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The Pew to the Pulpit

Suggestions to the Ministry from
the Viewpoint of a Layman

BY

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Court of the United States

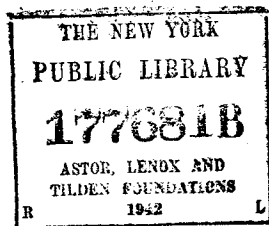


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THE PEW TO THE PULPIT

"TIME at last sets all things even."
For fifty years I have sat in the pew
a target for the pulpit. Unnumbered
arrows have been shot at me from
the ministerial bow, feathered with
logic and rhetoric, sharpened with
appeal and exhortation, and some-
times poisoned with denunciation
and abuse. All the ill I have ever
done, all I have ever attempted to
do, or even thought of doing, and all

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that any man believed I had done or even thought I might be tempted to do, has been held up before a sometimes admiring and sometimes amused audience, even as the results of a washerwoman's toil are spread out on the afternoon clothesline. Is it any wonder that as I have heard the anathema "woe unto you lawyers" rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue, I have felt like shouting, whoa unto you ministers. And this I have had to receive, sitting in silence and without the luxury of talking back. Now all is reversed. I have the pulpit before me. I am to talk and you must listen. I can fire away at you and you have no escape. Would it be strange if the words of Shylock came to my mind, "If I can

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catch him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him." Would it not be sweet revenge if I could gather in this single hour all the shafts that have been launched at me, and hurl them back at your devoted heads? You may say that personally you never did any of these things; but you teach the doctrine and justice of vicarious suffering and should not object to furnish an illustration.

We hear much to-day about the decay of the pulpit. And if you were to heed some of the would-be scientific critics you might be led to believe that it was an institution fit only for semi-civilized times, and now slowly passing out of existence in obedience to the scientific law of the

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words of Rev. Dr. Henry M. Field, in the "Evangelist."

"In the early days of New England the minister was the great man of the town. As the messenger of God, he was invested with a spiritual authority, that was far more respected then than now. If he did not assume, like the Catholic priest, to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the doors of which he could open and shut, yet the most reckless transgressor had a secret foreboding of the future if he disregarded his solemn admonitions. Even in the common intercourse of life, he was not like other men, to be spoken of, or to be spoken to, lightly or unadvisedly, but with a reverence approaching to awe. And such he re-

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mained for two hundred years. Even so late as the beginning of this century, Dr. Stephen West, who was the minister of Stockbridge, Mass., for sixty years, though small in stature, had a presence that frightened all the boys in the town. When he came down from the hilltop on which he lived, his diminutive figure set off by his three-cornered hat, his short clothes, and his gold-headed cane, they drew up by the sidewalk and uncovered their little heads, and so remained till he disappeared slowly down the street.

But all this is only a beautiful memory. That generation has long since passed away and another generation has come upon the stage, in which the conditions of ministerial

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life, as of all other life, have changed, and the picturesque old figure has disappeared and left no successor.

From that time—the first quarter of the century—the minister has lost in large degree the prestige that comes from his office; there is no longer a halo around his head; he has had to come down from his pedestal, and stand on the common earth, like other men—to be judged, like them, by what he is and what he does in the world.”

It is useless to ignore the facts thus graphically portrayed. Neither lamentation nor complaint can change what is, or disturb its significance. It is true, looking at the pulpit in its relations to present life and contrasting its position to-day with that

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which existed a century and a half ago in New England at least, there is a decadence of power and control. It is no longer the one great ruler. But I desire most earnestly to insist that this change in what may be called its purely human relations does not indicate that its value to the world is waning, or that its end is coming. The changed conditions of human life—marvelous as they have been in the last century and in few respects more significant than in the different relations of the ministry to the great body of the people—do not involve any disparagement of the ministry, no intimation that it is to become in the future only a memory, nor that it has outlived its usefulness. The change of its place in the

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torneys who practiced in the courts of the colony during its existence." And as for the doctor, his voice was heard, and his presence demanded, only when accident or disease invaded the home or threatened the end of life. He was, therefore, as it may be said, simply an occasional influence. The minister was the one constant universal and acknowledged presence and power. No suspicions attached to his integrity, no question arose as to his constant usefulness, no one doubted his learning. And so in an age and community where newspapers were unknown, books were rare, and the highest reach of ordinary knowledge was the three R's, as they have been so often called, reading, writing and arithmetic, it is not

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strange that *the one* subject to no suspicion, always present, confessedly learned and supposed to bear some kind of divine authority, should be the dominant force in the life of the community. While the form of government was democratic, in spirit and fact it was theocratic. The clergy were the real rulers of New England.

Now all this has been changed. The range of human inquiry has become vast, and no man can walk all its various ways with any hope of attaining proficiency therein during the limits of a single lifetime.

The pulpit no longer monopolizes or is even supreme in the fields of knowledge. One may be a good chemist or geologist or astronomer and neither read Hebrew nor be post-

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ed in the shorter catechism. Indeed, other things being equal, the more complete the devotion to one narrow subject the greater the knowledge in respect thereto. One who gives up an entire lifetime to the study of the characteristics and habits of a single bug not unreasonably feels that he knows more about that bug than the profoundest student of the Bible and theology. And as there are many bugs, as well as almost limitless objects of study, it inevitably results that the specialist in each is the learned man therein, and while the pulpit may be wise in matters of religion and theology it no longer reigns supreme over all the departments of human investigation and knowledge.

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The change in the business life of the nation is equally pronounced. No toiler in the great workshop of human life completes any article. Labor is universally segregated and divided. Each does his separate work as one of many steps necessary to the completion of the perfected thing, and knows little or nothing of that done by others either before or after him. Not only in the mere matter of manual labor is that segregation of toil evidenced. In the higher reaches of professional life it is becoming equally true that in order to attain success there must be a separation, and, what may be called, a narrowness of pursuit. No man in any of our great centres of business attains eminence as a lawyer, or a

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doctor, but rather as a specialist in one or other of these professions. He is a corporation lawyer, an insurance lawyer, a real estate lawyer, or a criminal lawyer. He must be a specialist in diseases of the eye, or of the ear, or of the lungs. So vast is the reach of human acquisitions, so intricate and complex are business transactions and relations that no one can hope for success unless he gives himself unreservedly to one especial branch of professional life. The old saying, "jack at all trades and good at none" is to-day carried forward to the proposition that Jack in all the departments of a single trade is a failure in each. In other words, the great law of labor and business and professional life to-day

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is speciality. The specialist is the successful man. And this law of specialization affects the ministry. No longer can the minister pose as one possessed of all information and entitled to control outside the limits of his special work. The moment he steps into the domain of education, and says, "I know what is best therein, I can decree the limits beyond which science may not go, and no man must be permitted to teach unless he has passed through the gateway of the divinity school"; the moment he enters the arena of business life and says, "I understand all about bonds and stocks and railroads, and I have a right to determine what is right and what is not"; the moment he presents himself in the city hall, or

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where the legislature of a state is convened, or beneath the great dome of the Capitol where Congress meets to determine the welfare of the nation, and assumes to say that "because I am a minister I have a right to prescribe the terms, the limits and the character of legislation, city, state, or national," that moment the common sense of the community says to him most emphatically, "go back to your pulpit and leave matters of education and business and legislation to those who are trained therefor." Never in the history of the world was there greater significance than to-day in the words of the Apostle Paul: "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

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And if in the future the ministry is to remain a welcome and acknowledged power it can do so only as it stays in the pulpit. The moment it goes outside of that it jostles with everybody and has no right to complain if everybody gives it a kick.

The other matter I desire to present is the growing intensity of the democratic thought. And I use the word "democratic" in no partisan sense. No man can read the history of the last hundred years without recognizing that it is becoming more and more emphatic in the judgment of all that the one sacred thing is the individual; that birth, wealth, place, profession, achievements, intellectual accomplishments, are all subordinate to the great fact of manhood, and

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that no authority, no control, no dominance over society or state rightfully attaches to any of the accidents or incidents of life. As Edna Dean Proctor, in her ode to the Prince of Wales, well said :

Clearer-eyed the world is learning through
each upward struggling year,
He is prince whose life is noblest, be he
peasant, be he peer.

Lo it crowns a Garibaldi, born a fisher by the
sea,

And it scorns a king of Naples though of
Bourbon blood is he.

* * * * *
Let the English heir believe it; read the
lesson of the time;

Know the sceptre is but a symbol and the
man alone sublime.

There is no divine right of kings.
There is no apostolic succession.
There is no inherited greatness. To-
day more than ever, and in the future
more than to-day it is and will be

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true that no place, position, office, inheritance, or any other mere incident of life will be recognized as worthy of notice among the controlling forces. The growing feeling is well illustrated by the story told of one who, registering his name at a hotel, rather pompously said to the clerk, "I am lieutenant governor" to which the clerk affably replied, "never mind, sir; I don't suppose you could help it, and no one about the hotel will treat you with any disrespect on account of it." Burns prophesied the future when he wrote,

"The rank is but the guineas stamp;
The man's the gowd for a' that."

And this fact will affect the clergy as all others. You cannot expect by simply saying "I am a minister" to

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have the people either bow down, give way, or let you have a place. The place you will have in society, the power you will exercise, the influence you will exert, will depend less and less upon the office you hold, the title you bear, and more and more upon what you are and what you do. Individuals among your number will rise to a commanding position and become mighty and uplifting forces in the community and in the nation, but your profession (considered simply as a profession) will mean little more than any other to the great mass of struggling, pushing, urgent humanity. The world will always recognize the wisdom of the wise man, the integrity of the honest man, the purity of the pure

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man as well as the helpfulness and comfort of him who really brings the sweet messages of peace and a higher life; but the strong man of mature years who has himself had the benefits of a collegiate education, or had his wits sharpened in the actual struggles of business life, to whom books of history and of science are no strangers, who has toiled and struggled until he has won a place in the community, only smiles to himself when some youth fresh from the divinity school, with little experience of the deep things of life, and seeking to direct the manner of other's lives, raises his arms and shouts "thus saith the Lord." Obviously, as he thinks, this is carrying too far the declaration of scripture, "out of the

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mouth of babes and sucklings." The blowing of ram's horns may have been potent to throw down the walls of Jericho, but the days of miracles are past, and the walls we to-day build around our lives rest on foundations too firm to be disturbed by the blast of any horn in the hand of priest or levite. Your impress upon life may and ought to be great and powerful, but it will be an impress coming not from your profession but from your personal earnestness, devotion and ability. In short, and to sum it up in a word, the democratic tendencies of the day are taking all authority away from rank and birth, from class and profession, and vesting it in the individual brain and life. Nor is this tendency to be regarded

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as a mere explosion coming up from the slums, from the pauper and the tramp. It does not mean the leveling down of the higher to the lower but the lifting up of the lower to the higher. It means that the great masses are entering the sacred and far-reaching precincts of human knowledge. It means that every man is learning to think for himself, and that he hears no commanding voice save that which comes from a clearer brain and a purer life. Do not think either that this tendency belittles the profession, or degrades in any manner your work in life. It rather comes as a most earnest appeal for your individual preparation for highest service, and bids every one entering upon the sacred work of preaching

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the gospel to enter it with a heart aglow with the enthusiasm of humanity and with that intensity of earnestness and devotion which compels attention.

May I be pardoned if, beyond these general observations, I add some suggestions of a more direct and personal nature. And first in reference to business relations. Be independent, and avoid so far as is possible anything that looks like dependency. Do not pose as even a quasi object of charity, or permit yourselves to pass as the expecting recipients of gratuities. While I do not charge this as a habit of the clergy I do mean to say that it is frequent enough not only to give point to the jibes of the vicious, but also largely to de-

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tract from the standing of the pulpit. The common talk is, I give so much to the church to support the minister, as though it were a mere gratuity. Half fare tickets are offered by common carriers and not only accepted but sometimes asked as a fitting charity to the clergy. A donation party is not only accepted but often welcomed and sometimes suggested as an equivalent or compensation for unpaid dues. A discount to the clergy is the advertisement of many business men, truthfully stated, though often with a view of securing the patronage of the congregation rather than with any idea of beneficence to the minister. These illustrate a common thought, which is seldom spurned, often tolerated, and

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occasionally encouraged by the profession, that the ministry constitute a dependent class, ignorant of the things of this world, and therefore to be cared for and helped by the business part of the community. There is a humorous side to this picture which is often drawn and which if I had time I would like to amuse you with, but I shall not wander in this attractive field. My purpose is served when I call attention to the facts as above stated. They mean this, and nothing more : that there is a disposition on the part of many to regard the clergy as not equal laborers in the great field of the world, fairly earning all that is promised for their services, and entitled to receive as any other laborers a just quid pro

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quo, but as at best a semi-dependent class, to be carried along through life as other objects of charity. How different the language commonly used in reference to business transactions with the ministers from those with other parties. In the one instance it is, I gave so much to the minister, or to the church for the minister. In all other instances it is, I paid the school teacher, I paid the doctor, I paid the lawyer, I paid the butcher, as though the one earned nothing, while the others did. Now I think one thing which would elevate the position of the minister is the constant assertion, I am no object of charity ; I take nothing as a gift. I am paid that which I earn and receive no more than the just

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value of my services and that which I have an equal right with every other laborer to receive. I give the quo and I demand the quid. In other words, I would have every minister say to any church seeking his services, if I come to you I come as a laborer, to be paid, and to be paid the full sum you promise, and at the time you name, and if you do not care for my services on those terms you can get along without them. I know you may reply that you are not working for earthly rewards, that you are looking for your compensation at the hands of the Master and in the life to come. I am not giving this advice solely for your sake, but as much or more for those to whom you minister. It is

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human nature to look down upon him who is in any sense regarded as the object and recipient of charity, and to respect him who demands and receives just pay for valued service. If you would have your life a power in the community, you must insist upon being regarded as an equal laborer with all others and possessed of an equal right to full and prompt compensation. Whatever of charity your life may express should be charity by and not to you.

Another matter, do not trust the Lord too much. This advice may savor of the earth, but nevertheless it is a wisdom born of experience. I do not question the fact that the God we worship is the Lord of the earth as well as of the heavens, and that

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His promises to His followers are abundant. At the same time He has placed you and me in a world subject to inexorable laws, and to the lessons of those laws we must listen. It may seem harsh and hard, and yet I must say that those beautiful words commencing "behold the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin" have misled many a preacher. They have suggested to him, and been a suggestion influencing his life, that somehow or other he is exempt from the control of the ordinary laws of business and that because he is as he fancies the special servant of the Most High he may disregard those laws and still escape the consequences of such disregard. While he may not formulate in his

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own mind the process of reasoning, his argument practically is this: that while confessedly the age of miracles has passed, that of special providences still exists and it is a good equivalent. While the Almighty may not send ravens to bring me food when I am hungry; while He may not strike the dead rock to open living streams of water when I am thirsty, yet, as He cares for the lilies so He cares for me, and that as I am engaged specially in His work I may trust Him to provide all that my life or the life of my family may, according to my judgment, require. But the truth is special providences seldom come to him who seeks to trade in them. They never can be depended upon for the payment of

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debts. You are not authorized to write the Lord's name as endorser on any note you give to the man from whom you have purchased your library, or piano, or horse and buggy. If you want to give full play to the matter of special providences trust the Lord to bring the thing you need and never trust Him to furnish the money to pay for that which you think you need and therefore have bought. Trust Him to provide the piano you think your daughters' musical education requires, rather than trust Him to provide the money to pay for it after you have bought it. He may think that your delay in putting your trust in Him presents a case which He may well leave outside the reach of special providences.

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It does not add to the power of your preaching or the influence which you as a man exercise in the community to have the grocer or the butcher saying that your bills are harder to collect than those of the saloon keeper or the woman who keeps a house of entertainment not for man and beast but for beasts of men. And even the patient members of your own congregation, who most of them are apt to have something of earth in their make-up, often get wearied—unreasonably though it may seem—of waiting for the payment of their bills. I do not mean to intimate by these words of advice that all preachers act in this way, or even that it is a common habit. Still there is enough of it to make it

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worthy of notice. At the same time it is fair to say that the fault is not wholly with the minister. If the congregation does not act in accordance with the strict laws of business in dealing with him; if it fails to make its payments regularly and promptly; it exposes him to the burden of just such trials as these. I know whereof I am talking. I have had experience. For something like thirty years my intimate friend, George Eddy, and I carried largely the burdens of the First Congregational Church of Leavenworth, and I know how difficult it was to make the members of that congregation realize their duty in these matters, and how hard it was to make collections with anything like reasonable

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promptness. And yet you will pardon me for saying that part of this comes from your own failure to insist upon business conduct in the dealings of the congregation with you, and partly from the mistake to which I have just referred, of regarding yourselves as quasi objects of charity. For the moment you put yourselves in that attitude, and look for gifts instead of payment, you not only seem to forget that time is not of the essence of a gift, but also are naturally led to discount the expected benefactions of the future.

Another advice is, do not write your sermons; talk to the people. Do not give a lecture, but preach. I know this is not always easy. With

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some it is almost an impossibility. If you want to write anything give it to the papers, and so reach a larger congregation, but when you stand in the pulpit leave your manuscript at home and talk to us. Learn wisdom in this respect from the court room, and imitate the lawyer. Indeed, I am frank to say it would do most of you good to practice law a few years before going into the pulpit. A lawyer stands before a jury; he has no speech in manuscript. He writes no learned or eloquent discourse, but throws the whole force of his being into a present effort to reach the twelve men before him by argument and appeal. He makes many grammatical blunders, often repeats himself, says many unnecessary things,

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but he has in view the single specific object of reaching the twelve men who are listening to him, and making them believe and feel as he does. And the very fact that he is unhampered by any manuscript gives more force and power to the words he utters.

Of course, we have this advantage: our audience cannot leave us. The jurors have to sit and listen and if we can only prevent the gruff old judge on the bench from interfering we may talk by the hour, while any one in your congregation as soon as he is tired gets up and leaves. You have, therefore, to use more moderation than we. You have to put a bridle on your tongue, for the great danger of extemporaneous speech is its

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length. Our grandfathers used to listen while the preacher turned the hour glass two or three times, but you would far better put on the table before you a half-hour glass, and the moment the last sand drops, stop—even if in the midst of a sentence. If you make this a rule the congregation will always know the limit to which your talk will run, and will therefore seldom if ever care to leave. More than that, the rule of always stopping at a certain time will get you in the way of condensing your words and strengthening your talk, and still you will retain the benefit of that appeal, that power, which comes from speaking and seldom if ever goes with the reading of written words.

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Again, give us not too much theology, and yet certainly some. We like it occasionally; we need it too. We like to have the good old doctrines of the church placed before us in all their fullness with clearness and with power. We like to have the historic story of the church's achievements pictured in all its splendor. It is a great mistake to suppose that theology is out of date; that we care not what our fathers believed, nor what is the creed of the church to-day. As a man thinketh so is he, and that which he believes controls his actions. And yet waste no time on unimportant matters. Only those questions, belief in which controls one's actions are worthy of consideration in the pulpit. We laugh,

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and properly, at many of the subjects upon which theologic discussions were had during the middle ages, and yet of how much more importance are some that we hear discussed to-day! No one cares how many angels can dance on the point of a cambric needle, or whether Joseph's coat of many colors was a piece of patchwork like the crazy quilts of to-day. And we are not much more interested in the question whether the whale swallowed Jonah or Jonah the whale. Matters of that kind have no touch upon human life, but there are questions which in the very nature of things are of profoundest present and practical importance; questions, belief in which must more or less control our action and direct the

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tendencies of life. You may call them questions of theology or not but they are certainly matters which affect our lives. Common sense in such things is perhaps, after all, the supremest test. It may be safely affirmed that a minister should never spend time talking about anything, belief one way or the other in which will change no man's life and conduct. Some times we hear things discussed in the pulpit that, to say the least, no sensible man cares aught about. I remember some years since going to a town where I was to deliver a lecture and spending the evening after the lecture in conversation with the good minister of the Congregational Church. He was very much interested in a sermon which

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he had recently preached, and told me the substance of it. He said that he had endeavored to show how the Almighty was going to get the better of Satan, and that for this He must postpone the end of the world until there were more saints in heaven than sinners in hell. He seemed to think that the Almighty had advanced no further in mathematics than the mere processes of addition and subtraction and that quantity and not quality was the great thought in His mind. I suggested that, from present appearances, such a result must put off the Last Day for a long while, and he ~~had~~ replied that he had considered that matter and shown that the day was not so distant as at first might appear. I asked him how

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he was to make up the majority on the Lord's side. He said he would first count all those who had a deliberate and intelligent faith in the Saviour—a great number of course, and likely to grow more rapidly in the days to come—then he would count all those who died in infancy, before the mind had attained any capacity to judge between right and wrong; and he seemed to believe that it was a great blessing to die in childhood. And as I listened I thought that in some cases it was so. And then, for the third class, he said there were the idiots, imbeciles and lunatics. I felt sure that he was going to count me in somewhere or other. But the idea of serving up to intelligent people such talk as

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that! Is it not a travesty on sacred things, and do you wonder that the people listening to it do not recognize the speaker as a leader and guide. You may always be sure that your talk is a failure when your congregation goes away, feeling that it does not care whether that which you say is true or not; when it is absolutely indifferent to the question which you are discussing, and indifferent because the question itself is of an entirely unpractical nature. Such a sermon is a great deal worse than a doctor's bread pills, because the pills if they do no good do no harm, whereas the sermon, by virtue of the fact that it wastes time and taxes patience, does immense harm.

But enough of criticism. Any-

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body can find fault. The fool can ask questions which a wise man cannot answer, and so long as we hold all our treasures in earthly vessels, so long as we have the weaknesses of the human and are exposed to the temptations of flesh so long must all the instrumentalities of life have their limitations and imperfections. Hence if any man sets out to find fault, becomes a professional critic and engages in the business of pointing out the foibles and mistakes of others he can spend all his time. But there is a better way. The builder is of more value than the iconoclast; the helper than the critic, and I want to occupy a few moments in suggesting why it is that the pulpit still opens the most

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inviting door to the best and strongest, the most eager and ambitious of our youth. We may have ceased to look at the pulpit but we still look at the man in the pulpit. You cannot awe us by claiming to be in the line of apostolic succession, but you may direct and influence us by your lives of purity and devotion and your messages of comfort and peace. The place does not make the individual but the individual may take great advantage of the place. Opportunity is said to be the golden word of success; and the pulpit is the opportunity. The power of the profession as such may wane, but with the waning of the power of the profession waxes the power of the individual in the profession. The

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pulpit is the fulcrum of opportunity, resting upon which the lever of individual brain and heart may still move the world.

Yours is the unselfish profession—not that there are no selfish men in it or no unselfish men out of it. It is undoubtedly true that many enter into business or professional life other than yours with the high thought of making their lives helpful and a blessing to the world, and also undoubtedly true that society comes after a while to recognize their unselfish purposes, and gives them high credit therefor. But notwithstanding this the fact remains that he who enters upon any of the ordinary avocations or professions of life is supposed to do so with the

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thought of self and self interests and he must overcome that presumption before the full power of his life as a beatitude can be realized. While, on the other hand, he who enters your profession is presumed to do so with no thought of self but with the supreme idea of helpfulness to others. There are no presumptions to be overcome before your real value is recognized. The presumptions are in your favor rather than against you. So that in the struggle to make one's life a power in the world you start with the vantage ground of the presumed unselfishness of your efforts.

This involves no contradiction. It does not imply that with the thought of personal glory you enter upon a

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profession presumed to be unselfish in its purposes, and so take advantage of this presumption to secure an advantage which those entering other professions do not have. It does not assume that the thought of every man's life is personal prominence and personal recognition. It does assume, and I think it may rightfully assume, that every young man starts in life with high ambitions; that he has the purpose to make the most of his life; that such ambitions and purpose are not matters of discredit but of commendation; that he not only may but ought to seek such work and place in life as will enable him to use to the best advantage all the powers with which the Almighty has endowed him. The

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aim of the highest and purest ambition is usefulness. The lower ambitions stop with wealth, fame, ease; and a great multitude are content with the mere pursuit of sensual pleasures. Now across most professions the highest word written is fame. Across many avocations the highest is wealth, but over the portal of your profession is written usefulness. He who would minister least to himself and most to others, who would make his work of the largest and widest influence, speaking most for the higher things of life, can find no better field for the realization of this ambition than the pulpit. So if one has an aptitude for the work of the ministry and is moved by the high impulses and am-

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bitious of youth he may well enter your profession with the assurance that in entering upon its work and life he enters with a presumption in his favor which will give him vantage ground for reaching the highest usefulness and therefore the highest success. This may seem like an appeal to one's ambition. I concede it; yet why not. Ambition may have been the sin by which the angels fell, but all the same it is the virtue by which humanity mounts to a higher life. The aspiration and ambition of the individual is that which promises higher and better things for the future of the race. And to discredit ambition is to disparage and condemn advancement. It is not the fact but the character of

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one's ambition which determines whether it is a matter of commendation or condemnation, and while a selfish ambition may deserve all the condemnation which is so often bestowed, an unselfish and high ambition is one of the noblest of human virtues and worthy of the highest commendation.

So, when I say that the pulpit opens before every aspiring and eager youth the best opportunity for making his life a great success, I am not appealing to the lower but the higher elements of his nature, and am simply saying to him that there, better than anywhere else, he can make his life an incarnate beatitude.

Again, you are called to preach a comforting gospel. You bear the

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message of the Master, "come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." You voice the words of Him who said, "the spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath set me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." In this you come bearing to all of us a comforting message. The struggle of life is hard and is becoming more so as the density of population increases. Out of such density comes more and more the maddening rush and pressure of the daily struggle, not merely for place and wealth but as often for mere

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subsistence. So, blessed is he who comes into this anxious, agonizing, struggling, multitude with messages of comfort and of peace. The angel of comfort is the sweet angel. All long for her presence; all need her blessing. The humblest home and the richest mansion welcome her entrance. She is the sweet evangel, whose presence brings peace, whose departure all mourn, and whose absence makes life one long sad failure. It is a great mistake to suppose that only the lonesome and weary toiler in the humbler ways of life cares for her presence. She is welcome there—thrice welcome. The poet of Kansas pictures her blessings when, in his Song of the Washerwoman, he tells this story:

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In a very humble cot,
In a rather quiet spot,
In the suds and in the soap,
Worked a woman full of hope;
Working, singing, all alone,
In a sort of undertone,
"With a Saviour for a friend,
He will keep me to the end."

Sometimes happening along,
I had heard the semi-song,
And I often used to smile,
More in sympathy than guile;
But I never said a word
In regard to what I heard,
As she sang about her friend
Who would keep her to the end.

Not in sorrow nor in glee
Working all day long was she,
As her children, three or four,
Played around her on the floor;
But in monotones the song
She was humming all day long,
"With the Saviour for a friend,
He will keep me to the end."

It's a song I do not sing,
For I scarce believe a thing

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Of the stories that are told
Of the miracles of old ;
But I know that her belief
Is the anodyne of grief,
And will always be a friend
That will keep her to the end.

Just a trifle lonesome she,
Just as poor as poor could be,
But her spirits always rose,
Like the bubbles in the clothes,
And though widowed and alone,
Cheered her with the monotone,
Of a Saviour and a friend
Who would keep her to the end.

I have seen her rub and scrub,
On the washboard in the tub,
While the baby, sopped in suds,
Rolled and tumbled in the duds ;
Or was paddling in the pools,
With old scissors stuck in spoons ;
She still humming of her friend
Who would keep her to the end.

Human hopes and human creeds
Have their root in human needs ;

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And I would not wish to strip
From that washerwoman's lip
Any song that she can sing,
Any hope that song can bring ;
For the woman has a friend
Who will keep her to the end.

But the blessing of her presence
is found not alone in the cottage but
equally in the palace. The great
longing of the human soul is for
comfort and peace. Neither riches,
nor power, nor position, of them-
selves bring these. The broken-
hearted are in one place as well as in
another. The sorrows of life come
to the higher as to the lower. There
are weary hearts up yonder as well
as down here. Sweet lives go out
from the one as from the other. In the
one as in the other the heart mourns
for the touch of a vanished hand and

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the sound of a voice that is still. The great agony of life has no location in place, and the great yearning for comfort and peace is not divided by the lines of wealth and power. It is the one hard thing coming to all, whose mysteries no man has yet fathomed, whose burdens all feel, and for comfort thereunder all intensely yearn. Into this longing and suffering and agony of life you come as the messengers of the only comfort, the only solace yet known to man. You are the escort of the sweet angel of comfort. You go with her into every saddened home, and introduce her to every sorrowing heart. Do I err when I say that to the aspiring, eager, enthusiastic, young man no door opens so rich in

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promise as the one which opens before him the blessed privilege of bearing the sweet message of comfort and consolation to the sorrowing ones of earth. It is a comforting gospel that you preach and bear.

Again, you preach an uplifting gospel. It is not accident that places Christian nations in the forefront of the world. Something more than race, climate and environment have caused the differences between the dwellers by the Congo and those by the Connecticut. The scale up from barbarism to civilization is along the lines of religion. The purer the religion the higher the civilization, and it is beyond peradventure that the highest civilization is found hand in hand with the purest Christianity.

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Contrast New England with Africa, or for that matter with any non-Christian race or nation, and ask yourselves if there be any nobler work than to advance and strengthen that which is potent to create such wondrous difference. If you say that this suggests missionary work, and something foreign to the thought of most entering the ministry, look within the limits of our own land and contrast the homes and lives therein and tell me where is found the most of health, prosperity, peace and purity. And when you find such homes and look for that which is the obvious cause of their superiority, can you doubt the nobility of a life spent in speeding that cause.

While this is a general truth which

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few would question, there are also special reasons why the appeal to-day in behalf of this highest and best service is more than ever strong and emphatic. Notwithstanding all the magnificence of our civilization it must be confessed that we face the growing danger of the dominance of the material over the spiritual. The marvelous inventions and discoveries, the wonderful reach of science, the unexampled business development and the luxuriousness born of all these elements, are pulling multitudes away from the spiritual and invisible to the material and the seen. And there is danger that the very intensity of our living—the magnificent surroundings of many, may overthrow and crowd out all those rich and

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tender experiences of life which are born of spiritual things. It is not altogether a phantasm—a dream unworthy of notice—that the very luxuriousness of our civilization may become its tomb, and that ours may repeat the story of prior races and civilizations in having both a beginning and an ending, a growth and a decay, a birth and a death. I am not frightened; I am not timid. I have abounding confidence in the reserved power of the spiritual life of the nation, but at the same time I believe that the emergency calls for the consecrated service of the best and strongest of our young men. They should understand that no higher service is before them, no

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larger possibility of usefulness, no grander work in life.

To this end, and, as I have said, in adaptation to the changed conditions of human society it is all important that there should be a singleness of thought and work. You must become most emphatically specialists, knowing, with the great apostle, only Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Not that you need to forget that you are men and citizens, or ignore the common duties of life resting upon you as such, not that you are to shut yourselves up in your study and be seen only on one day and heard only in one place, but you cannot be half preacher and half politician; you cannot spend half of the time trading horses and the balance of the time

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preaching the gospel. "This one thing I do" must be the motto of your lives, and in your fidelity to that will come the great success.

And what a glory in that success? Whatever may be the truth as to the nature, relations and purposes of Christ, no one doubts that His life stands as the mightiest and most uplifting force that has entered into human history. The cross upon which that life went out is its accepted symbol. From the hour when beneath the darkness brooding over Calvary "the earth did quake; and the rocks rent," that cross has expressed the great appeal from that Unseen yet Infinite Power which makes for righteousness to the individual and the race to "come up

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higher." Under the mystic power of its touch the face of the world has changed. Constantine saw it flaming in the heavens, and Imperial Rome became Christian Rome. Peter the Hermit lifted it up, and all Europe followed Richard cour de Lion to the walls of Jerusalem. Columbus fastened it to the prow of his vessel, and it led the way across unknown waters to an unknown continent. Every voyager to the new world came bearing the cross. To-day the King of Greece lifts it on the plains of Thessaly before the Moslem Crescent, and all Europe trembles at the inspiration. The individual has felt its touch. Before it, as the supreme expression of self-sacrifice, selfishness has lost its power, passion

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has softened and hate has faded away; love has blossomed as the fragrant flower of the soul, purity has become possible, all human relations have grown more sweet and tender, and the home has become a heaven upon earth.

Learning and wealth are in its service. Nicodemus no longer waits till nightfall before he seeks the lowly Nazarene. Dives does not forget the hungry and suffering Lazarus, and the Good Samaritan has come to stay. The weary traveler along the ways of life, as he sees it standing by the wayside, like Paul at Appii-forum thanks God, and takes courage. Uplifted on church and cathedral, at the top of spire and steeple, it summons all to a nobler and higher life, and

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above the entrance to God's acre it evermore stands prophet and prophesy of the resurrection and life eternal. Let the great song of your life, therefore, be:

"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.

"When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me:
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

"When the sun of bliss is beaming
Light and love upon my way,
From the cross the radiance streaming
Adds new lustre to the day.

"Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there, that knows no measure,
Joy that through all time abide.

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"In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

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