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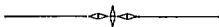
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ethical tendency in the human mind, may be often recognised as allied to the religious truths which we hold most sacred. And, assuredly, we should gladly recognise as common ground whatever there is in Islam of truth concerning God, and of acknowledgments that make for Christianity. But as we cannot put, complacently, in one Pantheon Socrates, and Buddha, and Confucius, and Christ, and honour all alike, so we cannot, without treason to truth, permit Muhammad to be placed before any, even "lower races," as an alternative prophet to the Lord Jesus Christ.

W. SAUMAREZ SMITH.



ART. IV.—THE CLERICAL BAGMAN.

TO the curate who has rashly given his heart to undowered beauty and worth, who wants to marry, but sees no speedy prospect of a rectory, such an advertisement as the following is not without its attraction :

WANTED immediately by the Society for the Promotion of . . . , etc., a Clerical District Secretary. £300 per annum and travelling expenses.—Apply, with testimonials, to Secretary, 47, Temple Court Square, London.

It is true that the curate may not know much about the Society in question; but, when he makes inquiry, he finds that its objects are excellent, its work is undeniable, and that it has secured the services of many good men, and the support of quite a number of enthusiastic contributors. Fathers of the Church direct its management, Bishops are its patrons, noble and distinguished laymen have occupied its presidential chair. Why should he not master the details of this new work, make this cause his own, and give some good service in return for his wage? So, he sometimes seals his fate, and, by one quick leap out of curatedom, condemns himself to wander for years in that intermediary limbo which lies outside the desired rest of the beneficed.

Not that I would assert that the life of a travelling secretary is for a man a fruitless one. Far from it. It might be sufficient to say that he is doing a necessary work which demands his best efforts. That is in itself enough to ennoble the life of any man. But apart from this, he will be brought into contact with many men, and many modes of religious life. He will have to adapt his voice and style to many buildings and many widely different audiences. He will have opportunities of platform speaking and lecturing such as are not within the reach of the ordinary curate. All this should shape him, if he is shapeable, into a ready and efficient man. The work of a travelling secretary to one of our great Church Societies, if not

prolonged beyond a few years, ought to be a very good second course to the preliminary training of a curate, and an excellent preparation for a Profession which makes more demands upon a man's knowledge of his kind, breadth of sympathy and ready tact, than perhaps any other.

Let not the secretary, however, be too sure that his term of service will be for a few years only. Looking over the lists of any of the great Societies, it will not be difficult to find the names of men who have been travelling preachers during the past ten, fifteen, even thirty years. Think of it, aspiring young man. A possible thirty years spent in speaking and lecturing on the same subject—harping on the one same string. You will probably know your one subject thoroughly by that time; but there is the possibility also that you may by that time be somewhat palled by it! My friend and informant on this matter, whose head is growing gray in the service of a certain London society, solemnly assured me the other day that, had he known——! But, then, we never do know. Why, indeed, should we know whither Duty will lead us? Enough for us that we should take the first step which Duty demands. If a door is clearly opened before you by the Divine Hand, which leads to such a nomad life, fear not; enter in—new experiences are in store for you, which will, in due time, bear their own fruit; but do not indulge in too sanguine expectations that this sudden advancement will bring you to honourable preferment in the Church any sooner, or perhaps so soon, as will patient continuance in the humble and ill-paid path of the curate. If your heart has enlarged itself toward some special field of Home or Foreign Mission work, and you feel that you can happily and profitably spend your whole time and talents in planning and organizing, arguing, demonstrating and begging in behalf of that special field of work, here is a career clearly marked out for you. It is not everyone who combines in himself the business qualifications and the gifts of the ready spokesman which go to make a good "Association Secretary." Let him in whom dwell the germs of these, arise and develop them. Never fear, there is a blessing in it. Only let him take heed how he is thereto moved by other motives. The curate who is tired of serving under a master, may find that he has merely exchanged one dictator for many—a vicar, who at least has a heart that can be moved and a humanity that can be appealed to, for that soulless, conscienceless, and irresponsible thing called a committee. Alas! miserable one, if his nose should be brought up to that grindstone!

Or if, again, he deems himself unknown and unappreciated in his obscure parish—"an oak planted in a flower-pot," as a

certain popular preacher, condemned to a provincial pulpit, indignantly declared himself to be—let him consider that acquaintances and friends are not interchangeable terms; and that it may not be better to be known by many than to be loved by few.

My friend the secretary, from whose stores of experience I have drawn the above sage reflections, tells me that he once received a very severe letter from a country clergyman to whom he had written, asking in the usual way for "Sermons in aid of his Society." This gentleman replied in much the same spirit as Eliab, when his anger was kindled against wandering David. "Why camest thou down hither? With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." So did this country shepherd wax indignant as he contemplated the clerical bagman flitting hither and thither like a wandering bee, and collecting from church after church what honey and pollen he might get for the central London hive. He assured my friend with much warmth that society did wrong to encourage the idleness of a race of young men who preferred to gad about the world and live upon their neighbours, rather than to settle down to the drudgery of parish work. Over all this my poor friend could but grimly smile. He had not seen his wife for a week. He had preached three times, taken two whole services, and addressed two Sunday-schools the previous Sunday. During the days that followed he seemed to see himself comically exaggerated into an odd figure—a kind of Waukenphast, with flying coat-tails, a bundle of diagrams under one arm and a carpet-bag on the other, rushing along crowded platforms to catch trains, interviewing vicars, calling upon local secretaries, inspecting public halls and National school-rooms, putting up apparatus, lecturing in hot, bare rooms beneath the glare of gas-jets, shaking hands with old ladies, and answering questions till his head swam, on every conceivable and inconceivable subject which might be supposed to be affected by the work of the Society whose cause he advocated. He was pathetically conscious that, at least he had not been idle. How gladly would he oftentimes, when his nerves were all on edge with the vibration of railway-wheels and the jolting of dog-carts; when he held in his hands four or five letters from different parts of his district, all demanding sermons on the same Sunday; or when—and this was the worst to bear—the numbing thought possessed him that he was but a wandering voice, and would never be allowed to taste the sweet joy of himself gathering in the soul-fruit of his utterances—how gladly, I say, would he have laid down

the carpet-bag and taken up the crook, if some patron could have been found who would have placed one in his hands!

Ah! poor clerical bagman, thou needest to be a man of unusual parts indeed if thou wouldest hope to leave a clear image of thy personality upon the retina of the vicar, canon, archdeacon, or even dean who entertains thee. They see so many of thy kind. And then thy visit is so short. "Like a weaver's shuttle," so thou dartest through life. A few weeks, and thine individuality will be blurred and thine image lost in those of thy successors, who, like thee, came and earnestly stated the cause of such and such a Society as though it demanded precedence of all the hungry charities of the world, preached a "begging sermon" for it, and went—into the whirling crowd of busy black-coats.

The young secretary whose heart is enlarged toward his fellows, and still green enough to put forth buds of expectation, may congratulate himself during the first year of his service that he has made many new friends. Let him be content if he has made a few. Country parsonages are very pleasant resting-places. The clergy are the pink of hospitality. At the hall, or at the wealthy merchant's well-appointed house, you may be received more magnificently; but nowhere are you made more at home than at the parsonage. The secretary will have many a pleasant remembrance of homely "spare rooms," where, at the foot of the white, broad bed, an easy-chair and writing-table, drawn up before a cheerily blazing fire, showed that the house-mistress had not been indifferent to his wants. He will recall many a breakfast-table around which sat fresh-faced boys and girls, and where "Rector, Director, and Miss-directors" all vied in showing him a courteous attention. He will have parted from such families with many a warm hand-shake and well-meant wish that he should return again next year. He hopes that he will neither forget nor be quite forgotten. When next year comes round, he has thus come and gone from, it may be, some hundred such homes. He recommences his round. Again hospitality, kindly greetings, friendliness; but, by-and-by, it will dawn upon him that this is a friendliness which differs widely in degree from that which exists between fellow-workers in the same field, or from that special and most delightful intercourse which exists between the pastor and the people who seek his ministrations. Friends no doubt he will in time make if "he show himself friendly"—even "friends for life;" but not more perhaps than he would have made out of his own rank of life had he remained in his cure; and out of the ranks of the poor, whose love and friendship is so precious, almost none.

My friend the secretary was a very young man when he left

a suburban curacy to join the ranks of the peripatetics and carry his carpet-bag throughout the provinces. He had ventured, after much urging on the part of his friends, to reply to such an advertisement as has been quoted above. Thanks mainly to an enthusiastic description of his oratorical powers by one of the aforesaid who firmly believed that he would not stay his triumphant career until he had attained to an archbishopric, he found himself in what the Scottish call the "leet" of half-a-dozen or so candidates who were chosen from the mass of competitors for final selection. In due time he presented himself at the dull-looking house in Temple Court Square which was the Society's head-quarters. He was asked to sit down in a large, dingy upper room where several clerks were at work, and abide until the committee were ready to see him. It was rather awful. He felt, he says, almost as though he had been whisked back to the old school again, and were once more in the dread antechamber waiting his turn to be caned. By and by came a messenger; so he settled his countenance, smoothed down his emotions with a mental "plums, prunes, and prisms," and advanced with what courage he could muster into the presence of the Board. A long table covered with red baize, around which sat about a score of middle-aged and elderly gentlemen. A chairman with bland smile and gray whiskers, seated at one end of the table, between two clerical secretaries. Forty or more eyes focussed inquiringly upon the curate, who felt himself begin to blush, and over whom came the odd fancy that he was being introduced as a "specimen" to be dissected and lectured upon before a party of naturalists. He was, however, treated with consideration, and, beyond being called upon to answer some rather irrelevant questions, did not suffer much. The object of the interview was, in fact, mainly that the committee might judge of the applicant's appearance and general "form"; of the rest they had satisfied themselves in other ways. Little was said, and that chiefly by one gentleman of rather red face, and with an important pursed-up mouth, who jerked out staccato questions, with intervals of silence. As each of these questions was asked, all the other members of committee gazed expectantly at the curate, some of them turning in their chairs to fix him patiently with eyes sidelong or straight, as the position of each required. Happily the candidate's sense of humour came to his rescue, and he stood the ordeal fairly well, and without showing signs of irritability. After a time he was released, and returned to his bench and his meditations in the dingy room. To him thus cogitating came, about half an hour later, one of the clerical secretaries, who, with sad and sympathetic face, informed him that.

another candidate, "a man of *great* experience," etc., had been selected. At the same time he assured my rejected friend that he had made a decidedly favourable impression upon the directors, and that they would probably communicate with him should another vacancy occur. To this he did not give much heed, thinking that the soft-hearted secretary was probably minded to let him down as easily as possible, and not snuff out all his hopes at once. However, not many weeks after, an offer really did come, and my friend the curate found himself appointed to a certain district, and enrolled among the "Association Secretaries" upon the Society's staff.

I have already said that my friend was a very young man. He had much to learn; fortunately, he was very willing to learn it. Young men mostly hide beneath a certain assumption of self-confidence a vast amount of nervous diffidence and self-doubt. Someone once said that he could not do with shy people, they were so outrageously impudent. On the same principle diffident people, and persons mistrustful of their powers, not unfrequently mask their weakness by a most provoking and intolerable attitude of assurance. Many a perky young man, who is set down, when first seen, as a conceited ass, is in reality only a pitifully frightened creature, morbidly sensitive of ridicule, and horribly conscious of his own limitations. Bear with him patiently, O—not unreasonably—irritated senior; and if thou seest fit to administer a measure of chastisement rather than "precious balms," see that thou smite him friendly. Thou, too, once wast young.

Unhappily all the fathers of the Church are not equally gifted with kindly discrimination. All have not that real love of the human soul which makes the study of the development of a young mind and character one of the most interesting things in the world. The new secretary received his share of snubs from such. He was enough of a philosopher not to let them break his head. Some heads and hearts have been thus broken. But the secretary, whether they were kindly or unkindly meant, rubbed them well in, and tried to profit withal. He soon sadly learned, however, that he must not expect mercy. He was an official, and as such to be pitched into. Whether the committee in Temple Court Square was well posted in his virtues he had no means of ascertaining, but he soon had cause to know that they were kept well acquainted with his failings. One unknown malcontent would complain, when he sent his annual parochial remittance to head-quarters, that the Society's representative preached as though the Gospel was never heard in his parish, and that it might be better if he would confine himself more to his proper function of giving information, etc. Another would ask that a hint might be

given to the secretary to preach the Gospel more, and not weary the ears of the people with dry details which might be gathered from the Society's report. Another, that more secretaries were clearly needed, since the young man never came himself to that parish to preach; and yet another that the funds of the Society were being shamefully wasted in paying secretaries who ran about saying what the vicars themselves could, if they chose, say very much better. One country clergyman even objected to the secretary's moustache, which he thought was of too military a cut. In fact, there was no end to the suggestions which reached the head secretary as to his subordinate's improvement in mien, manners, and methods. It would have been wise, perhaps, to have summarily burned all such letters. Head secretaries, however, do not always adopt that course.

To all this there was a sunny side. The new secretary became, as every true man must become, interested in his work. Friendly congratulations marked an occasional success on platform or in pulpit. Friendly greetings and pressing invitations assured him that he was not considered wholly useless, nor his work altogether badly done. As he gained confidence as a speaker he learned to find pleasure in encountering various audiences, and in adapting his style and arguments to the requirements of sharp-witted artizans, dull-brained labourers, or fastidious frequenters of west-end churches. He felt, too, that his mind was enlarged by contact with many minds. His life as a country curate had run in a very narrow channel. The great world of thinking men which lay outside his duck-pond had been to him as though it was not. He now learnt that there were other standpoints of mental vision than that from which he had taken his own little outlook—that sincere men may differ as to their inductive methods, and yet arrive at the same truths. All this was good for him. He became less opinionative. Some of his angles were rubbed off, and his crudities shaped into form.

With regard to his experiences of life, clerical and lay, the association secretary might have told tales. He had, like the proverbial owl, peeped down many chimney-pots and heard the whisperings of many households. A cleric to whom my friend was once introduced looked at him for a few moments silently, and then said, with a twinkle in his eye, "It must be very funny seeing so much of human nature as you do. What a lot you must have to tell about us parsons if you chose to divulge!" Happily for the peace of society, our secretary is a safe man. Let no one whose skeleton he may have discovered tremble; he will not point out the secret cupboard: at least,

if he should so far forget himself, he shall not use me as his channel of communication with the world.

The conclusion of the whole matter, according to my friend, is that a year or two, or three at the most, may be profitably spent as a travelling preacher and lecturer; but that a longer period, unless the secretary has other occupations than that of a speaker, is fraught with danger both for himself and the cause which he advocates. That which once was fresh to him, and which he therefore spoke of freshly, will cease to be fresh, and must then be pleaded mechanically. Even the evangelist is apt to suffer when he confines himself during several years to the preaching of "mission sermons" and the reiteration of the Gospel Invitation. If once his sentences lose their originality for himself, and, ceasing to be cast and recast in his own mind, become stereotyped, they lose also their power over his audience; he becomes but a machine for the grinding out of commonplaces. It might be well to consider whether mission preachers should be appointed for more than a few consecutive years. But this applies much more to the association secretary. The mould into which his sermons and speeches must be run is a still smaller one. Whatever he says, it *must* relate to one branch of the Church's work, and to the getting of money in support of it. To the test of that money result, moreover, all his work will be inevitably brought. In the long-run that will be apt to affect his estimate of things. He may find that the stater in the fish's mouth has become of greater importance to him than the fish itself. Alas, should he awake to find himself become, not a fisher of men, but only a clerical bagman! Every profession has its special temptation. That will be his. Let him guard against it in the only possible way, by seeing that, while he takes this special part in the "diversities of the Church's operations," in him may ever shine the light of, and burn the fire of, that One and the selfsame Spirit which divideth to every man severally as He will.

Edinburgh.

E. C. DAWSON.

