

character; was commonplace enough in every respect. His thoughts about religious matters were crude, and, whenever occasion offered, he had a coarse jest for sacred things, or the common sneer of the ignorant man. His physical habits were of a kind to make him only fairly decent. When the idea of his being a minister, a man to stand up in the desk made sacred and wise by the Great Teacher, was announced, the companions of the man received the report with a smile. It was all well enough that this young man should become a christian, and a member of the church, but it was carrying the matter too far, that he should suddenly develop into a minister. In the meetings following his change, he had stood up and made a few pert remarks, had recounted his past history after the style of Sam Jones or Sam Small, and, lo and behold, a few men who take it upon themselves to create ministers, imagined they had discovered a prodigy, and at once proceeded to invest him with the title, privileges and authority of a clergyman. This is a fair case; an illustration of what is taking place all over the land in certain denominations. It is paralleled only by the instantaneous creation of a doctor by the issuance of a diploma to an uneducated man, upon the payment of a small sum of money. It is just as mischievous—more so, for a man may bring his body back to a fair condition of health after a quack has tampered with it to its hurt, but a soul once set in the wrong direction by a quack in the pulpit, is not likely to recover.

This man is now beyond the age of a regular course of study for the ministry. Aside from that, he is married, is poor, is daily engaged in a business which, in every aspect of it, is opposed to religious thought, and only yields a fair living. Study for the ministry is out of the question for the man. What

is the result? Another botch at the ministerial trade; another third-rate mind where only first-rate intellect belongs. In the place where the living voice ought to be, the most powerful of all mediums of all mediums of mental, moral and spiritual influence, stands a man of mediocre talent, whose lifeless, listless, monotonous iteration of commonplace, will never awaken a single new and helpful thought. Who is to blame? First, the common sense of the man ought to have served him, and come to the rescue of the general public, or that part of it where he locates; and, in the second place, the persons who presume to know the signs of the so-called "providential gift" ought to make an examination of their abilities as judges, and make it in the light of nineteenth century intelligence, before they foist an amateur pulpiteer upon the public.

It will not answer to bring up that old, fossilized cry, that some of the best men of the church were self-made, or rather, "providentially gifted." Nobody believes that the best doctors have taken to medicine without study. Nobody will believe that the best lawyer has taken to law without long, careful study of the principles of law. You are not likely to leave your valuable watch, or your best shoes, for repair, with men who, without study or labor, have taken to watch mending or shoe mending. Because a man can stand up and pray interestingly, or talk for ten minutes with tears in his words, as well as his eyes, or even makes a fairly good talk to the Sunday school children, is no reason why he should be considered a proper candidate for the pulpit. The greatest pulpit figure in this city once said to the writer, "When I was getting ready for this work, the hardest task I had was to pray or talk in public." He is a man who is abashed and humbled by the sacredness of the theme of the