

“A SULBYITE”

“WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE APPARENT  
DECLINE OF VILLAGE METHODISM?”

(1889)

SIR,—As one deeply interested in the welfare of Methodism, I am sorry to have to come to the conclusion that if something is not speedily done to raise Methodism in Sulby to what it might be, and ought to be, it will soon be a thing of the past. It is my opinion, as well as the opinion of many others, that it is at present at as low an ebb as it can possibly get to; and I ask those who can answer the question—Is the number of young people attending the chapel on Sundays what we might reasonably expect, or is the Society as flourishing as it ought to be? I think not. There is a question which we very often hear asked in Methodist circles on our Island, to this effect: What is the cause of the apparent decline of Village Methodism? Among the many reasons given, there is one which I believe to be the truest, and that is, because the sole management is in the hands of so many lifeless, old-fashioned, stereotyped officials, whose motto for ever seems to be “No Progress,” and who seemingly forget that the things of thirty or forty years ago won’t do to-day. I think a great mistake is made in not changing officials annually, or if not annually, at least every two or three years; because, when they have been in office for twenty or thirty years, like many at the present moment have been, they seem to get to think they are monarchs of all they survey, whose right there is none to dispute, and that their duty is simply nothing but to wind the clock, criticise the preacher, and take up the collection. I think, sir, it would be a blessing to Methodism if these kind of officials, wherever found, were at once superannuated, even if compelled to pension them. Now, in my opinion, results seem plainly to tell us we have a few of these dignitaries among us in Sulby. I wonder how long shall we have to wait to see the chapel made more modern and more comfortable, by being re-pewed—a work which should have been done years ago. I suppose we may expect a long wait; but if we need not expect to see this done, surely we can get it made a little more brilliant and attractive by being newly painted and more comfortable, by getting the pews repaired, so that no one need get the colour of the wall on their coats through the backs of the seats. Would you think it possible that in a village like Sulby, where there are so many young men and women so talented for singing, we should be without a choir; I think it is disgraceful. There is no wonder that even the young people connected with Methodism from their earliest days go elsewhere—not very far off—where they can hear good singing, which, to them, is the best part of the service. I am sure it is anything but pleasant to hear the great official, who generally displays his vocal ability in Sulby chapel, raising the tunes; he might have been famous in the days when the fiddle and the clarionette

grinned at each other, but, I am afraid, that now his day is past. I do hope that soon there may come a radical change, and that all the improvements necessary may speedily be carried out, so that we can have a comfortable and attractive place of worship; and if we can have that there is no doubt the congregation will increase, and the members also. Sulby has of late become popular as a resort for visitors, many of whom are Methodists; surely we ought to show that Sulby is a credit to Methodism. I would advise all those whose heart is in Methodism in Sulby to let us agitate constantly, and if we cannot get those to move who ought to lead the way let us never rest until we see men in office with energy, push, and common-sense, and the stumbling blocks removed. Hoping you will pardon me for trespassing so much on your valuable space, I remain, yours truly,

A SULBYITE.

Pseud [signed as "A Sulbyite"]. "[Letter to the Editor] Methodism in Sulby." *Mona's Herald* 7 August 1889: 3g.

Stephen Miller RBV

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