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NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

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THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

BY WILLIAM A. HAMMOND, SURGEON-GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY, RETIRED.

THE search for elixirs of life is only one phase of that insatiable desire to investigate the infinite which has characterized the human species since it first made its appearance on the earth. The philosopher's stone, the fountain of youth, the squaring of the circle, perpetual motion, are other forms to which mankind have at different periods of the world's history given much time and thought. Some of these are, in the very nature of things, impossibilities, and not long ago the French Academy refused to receive any communications from those who pretended that they had discovered perpetual motion. But others are by no means impossibilities, and those who declare that they are have no clear idea of the matter at issue. The philosopher's stone, for instance, or something analogous thereto, which a few hundred years ago was the object of much scientific research, is probably by no means beyond the realm of realization. By the use of this agent it was supposed that the baser metals could be transmuted into gold. Subsequently, when science had made considerable progress, such a pretension was regarded as absolutely absurd, but recent advances in chemistry and physics have shown

MINISTERS' WIVES.

BY MARION HARLAND.

IN NO profession—politics not excepted—do personal address and individual popularity avail for more than in that of the clergyman. The most distinguished itinerant who ever bore orders recorded a statement to this effect that sounds like a sigh of resignation to the inevitable. "His letters, say they,"—quoting his critics,—“are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account.” From this and other hints dropped, as of their own weight, in these same letters—notably references to partisans of his colleagues, Apollos and Cephas—we may infer that Paul's preaching in Corinthian pulpits did not “draw,” and that—a thing stranger yet! although he was either a bachelor or widower (probably the latter)—he was not “popular as a pastor.”

Returning to our first assertion, we may join to it a second as dogmatic. In no other profession, vocation, or craft, do a man's domestic relations so seriously affect his success. The physician may be a thrice-wedded widower in quest of a fourth twin-soul, or a *divorcé*, or an exemplary Benedict, and not gain or lose a patient as the result of any of these conditions. The lawyer's private life lies entirely without the walls of office and court-room. Merchant and manufacturer command custom according to the excellence of their wares and their cleverness in putting them on the market. That Xantippe is a pestilent scold does not mar the force of Professor Socrates's lectures; Crispin may beat his “woman” daily, yet warrant a perfect fit; homely, unlettered Rachel Jackson could not keep her husband out of the Presidential chair, nor fascinating Frances Cleveland keep hers in it.

Paul, frankly acknowledging that his oratory was deficient in the suction-principle, and using zealously his compensatory epistolary talent, lets us into other interesting matters of personal life

and opinion. He stickles stoutly for his right to "lead about a wife (who 'is a believer') even as the rest of the Apostles, and as Cephas." This is but one of the lawful privileges cited in his Socratic appeal to the Corinthians, who were, apparently, "difficult" parishioners. In conclusion, he reminds them in sudden calm, as of abrupt recollection of what checks haste and heat: "Nevertheless, we did not use this right; but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the Gospel of Christ." Perhaps he did not mean to include among possible hindrances the exercise of the right to lead about a pious wife. The unlearned and common-sensible reader will doubtless differ on this point from the erudite (and wedded) commentator. If he did not allude to it, he might have done so with pertinence and with power.

Which leads directly to a third dogma, seriously considered and solemnly expressed. A clergyman's wife can, and (Heaven help him and her!) she often does, mar his usefulness, even to utter destruction thereof, but it is not given to her ever to rivet his hold upon the affections of his charge; to place or to maintain him in a desirable position. She has fatal influence in pulling him from his high estate. Let her be saint, seraph, or *diplomate*, she cannot sustain him there, when the wind of churchly favor veers. It may be the will of Providence, as interpreted by session, vestry, or consistory, that the unbelieving (translated freely "obnoxious") wife may lose a church to the believing (popular) husband. The reversal of positions has no appreciable effect upon Providence or people.

This is especially deplorable, since Our Minister's partner is so often selected for the qualities that would make her "a good pastor's wife." That the theologian must be mated, and the sooner the better, is a postulate. The attempt to work it out as a problem would threaten a *reductio ad absurdum* to him who weighs the power for undoing vested in the other party to the indissoluble contract.

Seriousness deepens into sadness with increase of observation and experience. A "call" to the ministry of reconciliation as God meant the work to be, is the most sublime commission ever put into the hand of man. The leaning toward—the aptitude for—even what competent judges pronounce to be a "vocation" for the clerical profession, as warped and varnished by human agency—is a caricature at which we could more easily weep than

laugh. The man of God no longer directs the battle as a general surrounded by his staff. He fights on foot in the *mêlée*, and as often meets his death from a traitor's hand as from a face-to-face foe. Long pastorates are in disfavor. Our warrior sleeps on the field, one ear open for alarm or for marching orders. His armor should be light and his *impedimenta* few. A wife and children are *impedimenta*.

Dismissing metaphor, let us recall how often the divine of learning, experience, and piety knows himself to be barely tolerated by a church incapable of appreciating him; yet, in consideration of the salary, grudgingly but promptly paid which yields a support for his family, he dare not resign. A rich vulgarian, an officer in the church presided over by such a man, described the situation aptly: "The people have the whip-hand when the pastor is a married man. However high-strung he may be, he thinks twice before he upsets the wagon that carries his wife and babies." "Send us a young man without-incumbrance," writes the frontier church that needs a master-builder, and cannot afford to pay for him.

Wise widower of Tarsus! "That we may cause *no hindrance* to the Gospel of Christ."

The duties of the preacher who is also a pastor demand his best powers, and all of them. The service he renders in the pulpit is but a modicum of that exacted and given. If not a success socially, he is a success nowhere. Pastoral visitation is not now a solemn progress of the parish with catechism for children and spiritual converse for their elders. All that has gone out with the rod of the tithing-man and the "awful circle" of church discipline. The people catechise and judge and admonish their spiritual head in this our day. Our popular pastor is a man skilled in small-talk and courtly or jolly "ways"; wondrous in tact and adaptation of manner and language to shades of intellect and breeding; a man of many sides, not one of which is his very own. Should he choose a wife of and for himself, there is a moral certainty that at least one marriage will be a failure in all eyes except, perhaps, his. To fit a woman of mortal mould to the needs and fancies of a parish is a task beyond archangelic ability.

We see women attempt it every day, it is true. The idea that a clergyman, being a model man, must make a model husband;

the devout tendency of the feminine nature ; the fact that men of the cloth are usually refined, well-educated, and well-mannered, are considerations that supply the market with minister's wives, until a confirmed clerical celibate is almost as rare as an incorrigibly disconsolate and reverend widower. The success of the Guild with the fair sex is too patent to be argued here.

Thus far there is no cause for cavil. Paul settled the *right* of the question for our generation, as for his. If our Clericus could seclude his hearth-stone angel from parish eyes and parish work, seeking in the home she makes for him the balm and cheer our physician and lawyer find in private life, she might be a helpmeet for him in the best sense of the obsolete term. But from the moment he installs her as mistress of the manse, the complexion of his public life is changed. It is not only disappointed spinsters and managing mammas who look at him with different eyes. His status is entirely altered. His gentle partner may be a timid shadow stealing at his heels. It is a shadow that affects form and perspective. The shepherd ceases to be interesting by virtue of circumstance. He must stand or fall according to talent and behavior. An admixture of patronage creeps into the manner and talk of the senior members of his charge. With the juniors, the same feeling verges upon contempt. "Art thou, then, become one of us?" is the half-sneering thought.

The new wife must reinstate him. If she be quick-witted and discreet, she tries to do it by making herself one with "the people," suing for their suffrages (always for love's sake and *his*) by every winning art she can command. Independent women, disdainful of subterfuge, girding at unjust exactions, defy impertinent criticism, hold on their own way, and suffer—with their husbands—the consequences of self-will.

There is, strictly speaking, no propriety in expecting the woman who has espoused a clergyman to have, *ex officio*, special fitness for all departments of charitable and religious labor. Common-sense rules that she may suit him excellently well as a wife, yet be endowed with no peculiar gifts for "leading meetings" and "taking chairs." Yet, by an anomalous incongruity, inseparable from the situation, the next worst thing to absolute insignificance in her case is decided significance. To outshine or outwork her lord is to demonstrate his insufficiency to fill the high and responsible office to which he was elected. If she be a cipher, she de-

tracts from his worth. He cannot, after the manner of other public men, bold in the knowledge that their houses are their castles, cast himself between her and her censors with the protest, "A poor thing, but *mine own!*" I have known men thus "hindered" to drag the shrinking weaklings into the fore-front of the battle, prick them into action beyond their strength by frantic appeals to expediency, custom, pride, love, piety, until the victims of a false system, wounded and wearied to their death, fell under the harness so much too heavy for them. The gaps they leave are quickly filled, often by stouter stuff. If I dared relate the humble tragedies of this kind which have come under my eye, the rush of recruits into the places of the fallen martyrs might be less eager.

Hardly less to be pitied is she intended by nature to be a leader among women, who marries the man of her choice with the earnest purpose of playing her part gallantly as his true yoke-fellow and lieutenant. I once heard the monition addressed to a wife of this build by a not unkindly mother in Israel, that covered the point neatly.

"You preside *too well,*" said the mentor. "You manage too skilfully and are too ready of speech, too quick to put people at their ease with bright, pretty sayings and all that, you know. Of course, we understand that you mean well and only try to do your duty as a minister's wife; but you put plain, everyday folks at a disadvantage, and even ordinary folks don't like *that,* you see!"

The minister's wife is, in too many parishes, virtually included in the engagement which hires him, body and soul. The unwritten contract is unfair, cruel, and iniquitous. What a private church-member of equal ability and opportunity can do consistently with her duty to her husband and family, standing in her lot in the fear of the Lord and love of her kind, she is bound to undertake—and *nothing more.* What she may or may not accomplish should affect her husband's influence in the same field no more than if he were a lay communicant in the church to which she belongs. The rule which makes the popularity won by her virtues and winsomeness ineffectual to succor him in the hour of need should work both ways, or not at all.

As it is, the mournful conviction that he for whom she would sacrifice ease, comfort, and life itself, would, after all, have done

better for himself and the Master had he never married her, has broken many a loving heart and brave spirit.

I need no mother or father in Israel to warn me that I am touching upon delicate and dangerous ground. If, to my apprehension, it may appear that the modern Nehemiah would work more efficiently and hold out longer to wield the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other, if he were not distracted by the wife's clutch upon his skirt and hampered by the baby bound upon his shoulders, I do not forget that wiser heads than mine have declared and do maintain the celibacy of the clergy to be a pernicious doctrine.

Let me, also, guard myself from invidious personalities by grateful mention of exceptional parishes where the love and loyalty rendered the pastor envelop his home and the dwellers therein in an atmosphere of affectionate appreciation, which is at once sweet and wholesome, invigoration and balm. Labor with such a "people" is a continual joy, and companionship with those who compose it enriches with fuller meaning the phrase "the household of faith."

These churches are not "run upon business principles"—a term much in vogue and favor of late years. The fundamental principle of business being to pay for what you bargain for, and to demand nothing more, excludes the unsalaried and uncontracted-for services of the minister's wife. By so much as she exceeds in zealous good works the layman's consort, she lays an obligation of affection and gratitude upon church and parish.

This is what men on the street call "cold business." It may be, as our postulate declares, that he who, in the mystical language of Holy Writ, is "put in trust with the Gospel," most needs, of all life-warriors, the tender ministry which only a true wife can bestow. Admitting it in the name of common humanity, then, in the name of heavenly pity, let her belong to him—him alone!

MARION HARLAND.