

Family Circle.

SHOULD HE BE PERMITTED TO PREACH?

CHAP. VI. UNMANLINESS.

Men in this life often find themselves in situations of doubtful propriety; and in deciding how to go forward are perplexed as to the course to be pursued. In such a state of things some are influenced to choose and act guided by the promptings of unholy ambition; some from considerations of worldly gain, some from the dictates of self-gratification; and some under the guidance of a particular desire to be noted among their fellow men for what is misnamed genius, being only an unbalanced mind guided by selfish motives and manifesting whatever ability it possesses in mere idiosyncrasy. How very few, in extricating themselves from difficult positions ever make it a subject of earnest inquiry to find out the right. Expediency decides in nine cases out of ten. And men, untrue to themselves, plunge onward in a course which their better judgment must condemn, making this shift and that, until they find themselves at last prostrate and ruined.

Richard Landon was incited to his choice by a desire for fame. He flattered himself it was the behest of duty he was obeying. It cannot be urged but that it was his duty to accept the kind offer of his benefactress to receive a theological education. This might be admitted right, though it strikes us that it is far better for any man "to work his way up," if we may use this homely but expressive phrase; but in the name of religion and for the purpose of gratifying a great ambition, it was decidedly wrong. Those who undertake to preach Christ should feel very sure they have clean hands. It is one thing to preach about Christ, and quite another to preach Him in His fulness as Saviour—the only Saviour of man.

We are delighted to see even the faint evidences of dissatisfaction with our present system of aiding candidates for the Christian ministry, now manifesting themselves in various directions. It is a healthy sign, an indication of a better day for the ministry and the people. If a young man feels himself called to preach Christ, and cannot see his way clear financially without sacrificing his manhood, he may justly conclude he is mistaken. For when the Lord calls men to be leaders of the people, he endows them with power from on high. And a man who properly estimates his position as an ambassador for Christ, cannot have an unmanly time-serving, man-fearing spirit. It is impossible.

But, as we have reiterated several times in this story, Richard Landon's strongest incentive to action was self-love and desire for the applause of men. And surely there could be no two characteristics more fearful in a minister than these. And yet how often we are driven to the conclusion that those who stand to lead men to heaven, need themselves to learn the way. We are so accustomed to popular rather than pious—to interesting rather than instructive pastors—that we have ceased to notice the deplorable deficiency of the pulpit in all the essentials of a truly effective preacher. Thank God there are some signs, faint as yet as yet it is true, that the beginning of the end of this sad condition of things is at hand. There are a few noble watchmen whose trumpet gives no uncertain sound. And the people of God will rally around the good old truths of His blessed Word, and present a bold front, and maintain the standard of the Captain of their salvation, while time servers and mere popular lecturers, and lovers of self, and seekers of the applause of men, shall be driven before them like the chaff of the summer threshing floor before the wind. "He that is for us is stronger than all who are against us."

It was a sad parting between Nellie Mason and Richard Landon. Her heart was well nigh broken; for although he assured her the probability was he should return, she nevertheless felt it was very doubtful. Her heart and judgment condemned the step he was taking, but she was too conscientious to interfere with what she fully believed was his sense of duty. He was deeply pained by the farewell, inasmuch as the step laid hand on the idol of self within his bosom, which the beautiful womanly love of Nellie had served to magnify and adorn. She, poor girl, mistook the cause of the great tears that coursed down his cheeks, as he lingered beside the fringe to repeat assurances of his love, and to console himself with the thought that he might return.

There are some lovers that are passionately excessive so long as the adorer is in

the presence of the adored, one whose tender, trustful devotion and self sacrifice each moment reflect that image of the flattered lover. Such lovers are very apt to lose their ardor as soon as some one or something else comes up to serve as a mirror for the "stately ego." And Richard Landon quickly wiped away his tears and gave himself to "prospecting" the future; and when two score of miles had been quickly passed he was as much interested in the contemplation of the things before him as in those he had left behind him.

It would take too much time and space to enter into his thoughts and plans; they reached out as usual beyond the boundary of the theological term into the coming years, each one of which should lay its tribute on the altar of his self aggrandizement. And so greatly had his supposed duty to the future eclipsed his duty to the past, that, on reaching the home of his benefactress two days after, he unbosomed the secret love of his heart, and laid it before the eyes of an entire stranger, one who perhaps had never known from experience what a woman's true love is—to be criticized, decided upon—and acted upon.

Could anything more fully prove the craven spirit of Richard Landon than this revelation and heartless discussion.

A man who can thus, as Richard Landon did, bare the sacred feelings of his soul to the critical gaze of a stranger, even though a benefactor, and that, too, where the honor and happiness of another were involved, must be pronounced deficient in all those higher perceptions of the pure and true that fit a man to walk in the elevated plane of thought and feeling so requisite to constitute a gentleman.

What a want of manhood! What a cheapening and degrading of that sacred relation in which Richard Landon stood to Nellie Mason, to allow himself to be questioned and advised about his love for her, and the sacred relation in which he had stood to her for months as her affianced! And then when the subject had been fully discussed both this way and that, and looked at it in all its phases simply as it bore upon his future, with entire disregard of the rights and claims and plighted troth of the pure, noble girl, who at any time would have laid down her life for him, the decision was reached and acted upon in a style of chaffering characteristic of a horse jockey in a trade.

If men so destitute, even of the lowest grade of honor, are educated and placed in our pulpits to lead men and women onward and upward in the divine life, we see at once that the whole business, (for it is simply a business) must prove a failure, and ultimately a disgrace. The blind leading the blind they must all perish in the ditch together. A man who will lieidly down on the earnings of another without an effort at self-support most assuredly is not at all fitted to preach the Gospel of Christ which is full of the spirit of manly effort and constant industry. And then when, in addition to this manifest want of self-respect, he evidences such heartlessness and want of refinement as to barter his affections and plighted vows, and the true undying love of a noble woman for his own self-aggrandizement, the question may well be asked of him, Shall he be permitted to preach?

In the hands of such, Christ is put to an open shame, and the world may well sneer and his, and turn in disgust from such a representative of religion. The time has certainly come when judgment must begin at the house of God. The worldly policy which now shadows the churches of Christ as a deadly Upas must be repudiated, and we must come back to the unchangeable guidance of God's Word. As antiquated as these sublime truths are now regarded by the progressiveness of this present age, they are the only salvation of mankind. Cutting loose from them, men, as individuals and as communities, are hopelessly wrecked.

While Richard Landon was allowing himself to be thus catechized and the holy secrets of his heart thus laid bare before the cold and calculating eye of another, to be viewed and acted upon in the light of mere traffic, the woman who loved him—who was ready at any time to bind up her life destiny with his in the service of her Master—willing to undergo privation and toil, aye and penury if need be, for his sake—this noble, self-sacrificing woman, was bearing up as cheerfully as she could under the sorrow his absence and uncertainty of his return caused her. Her heart bowed under the half-formed fear that years might intervene before they should meet again. She trusted him with the strong faith of her generous soul. She would have doubted her very existence as soon as she would have doubted his integrity and constancy.

Alas, alas, she little knew the craven nature hid within his selfish breast, which even then was deliberately planning to lay her pure and holy love on the altar of his selfish ambition. What cared he if her heart broke, so that his self-love was gratified? What cared he if her life should be suddenly dashed out by the fearful shock, so that he might move onward towards the goal of his ambition!

It was well for Nellie Mason that her fate was disovered from that of such a craven, soulless specimen of humanity, even though it well nigh cost her her reason.

Better that she lie silently down to sleep beside father and mother gone before, than to have suffered the fatal disappointment of finding, when it was too late, that the idol she had worshipped was simply a poor snivelling creature that could sell manhood, honor, plighted faith, undo a thousand promises, and stand up before a whole community a blackened character? And to whose outraged sense he now appears as a criminal.

To be continued.

Who are the Best Boys.

A tradesman once advertised for a boy to assist in the work of a shop, and to go on errands, etc. A few hours after the morning papers announced that such a boy was wanting, his shop was thronged with applicants for the situation. Boys of every grade, from the neatly dressed, intelligent little youth, down to the ill-bred, clumsy, poor, came either in the hope of a situation or to see if an opportunity offered for a speculation.

The man, at a loss to decide among so many, determined to dismiss them all, and adopt a plan which he thought might lessen the number, and aid him in the difficult decision.

On the morning following, an advertisement appeared in the papers to this effect:

"Wanted, to assist in a shop, a boy who obeys his mother."

Now, my little friends, how many boys think you, came to inquire for the situation after this advertisement appeared? If I am rightly informed, among all the lads of the great city, who were wanting the means of earning a living, there were but two who could fearlessly come forward and say, "I obey my mother."

Smiles.

Did you ever notice that the man who growls the loudest about paying \$7 for a \$4 smoking cap at the church fair is the man who most complacently and willingly pays twenty cents for a cigar with three cents worth of tobacco in it?

A sociable man is one who, when he has ten minutes to spare, goes and bothers somebody who hasn't.

A layman in Boston asked a neighbor if his minister did not borrow his sermons. The reply was in the form of another question, "Do you not wish yours did?"

"Dipped into a weak solution of accomplishments," is a term now applied to many of our girls professing to be highly educated.

I thought you took an interest in my welfare," said an unsuccessful lover. "No, sir," she replied, "only in your farewell."

Why is a baby like a sheaf of wheat? First it is cradled, then thrashed, and then it becomes the flour (flower) of the family.

In one of Chicago's suburbs, at a recent Sunday school meeting, a long-winded clergyman consumed too much of the time on a wordy address. When he sat down, the leader of the meeting announced a hymn—one by Bliss—beginning "Hallelujah 'tis done!" He didn't mean it, but it was apropos.

Dr. Guthrie once said: "Whiskey is good in its own place. There is nothing like whiskey in this world for perserving a man when he is dead. But it is one of the worst things in the world for perserving a man while he is living. If you want to keep a dead man, put him in whisky; if you want to kill a living man, put whiskey into him."

On one occasion when the late Lord Bishop of Lichfield had spoken of the importance of diligent, painstaking preparation for the pulpit, a verbose young clergyman said, "Why, my Lord, I often go the vestry even without knowing what text I shall preach upon; yet I go up and preach an extempore sermon, and think nothing of it." The bishop replied, "Ah, well, that agrees with what I hear from your people; for they hear the sermon, and they also think nothing of it."

And old Scotch lady, who had no relish for modern church music, was expressing her dislike for the singing of an anthem in her own church one day, when a neighbor said, "Why, that is a very old anthem. David sang that anthem to Saul." To this the old lady replied, "Weel, weel, I noo for the first time understand why Saul threw his javelin at David when the lad sang for him."

A celebrated German chemist, to whom was addressed the question, "What is man?" promptly replied, "A pinch of phosphorus and a bucketful of water."

An Irish newspaper says: "In the absence of both editors, the publishers have succeeded in securing the services of a gentleman to edit the paper this week."

The minister asked the Sunday-school, "With what remarkable weapon did Sampson at one time slay a number of Philistines?" For a while there was no answer, and the minister, to assist the children a little, commenced tapping his jaw with the tip of his finger, at the same time saying, "What's this—what's this?" Quick as thought, a little fellow quite innocently replied: "The jawbone of an ass, sir."

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