heard that the combative Dr. Breckenridge once took fire in a meeting of Synod at some intimation that city ministers dressed too well and treated country brethren with contempt. He straightened his tall form and burst into indignant speech.

"Mr. Moderator," he said, "I am ready to exchange clothes with any brother on this floor."

A short, fat minister waddled into the aisle and cried out:

"Mr. Moderator, I'm his man!"

Why should Dr. Storrs or Dr. Taylor wish us to wear clothes that fit them? At the same time I am sure that many men would be better without manuscript who now use it from sheer timidity; and I know some who can never be anything but hopeless stammerers in extemporaneous speaking, and who would better go back to their writing.

Mr. Beecher, with his inexhaustible vocabulary, his ready command of apt illustrations, his histrionic gift, his boundless spontaneity, and all those other qualities that make him the master of improvisation, would be hopelessly crippled if he were set to read a written sermon. His lectures, which have the air of being more carefully prepared in the matter of diction than his sermons, are far inferior to the latter as examples of his eloquence. But, on the other hand, Canon Farrar, one of the rarest preachers the world has seen, reads every word of his sermons. His sermons in Westminster Abbey moved me to tears sometimes, though there was nothing that could be called exactly pathetic in them. There is a wonderful moral and æsthetic wholeness in him; one rejoices in his rare courage and lofty moral inspiration. I know no man who combines, as he does, the simplicity, repose, and finish of Greek literary art, with the high religious devotion and unwavering courage of a Hebrew prophet. Yes, and add, too, the magnanimity of a Christian disciple. His sermon on "The Confessional," delivered in July, 1877, to an audience that crowded all the hearing room of the Abbey, was the most masterful piece of destructive eloquence I have ever heard. Argument, ridicule, invective, were all intensified by the highest moral indignation. But not for a moment was the perfect poise of the speaker lost; there were sentences that thrilled the hearers like an electric shock, but there was nothing vehe-

ment from first to last. And the whole was closed by a noble passage, in which the men who held the views he had attacked so successfully were treated with the greatest personal respect, and the excellence of their work was fully recognized. Oh! that it were always so in religious debate!

After all, it is "the man behind" that gives weight to a discourse. I have never seen or heard Phillips Brooks; but, in his sermons and lectures as printed, there is the rare combination of personal earnestness with the utmost fairness toward opponents. But no preacher can be fairly estimated wholly by print. It is not by the compositions that he leaves, says a French writer, but by the memory of the effects he has produced, that an orator is to be judged. Of the purely pathetic or emotional orators, Bishop Simpson is one of the most successful, but there is nothing in his printed sermons to justify his reputation. He has a bold, dramatic instinct, and great sincerity of personal conviction.

Wendell Phillips once characterized a man as one who had "pulmonary eloquence." How many an eminent doctor has owed his distinction to a large chest, a resonant voice, and imposing manners! I forbear to repeat Sydney Smith's pun on "Postures and Impostures."

Sensationism is a grievous vice of the pulpit, and does incalculable injury to its influences. But sensationism is only an insurrection, somewhat violent, against conventionality. Men are so tired of metaphysics, and dogmatics, and firstlies, and secondlies, that they rush to the man who offers them relief. Though, for that matter, sensationism is a vice not peculiar to the pulpit. Literature, art, theaters, journalism, philanthropy, politics, the dry goods business, have all suffered from its ravages.

There is a sensation proper and a sensation improper; let us keep the distinction. The boat plashes the water with her wheels in order to go ahead; she makes an incidental sensation. But, if she only plashed the water, she would be like some ministers, some writers, some editors, some mountebanks. A rocket blazes for the mere sake of blazing, a fire-cracker makes a report for the sake of noise. A cannon blazes like the rocket and makes more noise than a hundred pop-crackers, but it does more. If you must make a noise in order to achieve a good purpose, by all means make a noise. But don't make a noise for the sake of the noise. Asses do that.

I do not object to advertising pulpit subjects, or to seeking fresh and interesting subjects. If I may advertise a lecture, why not a sermon? There is a good habit which the pulpit is learning of journalism—that of following the suggestion of any great event that is uppermost in the public mind. But there is a kind of preaching which may justly be called pulpit blood-and-thunder; it finds its interest in the same love of the horrible that sells the “penny dreadfuls,” and makes the story of a murder good stock for a newspaper.

It is so fashionable just now to denounce the bad taste of Dr. Talmage's pulpit performances, that I am inclined to put a little in the other scale. I prefer to remember the Tabernacle preacher in that earlier time before the great building made it needful to do an unreasonable amount of slashing in order to keep the house filled. Some evil influence has of late years dampened Mr. Talmage's humor, which was always his best gift. I used to hear him say some excellent things in droll ways in his first years in Brooklyn. He was speaking of the evil of high pew-rents one night, and he pictured a shipwreck with people floundering in the water.

“Man the life-boat, pull away! pull away! Now, save these men. Stop! Have you got any money? This seat in the bow is fifty cents, that in the middle is a dollar, the one astern there is twenty-five cents. Oh! you haven't any money! Well, go on, boys. There'll be a mission chapel along here to save these poor fellows presently!”

If I have dwelt in this discursive article on the foibles and eccentricities of parsons, it is not from any lack of respect for the class. I do not know any vocation that has produced nobler men. It is not to the great doctors that I appeal, but to the humbler men who have honored the calling. How many heroes I have known who have made me proud to be counted a parson with them! Brave, spirited James Peet rises up to my sight, missionary in the slums of New York, in the wilds of Lake Superior, and then among the negroes of the South. He was never eloquent, and had but little culture, but he was all man. I said he was never eloquent, but when at last he stood before those who had known him long, forewarned of death and haggard with consumption, asking no pity for himself, but pleading, as with his last breath, the cause of those to whom his last work

was given, we wept, all about him, moved by the matchless eloquence of heroic living. And there was Shaw, the sweet-spirited religious enthusiast, an Israelite without guile, whom I knew from boyhood, and who, now that his work is over, sleeps under the willows of the old grave-yard on the Ohio. I must not mention too freely the living, whose brave lives make the earth sweet. But I remember to have heard once the eloquent Dibrell, of Norfolk, who sent away his household and died with his people in the yellow-fever scourge. Nor shall I forget that Irish priest who lived through that epidemic, and when there sailed into Hampton Roads, some years after, a French ship, the men on which were dying by scores with the fever, he boarded her and ministered to the crew. He once showed me, with pardonable pride, a watch that the Emperor of the French had sent him as an acknowledgment of his services.

But this sort of heroism is common enough among ministers. More instances come to my pen than I can mention. There sat here in my library the other day Mr. Willard Parsons, who, a year and a half ago, was the pastor of a country Presbyterian church on the Erie Railroad. He found his work there, and this summer he has, with the aid of the “‘Evening Post’ Fresh-air Fund,” but without any organization, and without salary, taken one thousand and eighty-one invalid children from tenements in the city to sojourn for two weeks each in country farm-houses. Of his courage and sacrifices I may not speak. If liberal men were not so sunk in ruts, they would provide for the independence of such a man, that he might keep on in his work. “Endow a man, and not an institution,” says MacDonald.

When once a man has been guilty of writing novels there are always plenty of people who want to provide him with heroes for the next ones. A gentleman in Massachusetts is resolved that I shall write one with Abraham Lincoln for center-piece; another friend has a Catholic priest of the old French régime in the West whom he would like to have done, and a Connecticut deacon has offered to sell me an ancient love affair of his own as literary material if I will work it up on the halves. And one of the funniest of our American humorists, in a serious fit, once handed over to me a Baptist minister for a hero. He is too good to be lost, and as I set out with a combative Baptist let me put in here a brave one. He

was well known to my informant, the pastor of a church in a town in the great wild forests of Michigan many years ago. He lived a bachelor life, and lived most penuriously. In every other regard he was beyond reproach, but people thought him most unreasonably stingy, and dubbed him a miser. When he died, it was found that his hard-saved money had been put away for all those years that he might leave twenty thousand dollars to found an academy in the town for the boys and girls of that destitute region. And in all those years of self-denial and

odium, he had hugged that excellent project and held firmly on his way, without giving a sign to any one or asking any sympathy.

We live at the dawning of a better time, a time of broader views and a more hopeful spirit. The severe and stately parson passes away. No longer, clad in official and funereal black, shall he sit like Poe's raven, cawing a sepulchral "nevermore" to the despairing human spirit. The strong men of our time know how much better is love than fear, hope than despair, personal influence than official authority.

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

The Magazine.

THE minister who preaches his Master fifty-two Sabbaths in the year, takes the Thanksgiving anniversary for the airing of himself and his pet notions on social or political topics. A wayfarer finds nothing so convenient and suggestive as a mile-stone, to sit down upon or lean against. Anniversaries have always been occasions for the survey of the path before and the path already trod, for individuals and enterprises and institutions; and as eight years of the existence of this magazine have been completed, and we enter with this number upon the ninth year, and the seventeenth volume, it seems a fitting occasion for us to say something about it to its friends and the great public.

Eight years ago, SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY began to be published. It entered the field without a subscriber, and now has a patronage crowding closely upon a hundred thousand. It never was growing more vigorously than it is to-day, and never, during any year, made a better or more healthy advance than it did last year. The elements that have commanded this success seem worth talking about.

No one can suppose that a magazine published without illustrations could have achieved the success to which we allude. It is doubtful whether the same magazine, omitting the illustrations entirely, could have been made to pay expenses, thus reduced to the minimum, as they would have been. It is proper, then, that we place the pictorial department of the magazine at the head of the list, in recounting the elements of its success. It is not necessary for us to repeat the verdict of the newspaper press, both of this country and Great Britain, in regard to the excellence of this department. It has commanded, by its superiority, all that it has won. No labor and no money have been spared to secure the best results possible in this country; and such has been the advance in the arts of designing and engraving, under the stimulus of this patronage, that it may well be doubted whether the work on SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY could be produced to-day in any other

country. Certainly, there is no such work done on a popular magazine in any other part of the world.

It is noticeable, too, that the same change of relation, between the best artists and the magazine—considered generally, as a literary institution—has taken place that had already been effected between the best writers and the magazine. Formerly, the best writers of fiction never appeared in the magazine. It will be remembered that Dickens's works originally appeared in parts, and that almost all the prominent novel-writers of Great Britain published from the manuscript their completed volumes. The magazine-writers were another class, and a lower one, in everything, perhaps, but the essay. Now it is the second or third rate novelist who cannot get publication in a magazine, and is obliged to publish in a volume, and it is in the magazine that the best novelist always appears first. When this magazine published its first number, the best artists, as a rule, were not willing to engage in illustration, and very few of them had ever learned to draw on the block for the engraver. Within the past twelve months, some of the best artists in this country have been more than willing to furnish their exquisite work for the MONTHLY, and it will soon be impossible for any but the best artists to get magazine work to do.

The next element of success that comes up for notice is the publication of the distinctively American novel. In the success of a popular magazine, the serial novel has become a very important factor. There is a large number of readers in the country who never subscribe for a year, but who always buy the numbers as they appear. To give regularity and steadiness to this demand and sale, the serial novel has been found to be all important. For many years the American public depended upon the British novel. It took the work of the British novelist at second-hand, and at the price of second-hand work. The consequence was that the novel-writing capacity of the American remained undeveloped. This magazine saw very early the evil