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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE PREACHER AND THE PREACHING FOR THE PRESENT CRISIS.

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VI. THE PREACHING FOR THE TIMES.

Some Means of Direct Effectiveness.—What, in general, is the character of the preaching demanded by the times in which we live? The answer must be: *Direct and effective Gospel-preaching for the immediate salvation of men.*

It is evident on common-sense principles, that preaching to be effective must take wise account of the conditions and tendencies of the age to which it is addressed. The present time is characterized by remarkable activity of the scientific spirit; by an extraordinary rage for novelty; and by a constant demand for utility, usually of the baser sort. In such an age the preacher must present God's truth in its practical bearings, with special artistic form, and with power, for the grand end of saving and elevating men.

It would be easy to show, did space permit, that present conditions render it absolutely necessary that the preacher should form for himself a more correct, complete, and consistent theory of rhetoric or the art of oratory, and that he should conform his practise to that theory. The presentation of such a theory would embrace the statement of the practical ideas in man to which the preacher's message is to be addressed and attached, and of the rhetorical principles of invention and style, by which, as the vehicle, the message is to be borne to its destination, and to secure its aim. It would be necessary to exhibit the required conformity to this theory in the matter, the manner, and the spirit of the preaching, if the desired results, in the conversion of sin-

*The subject treated in this series of sketchy articles will be published later in book form, greatly extended so as to cover the vital current topics connected with it, in more systematic shape. The series copyrighted.

III.—THE PASTOR AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

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THE year 1894 will be memorable in history for the great struggle between labor and capital which, beginning in the workshops at Pullman, Ill., and extending over the country, swept like a disastrous tidal wave, carrying social anarchy and financial ruin in its path. The desolating wave has now receded far enough to be viewed with a calmness and impartiality of judgment that would have been impossible whilst we were in the midst of the turmoil and strife that marked its course. Measured by any standard you will, it was the most momentous and significant of all the labor troubles that have thus far agitated the country. For more than a decade we have been visited with periodic wage-contests and sympathetic strikes, of such a character as to fill the minds of philanthropists and patriots with foreboding. But this last disturbance culminated in so determined and riotous a revolt of labor against capital, that municipal and local governments were powerless to restrain it, and the strong arm of the Federal Government had to intervene, to arrest bloodshed and pillage, and to prevent wanton destruction of property and life.

The men engaged in these angry conflicts were, to a large extent, professedly Christian men. In some cases, the employer and the employee, thus in deadly antagonism, were members of the same local church, accustomed to worship together in the same sanctuary and sit at the same sacramental table. In all cases, prominent and influential men on each side were professing Christians, and believed themselves to be actuated by principles and motives entirely consistent with the spirit of Christianity.

Under these circumstances, when the public mind was engrossed with the subject of these labor troubles; when the columns of the daily press were crowded with sensational accounts of excited throngs, turbulent mass-meetings, and riotous street-processions, it is no wonder that the ministers of the Gospel were more or less unconsciously affected in the matter and manner of their pulpit services by the excited state of the public mind. They must have been either more or less than men to have been insensible to the force of the mighty current of popular sentiment around them. There were, here and there, faithful pastors whose fields of labor lay in the midst of the thickest of the strife, whose congregations were being rent asunder, and whose hearts were filled with ominous forebodings of internecine strife. With these men we sympathize most deeply. Any words that they may have spoken under these trying circumstances, now that the disturbance is ended, should be judged in the light of the stormy period

in which they were spoken. The speakers should not be too harshly criticized, if in any way they seemed to display the spirit of the partisan, and to carry into the sanctuary questions of political economy that belong properly to the hustings and to the forum.

But there was also a class of "preachers to the times," who found their golden opportunity in these labor troubles. Altho far away from the scenes of strife, with congregations in no way involved in them, they felt of course, as they always do, the "sacred duty" devolved upon them to enlighten the world in reference to the great ethical principles involved in the conflict. The Sabbath-evening services were largely devoted to a discussion of the just relations between labor and capital, and of the specific violation of these relations that lay at the basis of all these labor troubles.

From a homiletic point of view, these discussions, as illustrating the relations of the pulpit to the labor troubles of the country, are exceedingly interesting. Having spent a not inconsiderable part of the seminary vacation in looking over reports of Sunday-night discourses in the various periodicals of the land, the writer is moved to put in print some of the reflections which this study has awakened. In a brief article like this there is, of course, room only for a statement of conclusions arrived at, with a brief reference to the data upon which these conclusions are based.

The first conclusion reached as the result of this inductive process is that these efforts to enlighten the public as to the true relations between capital and labor, and as to the economic principles involved in our labor strikes, are from the younger brethren of the ministry, almost exclusively. In a number of cities in which the writer is well-informed as to the relative ages and terms of service of the pastors, the preaching on these labor problems has been, in almost every instance, by the younger men. In one of these cities, where union services were in progress with deep religious interest, the meeting moved on along the usual lines of gospel preaching until the turn came of the youngest pastor in the city to preach, and forthwith the advertisements appeared in the local columns of the city papers that he would take for his theme, "Capital and Labor."

When we come to inquire why this discussion should have been to so large an extent confined to the younger brethren of the ministry, there are many reasons that might be alleged. It is, perhaps, in accordance with the eternal fitness of things that the young preacher should set out from the seminary with a kind of encyclopedic self-consciousness; that he should conceive himself to be thoroughly furnished for the discussion of all social topics, and the overthrow of all popular errors; and should therefore throw himself, with all the zeal of a reformer, and all the gallantry of a knight-errant, into the thickest of every struggle for human brotherhood and human rights. As he grows older, he learns by experience how imperfect his mental equip-

ment is; and by the time gray hairs are here and there upon him, he has found out how little he does know, and becomes very chary of venturing into the troubled waters of political and social science, lest, like Shakespeare's "little wanton boys on bladders," he should suddenly find himself "far beyond his depth." There is a discretion, born of experience, of which it is preeminently true that it is "the better part of valor."

The explanation may be further sought in that natural want of confidence in what Paul calls the "foolishness of preaching," which is only effectually removed by the experience of the power of the Gospel, as it comes to the veteran in the field when he has thoroughly tested the sword of the Spirit and has found it, in the truest sense, "mighty through God." Whatever the explanation may be, the fact seems to be evident that it is the younger men who seek to wrestle with these more difficult problems of social economics.

Secondly, if we may judge the future by the past, the outlook is not at all hopeful for a solution of these grave problems through the intervention of the pulpit. Many of the sermons indicate ignorance or misconception of the simplest principles on which society is based. Many of the remedies suggested are as Utopian as ever were the day-dreams of any speculative philosopher. Indeed, how could it be otherwise, when men undertake to speak upon subjects to which they have never given any special study, and which they have certainly had no opportunity to master? They could, with just as much propriety, undertake to enlighten their congregations as to the national currency system, the demonetization of silver, or the relative jurisdictions of Federal and State courts. When we stop for a moment and think of the complicated interests involved in these labor questions; of the deep-lying and delicate questions of interdependence of labor and capital; of the discouragement to enterprise if capital be too much hampered with restrictions; and of the grievous wrong to industry if labor be denied its equitable reward: we shall see that he must be a wise and far-seeing social economist who can justly arbitrate in these labor questions in which the financial interests of the whole country are involved. A mistake, to the discouragement of the investment of capital in manufacturing interests, is as disastrous to labor as it is to capital; and, on the other hand, a discrimination in favor of capital as against labor may bring untold privation upon the honest and industrious poor; and, by weakening the arm of labor, may render it impossible for capital to secure proper returns for its investment. And yet it is upon these difficult and delicate questions, which have taxed the profoundest thoughts of the most experienced statesmen and philosophers, that the young theologian boldly proffers his advice.

Thirdly, not only is the minister incompetent to deal with these questions; not only is he speaking to an audience in which there are scores of business and professional men who know far more about the

subject than he, but he has gone entirely out of his province as a minister of the Gospel. He has no commission to solve these problems of social life. His one work is to preach the Gospel of the grace of God, to bring its spiritual truths to bear upon the hearts and consciences of men, for their spiritual enlightenment, quickening, and transformation. He is the ambassador of a King who said, "My kingdom is not of this world." This divine Master steadfastly refused to be drawn into any such discussion of social problems. When asked to interpose where social rights were being invaded, His prompt and emphatic reply was, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" His example in this regard, in not suffering Himself to be entangled with political and social problems, and in confining himself strictly to the great spiritual mission on which He came to earth, is worthy of the profound study of those who believe themselves to have been called by Him into the ministry of the Gospel, and yet are not willing to confine their preaching to those great themes of sin and redemption which He has commissioned them to proclaim.

It may be asked, then, Is the minister to make no reference at all in the pulpit to these subjects which are of such vital moment, and of such absorbing interest, to those to whom he ministers? Is he not to seize upon these great events and concerns of life, and draw from them lessons of practical wisdom? Will he not lose the ear of his people altogether, if he avoids studiously in the pulpit themes which to them are all through the week of most commanding interest? It is just here that the inexperienced preacher is most likely to err. There could be no more dangerous rule than that the minister should seek, for his Sabbath theme, that upon which the people have been most excited during the week. The Sabbath is God's great appointed day of rest. Precisely because the minds and hearts of the people have been filled with these exciting themes through the week should their feet be turned aside on Sabbath, and in the sanctuary, to look upon some burning bush of divine revelation, and lose sight, for a little while, of the strifes of earth in quiet communion with heaven. Should a congregation be in the midst of the strife, participating in its awful scenes and suffering its actual horrors, the duty of the pastor will, of course, be to bring all the benign influence of the Gospel to bear in softening the asperities of the conflict, and administering comfort under the trials. But we are speaking now of those outside of the great storm-centers of social disturbance; those whose congregations are not immediately involved; those who get their knowledge of the conflict only from the bulletin-boards on the street-corners and from the columns of the daily press. To all these we may say, as the result of the experience of the wisest and most successful pastors, that the best, safest, most brotherly thing they can do, is to make the Sabbath day to their people a day of true rest, as they lead them away from the scenes of riot and bloodshed, of turmoil and strife, and, like true shepherds, conduct them into the green pastures and lead them beside the still waters of salvation.