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The Vicar of the Parish.

LET me make a disclaimer at once and at the start. This is not a judgment or an exhortation; only a review. It is quite impersonal, except so far as the writer is bound to draw upon his own experiences in past years. And if the reader cares to insert the title of Rector or Incumbent in the place of Vicar, let him do so, for they stand just as well for the man I am trying to describe.

No other preface is, I think, required of me. You all know the man, set up like a lighthouse on the waters, standing out clear and distinct, and shedding, it may be supposed, a beneficent light amidst the perilous darkness and among the menacing rocks. As a peculiarly English product he is worth the study, I think, and will repay it.

I.

Perhaps the first thought which occurs to most as they consider the Vicar of the Parish is *what an enviable position he occupies.*

This is the Vicar's first thought, probably, when he is appointed. From the day of his ordination he has set that prospect before him as a legitimate goal. And when, in his curate days, he has worn the yoke, light though it may have been, to be a Vicar himself was the oasis he looked forward to in his comparative desert. In fact, no man in orders can be said to have "arrived" until he finds himself seated in the Vicarial saddle. So may the mariner feel when, after tossing about on the stormy seas, he finds himself in harbour. For then he tastes the first sweet fruit of freedom. He is his own master. He can map out his own days, and need give no one an account of his stewardship. Provided he performs his specified and expected duties, none can take him to task. He can measure out his own holidays with a liberal hand and, when he feels disposed, take a day or two off between times.

He has, too, an assured position, for his living is his own freehold, and not even a Bishop can unseat him from his lofty saddle except for flagrant offence. A tenant at will may well sit on tenterhooks, for his holding may be snatched from him ruthlessly, but our Vicar can sit tight, and sit for life. He sits high, too, on a sort of Vicarial throne, master of all he surveys. Possibly nothing particular before, he has the chance now of swelling a little, and cutting

a figure. And, for the first time in his life, it may be, he is being looked up to. He sits above the salt. And as he is only a man after all, he is not beyond feelings of pride. Moreover, he becomes a sort of authority in his own particular sphere, a kind of parochial Pope, and can lay down the law on Sundays and weekdays, no man forbidding him. If it be a pleasure to become in very truth a "Sir Oracle," he has that delight to the full.

And there are still higher claims for our Vicar than these low-lying ones can supply, some more spiritual, and less earthly and natural. For a Vicar who believes that he is where God Himself has put him, and that He Who placed him there will assuredly meet all the demands which such a position makes, the satisfactions must be many. What more satisfying to any man than to feel that the Great Divine Player, Who moves His pieces on the Church's Chess-board, has moved him just there, and that, being there under such auspices, he is truly playing a part in the great game of life, and will share by and by in the great win eternal. It is only when a piece moves itself that it is likely to find itself on the wrong square. And for a Vicar who really cares for divine things, for the souls of men, and for the glory of God, there can be no better and more delightful sphere. For he is on the line of least resistance, in one of the brightest of the world's spots. He is following the lead of his heart and of his best inclinations, and working with the grain, and not against it.

He has the joy, too, of knowing that his life is being laid out to the best possible advantage. Most men have to fight for their own hand, and to come in daily clash with competitors in the struggle. But he fights for God's Hand, and for the direct welfare and gain of his fellows. There can be no collision of interests. He is tilling his Master's garden, and the produce is all for others, and never for himself. He labours for time, and not for eternity. Even in social matters he can scatter benefits around him. He can often stand between the poorer of his people and hunger. He can set himself against disease and physical perils. He can be almost an arbitration court to his parish, perhaps the fairest of all possible intermediaries. He can be an element of peace and conciliation amongst his flock. And, added to all this, he can become a bridge across the chasms which exist in social circles, and so relieve the aching loneliness of many. In fact, in numberless ways our Vicar can play the quiet,

beneficent part of friend and adviser to his people, to his own great joy and satisfaction. In all the world there is possibly not a more enviable position for a warm-hearted man who truly looks out upon the world with eyes of tenderness and love.

II.

Lest any of my readers should be misled by this glowing and rosy description of the lot of our ideal Vicar I must hasten to drop one or two necessary qualifications.

It is quite true that the office is an enviable one to all who are rightly constructed within, but it must also be added that *no man occupies a more exacting position than the Vicar of the parish.*

I am not thinking only of the drain upon his pecuniary resources which he is continually subject to. It is one of the scandals of the Church of England that livings are rarely true to their name. And it will not be long before our sanguine Vicar will discover the difficulty of making two ends meet, and that a living is a splendid place to starve in. He will also discover, to his great wonder, how easy it is to starve with a well-to-do parish looking on and doing nothing to prevent it. No, the exactions I specially refer to here are those which emanate from exacting people, who with many opinions and views expect their Vicar to satisfy them all. High, Broad and Evangelical parishioners each demand exclusive satisfaction. The difficulty may not be great in town parishes where there are churches to suit all tastes, but in villages and smaller places with but one church the friction is bound to be enormous. The only man, perhaps, who can approach the solution of the problem is the invertebrate Vicar whose views are elastic and can stretch. But even he, with all his thin breadth, will find it difficult to cover so big a surface as a whole parish.

Unfortunately, we are not chameleons, able to adapt ourselves automatically to our surroundings, and taking the colour of our immediate ground. A few try to be, and succeed but ill, I fear. The changes are too many for even a Vicar of Bray. No Vicarial jelly that was ever concocted will fit into the parochial mould. It is a sheer impossibility for any Vicar, however well or ill disposed, to adapt himself to it. Silence, were it possible, might provide a convenient screen for our Vicar, for then he might look all sorts of wise and agreeable things, but he has to preach and speak and take

constant action, and to be a neutral under these circumstances is not in mortal's power. But what honest Vicar would wish to conciliate any one by the sacrifice of his heart's convictions? Were he to attempt it he would disqualify himself in the opinion of all right-minded people as a hypocrite. So he must perforce face the music, and go his own way, teaching what he believes, and bearing the frowns and reproaches of his offended parishioners as well as he can.

Besides theological exactions, there are sentimental ones, with which he is bound to come into collision. The ladies of his congregation, and some of the ladylike men, will be found to have a nice taste in millinery and decoration and such æsthetic matters. No doubt it is distinctly bound up with their views of truth, but it may not be. Some love a religion with a ritual to express it, and think a service drab and dismal where the Vicar does not dress finely, posture nimbly and keep abreast with the times. And, being very aggressive, they will try to force his hand by incriminating gifts to the church which commit the Vicar to their views of proper ornament and all that they represent. Having definite opinions of his own on such matters, he will naturally be found in the opposition, and will, just as naturally, be found in a very hot and difficult corner. The position is distinctly aggravated when the aggressors are the wealthy persons of his flock. Neither will he be helped much if he yields, for there are other aggressions coming on apace.

The worldly elements of his congregation will put in their exacting claims, demanding all sorts of concessions from the poor Vicar. They will suggest, and almost demand, dances, whist drives, theatrical displays, and many like things which have been more or less identified with the spirit of the world. Disguised under the ample drapery of charity, and linked ostentatiously to some parish organization which is in a weak financial condition, they will be introduced in so subtle a way that to rule them out is almost tantamount to cutting some poor parochial throat. But refuse such adjuncts he will if he be a spiritual man of God, and suffer for his refusal he will if the world be what it always has been, a truculent foe to the Church of God.

There will be exactions which will touch our Vicar in his very pulpit, where he is supposed to be supreme. He will be frankly told by his more outspoken parishioners that they like short sermons, that his discourses must be eloquent, and that they must be dis-

tinctly interesting, if they are to be induced to keep awake. He must not be too vehement, or too aggressive, or too personal. But then, on the other hand, he will be told that it is the very opposite which others like and demand, if they are to be kept from sleep. Some would prefer no sermon at all, and, if there is to be one, in spite of their protests, they intend to go out before it is delivered. And go out they do, with a sort of swishing disdain. It is hard for a poor parson, who perhaps has no particular gifts for preaching at all, to look down upon his critical people and remember their peculiar and antagonistic preferences.

Then, also, there will be exactions on his intelligence, which he will find hard to meet. He must be ready to give an answer on the spot to questions which occur to his active-minded parishioners. And it is astonishing how many and difficult some of these questions are. For these are days of heresies, of new faiths or unfaiths, and of new forms of thought, and many are the problems which our poor Vicar will be called upon to solve. It is possible that some of these questions are quite new to him, and he meets them for the first time when his curious interlocutors make play with them in his hearing and demand some reply. Of course it ought not to be so with a well-read and intelligent parson who studies these questions, and gives honest thought to both sides of them. But, then, our Vicar may not be a reading or thinking man, and, unfortunately, may be less active-minded than some of his people.

And so, when he has nothing to say to the Theosophist, the Christian Scientist, the Pantheist, or the aggressive Romanist, nothing to the point, nothing reasoned, he will be set down as incapable, and he will not be trusted on matters of which he has knowledge. A curate can turn over such questioners to his Vicar, but our Vicar can refer such inconvenient subjects to nobody because he is alone and in authority.

There are business exactions, too, which must not be overlooked, for on no man do business demands fall more heavily than on our Vicar. He is called upon to preside at meetings, to keep accounts, to collect funds, to see that these balance on the right side, and to decide no questions of ecclesiastical law and order. Even if he has a good business layman at his elbow, he must himself be able to understand business matters, and act upon his own knowledge. And Vicars are not as a rule trained in business habits.

Society, too, has its exactions to make upon our Vicar, for he belongs to all its strata, and must not make distinctions. His Vicarage should be open house for the parish, and all should be his friends. He and his household are the bonds which unite all, and it is in his power to draw together all classes, and make common ground with all. He is the Vicar of the parish ; not of this class or that.

It is of no good to disguise the fact of these many exactions upon our poor Vicar, for they undoubtedly exist, these and a hundred others. And it will not be long before he discovers that no man alive is able to meet them all satisfactorily. He must be a bundle of all the excellencies, an admirable Crichton, in fact. He must be an angel in his temper, a genius in his intelligence, an expert controversialist, a brilliant orator, a social success, and be, like Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche.* He must be able to drive a team of a thousand horses abreast, and each of a different temper. He must dance among a thousand eggs, and not break one of them. He must be prepared to be an Aunt Sally for men to throw sticks at, and yet must manage to smile serenely. He is called upon to grasp nettles, to sit on thorns, and handle wasps' nests, and he must do it all as if he liked it. He must be a gentleman, a scholar, a saint, and an angel all rolled in one.

And so long as he pleases these exacting men and women, they will hasten to burn incense before his shrine, and applaud him to the skies. But once trip, and they will treat him as the African natives treat their disappointing gods, beat him thoroughly, and scold him unmercifully. A glorious position indeed has our Vicar, but, let it also be said, a very difficult one.

III.

From these glimpses of the demands made upon our Vicar we may judge the kind of equipment necessary for him. And this brings us to the third position in our inquiries, that *it takes a good deal to make a good Vicar of the parish.*

Every Vicar when he gets into his stride evolves, I should imagine, a good working policy for his daily guidance. He lays down definite general principles to ease his going along the parochial paths. For instance, he comes to the conclusion that he cannot possibly please everybody. Even the Great Master could not do so when He was

on earth. There are antagonisms that can never be made to meet, divergencies that can never be bridged, demands that can never be acceded to by any self-respecting Vicar. And, seeing that this must necessarily be so, he wisely determines that he will not attempt to please everybody. This is a great step forwards, and one which he will have cause to be thankful for all his ministerial life. It will save him endless worries and mistakes. It will cut knots which are otherwise irresolvable. Later on he sees that his wisest and safest plan is to succeed in pleasing the best, which he will better achieve by doing his best than by any attempt at man pleasing. He certainly may manage to please the worst if he be willing to stoop low enough for it, for only by unworthy compromises can he delight the worldly. His principles must have been badly surrendered before a man of the world says "Well done."

Having taken this general view of Vicarial proprieties our Vicar will try to cultivate the attitudes which will yield the best possible results. He will, for instance, try to be what he preaches, to possess the experiences he proclaims, to cultivate the graces he commends, and to overcome in the contests he insists on. He will not be content to preach on love without love in his own heart, to hold up the Cross without clinging to it himself, or to tell of a pardon, a peace, and a life known only to himself at second-hand. The kings of old would only partake of food which their tasters had first tried, and we are to be the tasters of the good things of the Kingdom for our people before we commend them. Truth on the lips which has not first reached the preacher's own heart is never likely to appeal to anybody. It is not enough to speak truth unless it be spoken truly.

For another thing, he will see the necessity of cultivating a good temperament. In no one does a good temperament tell more for good than in the Vicar of the parish. Your calm man will bear the assault and battery of peppery parishioners with equanimity. Your buoyant man, however sat upon, will mount upwards again the moment the pressure is off. Your bright man will not easily lose his temper, no matter how hardly tried. Our Vicar must learn to listen, to smile and to forget, if he is to be a good Vicar. For a good temperament serves him as does a good water-proof in a storm the traveller who wears it; he runs through it dry and comfortable He is like the good ship, which lifts with the great waves, rides over them, throws back the wash of the seas, and pursues her triumphant

course to her destination. A good temperament may be backed against any other virtue in the world.

A good Vicar, too, learns to observe strict impartiality in his parish. This is difficult, but it is not impossible. Again and again he will be asked to take sides with this group or the other, to adjudicate in some parish squabble with which he is not concerned. Better a great deal to let his neighbours settle their differences amongst themselves than burn his fingers in a hopeless quest. Quarrels mostly die better and faster for being let alone. Interference often adds fuel to the fire, and causes it to burn up more fiercely. Hot local politics, too, are not in his sphere as a rule, and had better be ruled out. Party spirit may lead to his undoing in his own proper sphere as the Vicar of the parish. Truth is above party, and tries to see the good in all parties.

The Vicar will see also the necessity of keeping a strong head. A little flattery soon makes a weak head swim, and many a man who stands bravely upright when storms are blowing will capitulate to praise and flattery. Foolish and designing people will do their best to spoil him. The praise of his sermons will be their sheet anchor, for here most Vicars are too vulnerable. Here his strength and common sense will prove of advantage, and lopsidedness prove his curse. An unbalanced man with a strong dash of self in his constitution will, like a ship in light draught, heel over and sink. Parasites feed only on weakness.

Not a day will pass either when our Vicar will not be called upon to use his tact, if he has any. It is not only horses which require to be driven with a light curb, and tact is just that light touch which makes all the difference in parish driving. Most blessed is the Vicar who has the most of it. For delicate situations—and our parishes swarm with them—our Vicar must have delicate tact, that instinctive quality which helps to smooth and straighten out rumples and tangles more than any dozen of other gifts. Like a gentle step which makes no jar, a soothing hand on aching brows, or a gentle voice which awakes no echoes, so is our tactful Vicar. For lack of tact the whole parish may boil and swirl like a mountain torrent. Good intentions, honest zeal, and the best of motives cannot save a situation which has been created by tactlessness.

The advantage of a large heart, too, will be apparent to every Vicar. Better a good heart than a good head, if the choice must lie

between the two. For the man of the good heart will steer a straighter course, dry far more tears, and gain a better welcome, than his cleverer brother in the ministry. Most of the failures in the ministry have been due to heart deficiency rather than to head lack. Is it not the hearts of men that we are out to win? Have we made any real headway when we have only convinced their reasons? There is too much heartless religion in the world, and heartless it will remain if ministers do their work with cold hearts. It takes a heart to win a heart, and where the heart fails the whole effort is paralysed and powerless. Rationality is good, logic has its real place, and hard common sense can fall like a sledge-hammer in its might, but for disarming opposition and winning heart-citadels a little warm blood and a little warm love will eclipse them all. Hearts fly open quickly when love comes and knocks at the door, and love's voice has a winning quality which is all its own.

It is quite as essential, too, that the Vicar of the parish should know his own mind. It need not necessarily be a closed mind, but it must be a clear mind. To have " no mind of his own " is a pure scandal, and wins nobody's respect. Besides, it is an invitation for the harder, clearer minds to assail him with their own good or bad views. Naturally, such a man is at the mercy of all, a poor invertebrate jelly-fish man who needs vigorous shaping, and hardening off. He is like a derelict, waiting for any fussy, determined tug to pick him up, and tow him away into some good or bad shelter. There may not be many such men, but there are a few here and there. You may know them by their softness, and by the way they keep for a time the impression made by the last assailant, like a dinted pillow. You may know them too by the rapid changes through which they pass, boxing the compass in their views. Who can respect such squeezable, impalpable men? And of what use are they in the world? To catch a creed as you would catch a disease, by mere contagion, is to be a source of mischief to the whole parish, and they should be taken somewhere and disinfected thoroughly before being allowed abroad again. We respect a definite man even when he is wrong, but our inconsistent, intangible brother scarcely satisfies us even when he happens to be, for the moment, right.

It is also important that the man be not buried in the Vicar. It often is so, unfortunately, so much so that his manhood drops from him when he becomes the Vicar. But surely he ought to be the

more of a man when he assumes such a position, for certain it is that the more humanity he has, the better the man. Why in the world should his voice lose its manly quality ? Why should he assume the unnatural in his manner and ways ? Why, too, should he play the man milliner, and embroider altar-cloths ? Why should he strike attitudes which no man in his senses would be likely to originate for himself ? A man never poses or cultivates artificial sanctities, unless he be a successor of the old Pharisees.

But more than all of these is the divine equipment. A good Vicar is not what he makes himself, but what his Master makes him. No self-made minister is ever worth his salt. Universities may turn out scholars, and colleges may turn out theologians, but only the Holy Ghost can turn out saints. What avails an apostolical succession, even if it could be proved, if the touch of life be wanting ? A man may be properly ordained, and his rights unquestioned, but a thousand bishops cannot make him fit to proclaim the everlasting Gospel if he be not ordained and changed within. There are baptized dead-heads, and there are ordained dead-heads, and neither are right with God if they have not passed under the Hand of Christ, and been baptized with the Holy Ghost. Natural gifts are not to be despised, learning is not to be undervalued, ordination is not to be gainsaid, but to be a faithful, effective minister of God requires the influx of a divine life, and the embrace of a divine and realized love. Oh ! the joy of this divine equipment, the power of this divine touch. Without it we are only a simulacrum, a dummy, a counterfeit.

IV.

The next position we must take up in connexion with the Vicar of the parish is to point out *how easy it is for a Vicar to miscarry.* There are rocks before his feet as there are before those of every man. There are quicksands into which he may stumble and sink. It is good for him to know beforehand where his dangers lie, and to learn how to avoid them.

For instance, he may be in danger of playing the autocrat. Power is a dangerous weapon to use, and its sharp edge may cut the holder of it seriously, to say nothing of the victims. The law gives our Vicar a paramount position and naturally expects him to use his power wisely. It was never intended to be flourished overmuch, or to be flaunted in his people's faces. Not all parishioners are

meek and acquiescent, and willing to subside at the very sign of authority. Besides, the power is not all on one side, for if the Vicar has the power of the law, they have the power of the purse, the power to stay away from his ministrations, the power to shut their doors upon him. A parish boycott is an ugly phenomenon, and not to be earned or deserved recklessly. To rouse a parish by high-handedness is as bad as to overturn a hive of bees out of sheer wantonness. The sweets of power are bought in a dear market when they induce so much bitterness.

Then he may miscarry through a too restless love of change. There are in every parish a goodly number of fine old crusted Tories, who may be depended on to prefer old ways to any new ones. It is good to let well alone, and not to stir up sleeping dogs. Of course there are changes and changes, and one must make a distinction. There are changes which come naturally, with the lapse of time, and which, like the change in the dress fashions of the day, imperceptibly steal upon you. Such changes effectuate themselves as a rule. They are like the dropping out of the milk teeth from the growing pressure of the oncoming ones, and this happens usually without the intervention of the dentist. But the changes which vex and worry are the violent ones, the uncalled-for ones, the unwished ones. And these are the ones which cut across the cherished doctrines of congregations, and insinuate new views of truth or untruth. Many a man has embittered his own heart and exasperated the hearts of his people by the fight over trifles, or by attempts to shunt the congregation on to new, and as they think, down lines.

There are other Vicars who miscarry through running to extremes. There are extremes of views, which may easily throw him. He is not a Nonconformist, or he would have been amongst them; why, then, does he act as one, and speak ill of his own church? If a man is not a good Churchman, as he has undertaken to be, let him pass out. And if I may not lawfully look longingly over the Nonconformist wall, neither may I do so over the Roman wall. If my Catholic sympathies swamp my love for my own church, and send me flying in the direction of Rome, then my position in the Church of England is compromised and untenable. I am a traitor, and ought to share the traitor's fate. A disloyal Vicar is an offence to all honest men. They cannot understand the position of a man who explains away his own formularies, and tries

to import into the services of the Church doctrines and practices which have been deliberately rejected and disowned. And if such a man finds himself in very hot water in his parish, he has only to thank himself for it and richly deserves it.

There are, of course, other extremes than extremes of doctrines and views. A Vicar may be extremely unsociable, and shut himself in his Vicarage, appearing only when his public duties call him. He may be distinctly unapproachable, and his doors be kept closed by watchful guardians. But such a Vicar is not the Vicar of his parish at all. Or our Vicar may run to the extreme of joviality, and spend his life to the accompaniment of perpetual titters at his funny stories. Everybody will like him, but few will carry their troubles to him, or take him seriously even when he is preaching the Word of Life. The man of God is lost in the funny man, and the Gospel is attenuated by his festive jocularities. Surely, there is a cheerful mean between too great seriousness, and too extreme humour. Or the Vicar may run to extremes of sociability. Let a people once believe that their Vicar is a man of the world, and his influence ends. He is not supposed to be, and he ought not to be. But, even though he may not be, the suspicion is poisonous and hurtful. So it behoves our Vicar to take good heed that he does not give them a handle for the impression. We know that many are unduly severe in their judgments, and would limit even their Vicar's lawful amusements. But, then, they may be right, and have good cause for judging him as a pleasure-loving man. It is well to be on our guard against the danger.

He may miscarry, too, through personal neglect. He may neglect his mind, and let it lie fallow. Hence a plentiful crop of inanities and platitudes and second-hand assertions. He cannot afford to let the world of thought flow past him, and he not be in it. He must read, he must think, and he must know what his people are thinking of. He may neglect his body, too, forgetting the affinity between body and soul, between body and mind. His work demands the full care of the body, and all the exercise, temperance and wisdom which such a work involves. But the worst neglect of all is to neglect his inner being, for here is the mainspring of his manhood as a minister. What is a scythe without an edge, a gun without its priming? What is a candle without a light, or a body without a heart? And what is a heart without love? If the inner man

decays the whole man falls to pieces, and his usefulness ends. To lose touch with God is to make shipwreck of one's work, and to lose the spirit-quality is to lose the one absolute essential. Such a man may go along like an engine proceeding down the incline by its own weight of iron and steel, but, once at the bottom, it must needs stay there useless.

Out of all this, as a strict issue and result, must come the neglect of the parish. Seized with the spirit of sloth and inertia he will sink, and bring his parish down with him.

Yes, it is easy indeed for a Vicar to miscarry, but it is possible that he may not, and he cannot, if he hold fast the Strong Hand of his Master. No man has more resources open for him in his Lord, and the supplies are all close at hand. With all the special promises made to him, with all the divine possibilities open to him, why should he miscarry?

"Workers together with God"; it is along that road that he will carry the blood-red banner of Christ, and will never tire nor fail.

V.

I will now draw my article to a close with *some general principles* which will stand him in good stead.

The first is, that the Vicar exists for the parish, and not the parish for the Vicar. The recollection of this simple fact will parry a multitude of ills. Parishes are not pocket boroughs, or private estates, or little families, of which the Vicar is the head. They are flocks put into his hand to be shepherded. In that sense only let him, if he will, call the parish "My people," or "My parish." Proprietary right there is none. It is God's parish, and he is only the man in charge.

The second fact is that God keeps the oversight. The Bishop sees that we do our superficial duty, but how we do it he can never know. But the great Master knows. He separates the merely physical and showy from the genuine and the spiritual. He reads the inner spirit of the Vicar, and is never deceived by rush and clamour and multitudinous organization. He detects the intention, the motive, and the honest desires. It is He Who is "the Shepherd and Bishop" of our souls.

The third fact is that the person in most danger in the parish is the Vicar himself. It is a dangerous business that of a Vicar, ever

handling spiritual realities, and appearing in religious postures. Those who are constantly in evidence may grow callous, like the oft-used hands in work. In the multitude of prayers he may grow prayerless. In the throng of spiritual engagements he may lose sight of God Whom he is supposed to meet. The Word of God, ever on the lips, may stay there, without going deeper. He is ever in danger of becoming a machine. Cant waits close to the minister, and will surely seize upon him if he slips along a smooth, unthinking way too often and too long. The spiritual essence which alone can keep him fresh once flown, he is only a carcase and a corpse.

My fourth fact is that there is no room for self and Christ in the same heart. It is good to know this, for there is an eternal seesaw in the ministerial life which it would be well if we could arrest. When self is out, Christ is in; when Christ is out, self is in. And when Christ has to give place to self, the life's running stops like the electric trams when the current fails. Everything stops dead when He is deposed. And self's forms are many; self-conceit, self-possession, self-seeking, self-praise and self-ambition. It is just in this neighbourhood that most of the tragedies of our Vicar's life are found. Self is the arch-enemy; self is the standing menace; self is the paralysing evil of life. Happy the minister who can say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

CHARLES COURTENEY.