

Our Contributors.

THE INTELLIGENCER AS A MINISTER.

BY REV. A. H. M'LEOD.

"I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," said Jesus. The best gospel ministers get no higher than this, no matter what have been their advantages. It might be said that the man who gets there, that is, who feels that he is a servant to the spiritual needs of the people, does well. That place is to be coveted.

Gospel ministers are many, and yet how few when we consider the many calls to duty. This minister of whom I write had "a call." No one who knows the minister doubts that. He not only felt "woe is me," but "woe will be to many others if I preach not the gospel." No minister could give clearer evidence of having been called to preach. None doubted less their call to preach. Many unparalleled discouragements were overcome, proving most convincingly the call. Examiners found he was orthodox in his views. The only debatable question among the divines was, "Shall we get a hearing?" The young minister settled this for them: "If God calls, he who has been called will be heard," he said.

This minister's first sermon was somewhat a trial one. His text was carefully selected. The second word of the text was "God," the last two words were "Jesus Christ;" the rest perhaps you have seen before this. There was light in this sermon, more brilliant than the sun. There was glory around.

This sermon secured for him a call from a flock. They did not say how much they would give. He, for fear of insulting them, did not ask, "Are they good pay?" Nevertheless, with much trembling, he stated, at his first opportunity, what an honest minister ought to receive for his work. His first sermon was heard by more than an average audience. He had no predecessor, with whom to compare notes, but he did this with the minister of another denomination. By this experience he was much encouraged. But remembering that "a new broom sweeps clean," he did not become vain glorious.

To get a regular congregation was an early difficulty. He prepared a sermon on "sanctification," expecting a congregation of well-grown Christians, when, perhaps there would assemble a congregation of hard-hearted sinners. He prepared a sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," expecting to have ungodly men to hear him, when, perhaps, the parents had all planned to send their innocent children to church that day. Not only was he troubled about the irregularity of attendance, but many dropped out altogether. Many of those whose names were on the subscription paper died or migrated across the line. Of course we had to lose their subscription; for the flock could not afford to lose it—or thought so.

For several years he had curious experiences. One bright summer day he preached from "Owe No Man Anything." When about half way through the sermon, one of his auditors went out, slamming the door as he went. The next day the preacher heard the cause—the man was three years in arrears. He paid up but did not go back again.

Not long afterwards another one of his hearers did the same thing. This day the preacher was, with much physical and intellectual energy, discussing the rum traffic. The man who went out was a rum-seller.

It was a long time before he had any approvals of his work. One day he called on a dying woman who had, on a stand near her bed, the Bible and the INTELLIGENCER. Tremblingly he asked, "What are these here for? 'My best companions,' was her reply. "They have taught me how to live and how to die." It is needless to say that the minister began his next week's work with a comparatively light heart. Five years had brought him one approval. He thanked God, and was encouraged.

He would often say to his Christian wife that the people did not listen with appreciation. But one day, as he was preaching on immersion, a man responded loudly, "Amen!" He was somewhat chagrined, next day, when he heard that a Methodist family, very much disliked by this member, was present; they being the occasion of the response, and not the sermon. But further on in his meeting spontaneous applause was more comforting.

What greatly troubled this minister more was that he had but few converts. And when any one sent him a pledge, they broke it so easily. He remembered well that an older and more experienced man had told him, "Your people are not a cultured people; you are to instruct them." He looked with a degree of hope and comfort for a future audience, to the children whose parents were already his hearers.

On several occasions he preached missionary sermons. While his own soul was stirred with the need of saving the heathen, his sermons met with little acceptance. But in course of time, in one of the annual meetings, he was more than surprised when one of the more intelligent ladies moved that our pastor regularly preach a missionary sermon. He had done so ever since.

Much concern was felt for the Sunday-school. The children, many of them, had no quarterlies, and no helps with which to study the lesson. So he resolved to give special attention to that branch of Christian work. That resolution he has faithfully kept.

Ministers of other denominations had become deeply interested in young people's societies. Indeed, many of his flock had been drawn away because of particular interest being taken in them elsewhere. What was

he to do? The elders were consulted, the young people organized, and one day when a university student waited on him and said, "Our league requests you at regular intervals to preach in their interest," he was overcome. For this he had been praying a long time.

This minister, you see, had much to do. Is it any wonder that his health gave way? Vacations usually come to ministers when they are well, but he had no rest till compelled by sickness to take it. Congregations usually pay the bills of a minister's vacation; a few of this minister's most intimate friends gave him a few dollars to pay his car fare. He came back stronger and in better health.

Not many get burned out, but he was. If this had only inconvenienced him, it would not have made much difference, but how his congregation found fault, especially those who had not paid their subscriptions. They found more fault than if they had been burned out themselves.

What minister every time he preaches has something to say to the post-graduate, the university student, the teacher, the deacon, the parents, the young people, the children, the sick, the sinner, the Christian, the politician? Does not this one?

What minister does his work more clearly, more regularly, with greater sacrifice, with more prayer, more faith, more confidence in his audience, with less fault-finding, with as little thanks from his people? Who reaches more every week, who has occupied the same pulpit so long, whose congregation owes their minister as much as his? None. *And I am one of the congregation. God forgive us.*

There is no doubt that the prayers are those whose names are mentioned below have helped this minister very much, but in reality they have received more help than they have given. Caleb would never have seen clusters of grapes in Canaan, John would have died before writing his reminiscence in Patmos, Joseph could not have supplied Israel with as much corn, Gideon would never have been a judge, Benjamin might have died in the hands of his cruel brethren, David might have been still caring for his father's flock, Abram have been ploughing the ridges of Canaan, and Jonathan still a prisoner of war in the hands of the Philistines, if it had not been for the faithfulness of this minister.

I was just about rising to say, "Mr. Moderator, I move that this minister be granted a vacation of four months, that he be urged to make a visit to Palestine, and that the congregation—the people to whom he has ministered so long,—pay his expenses, and be hereby notified to govern themselves accordingly," when the ringing of the door bell reminded me that I was not in Conference, but in my own home, the parsonage.

Clark's Harbor, N. S.

—Rev. C. A. Barbour, D.D., of Rochester, N.Y., has been called to the pastorate of Tremont Temple, Boston.

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