

A GRAVEYARD FOR GOSSIP

If you must gossip, tell your seamy tale to someone who won't tell anyone else. One of those old-time wooden Indians might do. Or some china figurine. Or your child's teddy bear or doll. Your dog or cat should be able to keep the secret. It would not be safe to tell it to the birds, for our feathered friends have been much maligned in the common expression, "A little bird told me." Go out into the middle of the section and relieve your urge to tell where none but the rabbits and the squirrels can hear. The whispering winds have better subject matter than what you will tell them.

There are a few people in whom you can confide your story. Proverbs describes one such: "he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (11:13b). A person of this genius is a graveyard for gossip. Any tale which has no real right to public possession dies with him. He carefully weighs whether what he hears is worthy of being repeated. If the decision is negative or doubtful, he promptly buries the tale away.

Actually, people like that don't hear many tales. The gossipers don't like the cool reception they get. The sober judgment of eye and demeanor is not easy to meet. And so the one who refuses to gossip soon is left uninformed.

It is of no particular compliment to a man or woman that he knows everything that is going on, including things that should not go on. It is a compliment to a man when the purveyors of scandal detour around him. Here, surely, ignorance is bliss. There are things a good man would rather not know. His ears are clean and his mind untainted. Thoreau once wrote of people whose ears are vast hoppers for sound.

A deaf man once thought that he was fortunate, for there were so many things he didn't need to hear. We can be thankful that we have ears. But the good man will learn to control the gate between his ears and his tongue. The ground plan of a Christian mind should include a graveyard for gossip.—Gospel Herald

In favor of

AN OLDER PASTOR

American Churches are aggravating their acute shortage of qualified clergymen by making a fetish of youth.

Denominational leaders report a growing tendency among local congregations to set arbitrary age limits in hiring new pastors. Many pulpit committees refuse to consider any applicant over forty. Surveys show that ministers over fifty often have great difficulty in finding employment.

This discrimination against older ministers is hurting the churches, as well as the clergymen who are consigned to the scrap heap in the prime of their professional career.

The National Council of Churches reported recently that major U. S. Protestant bodies now have a shortage of at least 25,000 ministers. Church membership has been growing much more rapidly than the flow of trained ministers from seminaries. The council estimates that American churches will need upwards of 168,000 additional ministers by 1975 to meet the demands of their ever-expanding enrollment.

Why—in the face of this serious shortage of professional manpower—do churches sharply narrow their own field of prospective pastors by insisting on youth as an indispensable qualification? Dr. Aute L. Carr, assistant dean of Yale Divinity School, writing in the *Christian Century*, lists three "popular fallacies" which cause churches to shy away from ministers over fifty.

Fallacy number one is that the older minister is "a poor health risk." Carr rebuts this notion by pointing to studies of the U. S. Public Health Service, which show

that the average incidence of illness is actually higher at age thirty than at age fifty.

A second fallacy is that "older men are less efficient and less effective in their work" Carr says this generalization about older persons "has been widely accepted in industry, and is often carried over into the thinking of churchmen who are charged with the selection of new ministers."

DENIED BY RESEARCH

But here, as in the case of the health question, research has refuted the popular idea. Several studies in recent years have shown that older men develop disciplined work habits and an ability to concentrate which more than offsets any slowing down of their reflexes. They also tend to be more conscientious about the performance of their duties, and less distracted by outside interests.

The third fallacy is the belief that a youth minister is the only kind who can "capture the imagination and win the hearts of the young people of the church."

"The young people themselves would be the first to deny this," Carr says. "If you observe students in secondary schools and in colleges, you will often discover that the teacher they most respect and love, the teacher who is exercising the greatest influence in their lives, is one whose hair has long since turned gray with age."

Carr concludes that churches cannot afford to continue their present prodigal waste of "the tremendous resource we have in our older ministers."

—The Baptist Record

GLORIES ABOVE

A story is told of a small lad who lived in the heart of one of the great European cities. He was truly an urchin of the streets—the only playground he had ever known was the hard pavement of this great city.

Shortly after the beginning of World War II, the city established its blackout policy, and on the first blackened night the boy slipped out into the streets as usual. But all was still and very black; he could see nothing in front or beside him, so he raised his eyes, and high above him he saw millions of lights. For the first time in his life he had seen the stars.

The story reminds us that many of the beautiful things in life become visible only in contrast with the dark and undesirable. In the midst of the blackness of trouble, sorrow, and despair, let us remember to look up, and shining as beacon lights far beyond the darkness, we may see the stars of eternal truth and beauty, and the everlasting glory of God's unchanging love.

—The War Cry.

A COUNTRY CHURCH

I slipped into a little church

The peace of God was there,

I saw it in the faces,

I felt it in the Prayer.

The Word—they called it Holy,

The Christ—He was Divine,

I left to face another world

With courage, high and fine.

God bless the little churches

Scattered here and there,

God bless their faithful preachers

And the people bowed in prayer.

And tho' they worship simply,

It is never commonplace,

For the very light of Heaven

Beautifies it with God's Grace.

Quoted

The King's Highway