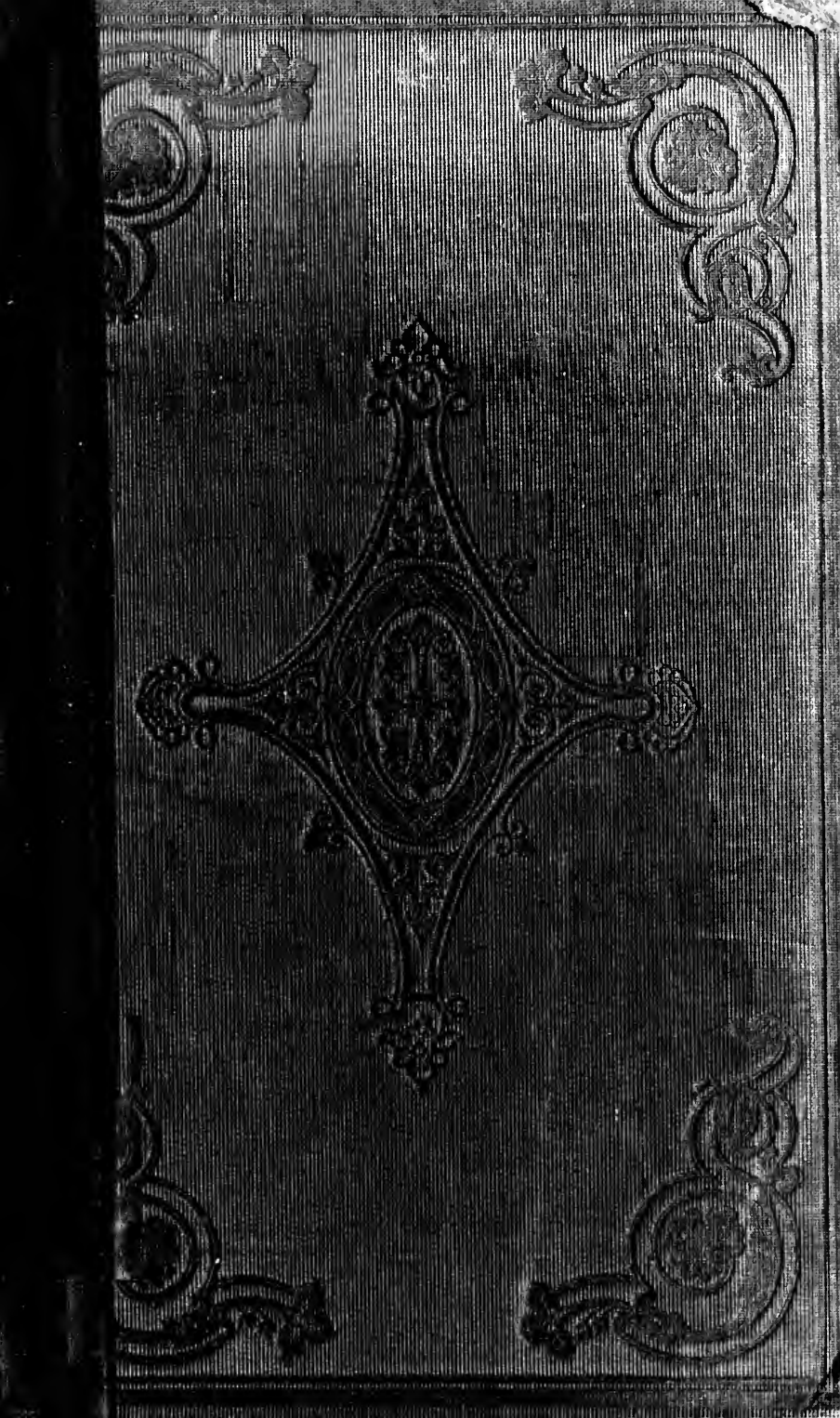

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THE MODERN PULPIT

VIEWED IN ITS RELATION TO

THE STATE OF SOCIETY.

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BY

ROBERT VAUGHAN, D.D.

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1842.

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PREFACE.

THE late George Storer Mansfield, Esq., who resided many years near Derby, accumulated considerable property, which, in purpose, he bequeathed to his two sisters, Mrs. Glover, and Miss Mansfield. These ladies were more concerned to see their brother a man of piety, than to become possessed of his wealth. They agreed to offer the prayer of faith in his behalf, and that prayer they lived to see fully answered, so that the practical disregard of religion, which they had long deplored in their relative, was followed by a habit of enlightened and fervent devotedness to the service of God. Soon after this change, Mr. Mansfield, with the cheerful concurrence of his sisters, appropriated the whole of his estates, and some other property, to establish a college, in which young men of piety and talent might receive education preparatory to the Christian ministry. To the munificent

gifts of Mr. Mansfield, others have been added by his sisters, and at their decease an income will be realized from these sources amounting to nearly £1700 per annum.

In this manner has originated the Independent College at Spring Hill, near Birmingham. The plan of a building, to be raised by public subscription, sufficiently spacious to become the residence of fifty students, and which, with its furniture, will cost, it is calculated, little less than £25,000, has been agreed upon; and such progress has been made in obtaining contributions toward that object, through the indefatigable labours of my esteemed friend and brother, the Rev. Timothy East, as to warrant the expectation, that within five years the intended edifice will be raised. Early in the next year, also, a building, on a scale no less extended, and dedicated to the same objects, will be completed near Manchester, nearly the whole cost of which has been met by the liberality of the dissenting churches in Lancashire belonging to one denomination only.

In both these colleges, the means of education will be provided on a plan, equal in respect to the essential branches of learning, and superior in respect to theology and pastoral science, to what is generally obtained at Oxford or Cambridge. Both, also, are founded by

congregationalists, and they make their appearance in addition to the older colleges at Homerton and Highbury, and those of Rotherham, Airdale, and Exeter, as belonging to the same denomination of Christians.

The present treatise owes its origin to a discourse delivered by the Author at the annual meeting of Spring Hill College, in June last. His fathers and brethren who were present on that occasion, requested that the thoughts which had engaged their attention from the pulpit might be submitted to them from the press. But the preacher soon discovered, that the theme which he had selected embraced too wide a compass, and too great a variety of topics, to admit of its being treated, with any approach toward justice, within the space allotted to him in the pulpit. He has accordingly recast, and greatly expanded, the whole matter of the discourse, in the hope of rendering it in some degree less unworthy of the subject to which it relates.

In conclusion, the Author would not be understood as addressing himself in the following pages to the ministers of religion, more than to the laity; nor to one class of Protestant Christians, to the exclusion of others. It is his settled conviction, that in the times coming upon us, the power of scriptural religion, as exposed to the influence of superstition on the one

hand, and of scepticism on the other, must depend mainly on the power which may have place in the Protestant pulpit; and that the Protestant pulpit in the future, will be found to possess the required efficiency, only as our laity shall be resolved on seeing that it does possess it. On the deficiencies and faults observable in the present state of that pulpit, the Author has spoken with freedom; and his apology for that freedom must be in the confession that they are deficiencies with which he feels himself to be in a great degree chargeable, and faults which he has himself only very partially unlearned.

Notting Hill,
August 3, 1842.

THE MODERN PULPIT.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE OFFICE OF PREACHING, AND ON THE PLACE ASSIGNED TO IT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

One consequence attendant on the discovery of printing has been, to render society less dependent than formerly on oral instruction. In the ancient world, and down to the close of the middle age, the student learnt nearly everything from the lips of his teacher. During the last three centuries, the printing press has done much toward supplying the place of the living instructor. Hence while the people of England in the fourteenth century must have been as a small fraction only, if subtracted from our present population, the numbers resorting to Oxford as pupils were much greater in that age than in our own. This fact may be in part explained by another—the instituting, subsequently, of so many local seminaries for primary education, which has served to restrict the matters taught in universities to the higher branches of scho-

larship. It may also be somewhat further explained by the circumstance, that ecclesiastical persons are no longer the only persons engaged in conducting the work of education. But even these causes have not done so much, probably, toward producing this change, as the discovery which has raised the printed volume, in so great a degree, into the place of the college professor, sending the means of instruction which was once almost confined to the walls of colleges, home to the fireside of every student.

But great as this change may be, it has its limits. No prevalence of written learning can wholly supersede the services of the oral teacher. Dependence on such assistance may be less than formerly, and may be different, but it will still be felt, and that feeling will be acted upon widely. Greater facility with regard to attainment, must always bring with it a higher average of attainment. The more ample the means of education, the higher will be the demand made upon the educated. Oral teachers, accordingly, may not be required to teach in the same manner, nor to teach the same things, and still be required to teach. Their instruction, indeed, may have become only the more necessary, as, from these causes, it has become less elementary. Such aid may not be the less valued along with the possession of books, because it is now oftentimes only subsidiary to what must be learnt, in the main, from the study of books. It is inseparable from the susceptibilities of our nature, that private

study should be stimulated by the countenance and voice of the living teacher, by access to him in all cases of difficulty, and by association with class-fellows, as well as by that consciousness of realizing both a more speedy and a more certain progress which is the natural effect of such advantages. We can hardly conceive of circumstances that should prevent these causes from operating so as everywhere to congregate the young for the purposes of education by such means, and so as to perpetuate, in different forms, and especially in relation to the higher objects of study, the old relationships between the less taught and the more taught.

But if nothing may be expected to separate the progress of scholarship from its relation to the chair of the professor, assuredly nothing can be expected to separate the progress of religion from its relation to the pulpit. If secular knowledge must possess its places of secular training in respect to the few, religious knowledge must not be wanting in its places of religious training with regard to the many. It is not more certain that we may not do without colleges in the one department, than that we may not do without churches and chapels in the other. If it would be vain to expect that the minority, consisting of the highly educated, should ever be wholly independent of college lecturing in regard to general learning; not less vain must it be to expect that the majority, con-

sisting, for the most part, of the comparatively uneducated, should ever be independent of pulpit instruction in regard to religious learning—that learning which is the proper business of every man, and his proper business from the beginning of his days to the end of them. Indisposition to the exercise of reading, and the consequent proneness to depend on oral instruction, is always strongest where mental cultivation is the weakest, and on no subject is this so much the case as in respect to religion. The feebler the resources of the individual, the more must he depend on the aids of association. The more limited his attainments or capabilities as a learner, the more must he need the sensible presence, the animating utterance, and the power of simplification peculiar to the living teacher. But if the principle and feeling of association have their roots so deeply fixed in our nature, that even the studious who assemble in colleges have always been governed by them in relation to their studies, and are never likely to be less governed by them than at present, is it to be supposed that it will ever be otherwise in the case of the busy multitude of men, if they are to acquire the power of exercising their thoughts with any degree of wisdom in the study of religion? Is it not at once obvious, that the aids both of the feeling of association and of oral instruction must always be greatly more needed in the latter case than in the former?

We see, then, what the effect of the printing press has been in this view—that it has rendered self-education more possible than formerly, and has devolved a larger portion of the labour of education in all cases upon the learner; but that so far as respects the services of the public instructor, its effect has been to give them a higher character, rather than to supersede them, and that this has been its effect in an eminent degree with regard to the instruction designed to be conveyed from the pulpit. The demand now is, not that preaching should cease, nor that it should be less frequent than formerly; but that, in general, it should be of a higher order, as being addressed to an auditory capable of reading, to an auditory in possession of books, and to an auditory whose education is much more general than obtained among assemblies of the people in former ages. The Christian minister, then, is not to surrender his office to the printing press. He may sometimes have to contend with it as an antagonist, but his proper vocation is to labour with it as an ally.

Such is the view we should be disposed to entertain with regard to the office of preaching in relation to modern society, if the scriptures had been silent on the subject. Books may do much, but the law is eternal which places man in much dependence on the immediate tuition of man. In this respect, as in every other, the gospel has anticipated social improvement. The prominence assigned in the New Testament to

preaching, and assigned to it as its permanent place under the Christian dispensation, has been determined in the clear foresight of all the change that has been, and that shall be. Revolutions in the social and in the moral world may greatly affect the mode and complexion of preaching, but its high uses must be perpetual, inasmuch as the great aptitudes of human nature to which it commends itself must be perpetual. The labours of our blessed Lord consisted almost entirely in preaching. It was in this office that the apostles were to find their almost constant occupation. It was as preachers that the seventy were deputed when they were sent forth two and two into every city and place whither their Lord himself would come. To this kind of labour the risen Saviour pointed when he said, in his emphatic address to Peter, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs;" and still more instructive in this view was his parting command to his disciples, when the heavens were receiving him out of their sight—"Go, preach my gospel to every creature."

Everything in the history of the church during the apostolic age is in harmony with these intimations. Preaching everywhere appears as the great employment of the apostles, and not less so of the settled pastor. "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour, *especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.*"* The inspired guides of the

* 1 Tim. v. 17.

church sometimes touch upon the institutes of religion, and upon matters of church government, but it is always briefly, and for the most part indirectly, leaving nearly the whole space in the apostolic records to be occupied with the matter proper to preaching—viz., the exposition, the defence, and the enforcement of the great truths and duties of religion. The apostles were not indifferent to the true principles of church government, but their great concern was that churches should be governed by the spirit of an enlightened Christianity. They well knew the symbolic use of the Christian institutes, but they trusted not to them as expounders of the truths of which they were the symbols. When Paul gave thanks to God that he had baptized so few of the Corinthians, adding—"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel,"* he announced distinctly the place assigned to the work of preaching in the New Testament. He knew the terms of the commission which had been given to him as an apostle, and his conclusion from those terms was, that it is more important—greatly more important, to preach than to baptize. So great, indeed, was the difference between these things, that he speaks of the one as though it possessed no value, even as though it had no existence, compared with the other. It follows, accordingly, that among the means of promoting religion in the

* 1 ~~Eph~~ Cor. i. 17.

world, preaching should always hold the first place. All other institutes, even when clearly the appointments of God, as in the instance of baptism, and when administered in all respects scripturally, as in the first churches, are thus made to have their place and value as subordinate to preaching. Nothing can be more plain than that Paul looked to preaching as the great means in forming churches, and as the great means by which they were to be edified when formed. It is from the state of the pulpit, accordingly, that we should judge, in the main, as to the state of religion in the case of any people.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN SOCIETY.

No age has been so characterized by a diffused intelligence as the age in which we live. Its remaining ignorance and folly may be sufficiently humiliating, but its amount of knowledge and culture is unprecedented in the history of the human family. If we look to past times, even to the spaces which have been rendered most conspicuous by the works of

genius and the progress of civilization, we see, in general, the civilization of a class, rather than of a people, and the intelligence and dominance of a few, contrasted with the ignorance and subjection of the many. Such has ever been the state of things in the East, and such, in a degree little apprehended in modern times, was the condition of society even in Greece and Rome. Throughout the ancient world, authors were a class, and their readers were a class,—the people at large possessing little sympathy with either. Even the arts were aristocratic rather than popular, affording a better indication in respect to the wealth and power of men in authority, than in respect to the social state of the people subject to that authority. The majority were slaves, and a small minority only could read—need we say more?

So far as concerns the soil of Europe, this phase in social history has passed away, and passed never to return. Books no longer consist of costly manuscripts, which find their way only to the hands of the opulent. They now have their place among the cheapest of commodities, and everywhere cross the path even of the poorest. The inducement to learn to read has gone along with this new facility for exercising that pleasing and powerful faculty when acquired. The absence of domestic slavery, the elevation of the female character, the diffusion of the principles of political franchise and self-government, and, above all, the liberty of worship, and the right of private

judgment in matters of religion—all these have contributed to call forth habits of thought and feeling, and facts and relations in the social world, which are, strictly speaking, new things in the history of our race, and new things which cannot fail to give character to the ages to come, as distinguished from the bygone. This change has come also—not as with the suddenness of accident, but as with the gradualness of a great law of providence. It has its roots everywhere, and, notwithstanding temporary oscillations, it will have its permanence everywhere.

We know that, in all ages, the education of men has not been the effect of what has been taught them from books, so much as a natural result of the training inseparable from the domestic relations, and from the intercourses of social life. Parents do more in this way than schoolmasters. The young owe their character much more to the influence which they exert over each other, than to the direct labour of their professional instructors. Society is the great free school, in which, as by a ceaseless pressure toward that end, thought is adjusted, habit is formed, and character is made indelible. So long as the majority were unable to read, they were of course left wholly to such influences. The things written in books affected them powerfully, but indirectly—not in the manner of something inscribed upon parchment, and deposited in the pavilions of the wealthy, but in the manner of something always floating through society.

Failing to learn by the side of the domestic hearth, in the workshop, in the theatre, in the street, or in other places of public resort, they failed to learn at all. Such places were their great seminaries, and in them they found almost their only teachers.

But it is obvious, that the whole of that social apparatus, as bearing upon instruction, exists among ourselves. Among us also, it exists with a wonderfully improved aptitude for accomplishing its object. We know nothing of the distinction between the bond and the free. Books, and the power to read books, are no longer peculiar to the privileged, but common to the multitudes of men. The leaven of written intelligence, which once came to the people at large only through the medium of others, and in fragments, now comes to them directly, and is exhibited in forms studiously adapted to interest and instruct. Society is still the great schoolmaster, but it is society with better means of self-improvement; society itself better taught; society including more of the equalities which conduce to mutual instruction; and society, accordingly, conveying instruction which in its modes of communication, its variety, and its amount, is peculiar to the times in which we live. All the channels of instruction which are natural to the relations of social life, and which were possessed by the ancients, we possess; and we use them with much greater effect, as being aided by our more advanced social position, and by that prodigious increase to the means of knowledge

which has been supplied by the printing-press—a power which is not restricted to place or time, and which combines in itself not a little of the potency of the senate, the forum, and the pulpit.

In no country is the effect of these changes more observable than in Great Britain. The manner in which they have affected the character of the manual-labour classes will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE MANUAL-LABOUR CLASSES, AND ON THE PULPIT IN ITS RELATION TO THEM.

It must be manifest, on the slightest observation, that the manual-labour classes in this country are men of a widely different character from those occupying the same social position a century, or even half a century since. Inasmuch as all may now derive some knowledge from reading, a considerable number, even among those classes, give a portion of their time to such employment, and the few who are most disposed to employ themselves in that manner, act as constant instructors in respect to the greater number who read much less than themselves. Living in nearness to each other, or accustomed to almost ceaseless intercourse

from the nature of their avocations, working men partake, almost imperceptibly, of something like an identity of thought and impression. They are connected by so much in common, that they are naturally influenced by strong tendencies towards assimilation—the more shrewd ever acting, in this manner, upon the less shrewd.

But in Great Britain, artificial causes have so affected the bearings of this intelligence, both as regards social questions, and matters of religion, as to have given to the labouring classes in these kingdoms a character almost peculiar to themselves. The working man on the Continent is, in general, better educated, and much better conducted, than the working man in England; and, what is more remarkable, he participates little in the disaffection of the English artisan with regard to the existing institutions of society.*

We may observe, as somewhat in explanation of this last fact, that the mechanic abroad is less familiar than the Englishman with the forms and spirit of a free constitution, and is in consequence less likely to

* "Apart from Switzerland, generally speaking, the working classes of the Continent are thoroughly indifferent to politics. Their politics, even at Lyons, where they have acted so conspicuous a part in hostility to the existing dynasty, may be attributed more to the prompting of agitators acting on the irritability of empty stomachs, than to any decided political feeling or thoughtfulness on the part of the people themselves."—*Arts and Artisans at Home and Abroad.* By Jelinger C. Symons, Esq., p. 112.

fix his attention on matters of a political complexion in order to discover the cause of his sufferings, or the means of providing against them. Nor has he experienced, in the same degree, the distress attendant on the fluctuations of commerce and manufactures. The English artisan has been subject to more frequent and more severe privation than his neighbour; while his manner of thinking, as the subject of a free government, is such as to assure him that, had he been fairly dealt with, the balance in this respect must have been in his favour. With a better government, he accounts himself worse governed.

It is painful to contemplate the spirit which has grown up from these causes, and become in a great degree characteristic of the English mechanic. Often does he look on the comparative ease of the classes above him, as though exhibiting little else than the gain of a selfish policy successfully pursued; and on the splendour of the rich, as realized in great part by means of an unrighteous exaction from the poor. Nor is there anything in the pomp thrown about the possession of power, to divert him from scrutinizing, with the utmost freedom, the object so invested, nor to prevent his evincing towards it, in too many instances, mingled hostility and scorn.

The natural urbanities, and the mutual trust and good-will, which once held the different grades of society together, are so diminished as to be almost effaced from our habits and character. Variety in

allotment, which has so often conduced to social unity and power, seems to be fast losing its tendency toward any such result. The portions of the community which are unlike, are almost everywhere the portions of it which are at enmity. It is a great gulf which separates between the richest and the poorest; and in the case of the classes which come nearer together, the jealousy and ill-will between them is oftentimes more deeply rooted and bitter than in the case of those who are separated in the greatest degree from each other. Equality seems to have become the great want and object of the manual-labour classes; and the worship offered to this idea, is as to a species of divinity, which it is only needful to make propitious in order to realize the visions of a golden age. Of course, the degree in which the mind is fascinated with this object, is the degree in which its enmity rises against all opposition to the prosecution of it. Hence the ideas of wealth and power have become identified, very generally, in such quarters, with those of selfishness and oppression—so much so, indeed, that to be apprehensive of some great social convulsion, would seem to be a greatly more reasonable state of mind, than strong confidence as to the continuance of tranquillity.

Religion, also, as being unhappily blended with everything secular about us, shares largely in this enmity. Of all the parts, indeed, included in the established order of things, this is viewed as in the

least degree just and humane. Among all the offices which are accounted useless or pernicious, those of the dignitaries of the English hierarchy are regarded as the least endurable; and of all men, the clergy of the established church are the last to whom this class would think of looking for any concession in favour of popular power. In the state church, these men see a state engine—an engine of immense cost and portentous mischief. Judging of Christianity from such exhibitions of it, they regard it as a policy, and not as a religion; and if they ever appeal to it with any appearance of respect, it is when they would reproach its ministers with having divorced its creed from its practice, or with being zealots for its doctrines, while they manifest the deepest repugnance to its social morality. By these persons, as in the case of much more educated men during the last century, little distinction is made between the Christianity which is perpetuated by selfish usage or state polity, and that which is sustained by means of its own worth. It has not been convenient, in either of these cases, to be observant of such distinctions, and the precious and the vile have been confounded accordingly.

But whatever right we may have to complain with regard to such a method of proceeding, the great fact remains—it is so, that from these and other causes, we have not only to do with a more diffused and a more vigorous popular intelligence than our predecessors,

but we have to do with it as disposed to take a wrong direction, so far as regards religion, rather than a right one. The classes who, less than a century ago, regarded everything English with blind admiration, now look on nearly everything established with an aversion hardly more discriminating. Extreme has come, for a time, into the place of extreme. We needed change, but it has not halted at the right point. The false has been discarded, but it has not always been that the true might come into its place. We have something very like the spirit of insubordination in place of the spirit of servility; and scepticism has come, too commonly, into the place of credulity. Enmity to our social institutions is proclaimed as on every house-top; and enmity to revealed religion, in every form, is published in a manner scarcely less notorious.

Should the indolent statesman, or the confiding Christian, be disposed to account these appearances a trivial matter, we would remind such persons of the maxim which derives strength from unity, and would bid them look to the capabilities of organization with which this new spirit is associated, as evidence, of the most unequivocal nature, in regard both to its prevalence and power. It is a leading fact in the social history of our times, that the idea of power has come to be almost inseparable from the idea of centralization and unity; and even in the class adverted to, among whom concert of this nature was least to have been expected, this notion has not only become familiar, but has ob-

tained the place of a fixed maxim, and has been acted upon with a singular measure of success.

It is not necessary to our present object, that we should deliver any definite opinion concerning the merit or demerit of the objects contemplated by this novel species of popular combination. It may be, that we ought to see in it, nothing more than the natural effect of some much older, and by no means less selfish combinations, in favour of the interests to which it is opposed. It may be, that the unreasonable contained in it has derived its measure of influence and power from its alliance with much that is not unreasonable. It is always safe, as well as humane, to judge leniently concerning the errors of the people, and, on the whole, it may be, that the weak in this case, as in most others, possess a more weighty claim upon our sympathy than the strong. But whether addressing the many who toil, or the few who luxuriate, we mean not to use flattering words, and we must confess, that the insufferable arrogance, and the ill-disguised mental depravity observable in not a few who aspire to be as masters over this popular organization, are such as to leave no doubt in our mind with regard to the course which such men would pursue, were *their* power once to become commensurate with their inclinations. We are willing to believe that the course taken in this respect by multitudes among the labouring classes, is not to be ascribed to those darker intentions which are often imputed to them, so much

as to their limited knowledge, their want of consideration, and, above all, to their complicated suffering and their deep sense of its being unmerited.

But when every deduction of this sort shall have been made, the fact that so many of our countrymen should have given even the semblance of an adhesion to a course of proceeding which is hardly less than hostile to everything religious among us, than to everything political, is a matter sufficiently ominous. Many thousands—many myriads, of the working men of England have been disposed to take their course apart from such questionable associations, but this has been almost uniformly as the effect of their having been brought under some religious impression by means of an evangelical ministry, either in the established church, or among the various bodies of methodists or dissenters, and to this fact we must attribute the ferocious attacks which have recently been made on all denominations of Christians, through some of the organs of the party whose ranks have been thus affected. If we succeed in diffusing sobriety of thought, and the fear of God, among the people, we must lay our account, it seems, with not a little of such invective.

But, as Christian ministers, and religious men, our attention is naturally directed towards this social phenomenon, considered mainly in its bearing upon religion; and in this view the point which I am desirous of pressing upon the attention of my brethren is, that

while we are at full liberty to be observant of the good, and of all that may be excused or extenuated in these appearances, it is imperative that we should look to the evil that is in them — look to it in its whole compass, and in its lowest roots, if we would deal with it wisely. It must be remembered, that in these appearances we find the most remarkable feature of the age in which we live. To a great extent, popular passiveness and superstition have given place to popular restlessness and irreligion. We see in this change a great social reaction—a reaction in excess, and a reaction, in consequence, which will probably subside, though not, perhaps, within the time of the present generation. It may be, that as the lines which have separated our two great political parties are becoming less and less distinct every day, the main effect of these new indications with regard to popular feeling, intelligence, and power, will be to give a more beneficial character to that new adjustment of the great elements of political society which seems to be at hand.

What, then, is the report that should be made concerning the pulpit, viewed in its relation to this large portion of the community? Our answer must be, that we cannot avoid accounting it as being, in a great measure—perhaps in a majority of instances—a manifest failure. Nor are the more considerable of the causes which have conduced to this failure hard to discover.

It would seem to be a cardinal error among the great majority of preachers in our time, that they think much too meanly of the popular understanding. It is their manner to judge of the minds of men too much by the standard of a technical education, without keeping sufficiently in view either the sameness or the variety of those natural capabilities which God has bestowed upon men as such. It is little remembered, in consequence, that the slightly-educated man in the pew, may possibly be possessed of much greater sagacity than the thoroughly-educated man in the pulpit. Ministers of religion should not need to be reminded, that the smith at his anvil may have more compass of soul in him, than is found in the scholar, however much given to his books. In the case of the one, there may be naturally a robust mental health, such as no amount of artificial means would suffice to confer in the case of the other. Equality in these things is of much wider extent than is commonly supposed. The peer and the mechanic are alike specimens of humanity, and, not unfrequently, all the training in the world would fail of securing to the man of high degree, the same habit of intelligent perception which may be existing as so much natural bestowment in the man of low degree. In all time, the toe of one grade has come, in this manner, near upon the heel of another accounted as greatly its betters. But in no time has this rivalry between the children of

nature, and the children of fortune, been so prevalent, or so marked, as in the time in which we live.

It is a great mistake to suppose, that in order to interest and instruct the popular mind, it will be necessary to descend to it in a manner inconsistent with good taste. It is not denied that some men do thus descend, and that they do so with their measure of success; but we deny, even in their case, that success has been necessarily dependent on such means. One of our greatest masters in eloquence has assured us, that all the highest powers in oratory consist in producing such passages as may at once affect even the most promiscuous auditory, and that the most elaborate graces of composition are rarely thrown away even upon such an auditory, provided they are graces adapted to their object. "Clear, strong, terse, yet natural, and not strained expressions; happy antitheses; apt comparisons; forms of speech that are natural without being obvious; harmonious periods, yet various, spirited, and never monotonous or too regularly balanced;—these are what will be always sure to captivate every audience, and yet in these, mainly consists finished, and elaborate, and felicitous diction. 'Mirabile est,' says Cicero, 'eum plurimum in faciendo intersit inter doctum et rudem, quam non multum differat in judicando.'* The best speakers of all times have never failed to find that

* De Orat. iii. 51.

they could not speak too well or too carefully to a popular assembly; that if they spoke their best—the best they could address to the most learned and critical assembly, they were sure to succeed."* Thus, even among the ancients, with whom oratory was much more a matter of mere embellishment or amusement than among ourselves, the utmost care was taken that the erudite should always be subservient to the popular, and that the effect of the utmost degree of literary refinement should be a stronger popular interest, and a deeper popular impression.

But in the modern pulpit, the effect of learning, and of elegant scholarship, has commonly been to render men incapable of producing impression of that nature in any degree. In the case of such preachers, neither the diction they use, nor the mould into which they cast their expressions and sentences, nor the comparisons they introduce, nor anything belonging to their rhetoric, has been an object of study with a view to its fitness to secure the attention, and to move the thoughts and passions of such assemblies as are generally convened by the preacher—assemblies made up from the popular, much more than from the thoroughly educated classes of society. The great object of this class of preachers has been to acquit themselves learnedly, or to acquit themselves elegantly. It is grievous to witness the mischiefs which have

* Dissertation on the Eloquence of the Ancients, 424, 425.

resulted from this conventionalism in pulpit taste. If our pulpit lessons must be veiled in the language of a particular kind of scholarship, then the people generally, and even men of good natural parts, who have not been initiated into that scholarship, will fail to perceive our meaning, and will begin, as the consequence, to cast about for some better employment than listening to the utterances of our unknown tongue.

It should be accounted as a pleasing proof of the good sense pervading the popular mind, when the people refuse to be put off with the jingle of style in place of the clear statement, and vigorous enforcement of truth. Nevertheless, on the ground that the people almost uniformly estimate such pulpit trifling at its proper value, are they commonly reproached as incapable of appreciating pulpit excellence! In general, the scholar needs only speak in his own language to be understood by the scholar; but should it become his object to make himself equally understood by men who are not scholars, it will be necessary that he should study to become expert in the use of language which may not be strictly his own. He must look from his own immediate associations to the associations of other men. He must become observant of the modes of apprehension which belong to minds widely different from his own. He must be capable of effort to place himself as in the stead of such minds; and from that point he must learn to judge concerning the

manner in which such mental habits may be approached with the best effect. Nor must he regard this as being altogether a work of condescension. It is not condescension that is demanded of him, so much as adaptation. This manner of observation, and this kind of study, may be necessary, not so much because the minds about him are weaker than his own, as because they are different. The point to be guarded against is, that what is peculiar to the class of the teacher on the one hand, and to that of the taught on the other, may not be allowed to prove fatal to the sympathy which might otherwise arise from what is common to them both. Should it be necessary to condescend, it will not be the wisdom of the public instructor to seem to do so. Any intimation to that effect would be felt as so ill a compliment, in many cases, as to prove in itself sufficient to ensure a failure.

On this whole subject, the following passage abounds in the most apposite truth—and truth of such practical importance that no public speaker can ponder it too closely. "It is a common thing with those who, because Cicero is more ornate, suffers the artifice of his composition to appear more plainly, and indulges more in amplification, imagine that he is less argumentative than the Greek orators, to represent the latter, and especially Demosthenes, as distinguished by greater closeness of reasoning. If by this is only meant that he never wanders from the subject, that

each remark tells upon the matter in hand, that all his illustrations are brought to bear upon the point, and that he is never found making any step in any direction which does not advance his main object, and lead toward the conclusion to which he is striving to bring his hearers—the observation is perfectly just; for this is a distinguishing feature in the character of his eloquence. It is not, indeed, his grand excellence, because everything depends upon the manner in which he pursues this course, the course itself being one quite as open to the humblest mediocrity as to the highest genius. But if it is meant to be said that these attic orators, and especially their great chief, made speeches in which long chains of elaborate reasoning are to be found—nothing can be less like the truth. A variety of topics are handled in succession, all calculated to strike the audience. Passions which predominated in their minds are appealed to—feelings easily excited among them are roused by skilful allusions—glaring inconsistencies are shewn in the advice given by others—sometimes by exhibiting the repugnance of those councils among themselves, sometimes by contrasting them with other counsels proceeding from the same quarters. The pernicious tendency of certain measures is displayed by referring, sometimes to the general principles of human action, and the course which human affairs usually take; more frequently by a reference to the history of past, and generally of very recent events. Much invective

is mixed with these topics, and both the enemy without, and the evil counsellor within the walls, are very unsparingly dealt with. The orator was addressing hearers who, for the most part, were as intimately acquainted as himself with all the facts of the case, and these lay within a sufficiently narrow compass, being the actual state of public affairs, and the victories or the defeats which had, within the memory of all, attended their arms, or the transactions which had taken place among them in very recent times. No detailed statements were therefore wanted for their information. He was really speaking to them respecting their own affairs, or rather, respecting what they had just been doing or witnessing themselves. Hence a very short allusion alone was generally required to raise the idea which he desired to present before his audience. Sometimes a word was enough for his purpose; the naming of a man or a town; the calling to their recollection what had been done by the one, or had happened to the other. The effect produced by such a rapid interchange of ideas and impressions must have struck every one who has been present at public meetings. He will have remarked that some such apt allusion has a power—produces an electrical effect—not to be reached by any chain of reasoning, however close, and that even the most highly-wrought passages, and the most exquisite composition, fall far short of it in rousing or controlling the minds of a large assembly. Chains of reasoning,

examples of fine argumentation, produce their effect upon a far nicer, a more confined, and a more select audience. But such apposite allusions—such appropriate topics—such happy hits (to use a homely but expressive phrase) have a sure, an irresistible, a magic effect upon a popular assembly. In these the Greek oratory abounds, and above all, its greatest master abounds in them more than all the lesser rhetoricians. They would have been highly successful without the charms of composition; but he also clothes them in the most choice language, arranges them in the most perfect order, and captivates the ear with a music which is fitted at his will to provoke or to soothe, but ever to charm the sense, even were it possible for it to be addressed apart, without the mind too being moved.

"Let any one examine the kind of topics on which those orators dwell, and he will be convinced that close reasoning was not their object—that they were adapting their discourse to the nature of their audience—and that, indeed, not a few of their topics were such as they would hardly have thought of using, had they been arguing the matter stringently with an antagonist, 'hand to hand, and foot to foot;' or, which is the same thing, preparing a demonstration to meet the eye of an unexcited reader. It is certain that some of Demosthenes' chief topics are exactly those which he would use to convince the calm reason of the most undisturbed listener or reader—such as the dangers of inaction—the formidable, because able

and venturous enemy they had to contend with—the certainty of the peril which is met by procrastination becoming greater after the unprofitable delay. These, however, are the most obvious considerations, and on these he dwells the less because of their being so obvious. But the more striking allusions and illustrations by which he enforces them are not always such as would bear close examination if considered as arguments, although they are always such as must, in the popular assembly to which he addressed them, have wrought a wondrous effect." *

In nearly all these respects, effective public speaking with the moderns, is precisely what it was with the ancients. The use, indeed, of the apt allusion or illustration, for the purpose of giving the effect of argument to points of mere ingenuity, is, of course, no peculiarity to be imitated by any ingenuous speaker, and least of all, by the Christian minister. Nor are we insensible to some other material differences between the eloquence proper to the forensic orator and that proper to the divine. But it would be well if the eloquence of the pulpit were made to partake of all that is strictly appropriate to it in the eloquence of the senate and the bar. The barrister, in laying his case before a jury, has all the inconveniences to surmount which can beset a preacher when addressing himself to the partially instructed, in the presence of

* Brougham's Dissertation on the Eloquence of the Ancients, 432—435.

many belonging to a higher class. He has to bear in mind that he is speaking as one of a profession which is understood to be restricted to persons possessing the attainments of the scholar and the feeling of the gentleman. He has to speak also in the presence of a court before which nothing at variance with the established notions of taste or decorum would be allowed. He has at the same time to secure the attention of a jury consisting of persons selected from the occupied, more than from the educated classes—the majority always needing to be addressed with the greatest regard to lucid arrangement, clearness of expression, and popular modes of illustration, if the case is to be presented so as to obtain a favourable verdict.

Thus it will be seen, that the lawyer, in order to success, is obliged to be at once erudite and popular: and that he is expected to exhibit this versatile power without descending to the coarse or the vulgar. And has the divine any right to complain because success in his case is made to depend on a similar necessity? No man expects that a barrister will be successful, except as he is found capable of casting a luminous glance over all the points of a case when submitted to him, capable of assigning to the points of greatest importance their due place, and capable of setting forth the whole with a distinctness and strength adapted to apprehensions of much less discipline than his own—and shall we complain, because the conditions of success in the pulpit are the same in these re-

spects with the conditions of success at the bar? No advocate ever dreams of being effective, except as he shall have made the minds to which he has to address himself an object of study, so as to facilitate his progress in the great art which enables a man to throw off the results of accurate, and, it may be, of profound learning, in the most popular form. Need I say, that it is precisely by such a process that we should seek to realize eminence as preachers?

It is in vain that we cast the blame of our failure in this capacity on the popular taste. Men capable of teaching, will succeed in that office, if they only study, with a view to success, so as to deserve to succeed. No man, whose aim in elaborating sermons has been to give clearness and force to Divine truth, has ever had reason to complain of the obtuseness of the popular apprehension, or of the coldness of the popular gratitude. But the preacher who would find this assertion corroborated in his experience, must be careful that his labour is indeed to make truth plain, and not to obscure it—to give it power, and not to render it pointless. If observant of these very obvious maxims, he will soon perceive that there is very little knowledge in the mind of our preachers, which might not be made to have its place in the great majority of the people looking up to them for instruction. There is nothing so wonderful in our thoughts, even in the case of the most intellectual, as to prevent men in general from sympathizing with them, whenever the object of the

preacher is to shed light upon thought, and to render it impressive.

But not a few preachers would seem to have been more solicitous to discover a plea for indolence in looking to the weakness of the popular mind, than to realize a stimulus to exertion by looking to its strength. How else may we account for the conduct of persons who appear to have come to the conclusion, that the best way to interest men is, not to communicate knowledge, but to indulge in a constant iteration on what is already known. Man is so constituted by the law of his Creator, as to be capable of finding immeasurably greater pleasure in the sense of going onward, after the manner of a rational being, than in the sense of going merely round and round, after the manner of a mill-horse. But manifest as this fact may be, on the slightest reflection, there are many preachers who seem to have spent a long life without taking any real cognizance of it. In the train of this weakness every sort of evil naturally follows. No pains are taken to explain the obscure or to establish the doubtful, partly because these things would require effort, but mainly because the preacher has learnt to think that such labour would be useless, and possibly worse than useless. Hence, in the midst of a generation which has left nothing unquestioned, the man continues to preach as though the credulity of the middle age had never been disturbed. While every appliance is abroad on the side of error, such

preachers deem it enough that they repeat, to utter weariness, a mere proclamation of the elements of truth; and should this fail of convincing the gainsayer, they account their office as performed, when they have imputed to such persons everything bad in motive, and have consigned them to everything terrible in destiny. Even such preaching may not be without a measure of the Divine blessing, and may, accordingly, produce some good impression; but that impression will be very much confined to the more passive and feeble-minded, even among the humbler classes, while upon the more shrewd in those classes, and especially upon such as may have imbibed prepossessions opposed to all credence in revealed truth, the tendency of such preaching must be rather to excite disgust than in any way to conciliate.

Having used this freedom of expression with regard to the defects of the pulpit viewed in its relation to the manual-labour classes, it will be proper to add, that we are happy in the assurance that there are many hundreds—indeed, we can readily believe many thousands—among the preachers of the gospel in Great Britain, who are not insensible to the wants of the age in this respect, and whose efforts in some degree to supply those wants, entitle them to much commendation. In England, great praise is due, on this ground, to a large class of preachers among the Wesleyan methodists, among evangelical dissenters, and in the established church. On the

whole, we judge that the gospel has not been preached in so much of its apostolic import and spirit, by so large a number of men, in any period of our history as at present, or in any period in the history of any other people since the age of the apostles.

Our matter of regret is, that notwithstanding these signs of improvement, deficiency in this respect is still so manifest among us when compared with the demand of the times. It is to be regretted, also, that the attempts made by methodists and dissenters, to adapt religious instruction to the classes adverted to, should have been so often made in a manner inconsistent with that regard to decorum, and that good religious taste, which never should, and never need be dispensed with in the pulpit; and that in all these connexions, the effort to render instruction popular should have been so generally allowed to wear the appearance of an act of condescension. The educated do not need to be regardless of dignity on the one hand, nor to put on this seeming of the superior on the other, when accosting the uneducated on the village green, or by the way side, and why should these things be suffered to make their appearance in the pulpit?

But while some preachers give themselves to the study of what is needed from them, as such, by the age in which they live, and a greater number possess only a little light on that subject, there is a greater number still, who seem to be wholly incapable of understanding what is expected from them

in the office they sustain; and our fear is, that, in many cases, persons of this latter class will take to themselves the benefit of the favourable exception just made, while nothing is farther from our intention than that they should be so comforted. On this subject there is much need to pray that those who see not might see, and that those who see in part might see more clearly. Only as the Christian ministry shall become characterized by much sound practical intelligence in relation to the duties of the pulpit, can we hope to see the mass of the people retained in any profession of regard to the gospel; and if the existing religious bodies do not occupy themselves wisely and sedulously, with a view to efficiency in that form, let them not be surprised if it should appear that the nineteenth century is to give existence to some new religious movement, after the manner of the eighteenth. It is not in the history of methodism only that we see the zeal of new sects employed as means of correcting the errors or expelling the lethargy of the old; and in this connexion, as in every other, if the same causes are permitted to recur, the same effects must be expected to follow. If the impression which it is so necessary should be made on the masses of society, in regard to the claims of revealed truth, is to be made, it must be in the main by the ministry of men who, with minds devoutly intent on doing good, will know how to unite the advantages of scholarship with the

studious culture of popular talent; and if the existing ministries of the church should fail to send forth a large supply of such men, it is to be expected that the Head of the church will himself raise them up, by a special intervention to that end, and the new agency will probably make its appearance in quarters, and in circumstances, of which we have at present no sort of foresight.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE MIDDLE CLASSES, AND ON THE PULPIT IN ITS RELATION TO THEM.

It has appeared, then, that the increase of numbers in the labouring classes of Great Britain, within the last half century, great as that increase has been, is not so remarkable as the change which has taken place in the character of those classes. Of course, this great moral revolution has not come alone. Corresponding change is observable in the middle class, and has reached, more or less, even to the highest.

The present intelligence of the middle classes, regarded in its average, is much more varied, and of a much higher character, than that of the gentry of

England a century since. It is now felt that every trade demands a new degree of skill, promptitude, and energy; that every profession is based on quite another grade of attainment; and that men who would distinguish themselves in public life, must do so through a process of competition and ordeal unprecedented in our history.

We have our prejudices still, fully enough of them, but they are everywhere, in some degree—if the expression may be allowed—*reasoning* prejudices. Men continue to hold very absurd opinions, but they are nearly always founded on *some* apprehension of truth, and are sustained by something of the plausible in argument. Literature is no longer an appendage to aristocracy, but a possession of the people, and especially of the people in the middle ranks of life. Authors look immeasurably more to the patronage of the professional and trafficking classes of society than to persons above such classes. The taste of this wider circle of readers is for the clear, the direct, the forcible, and the demand produces the supply. Poetry, description, narrative, argument, eloquence—all the forms of composition come before them from the press almost every hour, and serve to familiarize them imperceptibly with the exhibition, the clothing, and the working out of thought, after the manner of educated minds.

Hence while we find not in the history of any other country so large a middle class as in Great

Britain, in no other country do we find that class including so large an amount of wealth, intelligence, and power. It is true, it is a middle class severed too much from the lower classes, and subject often to unwholesome influences from the higher; but the intrinsic strength retained by it in these somewhat unfavourable circumstances, is still such as to present to the eye of the preacher a wide and most promising field of mind on which to bestow his labour. In this department he can bring no real skill to the public service which he may not expect to see fairly appreciated. Within this enclosure school instruction has been considerable; but the shrewdness and knowledge which have grown up within it, indirectly and imperceptibly, as consequent on the daily intercourses and occupations of life, are such as no school or college would have imparted. Of course, the powers of mind which have become acute, penetrating, comprehensive, from their contact with the world, do not cease to possess these qualities of strength when invited to an examination of the claims of religion. Habits of forethought, caution, scrutiny, calculation—all are so many forms of mental power, and if taken in the track in which they are accustomed to move, are so many avenues by which the preacher may hope to reach the understanding and affect the heart. Professional life, and commercial life, have never done so much to give discipline and force to the general capabilities of the human mind as at the present

time; and never, in consequence, has so large a demand been made upon qualities of that nature in the preacher when addressing himself to minds engaged in such pursuits. Our aim, accordingly, should be, to see that the intellect which is put forth on the side of the religious, is not less powerful than the intellect which is thus on the side of the secular; that the stronger cause may not be allowed to appear as the weaker, through weakness on the part of its advocate; that the men who plead for the future may be capable of contending, closely and successfully, with the men who give themselves wholly to the present; and that we no more commit the folly of sending forth contemplative imbecility, to make proclamation of its weakness by attempting to do battle with active power.

One effect of the position taken by the labouring classes, and of other causes of a similar complexion in our recent history, has been an augmented zeal on the part of the wealthy, the professional, and aristocratic classes, in favour of the older forms of our institutions, and especially in favour of the established church, producing in a large body of the clergy of that church, and among many of its laity, a much stronger disposition to recede toward the Christianity and the civilization of the middle age, than to allow themselves to be drifted onwards, they know not whither, by the new tendencies of society. Upon the less wealthy sections of the middle class, this dis-

position to fall back upon the servile and superstitious will probably make little impression. But there are other classes, a little more fortunate in life, and more beset, in consequence, with a disposition to ape the tastes and manners of the classes above themselves, who will not be unwilling that their natural sympathies or preferences in matters connected with religion should be accounted as piety; and many among the more untaught and the lowest classes, will be as readily disposed to substitute the forms of ecclesiastical observance, in the place of the intelligent, the moral, and the devout, which alone constitute the religion of Holy Writ.

In what state, then, is the English pulpit with regard to this class, filling as it does its wide space between the two extremes of society?

In the case of devout churchmen, much inconvenience and cost are frequently incurred to place themselves in connexion with an evangelical ministry, which sometimes proves everything they desire, but is more frequently regarded as a matter for which they should endeavour to be thankful, seeing that it is the best of its kind they can obtain. Very commonly, such persons have a much better conception in regard to what preaching ought to be than the preacher himself, and they find themselves obliged to bear with a want of capacity and adaptation in the pulpit, which they would not tolerate a week in the case of persons entrusted with the management of anything respon-

sible in their worldly business. It often happens, indeed, in this connexion, that well-meaning people, strongly attached to certain walls, to particular forms, and to one class of ministers, learn to content themselves with the most puerile round of instruction, so that it comes to them through the right channel, so that care also be taken to set it forth in a certain phraseology, and with the required tone of seriousness. But even these persons are often secretly conscious, that the pulpit, as they see it filled, instead of being in advance of the times, is a pitiable loiterer in the rear of them.

With regard to churchmen in the same social position, who give no preference to evangelical instruction, deficiency of this sort may be less felt in their case, but it is by no means unperceived even by such persons. Every clergyman, it is presumed, is a man of ability in some way, seeing he has patent as such, under the seal of a university. But few things are more common than a feeling of surprise and regret that the results in this case, so far as regards preaching, should be so little commensurate with the understood cost and labour of the process. Not that these persons in general care much about preaching, as a matter relating to themselves; but they look to it as something for which a good price has been paid, as something which on that account ought to be done well, so done as to accomplish its object; and they look to it, moreover, in connexion with what obtains

of the same kind elsewhere—and it is not at all gratifying to perceive that their own ministers, who claim to be in all things belonging to their vocation as the first, should so often be in this very notorious matter of preaching as the last.

Looking to churchmen of the middle class generally, particularly to the more shrewd and informed, and taking in the leading men in mercantile and professional life, we cannot avoid the conclusion, that the honest and fixed opinion of those parties must be, that no portion of the public service is, on the whole, so defectively performed, as the service of the pulpit. Such men cannot fail to see, that of all the products in our social system, those of the pulpit are the most costly, and the worst supplied. Nor are the clergy themselves wholly insensible to this fact. Hence, in great part, the ceaseless attempt, in the case of a large number of them, to depreciate the office of preaching altogether, as compared with the reading of prayers, and other official services. If we would trace this anti-apostolic theory—which aims to put disparagement, rather than special honour, upon the men who labour in word and doctrine—to its root, it will be seen, we suspect, to arise out of the conviction—a conviction not the less real for being unavowed—that if the church of England has stability and power in the land, it is on account of what she is in other respects, and not on account of her company of preachers.

Once for all, we would readily do honour to the

able, the laborious, and the devout among the ministers of the established church—and they are not a few who may be so described—but we speak now of the ministry of that church viewed generally; and, so regarded, it is manifestly below the age, a most evident failure, and a framework which, for the most part, would fall to pieces to-morrow, if its artificial means of support were once struck away.

Congregationalists derive their strength from the middle class. But we do not mean to conceal—we dare not conceal, our impression, that the state of the pulpit among ourselves is open to much—very much of the complaint which we regard as applicable to it elsewhere. If deficiency in pulpit ability, in certain respects, is not so manifest among us as in the established church, it is mainly because our system is of a nature to be always placing such evils in process of correcting themselves. Our preaching may not consist in reading the smooth pointless essay, but it may not be on that account the less barren of instructive thought, and impressive utterance. It may be much in advance of the preaching which is tolerated, and even praised, in the case of the feebler portion of the evangelical clergy, and still be so far below its proper level, as to be of small effect and very little valued. Extemporaneous discourses may partake largely of the faults of that manner of preaching, and very little of its excellences. The consciousness of possessing thought, may be allowed to induce a negligence of

utterance ; or a consciousness of possessing utterance, may be allowed to induce a negligence of thought. In the former case, we lose our hold on the less intelligent ; in the latter, on the more intelligent, by whom the less is generally governed. Our notions in regard to the ministerial office, and our manner of education as ministers, may not be of a kind to separate us widely from the general habits of the occupied about us. But we may fail, nevertheless, to make that class of persons sensible, that, as the consequence of being less professional, we are more natural, more sagacious, better informed concerning them and their circumstances, and better skilled in exhibiting the lessons of the gospel in their adaptation to both. If it be inexcusable to underrate the capacity to receive instruction in the case of the labouring classes, fault of that nature must be still more reprehensible when it has respect to parties who are all more or less educated men, and all men whose avocations are constantly tending to enlarge their knowledge of human nature, to sharpen their faculties generally, and, without making them preachers, to constitute them shrewd judges of what preaching ought to be. It is a sore trial of patience to hear some preachers talk of the inability of their hearers to appreciate good sermons as the reason why they do not labour to produce such sermons. It would often be well for the preacher, in such cases, did he possess half the capacity of not a few of the minds which he has learned to despise.

Good sermons are discourses adapted to edification, and my experience has never brought me in the way of a middle class auditory that could not at once appreciate a sermon characterized by that kind of goodness, always supposing it to be delivered with a good natural manner.

It is to errors of this description—errors of a nature which it would seem most natural in men of sense to avoid—that we must look for an explanation of the fact, that the instances in which our own pulpits are occupied in a manner so little suited to the times in which we live are so numerous as we find them. It is painful when even the preaching of the gospel comes to be a matter *borne* with, rather than a matter highly esteemed and valued. But so it is at present to a grievous extent, and so it must be whenever disparity is felt to be on the side of the teacher rather than the taught.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE HIGHER CLASSES, AND ON THE PULPIT IN ITS RELATION TO THEM.

The state of the English pulpit in respect to the higher classes may seem to be a topic with which Protestant dissenters have no great concern, inasmuch as the ministrations of the established church, be they of what character they may, are the only ministrations which such persons will be found to attend. But by the upper classes we would not be understood as referring to persons of rank merely, nor to persons of great wealth, so much as to the intellect and refinement of the age generally, and the position of the pulpit in this view, is a question of interest and importance.

If we look to the scientific world, we see every department occupied in a manner of which the history of science affords no precedent. The multitude of persons devoted to such studies has supplied an augmented stimulus to exertion. Every branch of knowledge has been divided and subdivided in a manner peculiar to our times, in order that the whole might

be the better understood, as the result of a better attention to the parts. Acquirement and skill which would once have been accounted extraordinary, now have their place as so much moderate attainment. The men possessed of such attainment are found everywhere. Disciplined mind, accordingly, is everywhere; and the ever-increasing number of such minds, is the constant diffusion of a power which cannot fail to distinguish between the instructed and the uninstructed, the skilful and the unskilful, in preaching as in other things. Such men may not have been students of divinity, nor have given much attention to the teaching contained in books on the subject of pulpit oratory; but the mental training which has given them the power of clear and vigorous conception on one matter, is inseparable from considerable power of judgment in relation to many other matters, and especially in regard to such qualities as are of the greatest importance in a sermon—viz., a real knowledge of the subject, together with order, precision, adaptation, and force in the manner of treating it.

In all these respects it is with the world of letters as it is with the world of science. Everywhere we find men capable of sympathizing with the spirit of our general literature, and men who can themselves use our language in a manner fitted to meet the public eye. Even the men occupied in the regular craft of authorship, would seem to be almost as numerous as the members of the most crowded professions. That

easy, accurate, and effective style of writing, which secured so much fame to our Drydens and Popes, our Addisons and Johnsons, would now appear to be within the power of almost any man choosing to attempt it. Not only does the periodical press abound with compositions of that high order, but even the cheapest productions of that description, meant for the humblest class of readers, frequently exhibit a literary power scarcely inferior to that displayed in the most costly publications. In this ready mastery of our mother-tongue, in this power over the material of thought, and in this aptness in all matters of arrangement, description, argument, and eloquence, we see the standard with which the intellect of our times is familiarized as regards the manner in which topics of discourse or appeal should be treated, and in which such topics must be treated in the pulpit, if the pulpit is to be to the age what the age demands. In this aspect of the public press, very much is implied, both as to the widely-diffused power of a highly cultivated authorship, and as to the still more widely diffused capacity to appreciate such authorship. Ignorance, dulness, feebleness, are nowhere—success is bound up with the reverse of such things.

We should now observe further, that with this more general passion for knowledge has come a more general feeling of interest in respect to everything pertaining to the history of knowledge. Hence everything within the wide domain of science and literature has its asso-

ciations with the past as well as its relations to the present. In the mind of multitudes, the great charm consists, not simply in its being what it is, but in its relation to the processes and the times through which it has become such. In this manner, subjects which are little poetical in their own nature, are made to carry with them something of the element of poetry. Every branch of knowledge can boast, more or less, of its great men, of the difficulties which have been surmounted in its favour, of the distant, the shadowy, the romantic, as belonging to its story. Thus the very knowledge which has superseded the past, in one respect, has given new interest to it in another. Our age, accordingly, matter-of-fact as its character may appear in some views of it, is still highly imaginative; its knowledge, its institutes, and its aims, being in a great degree its own, while its tastes still linger in no slight degree amidst the scenes of other days—much as the heart of manhood is found to retain its fond recollections of childhood and youth.

Hence in an age so much imbued with the spirit of calculation and gain as our own, the artist and the engraver ascertain that few subjects are better adapted to remunerate their toil, than pictures of the feudal and the bygone. In literature, also, the soberness of history and truth has been almost extruded from its place, by the more vivid representations of social life in past ages as supplied by the genius of fiction. Evidence in regard to the prevalent tendency to indulge

in such reminiscences, is before us on the walls of every picture-gallery, and on the table of every drawing-room, and frequently in the antique form given to our domestic architecture, and to the interior decorations and furniture of our dwellings. Thus, while our principles would seem to be propelling us to the greatest distance from the *realities* of the past, our tastes are constantly disposing us to be calling up its *shadows* and its *forms*.

Now let it not be supposed that this is a trifling matter, even in relation to our present subject. It is not a small number of mankind who are governed by their tastes more than by their principles, especially in those cases in which their being so governed is not attended by inconvenience. Society in our day embraces large classes, who, while they know how to tolerate vice, can never be made to tolerate coarseness,—points of taste being with them a much more serious matter than points of morality. Such is the character of modern education, that we are surrounded by multitudes whose distinction from the crowd consists wholly in a superficial and showy sort of refinement; and this large class of persons, we may be sure, will always be much more influenced by the elegant or the picturesque in the form of things, than by any consideration about the true or the rational as relating to their substance. Romanism has never ceased to lay heavy tribute on this infirmity in human nature, and has succeeded by this means in substituting

emotion in the place of principle, and in confounding the feeling of taste with the feeling of piety. Oxford is now pursuing the same course. In both those connexions religion is arrayed in the drapery of art, and the worship of her costume is accounted as the worship of herself. Our literature during the last thirty years, and particularly by reason of the character and position it has given to works of fiction, has contributed powerfully to diffuse this feeling, and has done much, incidentally, toward reviving ideas and sentiments in connexion with religion of a nature most inimical to its purity and power. Puseyism, like popery, will be a religion of pageantries and mystical pretension, and will derive its main strength from ministering to a species of poetic taste, under the name of religion, in the case of the educated; and from misleading the religious instincts, by means of the *ignis fatuus* of imposing forms, in the case of the uneducated.

It would have been well, however, if the intellect and refinement of the age had always been found tending in this manner toward religion in some shape. But since the year 1660, the educated classes in England have exhibited a considerable bias towards scepticism; and no one can need be reminded, that the more expanded, and the much higher mental cultivation of our own time, is by no means without an alloy of this nature. The excesses of the infidel faction during the heat of the French Revolution, gave some check to such tendencies in this country, but there is room to

fear that the change thus produced, while real in some cases, has been often much more apparent than real. At present, this bias in such quarters rarely betrays itself by any direct attempt to disturb the credence of the popular mind with regard to religious matters;—but it has its occasions on which it can hint as to what it might do in that way, if so disposed; and many connexions in which the little that is written or said is meant to suggest, that informed and thinking men, if believers at all, have very good reasons for not being such in the sense of the multitude.

In general, both the information and the thinking of these persons, on the subject of Christian evidence, are of no great amount; but it happens commonly, that in the case of each man, some real or supposed difficulty of this sort has arisen within his own department of study, and though the power which has realized that difficulty might have sufficed to realize an abundant solution of it, the will so to employ that power has been wanting, and the general effect, from this cause, and some others, has been, to leave the mind without anything deserving the name of religious belief, and possibly to occupy it with much secret or avowed hostility to all persons seeming to be in earnest in the profession of such belief. Such are the gentlemen whose after-dinner or evening conferences often assume the tone of a profound philosophizing about religions and religionists.

The votaries of politics, science, letters, art, and

taste—often embracing persons of the greatest opulence and of the highest rank—all have their respective divinities, to which they are wont to bow down and worship. It is the manner of each, to associate the idea of everything most exalted in intellect and refinement, with the homage of the deity to whose shrine he is himself especially devoted; and all are perhaps of one mind in regarding it as a mark of wisdom to be thus intent on exploring, analyzing, and imitating the created, and to be devoid of solicitude in regard to the means by which man may rise to the knowledge of the Creator—the being from whom all created things have proceeded, as the matter of a grand discourse, or as an embodiment given to a few from among that infinitude of wondrous thoughts which have their dwelling-place with him from everlasting!

Every sober man must have had frequent occasion to deplore the narrow views, the intoxicating vanity, the inconsiderate and imbecile conceits, which are often attendant on intellectual pursuits, so far as concerns the judgment frequently formed by such minds in regard to religion, and must have regarded it as no mean evidence of the depravity of human nature, that such men should so commonly form conclusions on religion as they do not on any other subject—viz., without any adequate effort to understand either its nature or its evidence. But, little reputable as the frequent scepticism of the higher classes may be to them, considered in what it indicates with regard to their general knowledge,

capacity, and ingenuousness, the fact that such scepticism exists, and that it is nourished by much in the science, literature, and taste constituting the fashion of the age among those classes, is still before us, and a great social fact it is, of which the preacher must not be unmindful. In such quarters it is hardly to be expected that revealed truth will obtain even a hearing, except as it is presented with the kind of ability which it would not be expedient to seem to despise. Knowledge must be opposed by knowledge, intellect by intellect, and religion be presented as the grand and the beautiful, in such forms as may leave little of grandeur or beauty to anything beside. Religion is all this; the intellect of man is capable of so presenting it; and there are occasions when to give up his whole nature to such effort becomes the duty of the preacher.

Such, then, in general, is the character of the intelligence and refinement of our times, especially in regard to science, literature, and taste. Is the English pulpit equal to its office, viewed in relation to times of this complexion? In answer to this question, I shall borrow the language of a critic, who, while in the highest degree competent to form an enlightened judgment on all such topics, would be among the last of his generation to judge uncandidly or inconsiderately with regard to the Christian ministry, or anything Christian. My reference is to the author of a recent article in the Edinburgh Review, on the works of Mr. Isaac Taylor, in the course of which,

touching on the state of theology and of the pulpit in this country, the writer observes:—"Feeble, indeed, are many of those who attempt to draw this Durindana from the scabbard. Malignity itself cannot accuse our pulpits and theological presses of beguiling us by the witchcraft of genius. They stand clear of the guilt of ministering to the disordered heart the anodynes of wit or fancy. Abstruse and profound sophistries are not in the number of their offences. It is mere calumny to accuse them of lulling the conscience to repose by any syren songs of imagination. If the bolts of inspired truth are diverted from their aim, it is no longer by enticing words of man's wisdom. Divinity fills up her weekly hour by the grave and gentle excitement of an orthodox discourse, or by toiling through her narrow round of systematic dogmas, or by creeping along some low level of schoolboy morality, or by addressing the initiated in mythic phraseology; but she has ceased to employ lips such as those of Chrysostom or Bourdaloue. The sanctity of sacred things is lost in the familiar routine of sacred words. Religion has acquired a technology, and a set of conventional formulas, torpifying those who use and those who hear them. Her literature also bears the impress of an age in which the art of writing has wellnigh proved fatal to the power of thinking; when the desire to appropriate gracefully has superseded the ambition to originate profoundly; when the commercial spirit envelops and strangles

genius in its folds; when demi-gods and heroes have abandoned the field; and the holiest affections of the heart die away in silence; and the ripest fruits of the teeming mind drop ungathered into the reaper's bosom;—an age of literary democracy and intellectual socialism, in which no bequests are made to remote posterities, and no structures are rising to command and break the universal mediocrity."

Now, be it remembered, that this melancholy estimate with regard to the state of theological literature in our country, and especially with regard to the manner in which that literature is made to bear upon our people from the pulpit, is the estimate of a layman, of a literary man, and of a mind exhibiting one of the rarest combinations of large knowledge, exquisite refinement, and profound wisdom, in union with a truly Christian charity. It is an estimate, as we humbly think, which might have been rendered somewhat less gloomy, and still have been consistent with the whole truth. But all the faults which it depicts so forcibly, manifestly exist—exist over a wide surface, and if, on the whole, this description be only admitted as making some considerable approach towards a just representation of the case, is it not high time that we should endeavour to awake out of sleep?

Concerning the dependence of all human effort upon a Divine influence for its success, we shall speak in another place. But in the meantime, we scruple

not to say, that if the intellect of the scientific world is to be brought to the obedience of faith, we must be prepared to compete with it in the use of its own weapons, and after its own manner. And if the high-minded pretension which so often obtrudes itself upon us in the world of letters is to be effectually repressed, and to give place to the reverence with which the religion of Holy Writ should be regarded, this will only be in proportion as we shall know how to make such men sensible that the matters of which they judge so highly have not been excluded from our knowledge and scrutiny any more than from their own. It will be folly to hope that such men will be found assigning to revealed truth its proper place, if they are obliged to tolerate imbecilities in its favour which they do not tolerate elsewhere.

It is true that these persons are by no means shut up to the necessity of exercising such forbearance in order to their becoming Christians. The present state of things is not so bad, as to allow that any pretence of that nature should be honestly pleaded, in vindication either of their scepticism, or of their religious indifference. Our theological presses, and even the sermons in our language, are still such as to demonstrate, that there is a mental power among us that may be brought to the side of religion, which is of a much higher order than anything displayed against it. But the evil to be deplored is, that these appearances should be so much the exception, and that something so very

different should be found to constitute the rule. Hence it commonly happens, that the contact in this respect into which such men are brought, is with the imbecility which becomes to them an occasion of stumbling, rather than with the sagacity which might be taken as a safe and honourable guidance.

Nor shall we be negligent even of the province of taste in matters of religion without loss. We dare not attempt a commendation of the gospel to men by means of those vain trappings which some of its professors have thrown about it. We depend for our success upon what Christianity *is*, and not upon the adjuncts which man may bring to it. In this respect, time, and the course of events, have served to place protestant dissenters at much disadvantage as compared with the Christians of some other communions. We cannot boast of structures which have stood through many long centuries, on whose curving roofs, and time-worn pavements, and curious panellings, and half-obliterated monuments, the eyes of many a remote generation have fallen. No scenic costume, varying from the most gorgeous vestments to the most simple or austere, are at our disposal; nor have we the aid of those symbolic forms in the office of the sacraments; nor of those mystic exhibitions in the worship about the altar; nor of those daily or nightly pageantries which chant their way through the cloistered aisle, or along those sacred floors where architecture rises like a forest towards heaven. Such spectacles lend their

sort of fascination not only to the vulgar sense, and the vulgar imagination, but oftentimes to minds in which the tenderest natural sensibility has been wrought up into the truly heaven-bound aspiration! These wizard elements, of which superstition has made such potent use, are not at our bidding.

But the greater is the need that all which may be done truly and wisely to affect the kind of susceptibility which is addressed by such means should be done—done studiously, and done upon system. If we may not convert the worship of God into so much artistic display, the greater is the need that we secure to it the charm of decency and order. If our services are not to be powerful in their appeal to the senses, the greater is the need that they should be powerful in their appeal to the understanding, and in their fitness to move the devout affections. If minds of sensibility and imagination are not to be influenced by mere ritual and show, the greater is the need that they should be influenced by those more illustrative and tender modes of exhibiting the great and the affecting in religion itself which are especially adapted to awaken and interest such susceptibilities. If our taste in all matters connected with religion must be simple, the greater is the need of care that it may not fail of being appropriate and impressive. If a superstitious reliance on forms be a kind of deception in religion most fearful in its power, the greater is the need that the argument on the side of religion, considered

in the proper spirituality of its nature, should be made clear and irresistible. In a word—if it be the practice of men to throw so much artificial attraction about the false, how can we hope to succeed except as we throw all its legitimate attraction about the true? If we aim not to subdue men—as the manner of some is—by ensnarements addressed to the senses, must it not behove us to commend ourselves the more skilfully and earnestly to all that may be affected as belonging to their inward nature? If we depend less than others on the aids of the imagination, should we not look with a deeper intensity than others to the intellect, the conscience, and the heart? Is not all this imperative if we would demonstrate that scriptural Christianity, in the use of no other than its proper means, is really stronger than corrupt Christianity, with all its world of false appliances at command?

But it must be clearly perceived, that in endeavouring to counteract the advantages which are thus on the side of error, and to avail ourselves to the full of those which are on the side of truth, the pulpit must be our grand instrument. Powerful as may be the agency of the press, it is by means of preaching that the battle of religious truth must be fought—whether we look to it as a conflict with superstition on the one hand, or with infidelity on the other. It will never cease to be the fact in relation to this subject, that the mass of the people will be much more affected by what they hear than by what they read.

Hence the religious denomination which shall commend itself to the ear of the people with the greatest effect, will be the strongest to mould their religious opinions and preferences. The false in religion is more congenial, in many respects, with depraved human nature than the true; and that the true may nevertheless prevail against the false, it must be presented with a greater force than can be given to the false—be so presented to men at large, and so presented especially from the pulpit.

Nor is there need to despair of seeing it thus exhibited. It may be that our polity and ritual are very simple, so that we hardly expect to see them associated with any strong exercise of the imagination. It may be that we have learned to look on them as so prosaic and literal, that the mind seeing as to the end of them at a glance, and nothing being left to awaken curiosity, or to hold out its visions to the fancy, we find it difficult to suppose that they might be readily allied with a feeling of deep and permanent interest. But in so judging, do we not overlook the great facts in His history who was himself the first preacher of his own truth? Did he account the impressiveness of his own teaching as dependent on the aids of human architecture and decoration, on the pomp of priestly vestments and priestly pageantries, or on anything artificial, however beautiful in itself, or however venerable from its relations to the past? Was not his course as studiously separated from all the gauds

of an ecclesiastical greatness, as from those of a secular greatness? Was he not in his appearance, and manners, and teaching, as little like the priests of his time, as like its potentates? Has he not taught us, in this manner, that the power of his truth in the earth is as little dependent on its alliance with temples, as on its alliance with palaces? Does he not point to the sea-shore and the mountain-side, to the green field and the desert place, to the solitary village road and the crowded pathways of the city, and bid us see in them, both the places and the circumstances of his ministry? Was not the earth as the pavement of his temple, the heavens as the covering beneath which he constantly offered up his spiritual sacrifices; and all the wonders in earth and heaven—were they not as the matters of a marvellous ritual, which, touched by his words, became everywhere as the shadows of a living substance—as the ever-present forms of an ever-living truth?

He has thus taught us, that the symbolic which is of God, is much more to the purpose of the preacher than that which is of man. He has thus assured us, that art can present no such adumbration of divine truth as may be seen in nature. He has done enough to make it certain, that the minister of the New Testament who shall be careful to avail himself of the semblances and illustrations of scriptural truth which are everywhere presented in the visible and living world, need not fear the issues of a

contest with men who place their great trust in ceremonial observances—matters, which can be at the best only a poor or tawdry imitation of the realities which are constantly passing before the eyes of all men in the evolutions of providence, and the changeless appearances of nature. Our polity and ritual may be simple, but what they denote is shadowed out by universal nature, and is infinitely more wonderful than universal nature. In themselves they are as nothing—in their relations, they embrace all things. We may see to the end of them as mere forms, but no created mind can see to the end of them in their spiritual import. While only an object of the senses, they present nothing of the indefinite or mysterious, and are little adapted to fill the imaginative spirit with those vague thoughts, and still more vague emotions, which it covets; but viewed under the light of a sanctified intellect, we see them send forth, in lengthened perspective, the perfection of the ways of God. Thus viewed, they stand in relation to a thousand mysteries in time, and to much deeper mysteries as pertaining to eternity. No wing of created imagination can ever reach to the borders of that land which is thus opened before us!

But it is our happiness to live under a dispensation in which the minister of religion has less to do with the ceremonial, that he might have more to do with the rational; in which teaching is to be less the work of a ritual priesthood, and more the work of the oral instructor; and in which the emblematic exhibi-

tions of inspired truth, in place of being confined to a few prescribed observances, are to be selected, in the freedom of a truly Christian intelligence, from the wide phenomena of nature, and from everything having place among the passing events of time. If it has been the manner of Antichrist to cluster upon the simple institutes of the gospel an endless trumpery devised by man, be it ours to bring to them those better adornments which their Divine Author has furnished to us in his own works, and which our Blessed Lord himself has thus appropriated through the whole course of his recorded ministry. The great demand now made on us in this respect is, that what other men aim to do by scenic show from the altar, should be done, and much better done, in our case, by effective instruction from the pulpit; and that on the whole matter of visible aids in religion, we should spare no pains in opposing to every illusive spectacle supplied by art, the truthful utterances which may be always successfully invoked from the real magnificence of nature!

But the power necessary to this kind of preaching, while it must come in part from nature, must come also from much study, and from a devout solicitude to lead men into the paths of truth and piety. Nor is anything further from our thoughts in the above observations, than to encourage that kind of preaching, which, in its exuberance of language and allusion, seems not to belong either to poetry or prose. Ser-

mons, in general, are addresses to the people, and, as such, should be eminently popular; in some connexions, a certain measure of homeliness would be their great excellence. But men do not need to be unnatural in making use of nature. Our example in this respect is before us in His manner, who preached on—the sower that went forth to sow—on the blade, and the ear, and the full corn in the ear—and on the man who built his house upon the rock, and the other who built upon the sand.

Let it be remembered also, that a religion based upon poetry must be a frail thing in the hour of trial, compared with a religion based upon principle. Men governed by emotion have necessarily much less stability in them than men governed by reason. Concerning the sort of Christians that are formed, by the system which has more respect to the great truths of theology than to trivial points of church government, and which attaches greater value to an enlightened moral consciousness than to accuracy in matters of ecclesiastical observance, some judgment may be formed from the conduct of the confessors and martyrs in the primitive church, and from that of the same class of sufferers in the south of France during the middle age, and in the history of Europe from the age of Wycliffe and Luther downwards. It was a Christianity restored to something of its ancient simplicity—a Christianity much of the puritan mould, which enabled the old Germanic states to assert their

ecclesiastical freedom; which gave so formidable a character to the remnant of Protestant feeling in France; which nerved the arm of the Dutch while opposed to the fearful odds arrayed against them by his Catholic majesty; which sustained the heroism of the covenanters amidst the wilds of Scotland; and which, under God, sufficed to preserve both the Protestant religion and civil and religious liberty in England. Wherever you find a poetical Christianity, you find a despot; and in the history of despotism, whether ecclesiastical or civil, the governing are doomed to reap as they have sown—being often placed in exigencies in which they are made to learn, that subjects trained to the passiveness of children, must not be expected to shew the vigour of manhood at the pleasure of their rulers. Exceptions to this rule, in the case of individuals, there may be, but the rule is not disturbed by them. So far as respects communities, or the people at large, the daring and endurance proper to manhood, will be found along with the independence and freedom proper to manhood.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE MODERN PULPIT IN RELATION TO THE PAST.

About the year 1500, there lived, in the village of Thurcaster, in Leicestershire, an honest yeoman, whose acres were sufficient, according to the usage of those times, to constitute a farm, though the rental did not exceed some four pounds a year. In the tillage of those acres, six able-bodied men found constant occupation. Within those limits also, this sober cultivator of the soil found walk for a hundred sheep, and his frugal wife milked her thirty kine. Feudalism in those days was on its wane, but it was still the pride of the substantial yeoman to be able to furnish the king a harness, to mount his own horse, and to present himself duly accoutred at the royal call; and it was well remembered by the children of the yeoman adverted to, that he so presented himself before his sovereign at a muster on Blackheath field. The children who were thus mindful of their father's loyalty and prowess, were mostly of the softer sex, whom the good man, as our authority reports, was careful to bring up in godliness, and all of whom he saw married, and gave them, on the happy day of their espousals, the sum of twenty nobles, or about five

pounds in the money of that time, as a father's dowry. But while thus bountiful, from such slender means, it would have been a sore grief to this prudent father, had he not found it possible to reserve something from his in-comings to be disposed of as alms to the poor; and something with which to shew hospitality to such of his neighbours as were not to be accounted receivers of alms, but who were much less wealthy than himself.

But among the children who gathered round the winter-hearth of this good yeoman of Thurcaster, there was a son, and, judging from what has since become known concerning him, a lad of fine spirit and high promise, as we are tempted to think, he must have been. His features, as he grew toward man's estate, were all regularly and finely formed—the forehead being beautifully elevated, the nose slightly aquiline, and the mouth characterized by an admirable mixture of firmness and intelligence, while the eyes which had their place in this goodly fellowship always beamed with a mingled intelligence and kindness, and kindled at times in such manner as bespoke a keen relish of wit and humour. This youth evinced an early fondness for books, and a father who possessed ability enough to manage all his worldly matters with so much discretion, was not likely to be inobservant of the tastes and capacity of such a son, though of a different bias from his own. Suffice it to say, the lad was kept some time at school, and was

afterwards sent to Cambridge, where he passed through the usual course of education with credit, and being ordained a priest, became, after the manner of the more ardent spirits of those times, a zealous papist. As he began to number the years of manhood, our native of Thurcaster distinguished himself on various public occasions by his opposition to the doctrines of the German reformers, particularly to some of the opinions of Melancthon. His zeal and talent called forth loud applause, and in further reward of his services, on days when the university went forth in solemn procession, the office of cross-bearer was assigned to this champion of orthodoxy. His honesty in this course no man doubted—not even Master Stafford, whose divinity lectures he had often publicly opposed on account of the approaches toward a more scriptural theology which were sometimes observable in them. But perfection is not in humanity, and it may be that the son of the Leicestershire yeoman was not altogether insensible to the honour which attended him as a defender of the faith. However this may have been, it is certain that his zeal increased with his years, and that he meditated giving himself up more passionately than ever to the prevailing superstitions, by relinquishing his priesthood, and becoming a monk.

But it happened that there was in Cambridge at that time another priest, who, though less gifted than our zealous cross-bearer, was not a whit less honest, nor

less ardent. This priest had learned to account the worship of images and saints, and many kindred superstitions, as so much pitiable delusion, and was himself considerably enlightened concerning the true meaning of Scripture. This devout person, with a zeal which may be regarded as exceeding his discretion, presented himself privately to the cross-bearer, praying that he might be permitted to confess to him, and in the course of that confession made such exposition and defence of his novel opinions, that the cross-bearer to the university became a disciple of Lutheranism. The good priest who did this kind office, afterwards proved to be the martyr Bilney, and his convert rose subsequently to the dignity of prelacy in the reformed Church of England; became known, all England over, as a zealous advocate of the truth which he had once laboured to destroy; appeared often as a preacher before kings; and closed his career in front of Balliol College, Oxford, in the seventy-fifth year of his age, with all the dignity becoming the hoary-headed martyr in the cause of the Protestant faith. Such, in brief, was the career of Hugh Latimer, the father of pulpit eloquence in England.

No man ever applied himself to the office of preaching with a more simple or considerate aim to communicate instruction, and to make the right impression, than did honest Hugh Latimer. He was a preacher eminently adapted to his own age, and one who would not have failed to adapt himself to any age.

During some space before his time, it had been the custom of the clergy to substitute religious plays in the place of sermons. The imbecile, the indolent, and the facetious in our monasteries, found occupation meet both to their capacity and their humour in getting up those rude dramas, which bore the name of "mysteries." In the said dramas some of the great facts and lessons of holy Scripture were exhibited, and exhibited in such manner as was deemed most conformable to the tastes and apprehensions of the people. Our notions may scarcely bear the shock produced, on seeing the truths of revealed religion set before the people much as the early dramatists of Greece had taught the principles of the Greek mythology to their countrymen; but so long as preaching after this strange fashion found favour with the people, it was natural that preaching generally should partake strongly of the dramatic—being frequently enlivened with dialogue, anecdote, and biography. In most catholic countries, the tastes belonging to that stage in the history of preaching have come down to the present time. The Englishman who shall take his place with the auditories assembled in village churches in Italy or Spain, will there find the pulpit still occupied by men of nearly the same mould with those who addressed our docile countrymen on the same topics some three centuries since. In those countries, every preacher is required to acquit himself in the manner of an extemporaneous orator, and the man

whose natural aptitude may enable him to paint and illustrate his theme most in the manner of the dramatist is the most popular.

In such a school did the genius of Latimer expand itself, and from such causes did his memorable sermons derive the strong characteristics by which they are distinguished. In his age the preacher was the only orator. In vain was it in those times that the student of eloquence looked either to the senate or the bar. Even the printing press had produced little perceptible impression. It was a benefactor in chains, and its productions were few and far between. The pulpit was to the people as the printing machine, the legal advocate, and the political debater, all in one. It was from the pulpit that the ordinances of the state were made public, and it was from the pulpit that the people were to be instructed in their civil as well as in their ecclesiastical duties. Preachers, accordingly, scrupled not to express their opinions concerning the politics of the world, as well as concerning the spiritualities belonging to the church. It was expected of them that they should be observant of the state of society, and of the public manners, and that they should exercise their censorship on such matters with a freedom and boldness which could not fail to sound in modern ears as harsh and intrusive. But so great was the difference of opinion, and feeling, and usage in this respect, in the age of Latimer, that his sermons became so many vivid pictures of the times, and are,

in fact, more valuable to us as documents of history, than as discourses on theology. His preaching was always to men as individuals, and to individuals as belonging to a class, and men and classes are thus isolated and depicted, that the same unshrinking fidelity might be meted out to them all.

It is observable, too, that the censor who could thus adapt himself with equal ease to the yeoman and his menials on the borders, and to the king and his nobles at court, would seem to have been capable of exercising this versatile power with as much promptitude as skill. We learn from good authority, that Latimer was appointed, in a comparatively early period of his career, to preach a Latin sermon before the university of Cambridge, and that when he had made some progress in his discourse, the Bishop of Ely unexpectedly entered the church, and took his seat as a listener. Latimer well knew that the object of the prelate in so presenting himself was not Christian edification, but to disturb the preacher, and to catch him in his words. After a short pause, he began to diverge from his previous course of argument, and commenced, from the resources of the moment, a delineation of the office and character of a bishop. The portraiture was sketched with that directness and vigour which mark everything from the same hand, and touch after touch was felt as giving greater force to the contrast, between the character of the ideal prelate, and that of the right reverend personage who

had now become as much an object of attention with the auditory as the preacher. West, the bishop so admonished, is described as suppressing his resentment, but he could not bring his conference with the preacher afterwards to a close without betraying some feeling of that sort—"Well, well, Mr. Latimer, I perceive you somewhat smell of the pan; you will repent this gear some day,"* were the significant words with which his lordship dismissed the subject.

Latimer had frequent experience of the inconveniences attendant on this spirit of fidelity, but in no presence could he be deterred from pursuing this course. When preaching on one occasion before Henry VIII.—a personage whose displeasure it was much easier to excite than to control,—a courtier charged him, in the hearing of the king, with having uttered seditious words. "What say you to that, sir?" was the abrupt inquiry of the half-offended monarch. "Then," says the reformer, "I kneeled down, and turned me first to mine accuser, and required him—'Say what form of preaching would you appoint me to preach before a king? Would you have me for to preach nothing concerning a king in a king's sermon? and have you any commission to appoint me what I shall preach?' Besides this, I asked him divers other questions, and he would make no answer to none of them all: all had nothing to

* Strype's Ecclesiastical Memorials, iii., 233.

say. Then I turned to the king and submitted myself to his grace, and said, 'I never thought myself worthy, nor I never sued to be a preacher before your grace; but I was called to it, and would be willing (if you mislike me) to give place to my betters; for I grant there be many more worthy of the room than I am; and if it be your grace's pleasure to allow them for preachers, I would be content to bear their books after them. But if your grace allow me for a preacher, I would desire your grace to give me leave to discharge my conscience. Give me to frame doctrine according to my audience. I had been a very dolt to have preached so at the borders of your realm, as I preach before your grace.' And I thank Almighty God, which hath always been my remedy, that my sayings were well accepted of the king, for like a gracious lord he turned unto another communication. Certain of my friends came to me with tears in their eyes, and told me they looked I should have been in the Tower the same night."*

* Third Sermon before King Edward, page 44. Ed. 1584. The following passage is from one of the sermons preached before Edward. The first sentences are addressed to the king, and the extract altogether bears little resemblance to the paragraphs of court sermons in later time:—"Read the chronicles of England and France, and you shall see what changes of religion have come by marriages, and for marriages. 'Marry my daughter and be baptized,' and so forth, or else, &c. Fear them not. Remember the sparrows. And this rule should all states and degrees of men follow; whereas now they fear men and not God. If there is a trial between a great man and a poor one, then must there be a

This passage is interesting and instructive on many accounts, but we have cited it principally as illustrating that adaptation both of the matter and manner of discourse to the character of the audience, which was the constant study of Latimer, and which, within certain limits, must be the study of every man who would acquit himself with intelligence and effect as a preacher. We want not all the colloquialism of

corruption of justice for fear. 'Oh, he is a great man, I dare not displease him.' Fie upon thee! art thou a judge, and wilt thou be afraid to give right judgment? Fear him not, be he ever so great a man, but uprightly do true justice. Likewise, some parties go from their cure, they are afraid of the plague, they dare not come nigh any sick body, but hire others, and they go away themselves. Out upon thee!—the wolf comes upon thy flock to devour them, and when they have most need of thee, thou runnest away from them. The soldier, also, that should go on warfare, he will draw back as much as he can. 'Oh, I shall be slain!—such and such went, and never came home again. Such men went last year into Norfolk, and were slain there.' Thus they are afraid to go: they will labour to tarry at home. If the king command thee to go, thou art bound to go; and serving the king, thou servest God."—(Second Sermon before King Edward.) In this manner did the Reformer divide to every man his portion in his season, from the king downwards.

The following passage points to an evil of which the Reformer seldom loses sight long together:—"Since lording and loitering hath come up, preaching hath come down, contrary to the apostles' time; for they preached and lorded not, and now they lord and preach not. It is no meet office for lords—it is not seeming for their estate. Thus came up lording loiterers: thus crept in unpreaching prelates, and so have they long continued. For how many unlearned prelates have we now at this day! They hawk, they hunt, they card, they dice, they pastime in their prelacies with gallant gentlemen, with their dancing minions, and with their fresh companions, so that ploughing (preaching) is set aside."—*Sermon of the Plough.*

Latimer, and certainly not his occasional coarseness, which should be ascribed to the age more than to the man, but it would be well for England if modern preachers were found addressing themselves to the times with as much of aptitude as marked the labours of the Reformers in the sixteenth century. The simplicity, earnestness, and strength with which they set forth the whole matter of their teaching, were so eminently suited to their object, that they found acceptance equally with the peasant and the courtier. The boys who followed on the heels of Latimer, did so because they never listened to him without interest; and it was to this same preacher that Sir John Cheke, one of the most sagacious and cultivated minds of the age, was heard to say—"I have an ear for other divines, but I have a heart for you."

Some of Latimer's sermons were delivered to auditories of this mixed description under the "shrouds," or tented covering, that sheltered the congregation at St. Paul's Cross in the winter. In general, his preaching was in the open air; and a print, prefixed to an edition of his Sermons, printed in 1578, exhibits the Reformer as preaching in the garden of the palace in Westminster, with Edward VI. seated at the window, and surrounded by his attendants. The pulpit, with the exception of a raised step for the preacher, is occupied by the congregation; and of the auditory immediately about him, or seated in a sort of gallery, many appear with their caps on.

So wide and immediate, then, was the censorship of the pulpit in the practice of Latimer, holding all classes responsible to it, and so responsible, as to be liable to be judged from it publicly, and almost by name. In the case of Bernard Gilpin, and others, the same licence of speech is observable. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the civil power should have frequently exercised its authority in those times, to silence or control the utterances of the preacher. So long as it was the manner of the preacher to meddle with the province of the statesman, so long it was natural that the statesman should meddle with the province of the preacher. However much kings, and ministers, and magistrates, might be willing to profit, in arbitrary and corrupt times, and at certain junctures, by this use of the pulpit, they could not be insensible to the fact, that this free access to the ear of the people, which chanced to be so much in favour of their policy to-day, might prove no less formidable as opposed to it to-morrow. No prince of the house of Tudor was likely to be blind to this danger, nor was it in the blood of the princes of that line to be at ease while exposed to it.

It was in the nature of Elizabeth to regard all power with suspicion which came in any degree in competition with her own. The pulpit accordingly never ceased to be the special object of her jealousy. It was the popularity of the puritan clergy as preachers which exposed them, beyond all other considerations,

to her resentment. During her whole reign, she was more disturbed by a fear of the mischiefs which might possibly result from eloquence and power in the pulpit, than by the signs of "papistry" as still lingering among the mass of the people from the want of such power. The religion was by no means to her taste, which taught men to regard the allegiance of subjects to their sovereigns, as subordinate to the allegiance of the conscience to God. But all to that effect was the religion of the puritan, and his mental freedom and energy were the natural result of his solemn feeling in respect to the higher of these relationships. Such men as the Cecils and Lord Bacon, knew the efficacy of preaching in the hands of the puritans, and often spoke of it as the only means by which her majesty could hope to see the "papistical numbers" diminished; but they reasoned against the mixture of pride and fear which ceased not to operate as an incubus on the eloquence of the pulpit in England to the close of the sixteenth century.

In the judgment of the puritans, preaching bore a nearer relation than any other institute to the religions, liberty, and happiness of a people. Improvement of the younger clergy in the knowledge of the Scriptures, and in the power to arrange their thoughts with promptitude, and to clothe them readily with extemporaneous expression, was the main object of the district meetings convened by the puritan ministers, under the name of "prophesyings." So great,

too, was the importance which they attached to those meetings, that they ceased not altogether from holding them, even when the known hazard in so doing was the high displeasure of the queen.

During the interval from the death of Elizabeth to the Restoration, the mind of the English people evinced an unwonted spirit of freedom, the pulpit shared in the general feeling of emancipation, and the impression made by it on society was everywhere visible. Preaching in those times was often learned, but rarely so much so as to cease to be richly theological. Divines were conversant with the writings of schoolmen and philosophers, but seldom at the cost of ceasing to be divines. Our language, as employed by them, was often somewhat rough hewn, or put forth in unwieldly masses, and the anatomy of the form through which they presented the living power of truth was generally much too perceptible. But the truth was there, and there animated with so much of the redeeming spirit of a pious earnestness, that the frequent enumeration of the parts of a discourse was felt more as an aid than an inconvenience; huge sentences seemed only to harmonize with the strong continuous thought embodied in them; and an occasional abruptness, and negligent freedom of expression, fell commonly upon an auditory, as natural to men whose bursting announcements came forth from the well-spring of their own spirits, more than from the artificial reservoir of books. Uninformed as the

people of England may have been in those times with regard to many things, they were a soundly instructed people with regard to the matter of preaching. In that day, the circle of every pious family was a species of theological seminary, and when the people flocked from the country round to join in the worship of the sanctuary, and to listen to a favourite preacher, it was as expectants of a happiness such as no banquet on earth beside could promise them. Next to their reverence towards God, was the esteem in which they held the men who expounded to them his blessed will. Never, since the age of inspired teachers, had the pulpit been filled by men more sustained by the prayers, as well as by the affections of their auditory, and never, since that age, had the church seen a man more entitled to such regard, than was the puritan minister, when true to his vocation.

There was especially one of their number, the sight of whom, in the pulpit, and of the crowd about him, as they hung upon his lips, it must have been worth going far to see. Be it remembered, that the puritan preacher, while a reformer of the church, had his place within it. His pulpit rose near the ancient aisle, hollowed by the footsteps of the many generations who have traversed it. Above him stretched the arches of the old Gothic roof. Before you, and around, are the curiously carved and half decayed enclosures, within which a lengthened succession of kneeling worshippers have paid their homage to the

Omniscient and Everlasting. Beneath you, are the tombs of the dead, and about you, on every space that can meet the eye, are their mouldering monuments. In the pulpit stands the man of God. The book, rich in the idiom of our mother tongue, and richer still in its heavenly treasure, is open before him. The cap which forms its sable line across the summit of that forehead, only serves to place the fine intellectuality of the space beneath in greater prominence. The mingled force and tenderness of those dark eyes comes forth in beautiful keeping with the brow that covers them, and with the curvature of those lips, so fraught with sensibility, while in so little sympathy with the animal nature, and in such near affinity with the intellectual. Over the lining, the expression, the complexion, the whole cast of that countenance, you see the signs of feeling and of thought—of feeling ever active, of thought ever intent upon its labour. From the shoulders downward, falls the drapery of the college-robe, worn with no superstitious or vain intent, but as a seemly vestment, sufficing to distinguish between the teacher and the taught, and sufficing also to bespeak, that in religion there is still a use of authority, as well as an abuse of it. On every hand, and off to the walls and door-ways, you see gathered men, and women, and children, of all grades, embracing minds of various adjustment, power, and culture, and all moulded into a greater variety still, by the various pressure of those memorable times.

But as the preacher proceeds, you find that he knows them all—their coming in and their going out. So much skill has come to him from long practice, that the most learned and acute may not readily evade him. The busy and the worldly soon become aware that their working-day kind of life has been his study. The most obscure are made to feel that his benevolent thought has penetrated into their lot also; and even the young children, as they look up, here and there, from the family groups about, learn, with a mixture of surprise and fear, that the preacher has been careful to watch the budding thought and feeling even in children—while upon them all you see his words distil like the dew, words which breathe the mercy of the cross, and point, as with a power from heaven, to the visions of hope and blessedness which that cross has revealed to the children of mortality! What wonder if you see every eye intent on such a preacher, every ear open to him, every countenance sending forth the signs of a deep interest, and every heart vibrating beneath the touch of thoughts so devout, of emotions so heaven-born! In him they see the purified nature of the saint, without the perverted nature of the ascetic. He is an ambassador from God, but he is one with man. His devotion is impassioned—celestial, but it is a devotion which has given a new tenderness and force to every feeling of humanity, to every social affection. His preaching points to heaven, but his sympathies identify him with everything in

the allotment of humanity on earth, and all that he might become thus potent in leading men to heaven. Such, in the pulpit, was Richard Baxter, and such, in no mean degree, according to the testimony of Baxter, were many—very many of the puritan preachers in the seventeenth century.*

We are not ignorant concerning the sort of picture which some men would set forth in contrast with this representation, exhibiting the puritan pulpit, and "presbyterian eloquence" in particular, as characterized by narrow views, and by the worst possible taste. Nor will any man of intelligence pretend that faults of that nature did not attach in some degree both to the matter and manner of pulpit instruction in those times. Puritan sermons generally treated with much effect on points of theology, and on the bearing of those points with regard to the devout affections—or religious experience: but they appear to have been frequently wanting in broad and intelli-

* "What skill doth every part of our work require; and of how much moment is every part. To preach a sermon is, I think, not the hardest part; and yet what skill is necessary to make plain the truth, to convince the hearers, to let in irresistible light to their consciences, to keep it there, and to drive all home; to screw the truth into their minds, and to work Christ into their affections; to meet with every objection that gainsays, and clearly to resolve it; to drive sinners to a stand, and to make them see that there is no hope, but that they must unavoidably be converted or condemned: and to do all this so for language and manner as becomes our work, and yet as is suitable to the capacities of our hearers: this, and a great deal more, that should be done in every sermon, should surely be done with a great deal of holy zeal."—*Baxter's Reformed Pastor.*

gent views with respect to moral questions. Lord Bacon speaks of the puritan preachers of his time, as public instructors who succeeded admirably in bringing their hearers to the question—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—but laments that the hand which could lay the foundation with so much strength and skill, should be so often found defective in raising the superstructure. The cause of this occasional deficiency was sufficiently obvious. No candid man ever imputed it to an indifference with regard to moral obligation. It resulted in part from an excess of zeal against the supposed popish doctrine of salvation by works, and in part from disgust with the Arminian, and merely ethical preaching, which was understood to be characteristic of a court divine. It is worthy of observation, that the example furnished by Lord Bacon, as illustrating the defectiveness of puritan logic on moral subjects, is one which most readers, we presume, will regard as much more to the honour of puritan discernment than to its discredit. "They have pronounced generally," he writes, "and without difference, all untruths unlawful; notwithstanding that the midwives are directly reported to have been blessed for their excuse; and Rahab is said by faith to have concealed the spies; and Solomon's selected judgment proceeded upon a simulation; and our Saviour, the more to touch the heart of the two disciples with an holy dalliance, made as if he

would have passed to Emaus."* Had the puritans been otherwise minded on this point, what eloquent comparisons might not have been made between them and the jesuits? The passage is important, as shewing that if the puritan clergy did not bestow so much time in the pulpit on the discussion of moral questions as the court clergy, it was by no means as the consequence of their being less strict in their moral notions.

Similarly at fault is the charge made against the same class of men on matters of taste. It is true in part, but only in part. In an age when literary refinement, according to our feeling in such matters, had made small progress anywhere, very much regarded as bespeaking a great want in that respect might no doubt be culled from the popular oratory of the pulpit. It should not be forgotten, however, that if the puritan clergy were very deficient in such matters, so must Oxford and Cambridge have been, inasmuch as it had been made indispensable in the case of that whole class of men that they should receive the usual education in those seminaries. The probable conclusion from that fact, is no doubt the true one—viz., that the instances in which ministers of puritan opinions failed in the respect adverted to, as compared with the cultivation of their times, were the rare exception, much more than the rule. Such

* Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England.

a charge might apply to Scotland much more than to England, and to England subsequent to the commencement of the civil war, somewhat more than previously; but we deem it, on the whole, more reasonable, and certainly much more generous, to form our judgment with regard to religious parties from the men among them who make their bequests to posterity, than from such as constitute the weakness of a body rather than its strength, and who die, as a matter of course, in the obscurity in which they have lived. John Wesley was a scholar, and a man of taste, though we are not able to say so much in favour of many who have had place among his followers; and a similar disparity, though very rarely to the same extent, may be admitted as existing between such men as Baxter, Owen, and Howe, and some preachers who adhered to the peculiar principles of those distinguished men in the course of times so unsettled as were those through which they lived.

The puritan period in our history terminates with the Restoration. In no respect were men so sensible to the greatness of the change which had been brought about by that event, as on looking to the altered character of the English pulpit. With little exception, the men who could preach were silenced, and the men who could not came into their place. Preaching which had signally moved both the understanding and the heart, gave place generally to a manner of preaching which was neither suited nor

designed to produce any such effect. Popular preaching, indeed, was generally denounced, as having been the great engine of mischief during the late troubles; and almost as much pains were now taken to see that the pulpit should be rendered useless,—except for the purposes of tyranny and court faction,—as had been taken formerly to render it useful. Men accounted the most sagacious in such matters did not scruple to teach, that the less the people thought about preaching, and the more their attention could be restricted to a decent observance of the authorized forms of religion, and to just so much knowledge concerning it as might be presented in a creed or a catechism, the better for them. "If godliness be the design," says Dr. South, "it ought also, by consequence, to be the measure of men's knowledge in this particular; which consideration, well and duly improved, would discover how needless it is, to say no more, that ignorant people should be let loose to read and judge of writings that they do not understand. *The principles of Christianity, briefly and catechistically taught them, is enough to save their souls; but, on the other hand, they may read themselves into such opinions and persuasions, as may at length destroy a government, and fire a whole kingdom: and for this I shall not seek for arguments, after experience.*" *

Dr. South was known to his contemporaries, and is known to us, solely as a preacher. Excellence in

* Sermons, v., p. 83. Oxford Ed. 1823.

that capacity was the one object to which he applied his genius, from the beginning of life to its close; and he was, in some respects, the most able preacher of his times. What, then, must have been the estimate formed elsewhere concerning the utility of preaching, when even such a man could speak of it after this manner—as an ordinance having no mission to the people at large, but as designed exclusively for the educated? Of course, the seven volumes of sermons which have come down to us from the pen of Dr. South, are to be regarded as so many theological or literary disquisitions, addressed to the educated, who ought not to have needed such instruction, but by no means to the ignorant, who really did need it. Indeed, from the manner in which this facetious divine, and many beside, often expressed themselves, it would seem as though the great business of preaching had come to be, to persuade men how well the world might be made to move on without preaching. The upper classes could hardly be supposed to need it, inasmuch as they were educated, and the pulpit had now ceased to be the place in which it could be deemed proper to attempt to school them into propriety, however much they might be thought to need such schooling. On the other hand, the middle and lower classes were not to be preached to, inasmuch as they were not educated—the main effect of preaching in their case having been, to put them upon trou-

bling their heads about matters above their comprehension.

Lost in this manner to the service of religion, nothing could be more lamentable than the general state of the English pulpit during the interval from the Restoration to the Revolution. Concerning the bad uses that were made of it in those times, we have abundant evidence, as in the history of the Popish plot, and in the course of those changes which brought Russell and Sydney to the scaffold. Its good deeds, on the contrary, are very little apparent. When the assize time came round, when a bishop was to be consecrated, or on occasion of some civic festival, the divine generally made his appearance with his sermon—a composition rarely wanting in the sophistries usually urged in support of the doctrine of passive obedience, and containing a large infusion of invective against Protestant nonconformists, exhibiting them as hypocrites in religion, and as anarchists, plunderers, and regicides in matters of state. There were some exceptions to this rule, of which we shall make due mention presently, but such, for the most part, are the sermons which have come down to us from those times.

It is well known that a few men had distinguished themselves as the writers of sermons previously to the year 1688, and subsequently the pulpit began to add a literature of its own to the general literature of the

period. The age of Dryden and Pope, was that of Atterbury and Sherlock. But even then, and down to a full century later, men published sermons too much as they published poems, less in the expectation of their being read by the people, than in the hope of their obtaining favour with the critic, the opulent, and the powerful. The age was emphatically the age of patronage—the age of dependence on great men; and that it was so, was as rarely absent from the thoughts of the divine, as from those of the poet or the politician. The publication might be, a discourse on death, an ode upon a birth-day, or a pamphlet on the South Sea scheme, in general the mainspring was alike apparent, and always the same —everything looked one way. During the century which followed upon the Revolution, the English nation was left to find its edification in being a constant witness of the quarrels which took place between the different court factions for the possession of power, and then among the winners about the division of the spoil. It followed, not unnaturally, from this state of things, that the few should become as the breath of their nostrils to the many, and that the many should worship at the shrine of the few accordingly. No man acquainted with the lives of literary men, and the "dedications" prefixed to literary works in those times, can need proof on this point: and a glance at the language in which Atterbury has dedicated his sermons to the Bishop of Winchester, will be sufficient

to shew, that, as it was in this respect with the poet, so was it in a great degree with the preacher.

But manifest as this infirmity may have been, and manifest as may have been the defects and faults of the greater part of the sermons produced in such circumstances, no theological student should account his education complete until he has acquired a pretty familiar acquaintance with the published discourses of our English divines, both conformist and nonconformist, from the age of Jeremy Taylor to the rise of Methodism. The discourses printed by divines of the church of England during that period exhibit, as will be supposed, a great variety in character and merit. They embrace many peculiarities which the modern preacher will be concerned to avoid rather than to imitate, and their defects in respect to theological matter, and a mode of teaching adapted to the popular apprehension, are such as cannot escape observation, but they nevertheless abound, not unfrequently, in high qualities, such as eminently deserve a considerate perusal—a patient study. Knowledge on this subject, as a matter of mere literary history, should be interesting, and in the education of a preacher, should be deemed indispensable.

Almost every page in the sermons of Jeremy Taylor bears witness to his various and extraordinary learning, and to his most copious eloquence. His imagination appears to be without limit, and his feelings, while rising occasionally to some loftiness, are

always bland, catholic, and benignant. His genius is essentially poetical. No great thought ever comes to him alone, but in its train a multitude of lesser points crowd upon each other, as subordinate to it, and these groups of ideas are often made to carry with them all the lavished beauty of finished pictures. So free also is the flowing of this exuberance, both of genius and of learning, that a manner of writing which would have appeared as the effect of elaborate purpose, or as so much cold and formal pedantry, in the hands of almost any other man, is felt as the utterance most natural to a mind so richly stored, so variously gifted, and surrendered so manifestly to the impulses of a moral and pious earnestness.

But the defects of Taylor are scarcely less observable than his excellences. Such was the tendency of this writer to pour forth his erudition, even in his sermons, that the paragraphs and pages are frequent in which there would seem to be a striving between the dead languages and the living as to which should occupy the largest space. In this profusion of learned quotation, the writings of Taylor may remind some readers of the "Anatomy of Melancholy," more than of any other book in the history of English literature. Sermons studded after this manner with Latin and Greek, and in which so much room was assigned to the poets and philosophers of antiquity, and to the fathers and schoolmen of later ages, as sometimes to leave small standing-place to much better authorities, could never

have been regarded, even by their author, in any other light than as devotional treatises, to be read by highly educated persons in their closets. It is true, even the promiscuous congregation in that age expected the discourse of a learned preacher to be adorned with scraps of Latin, and sometimes with a little Greek, but the preacher who should have poured such fragments upon his auditory with the freedom of Taylor in his sermons on "the House of Feasting," and on "the Marriage Ring," would soon have discovered that the unintelligible in that shape must have its limits.

Nor was the substance of these sermons, any more than the mode of them, in strict accordance with the popular perception and feeling in that day. Their bearing was much more upon morals than upon theology; and while, in the latter respect, they harmonized little with the Calvinistic tenets of the puritans, they were not accounted unexceptionable even in their discussions on subjects strictly ethical.

Even the eloquence of Taylor is a power in respect to which the orator himself appears not so much in the posture of a master as in that of a victim. It resembles a torrent, which has become so impetuous as not to brook the impertinent interference of the reason in favour of a more calm and lucid distribution of thought, or of a more brief and perspicuous construction of sentences—all things being hurried onward, in a manner which frequently sets distinctness, and sometimes even grammar itself at defiance.

The labours of Taylor as an author belong, for the most part, to the period preceding the Restoration; the five volumes of sermons published by Dr. Barrow may be regarded as belonging to the first seventeen years subsequent to that event. Barrow was not the equal of Taylor in some branches of learning, but excelled him in others. In theology both were of the Arminian school. It was the practice of both to base their doctrine very largely on the authority of heathen authors, fathers, and schoolmen. Barrow does this less than his predecessor, but still does so very generally. Both, also, are much disposed to occupy themselves with reasoning on the duties of religion which border on common life, and in expounding the distinctive truths of the gospel, are rarely found contemplating those truths in their influence upon that inward and spiritual conflict which is understood as constituting the great moral struggle peculiar to the Christian. The views of Barrow in relation to the doctrine of justification by faith, and with regard to the office of the Holy Spirit as the source of progressive light and spiritual power to the renewed mind, are those usually termed evangelical, but he oftentimes inculcates the general duties of Christians at great length, on a variety of moral grounds, without any intelligible reference to the peculiar relation subsisting between these duties and such doctrines. But passing over this very material defect, nothing can be finer than the amplitude with which the mind of

Barrow embraces the whole compass of every subject upon which he happens to fix his attention. With regard to style, he exhibits less imagination, and much less warmth than Taylor, but he displays a more masculine power of understanding, which shews itself in the more deliberate and lucid arrangement of his thoughts, in the greater simplicity and accuracy of his expressions, and, on the whole, in the greater weight and impressiveness of his manner generally. In short, among all the standard divines of the church of England, there is no man whom we regard as so deserving to be read in the present day as Dr. Barrow.

Barrow died in 1677. South, who began his career as a preacher a little before the Restoration, continued in the pulpit until 1716. This person possessed little in common with the distinguished men above named. Nothing could be more in contrast with his nature, than the sweetness of disposition which characterized Taylor, or than the noble-minded candour which was no less characteristic of Barrow. Wherever Protestant nonconformity was concerned, South had learned to account himself virtuous in proportion as he could free his spirit from all taint of honesty, and esteemed himself devout only in so far as he could excel other men in the force of his malignity and in the loftiness of his arrogance. What may have disposed such a man to profess a creed somewhat more Calvinistic than was fashionable in his time, and at the cost of seeming to retain some affinity in that respect with

the great object of his aversion—the nonconformist, is a point about which it is not perhaps important to inquire—but such was the fact. His better creed, however, was greatly wanting in the better spirit that should have been produced by it. Nothing within the same range of composition is more destitute of devotional feeling than his sermons. All his attempts to inculcate affections of that nature, are in the manner of a man who would seem never to have known anything of such feelings from experience. Little effort is made to exhibit the good to admiration, but much is done to hold up the evil to alternate hatred and derision. Such, indeed, is the temper which he commonly betrays, that his chief motive in preaching truth and duty would almost seem to be, that he might realize the exquisite pleasure of putting the parties to torture, who have failed to receive the one, or have run counter to the other. Everything tends to convict rather than convert, to madden rather than reclaim. His rebukes fall, in consequence, in tones more proper to a minister of vengeance, than to the minister of reconciliation.

No clergyman in that age had ventured to assume a manner in the pulpit so much bordering on levity. In this respect he was original, and in a large city almost any sort of originality, if allied with a measure of real talent, becomes attractive or notorious. In South there was this double element of notoriety—novelty and power. His sermons presented nothing

of the poetry of Taylor, nothing of the dignity or learning of Barrow; but they possessed qualities that could not fail to secure a more immediate and a wider popularity. In style they were more idiomatic than elaborate, more pointed than regular—bearing a nearer resemblance to a ready and able utterance in conversation or discussion, than to the formal style usual at that time in books, particularly in books on religion. The sermons of Latimer are full of this popular point as regards expression, and are enlivened with wit and humour; but those racy peculiarities in his case, were allied with a manifest fidelity of temper which placed all the honest upon his side, and were under the direction of a benevolence and piety which gave him a strong hold on the sympathies of the humane and the devout. We need not repeat that the sermons of South were of another complexion in these respects. He was the only preacher of his age who had deemed the pulpit a fitting place for sarcasm, jibes, and wit, and while he directed these shafts against a considerable range of vices, he never seemed to point them toward their object with so much hearty good-will as when they were made to plant themselves among the roundheads and puritans of the last reign, or among those in his own generation who were regarded as sympathizers with the bygone rebel and fanatic.

With regard to his general ability as a preacher, South has been, as we think, much overrated. His

power in seizing on the import of a text does not exhibit anything remarkable; and in the easy and natural disposition of the materials of a sermon, he was excelled, toward the close of life, by some of his contemporaries, as in the case of Atterbury and Sherlock. But his frequent turns of ingenuity, the vigour of his separate thoughts, the skill with which he could sometimes lay bare the doubling of human motives, the strength of the pictures relating both to character and general manners which a few touches sometimes sufficed to strike off, and the alternate play of the droll and the biting,—of the things which commended themselves, now to the levities, and now to the resentments of his hearers,—these were the attractions which, during the greater part of the reign of Charles II., brought the idlers from the court, and elsewhere, about the pulpit of Dr. South. But towards the close of that reign, and during the whole of the next, affairs became much too grave in their aspect to allow of much time being spent in laughter. Nor were the events consequent on the revolution much more to the taste of our preacher. The idea of liberty of worship he had always denounced, and when toleration became a branch of our liberties by an act of the state, South appears to have found his chief solace, as thrown upon such evil times, in warning his hearers that should they presume to avail themselves of the freedom in this respect which the state now permitted them to use, and protected them in using, they would

so do at the almost certain cost of finding their way to perdition.

Contemporary with Barrow and South was Bishop Beveridge. The sermons of this eminently pious person amount to a series of volumes. But they are more remarkable from their number, and on account of the simple and earnest piety by which they are pervaded, than from any other consideration. Each discourse, whether delivered before the most august assembly, or upon the most ordinary occasion, is the strict counterpart of the whole, exhibiting the same total absence of imagination, the same extreme plainness of expression, the same mediocrity, or rather feebleness of thought, along with the same deep seriousness, and the same intentness to communicate scriptural instruction, and to lead the people into the paths of scriptural goodness. His narrow views as a churchman, were more consistent with his circumstances, and with the limits of his understanding, than with the simplicity and fervour of his devout affections. It should be added that, so far as my memory serves me, the greater part of these sermons are posthumous.

We have now reached the period from which the divines of the church of England become conspicuous as the authors of sermons. Among the names so distinguished, the most considerable are those of Stillingfleet, Atterbury, Tillotson, Sherlock, Bull, Waterland, Seed, Clarke, Jortin, Secker, Butler,

Horne, and Balguy. But these authors, with some others of the same class, whose labours are spread over the century which followed upon the revolution of 1688, belong so much to one school, and are so much more characterized by what is common to them all, than by what is peculiar to them separately, that any attempt to indicate their several lesser peculiarities would be a tedious, and not, perhaps, a very profitable employment.

With regard to style, this class of sermons generally exhibit that simplicity which, in England at least, would seem to be natural to true scholarship. Perhaps the greatest exception to this remark may be seen in the declamatory rhetoric of Atterbury, and in a fondness for the flowers of sentiment in Seed, while the perfection of that dignified sobriety of language, that masculine plainness, which characterizes this school, may be seen in Butler and Balguy. But this style generally,—so much more regular and subdued than anything that had hitherto obtained in the history of the English pulpit,—is often to the last degree elaborate. Its character is derived from the restraint rather than the excess of imagination, and from the poverty rather than the profusion of ornament, but the greatest attention is paid to accuracy, to the choice and collocation of words, to the harmonized structure of sentences, and to the finish of the whole composition. Effort is not unfrequently made by the preacher to remove difficulty, and to give clearness to the obscure,

but such attention to the matter of discourse is never prosecuted at the cost of the expected smoothness and dignity of expression. Too commonly, the thoughts to be communicated appear to be less a matter of solicitude, than the manner of presenting them—so continuous is the measured formalism of the language, however varied the subject of which it becomes the vehicle. In this style the appearance of the body is so quiescent, that we are tempted to think it cannot have the feeling and impulse of a soul, or, at the best, only those of a very cold and feeble one. In short, composition in the pulpit in those times came to be, in general, that of the graver papers in the *Rambler*, or the *Spectator*—a language which, even in its most familiar form, was not so much that of the people as that of the polite and the educated. In general, it was much too pointless ever to strike upon the multitude, and much too stately and uniform to be capable of taking a strong hold on any man. Such would have been its character had it been a language to be spoken, but as a language to be read, its effect on almost any auditory must have been, as we should think, to lull them into slumber, rather than to command attention and awaken interest. The cold, monotonous level to which the sermon had been reduced as a composition, was usually incompatible with any degree of warmth in the delivery; nor was anything further from the notions which then prevailed on the subject of pulpit taste, than that

either the style or the manner of the preacher should be found to rise, on any occasion, above the tone of a grave and scholarlike elocution. The time past was deemed sufficient for discretion and dignity to have given place to enthusiasm and rant. It was, indeed, a large world which lay between the school of Latimer, as a preacher, and this school among his successors. It would have been well if the faults of the former could have been avoided, without so strong a divergence into the greater faults of the latter. In the sixteenth century princes were addressed in the language of the people; in the eighteenth, the people and their language, so far as the pulpit was concerned, hardly seem to have an existence.

In their theological preferences, all these divines belong to the Arminian school. Some, as in the case of Bull and Waterland, were zealous Trinitarians; others, as in the case of Clarke and Hoadly, were regarded as holding defective views on that doctrine, and on some points collateral to it. But it is observable, in the case of all these writers, that they bestow a large space on discussions relating to duties which belong not so immediately to religion as to the morals of social life; and that in their treatment of theological topics, their object is very generally controversial, the points of combat being Socinianism, Romanism, or Scepticism.

In dealing with points of moral obligation, they appeal largely to the supposed innate susceptibility of

men, and to their natural power of discernment, in regard to such subjects, basing the principle of obedience very strongly, up to a certain point, on what is called natural religion. This is particularly observable in Tillotson, but is common, in a great degree, to all his contemporaries. In conducting their argument upon this ground, these writers have entitled themselves to the praise of much acuteness, often accompanied with very searching views of human nature, and sometimes with great learning in respect to the history of mental science. It is in this department that the study of their works would be of eminent service to nearly the whole of the modern evangelical school of preachers. Evangelical preachers, in the prominence and application which they give to the distinctive truths of Christianity, supply abundantly the great want in that respect in the sermons of the episcopal clergy of the last century—but their own want of power to enforce the duties of the gospel with the requisite discrimination, compass, and strength, is as conspicuous as their right-mindedness with regard to its doctrines. In this department, too commonly, everything needful is supposed to be done when a few apposite and well-known texts are cited. But it was the manner of the divines adverted to, not merely to cite texts, but to expound them.

Socinianism made some appearance in England so early as the middle of the seventeenth century, but did not become so considerable as to attract much

notice until toward the close of that period. The final expulsion of the professors of that creed from Poland took place in 1660, and as the fugitives found their natural asylum in Holland, the accession of William III. to the English throne, appears to have favoured a wider diffusion of their opinions in this country. The most memorable of the publications bearing upon this controversy during about a century from the Revolution, were those of Bishop Bull, particularly his "Defence of the Nicene Creed," in which the object of the writer is to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the ancient church to the beginning of the fourth century, by means of large quotations from the fathers to that purpose. From some examination of those authorities, Patavius, a jesuit, Courcelles, a learned Arminian, and our own Cudworth, had come to a conclusion unfavourable to patristic orthodoxy, and though Bull did not satisfy all his readers that these persons were in error in adopting such a conclusion, the bishop earned great reputation by his labours, both among his protestant brethren in England, and his catholic admirers in France. While the most learned in our universities gave themselves to such authorship, it will not be supposed that the pulpit was silent upon the controversy to which it related.

It was during the early part of the eighteenth century, much more than subsequently, that the discourses of the clergy were strongly imbued with hostility to Romanism. The panic in relation to that

subject during the latter part of the reign of Charles II., and the real danger connected with it in the time of his successor, left the public mind under the influence of a lingering apprehension in that respect, which did not wholly subside so long as any importance could be attached to the machinations of the exiled family, or to those of the partisans whom they had left behind them. Stillingfleet especially distinguished himself in this warfare, and next to him in promptitude and ability was Tillotson; but such was, or had been, the power of Louis XIV., and such was the kind of splendour which continued to vest the Gallican church, that few preachers, who were men of any efficiency, failed to hazard a lance occasionally with the defenders of Romanism. It would have been well if many who were most forward in assailing some of the opinions and forms of the papal system, had been careful to eschew its spirit.

But so far as the more educated classes were concerned, it would seem that neither Socinianism nor Romanism was the form of religious error from which there was most to apprehend. The reaction on the side of licentiousness which had come in with the Restoration, had continued to flow on until it had swept away nearly all ground of confidence with respect both to God and man. Distrust of human virtue, and of all virtue, whether human or divine, had spread its deep taint through society. So long as this temper was content to vent itself in gibes

against the fanatics and regicides of the last age, or against their demure descendants in the age present, it was accounted as nothing more than sound English feeling, and no portly vicar or squire, who prided himself on his sympathy with the "olden time," failed to give it cordial greeting. But of late this spirit had shewn a disposition to push itself beyond its former limits. It had ceased to distinguish between priests with a true apostolic pretension, and priests with any pretension whatsoever. It saw no more to respect in persons of that class who were in the pay of Cæsar, than in those who had been so long subject to exile, confiscation, and imprisonment, at his bidding. In short, it was plain that it had lost all reverence for the "church," whatever it might have retained for the "king." One half of its good ancient toryism was manifestly gone, and, in the judgment of the persons whom that fact most concerned, the half which had vanished was much the better half. To be wanting in fidelity to the church, was to be wanting in fidelity to the best thing in the land—the best, at least, in the sense of furnishing place and pay. In this light, unhappily, was that church viewed by most of its adherents, lay and clerical, at that period, and the fruit natural to such a habit of thinking followed. What wonder, if men, after being so long schooled into laughing at piety in some connexions, began to laugh at it in all connexions? What wonder, if worldly sagacity was seen to break away thus from the feeble leading-strings

of a narrow ecclesiastical cunning? What marvel was it, when the plea of religion had been used for so many long years on the side of almost every species of craft, injustice, and oppression, that men should learn to regard the whole of that plea as so much miserable grimace? We state deliberately, it would be expecting more from human nature than anything belonging to our knowledge of it would warrant, to suppose that the course pursued by the only accredited guardians of the national faith subsequent to 1660, should have led to any other result than was seen in this precise state of things some fifty years later. The men who should have been the special conservators of the Christian faith, were the men who did most to bring it into this state of peril.

Many of the clergy, subsequent to the Revolution, particularly the dignified clergy, laboured with memorable effect to repair the mischiefs which had been thus produced. It was their lot to enter into other men's labours in a sense which did not commend itself to their ease, though it did much for their reputation. The mention of Butler, and the "Analogy," will be a sufficient illustration of this remark. But it was an evil of great amount, that it should have become expedient for preachers to occupy so much time it combating this scepticism in the upper classes. Its effect, in connexion with other causes tending to the same point, was not only to call the attention of divines too much from Christianity itself, to its mere out-

works, but especially to prevent them from ministering to the spiritual wants of the people, who were little affected by the kind of speculations which had become so prevalent among their betters. Hence a large number of the sermons delivered in those times were discourses relating to the being of a God, the necessity of a revelation, the authenticity of the scriptures, the claims of the gospel, the causes of infidelity, and similar topics. In these discussions the abstruse and the learned were unavoidable, and as you listen to the preacher, much occurs to remind you of schoolman grappling with schoolman, but very little of a nature to suggest that the speaker is addressing you from a pulpit, and that the matter and language to which you listen are those of a sermon. Even when the subject of discourse becomes more theological and Christian, the case does not always greatly improve. Still you would often be constrained to listen as to an academic prelection, or a literary essay, more than as to an exposition of revealed truth, designed to convey instruction to the ignorant and salvation to the lost. We should be glad to suppose that this manner of preaching, so much more adapted to schools of philosophy than to promiscuous assemblies of people, was peculiar to sermons "preached at the Rolls Chapel," or before "the Worshipful the Masters," in the Temple Church; but we fear, from all that we can learn, that preaching generally partook very much of this character.

Nor is this all. Even when the topics of discourse are the more familiar lessons of doctrine and practice, and when the style is the most simple, the language is still that of books more than of oral communication, and in scarcely any case are the opinions expressed those understood by the term evangelical, but generally of a nature considerably opposed to such views. If the Trinity, the Atonement, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, are not for the most part passed over, the recognition of those great truths is in general so defective, that neither the hope nor the obligation of the Christian are made to rest with a scriptural distinctness on their proper foundation. Bishop Bull's "Harmonia Apostolica" is fatal to the doctrine of justification by faith, and on that vital point the divines of the church of England during the eighteenth century are much more the disciples of Bull, than of Luther, or of Hooker. Hence the great object of the theological student, in making himself acquainted with the works of these justly celebrated authors, must be, to enlarge the stock of his subsidiary knowledge, and to familiarize his mind with the exercises of highly disciplined intellect in regard to a wide field of evidence and moral reasoning, more than to learn from them either what he is to teach as the great theme of his ministry, or what is, upon the whole, the best mode of presenting instruction from the pulpit. In their works, generally, moral sentiment is too much in the place of religious sentiment,

moral motives are too much in the place of the motives that should be derived from the cross, and the doctrine of the cross is not only exhibited for the most part very imperfectly, but with very little of its intended bearing on the production and nurture of a true spiritual life in the soul, and with scarcely anything of the unction — the really Christian devotion which should be always attendant upon it.

We should now glance at the state of the pulpit among the nonconformists during this period. From 1662 to 1688, the nonconformists can scarcely be said to have had a pulpit. Towards the close of that period, some of their number availed themselves of the liberty of worship which had been proclaimed in their favour by the dispensing power—the power of the crown, as exercised irrespective of the pleasure of parliaments. But, strictly speaking, the nonconformist pulpit in England cannot be regarded as dating earlier than the passing of the Toleration Act, after the accession of William III. Hence the publications of the nonconformists previous to the Revolution, consist not so much of sermons as of theological and devotional treatises. Between the Restoration and the Revolution, Dr. Owen published nearly fifty works, varying in their extent, from a primer for children, to his series of folios on the Epistle to the Hebrews; but none of these publications are sermons.

No preacher in the unsettled times preceding the passing of the act of toleration, would seem to have

been so popular as the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress." Bunyan must have possessed great powers of attraction as a preacher. More than twelve hundred people often assembled before seven o'clock on a winter morning to hear him. When he came to London, one day's notice was sufficient to bring more persons together as his auditory than the largest place of worship would contain. Nothing like this had occurred since the times of the commonwealth, nor do we meet with anything of the sort again until the age of Whitfield and Wesley. It is said that Dr. Owen was frequently one of Bunyan's hearers, and that Charles II. once expressed his surprise that a man of the Doctor's learning could attend the preaching of a tinker; to which Owen replied—"Had I the tinker's abilities, please your Majesty, I would most gladly relinquish all my learning."*

The works of Dr. Owen include many sermons, published in part during his lifetime, but mostly from his papers after his decease. They all exhibit the general characteristics of his mind, great power of understanding, much theological learning, and an intimate acquaintance with the various aspects of the Christian character, and with all the exercises of the devout affections. But along with these qualities, his discourses also exhibit that want of spirited compression, of ready and skilful arrangement, and of ease and clearness of style, which detracts so much from

* Orme's Life of Owen, 399.

the pleasure that would otherwise have been derived from the study of his writings. If Dr. Bates had been less a man of mere style, and Dr. Owen less a man of mere substance, it would have conduced much to their mutual reputation and usefulness. In the finish and beauty of his language, no man in the English pulpit exceeded Dr. Bates during his lifetime. With these names, mention should be made of Doctor Thomas Goodwin, described by Anthony Wood as "one of the atlases and patriarchs of Independency;"* and who, during the commonwealth, was president of Magdalen College, Oxford. It is, however, as a theologian, more than as a preacher, that Goodwin is distinguished. His judgment was not sufficiently sound to prevent his pushing the points of Calvinism into some excess; but he possessed great knowledge of the Scriptures, was well read in ecclesiastical history, excelled in his powers as a biblical critic, and was especially versed in everything relating to the nature and history of church polity and discipline. His works extend to five folio volumes. He died in 1679, in the eightieth year of his age.

Among the theologians who had made some figure in the times before the Restoration, and who survived until the times of the Revolution, the most memorable beyond comparison is John Howe. Of this extraordinary person it has been justly said—"He seems to have been a combination of very various, and, in

* Ath. Ox. ii. 556.

some respects, almost heterogeneous excellences, every one of which may have been seen in a greater degree somewhere or other, but have seldom been concentrated in one person in such perfection. To the acutest powers of argument, and the noblest talents for speculation, he conjoined a most discriminating judgment, and shed around all the light of a powerful and sublime imagination. He possessed talents which equally fitted him for a contemplative or an active life; and though the tendencies of his mind would have led him to the former as a matter of choice, he was capable of performing the most arduous services in the latter when a matter of duty. To the most enlarged acquaintance with abstract science, he united a knowledge, not less profound, of human nature. In all transactions with the world, he exhibited a rare combination of prudence and integrity. In that most delicate task, the reproof of others, he was inflexibly faithful, yet always kind; and while he remembered what was due to the majesty of truth, never forgot what was also due to the claims of charity. He was frank, yet not rash; and cautious, yet free from suspicion. In his deportment, he knew how to conciliate the utmost elevation of character with the gentlest condescension and the acutest sensibility. Dignified but not austere; he was 'grave without moroseness, and cheerful without levity.' While he subjected all the inferior principles of his nature to the severe control of reason, itself enlightened by the Spirit of God,

he was not so absurd as to attempt their annihilation; nor did the loftiest attainments of intellect interfere with the varied display of human charities.

"Above all, these qualities were crowned, or rather sustained and nurtured, by a deep, ardent, habitual, all-pervading spirit of piety—a piety, which united the most burning zeal with the coolest judgment; the most intense desire for the glory of God, with ceaseless efforts for the welfare of man; the loftiest exercise of a deeply meditative and devotional spirit, with the sedulous cultivation of the homeliest graces; that rarest of all combinations, the closest communion with the future and the eternal, with a conscientious and busy discharge of all the duties of to-day. Such was John Howe; the rude elements of this various excellence were, indeed, bestowed at his birth; but it was the *power of the gospel of Christ*, and that alone, which developed and expanded them; which directed them to the noblest objects; which controlled, purified, and exalted them. As his reception of the gospel was an illustrious tribute paid to its truth, so his character and life were an emphatic exhibition of its power. That he had his faults, we are certain, for he was *man;* while all the excellences he possessed, he would have been the first to attribute solely to the influence of the Spirit of God. That these were many, we may judge from the language of Spademan, his friend and coadjutor—language already quoted, and worthy of being quoted again—that it

seemed as though he was intended to be an inviting example of universal goodness."

It is, however, more as a theologian, and a man of genius, than as a preacher, that eminence of this high order is due to Howe. Speaking of him in this capacity, the able writer to whom we are indebted for the above extract, observes—"Whether we judge from the discourses he has left behind him, or from the testimony of his contemporaries, Howe must have possessed very considerable powers. Still, the impression he produced is to be attributed, I apprehend, *principally*, to the intrinsic excellence of his matter, (equally valuable, whether presented in books or sermons,) and to the earnestness, solemnity, and majesty of his manner.

"The distinguishing characteristics of his genius were certainly not such as promise great oratorical excellence. Quite the contrary. Considered as a *public speaker*, his principal defects are obvious. He was evidently too philosophical, too fond of metaphysical discussion, and of refined and subtle analysis. Often must his audience have been wearied out by the long trains of reasoning, and the abstruse and often profound speculations, in which *he* took so much delight. That this was the case, we may safely conclude, from the fact, that (though, for obvious reasons, such a disquisitory style is far more tolerable in a treatise than in a sermon) even his readers often complain of the above peculiarities.

"These peculiarities have most undoubtedly rendered

some of the finest pieces of Howe less popular than they would have been, and, so far, less useful. The reader is apt to be wearied with so much preliminary skirmishing. Calamy tells us that the same peculiarity marked his usual style of preaching, the first part of his sermons generally displaying great depth and reach of thought. They uniformly closed, however, in a strain level to the comprehension of the meanest, and with an earnestness and pathos calculated to produce the deepest impression. Mr. Foster has remarked, that the very same peculiarities often distinguished Mr. Hall's sermons; nor is this the only point in which Howe and Hall resemble one another.

"I have heard of a good woman who, having read some of Howe's pieces, shewed her displeasure at the above-mentioned defects of method, by saying, that '*he was so long laying the cloth, that she always despaired of the dinner.*'

"From the mere faults which had their origin in the barbarous taste and uncouth fashions of the age, Howe was for the most part free. No one can charge him with an ostentatious display of his learning, or with an idle and pedantic introduction of scraps of Greek and Latin. Neither does he often indulge in the quaint conceits, or the coarse and ridiculous allusions, which in that age were so general. The sobriety of his mind, and his strong sense of propriety, equally concurred to preserve him from such follies as these.

"In one fault of the age, however, (as Robert Hall

justly remarks,) he far outwent many of his most extravagant contemporaries—I mean, in minute and frivolous subdivision. We have sometimes *heads*, arranged rank and file, half a score deep.

"It is astonishing that such a man as Howe, or, indeed, that men every way inferior to him, should not have perceived the utterly unphilosophical character of such a principle of classification. To affix numbers to the few leading topics of discourse (and these must of necessity be few) is very well. It serves to indicate the great line of thought on which the speaker intends to travel, and thus to assist the memory of the hearer. But if that division becomes intricate—if it consists of several *sets* of figures—a more successful expedient for thoroughly and hopelessly bewildering the mind can hardly be devised.

"If any would wish to see the full extent to which Howe carried this fault, they may look into the 'Scheme' (a very accurate one) which his publishers prefixed to the *first edition* of the 'Delighting in God.' By the time the student has thoroughly digested and mastered that, he will find little difficulty, I apprehend, in any of the first six books of Euclid.

"Though Howe's genius was not peculiarly adapted for oratory, the talents he did possess were diligently and successfully cultivated. The ministry of the gospel was not only his duty, but his delight; and he spared no effort which might enable him to discharge it with success. Calamy tells us—'his

ministerial qualifications were singular. He could preach off-hand with as great exactness as many others upon the closest study. He delivered his sermons without notes, though he did not impose that method upon others.' I may remark, that all contemporaneous accounts represent his preaching as deeply impressive." *

The fault which was so manifest in Howe, in the matter of excessive divisions and subdivisions, is hardly less observable in the otherwise excellent discourses of David Clarkson, the colleague, as a preacher, of Dr. Owen, and the tutor of Archbishop Tillotson. Altogether, this mischievous error—an error in judgment no less than in taste, betrayed itself among the nonconformists much longer than among the clergy of the established church, principally, we may presume, in consequence of the greater reverence with which they regarded the example of their puritan predecessors.

Speaking generally, we regret to say that we find much more to deplore than to admire in the state of the nonconformist pulpit during the former half of the eighteenth century. Arianism, and something still more removed from the truth, began to shew itself widely among the presbyterians; and many pulpits which did not become altogether unimpressive as the

* Life and Character of John Howe, M.A., by Henry Rogers, pp. 474—477; 503—505.

effect of such opinions, became very feeble in their influence from other causes.

Perhaps we may regard the sermons of the Rev. John Barker and those of the Rev. Joseph Stennett as exhibiting a very favourable specimen of the preaching which obtained among dissenters during the half century subsequent to the Revolution. In reading these discourses we can readily cede to the authors the praise claimed for them in their title-pages—that of being "learned." Nor should we withhold from them the praise of having distributed the matter of their discourses with considerable judgment, and of having expressed their thoughts with great propriety and clearness, and with occasional force. Their orthodoxy, and the evangelical influence of that orthodoxy on the habit of their own mind, are above suspicion. No one can doubt the piety of their feelings as men, or of their intention as preachers. But the greater part of their discourses partake too little of the applicatory character that should characterize a sermon, and too much of the system, expansion, and coldness, which might have been felt as more in place in a college lecture. If the reader can call to memory the substance and manner of Stennett's sermons on "Christ Crucified," he will at once understand what is meant. In the sermons of Barker and of Stennett there is not generally any want of the distinctive truths of the gospel, in proportion as the text or subject may be of

a nature to embrace them, but texts which are not evangelical in their direct import have little doctrine of that nature brought to them, and when such doctrines are put forth, it is too much in the manner of topics in a disquisition or an essay, with scarcely anything of that animated and searching appeal to the auditory, which is so necessary to secure attention and to produce deep and permanent interest. The object of the preacher, for the most part, would seem to be instruction, rather than conversion—the edification of the believing, more than the conviction of the unbelieving.

Such discourses might contribute, along with regular pastoral oversight, to retain dissenting families in their relation to the dissenting interest, but they were little adapted to command attention beyond those limits. Population was increasing rapidly, and with it popular ignorance and irreligion; and the manner in which the services of the meeting-house were conducted, seemed to possess little more of adaptation to the growing exigencies of the times, than the services of the parish church. Formalism, of a certain kind, though the fact would not perhaps be acknowledged, had its home in the places of dissent as certainly as elsewhere. Eminent piety existed in many nonconformist families. Devotional works passed through many editions, and furnished very widely the material of private reading and meditation. But the feeling of piety seemed to find the limits of its influence with

the individual, with the family circle, or at most with a particular church and congregation. The great policy of religion appeared to be to *retain* its hold, rather than to *extend* it—to perpetuate an interest, rather than to convert a neighbourhood. Without some extraordinary movement in order to overtake the increasing numbers of the people, who were fast slipping away from all the ordinary means of religious instruction, there was no prospect of their being retained under any sort of religious influence;—but to adopt any such movement seemed, unhappily, to be scarcely more in the way of the dissenter than of the churchman.

It is towards the close of this period that we meet with the honoured names of Watts and Doddridge. Watts, in his "Humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion among Christians," has sufficiently indicated his impression with regard to the main cause of the alleged declension of power and numbers among dissenters. "I am well satisfied," he writes, "that the great and general reason is the decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men, and the little success which the ministrations of the gospel have had of late for the conversion of sinners to holiness, and the recovery of them, from the state of corrupt nature and the course of this world, to the life of God by Jesus Christ. If this be not our hope and design, the support of the *dissenting interest* is but of little importance. What is it that we mean by assert-

ing the rights and freedom of conscience in our separation from the Established Church, but more effectually to promote the kingdom of God among men, to do more honour to the name of Christ our Saviour in his institutions, and better to carry on the blessed work of the salvation of souls?

"But if these things are not happily promoted amongst us, it is no wonder that persons release themselves from all the inconveniences that in some places may attend their separation from a public establishment, especially when it is so evident that the allurement of riches and honours, and public trusts and offices, lie all on one side.

"Nor is the complaint of the declension of virtue and piety made only by the protestant dissenters;—it is a general matter of mournful observation amongst all that lay the cause of God to heart; and therefore it cannot be amiss for every one to use all just and proper efforts for the recovery of dying religion in the world."*

It appears from this very interesting publication, that the great want was, not that preaching should be orthodox, nor that it should be evangelical, instructive, and even searching, considered in its relation to Christians, but that it should be pointed more earnestly and directly towards "the conversion of sinners to holiness." The most able preacher among the dis-

* An Humble Attempt, &c., Preface, third edition.

senters in that age was Thomas Bradbury, the minister of New-court Chapel, Carey Street, London. But from the numerous sermons published by Bradbury, most of which, it should be added, were delivered on special and public occasions, we should be disposed to fear that the greater point, animation, and genius of this preacher, did not tend more strongly than the less-gifted labours of his brethren towards the object which appeared to the devout spirit of Watts as the great want of the times—"the conversion of sinners to holiness." Bradbury is not the only man who has become so occupied with defending the polity and outworks of dissent, as to appear to lose sight of the fact, that congregationalism, next to its being, as we truly think it to be, a part of the will of the Saviour, derives its great value from its special aptitude to diffuse a serious and vital Christianity among the people. Men who become intent on making themselves felt through the ecclesiastical framework of a nation, too often fail of making any great impression, of the best kind, on the sphere immediately about them. Men of a less venturous aim, and given to more obscure labours, frequently do more, not only toward the advancement of piety, but toward the advancement of their distinctive principles. Watts and Doddridge adhered to the principles of Bradbury as a congregationalist, but placed them in a more marked, and a more just subordination to piety, and the effect of their wiser and better policy may be seen, in the

much wider and more permanent service to the cause of those principles which has resulted from their labours. The labours of Bradbury have passed into comparative forgetfulness, along with the excitements which produced them, and to which they were addressed; while those of Watts and Doddridge belong to our age as much as to their own, and by exhibiting independency in its true light, as a system of piety, rather than as a system of mere policy, have done more than the labours of all the men of their generation beside to give it reputation and power.

Watts did not possess the physical strength necessary to effectiveness as a preacher, and Doddridge was diverted from giving himself wholly to the service of the pulpit, partly by his habits as a student, and partly by his duties in later life as a tutor. But the sermons of both, in common with all their devotional writings, breathe a spirit of piety so intelligent and so fervent, that they could not have been feeble in their impression on those who listened to them. It was no doubt an eminent service which these holy men were called to perform in relation to the piety of their times; but the darkness which pervaded the established church, and the declension and lethargy which had come upon the churches of the nonconformists, were much too formidable to be greatly affected by exertions so subdued, so cautious, and so regular, as were those which could alone commend themselves to the habits and tastes of such men. Much they did, beyond

doubt, towards kindling the flame of devout feeling which began to shew itself, about the middle of the last century, within the established church; and towards reviving the feeling of piety among the nonconformists, so as to fit them for retaining their place when required to compete with the daring irregularities and the astounding novelties of Methodism. But to do the work of Methodism was not to be expected from such men as Watts and Doddridge. Conventional notions of propriety were as deeply fixed among nonconformist ministers as among those of the church of England. The spirit needed was one which should possess equal piety with that of the good men adverted to, but greater freedom. Not a spirit of greater learning, but one of more boldness. Not a spirit feeling more deeply for the perishing condition of the people, but one capable of breaking through the fastidiousness, and the deference to social usage, commonly induced by very studious habits, and of resolving to meet new and more desperate forms of evil, by means of new and stronger expedients. Such was the spirit of Methodism.

We know pretty well all that can be said in respect to the faults of Methodism, but to Methodism, with all its faults, belongs the high praise of having "remembered the forgotten, attended to the neglected, and visited the forsaken." In the spirit of Him who called it forth—as the foolish that should confound the wise—it had "compassion on the ignorant, and

on them that were out of the way." Nearly a century had passed, during which the greater part of the people of England had been as sheep without a shepherd. From 1662 to 1688, the men who were alone authorized to instruct them, with little exception, did not instruct them. Subsequently, there were some signs of improvement, both within the established church and beyond its pale, but irreligion diffused itself more rapidly than the power that should have been present to counteract it. Preachers, in all connexions, continued to address themselves too much to the rich and the learned, who would not hear; and too little to the poor and the ignorant, who, as the event proved, were waiting for instruction. Learning, and authority, and ecclesiastical pretension in all its grades, had passed by on the other side, and had left it to men, whose noble-hearted contempt of the recognised and the orderly exposed them to the ban of spiritual proscription, to pour the oil and the wine into the wounds which the hands of the violent and the plundering had made!

The leaders of Methodism were themselves educated men. Contemporaneous also with Whitfield and Wesley, as seceding clergymen, were the labours of a small band of ministers who preached the same doctrines, and in the same spirit, from the pulpits of the established church. On the whole, however, there was much in the movement, which men of education —men of those nicer perceptions and feelings which

education naturally brings with it—could not have regarded with pleasure. But it was to the honour of that practical good sense, and of that largeness of heart, which distinguished the pious men just named, that they did not allow themselves to be impeded in their course by such considerations. In their circumstances, it was wise, it was magnanimous, when they could not do good by the services of the sort of men whom they would have chosen, to avail themselves of such services as they could obtain. Their mission was to rouse the sleeper, and to save the lost, and the last fragment of fitting agency at their disposal did they put into requisition for that purpose. The wise men of the time accounted them rhapsodists and fanatics, but they were preachers distinguished by elaborate preparation for the pulpit, by the most studied aim to reach the conscience, and move the passions of their auditory, and by a rational and devout solicitude, to convince and affect the spirit of their hearers, in order to their enlightenment, sanctity, and salvation.

In connexion with these efforts, there were, no doubt, many displays of ignorance, conceit, fanaticism, and vulgarity. But with qualities of that nature, as observable in many of the preachers called forth by Methodism, others of a better character and tendency were prominently mingled. If ignorant in some respects, there was a knowledge, the gravest and the best, in respect to which even the humblest of those

worthy men was by no means uninstructed. If not wholly secure from the influence of vanity, they possessed that deeper feeling of humility which men derive from a contemplation of the Infinite, and from a knowledge of their own depravity. If liable to impulses bordering on the extravagant, they were, on the whole, impulses strictly natural to men who lived by faith amidst the scenes of the saved and the lost, as unveiled by Holy Writ. And if there was much in their occasional wit, in their familiar talk, and in their tales of terror or amusement, that must have offended, to the last degree, against the notions of every orthodox churchman with regard to pulpit decorum, there was mixed up with all this a love of the true, of the tender, of the devout, and of the heavenly, as nourished by the visions of the garden, the cross, and the world to come, which gave to the character of these preachers a real dignity, a true moral greatness, more to be coveted than any conceivable proficiency in those lesser proprieties of life in which the most vicious and frivolous of mankind oftentimes excel. It is when we look on Methodism as a whole, and in its great moral results, that we see it to be of God. It is in this manner that we are accustomed, at our present distance, to regard the progress of the Reformation; and, in the same manner, a devout posterity will regard the progress of Methodism. On the one class of Reformers, it devolved to break the yoke of papal superstition; on the other, to break the slum-

bers of a protestant formalism. In neither case was the agency without its imperfections, but in both it was eminently Christian. The effect of Methodism on the English pulpit, has been to do much towards restoring to it the evangelical and popular character which distinguished the preaching of the sixteenth, and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, giving to the substance and the manner of preaching which obtained in those times, a considerable measure of modification, so as to meet the different condition of mind, characterizing the state of society during the century which has just now reached its close.

If there is anything valuable to be learned from the retrospect of this chapter on the history of the pulpit in England, it would not be unprofitable to glance in the same manner at what has been most observable in the history of preaching on the Continent during the same period. But this is a large subject, on which we can touch only very briefly.

The principle of appeal to the right of private judgment is the great principle of the Reformation. Its effect on the pulpit, both in England and on the Continent, was at once manifest. The sermons of Luther, of his coadjutors, and of their successors to the close of the sixteenth century, are, in nearly all respects, such as were preached in England during the same interval. The early sermons of Luther, as well as those delivered by him when he became more known as an innovator, possess much of

the same kind of adaptation to the popular modes of thinking, and the same homely reference to the familiar circumstances of life, which we have seen in the sermons of Latimer. His speculations concerning the relation of the moral law to the gospel, sometimes led him to express himself with more strength than accuracy, as in his sermon on the "lost sheep;" but any one who shall read that sermon through, will perceive that nothing was farther from the intention of the preacher than to minister to practical antinomianism in any form, and the same may be said, we think, of his writings generally. The theory of self-righteousness he regarded as the great error of the times; his zeal against that error was his strong feeling; and extreme was, in a measure, the result of extreme. Hence, in what it opposed, and in what it laboured to establish, the mind of Luther exhibited the spirit of his age.

That age was the juncture when the worship of antiquity began to give place to something more than distrust with regard to nearly everything ancient and established; when the prejudices which had disposed men to lean upon others for everything in religion, began to prompt them to lean wholly upon themselves in such matters; and when the thoughts and the hearts of men, which had been so long content to move on slowly in the settled groove of earthly affairs, began to be agitated with new ideas, to be impelled by a strong passion for spiritual freedom, and

to be so fascinated by visions relating to human improvement, as to be prepared to pursue such objects with an ardour that did not comport with any adequate attention, either to those intermediate difficulties which it was needful to overcome, or to those ulterior issues, which always come in the train of great changes, and which are not the less serious from being scarcely, if at all, anticipated. But the pulpit had been the great agency in calling up this new state of things, and in the pulpit its wisdom and its folly, its good and its evil, were all naturally reflected. The pulpit, indeed, was not the place in which to broach subtle disquisitions on such questions as arose about the eucharist. But the grosser forms of superstition, tyranny, and worldliness, which disfigured the papal system—its saint-worship and its image-worship, its idle fasts and its worse than idle pilgrimages, the frauds allied with its system of monkery, and the oppressions exercised, religious and secular, by its haughty priesthood—all these were topics which plain men could understand, which such men could compare with the scriptures given to them in their mother tongue, and on which preachers, in the comparatively rude eloquence of the sixteenth century, dwelt with so much effect, as to shake the supposed stability of episcopal thrones from one end of Christendom to the other. It is always to be observed, with respect to this great intellectual movement, which diffused so much misgiving over the whole surface and splendour

of society, that it rose from the many—from beneath; and that the new force then given to those broad and deep elements in the social world which had so long reposed as in their imbedded quietude, was a force given to them mainly by preaching. It may be, that many causes, less strictly religious than those above enumerated, lent their influence to the wheels of that memorable revolution; but the sinister passions of the selfish, owed the success of their policy to the religious fervour which gave so much intensity to the purposes of the devout.

Subsequent to the age of Luther and Calvin, the protestant pulpit on the Continent appears to have lost much of its power; and it is not until the times of Louis XIV. that the preacher again appears as an important personage in the social affairs of Europe. It is the glory of protestantism, that it lives only through intelligence, and through the intelligence of the many, more than through that of the few. It is from this cause that it has so often acted as a reformer even upon catholicism itself. It was the act of protestantism to restore the pulpit to its due place among the means of religious improvement, and no sooner had protestantism seized upon the pulpit, than catholicism followed its example, and so ran the current of wholesome provocation in a multitude of things beside.

During the latter part of the long reign of Louis XIV. the eloquence of the French pulpit was such,

that it seemed to vie with the attractions of the French theatre. In that age, France appeared to have attained the zenith of her power in the political affairs of Europe, and her highest point in respect to learning, genius, and splendour ; and the pulpits of her capital were then the place of an oratory which frequently extorted praise from the vainest, the proudest, and the most impious. But where, since that age, do we find her Bossuets and Massillons, her Bourdaloues and Saurins? The office of those distinguished men descended to others, but their mantle has not descended with it. In the continental pulpit, both catholic and protestant, the men disappeared, and children, through a long and dreary space, came into their room. The sanctified genius which once seemed to possess so much power over the human spirit, has been succeeded, for the most part, by an ever recurring sameness of thought, by an abstruse mysticism, or a moral heartlessness, which has left the adversary of truth and goodness to work out his mischiefs with little disturbance. The literary excellence which no department of letters could surpass, has been followed by a wearisome mediocrity, rarely heard of beyond the circle of the listless assembly, or the empty pews, to which it has been addressed. In short, among our Gallic neighbours, the preacher, from having been almost the only orator, has come to be almost the last person whom men expect to see conspicuous in that character.

If report speaks truly, there are just now some signs of improvement in this respect, both among catholics and protestants, but much more, we regret to learn, among the former than the latter. "The Dominican," says the last number of the "Dublin Review," "is seen no more, as before the revolution, going from door to door, in the morning, through the streets of Paris; but the crowds that thronged the aisles of Notre Dame, when it was announced that M. Lacordaire would appear in its pulpit, and the enthusiasm inspired by his thrilling eloquence, when he unfolded the ancient catholic glories of his country, justify the hope that the habit in which he appeared will once more become familiar to the catholics of France."

The same authority further reports—"The conferences of Père Ravignan, in the cathedral, during last Lent, were attended more numerously and respectably, if possible, than before. With an eloquence worthy of his order, and of the greatest lights of the church of France, he expounded the certainty, motives, and object of the Christian faith, and two of its principal mysteries. But it was not the eloquence of the preacher, nor sympathy for an order which infidel prejudices and university jealousy prevent from resuming its place in public instruction, that attracted to the crowded aisles of Notre Dame an audience composed principally of the students from different professions, and of the talent, rank, and wealth of Paris. The religious recollection of the audience

during the retreat conducted by the preacher during the last week in Lent; and 1800 men receiving communion from his hands, on Easter Sunday, in the church where he had given his instructions, prove the progress religion is making amongst that class from whom it has always received most opposition." *

It is probable that the feeling of the partisan has lent some shades to the colouring of these pictures, but the passages suffice to shew the estimate formed among catholics with respect to the influence to be expected, in regard to public opinion, from a wise use of the pulpit. Protestantism, as we have seen, depends much more than catholicism on efficiency in the office of preaching, and should it prove less powerful than its antagonist, even in that particular, what can be its prospect of success? The only sermons by protestant divines in that country which have come to my hands, are those of Bonnet, Audebez, and Grandpierre; the first is pastor of the French church at Francfort-on-the-Main, the second and third are pastors in Paris. The discourses of Bonnet possess no literary pretension, but they are full of scriptural sentiment, and breathe a fervent and devout spirit. The sermons of Audebez are of a higher order, both in respect to matter and style; but those of Grandpierre rise, in those respects, considerably above the average of the evangelical discourses which issue from the press in this country. With such men as

* Vol. xii., pp. 432, 440.

Grandpierre, D'Aubignè, and Monod, presiding over French schools of theology, we may hope to see the protestant pulpit become powerful even in France.

But if we must indulge in hope, rather than in congratulation, when we look to the protestant pulpit in France, this is hardly less the case in Germany. We possess many proofs of the theological learning of Germany, but her pulpit exhibits little power. Liberty ceded to the professor in addressing his class, is not permitted to the preacher when addressing the people. The form of government which has hardly left to the state the name of freedom, has been fatal to pulpit eloquence. Where there is no liberty of the press, there will be no liberty of prophesying. It is true there may be much useful, and even able preaching, the knowledge of which does not extend beyond the limits of its own language and country. But wherever preaching is really popular on a large scale, it is reasonable to expect that so notorious a fact should be generally known; and that where multitudes do well, some should rise to excellence. Let there be a greater number who preach with effect to the many, and the next step will be the appearance of a lesser number who will preach with effect to the few, and the fame of this lesser number will be matter of observation from afar. But nothing of this sort is observable in the present state of the pulpit in any portion of the continent of Europe.

The act of the late King of Prussia, which amalga-

mated the ancient Lutheran and Calvinistic churches into one form of creed, polity, and worship, has not only deprived the clergy of their old privilege of free-prayer both before and after the sermon, but has, by royal edict, restricted the time of the sermon to half an hour, and on fast-days, or other days of particular religious observance, it is the practice of the government to supply the preachers through the state with the text from which they are expected to discourse to the people.*

The effect of this spirit of restraint and dictation it is easy to imagine. While subject to a censorship of this jealous and meddling description, there is little probability that the German pulpit will be found capable of producing much impression; and judging from the German sermons which are best known to us, particularly those of the eminent divine, Professor Tholuck, there is reason to apprehend that the evangelical preachers—the pietists, as they are called—in Germany, are too much disposed to indulge in the obscure and mystical, to allow of their making themselves felt in the pulpit at all in the manner of their famous predecessors somewhat more than two centuries since. But until men shall arise in the states of Europe, knowing how to use the pulpit more in the manner of the Luthers and Latimers of a former age, it must be vain to expect that new conquests will be

* Laing's Notes of a Traveller, 208, 209.

made, either upon the space still occupied by Romanism, or upon that which has been seized by scepticism. If any marked change in this respect is to come, it must be preceded by change in another respect—the office of the preacher must be identified in the public mind in a much less degree with the immaturity and feebleness of the age, and in a much greater degree with its intelligence and power.

The state of the pulpit in Great Britain is both worse and better than upon the Continent. We have many good men among us as preachers, whose deficient education would have precluded them from all place in the Christian ministry in any other state of Europe. But while we concede this point of inferiority, as a consequence naturally attendant on our system of liberty, we are satisfied that we lose nothing from this cause as regards the comparative amount of proper pulpit ability; and as regards the average qualifications of our preachers, and the number of them who rise above mediocrity, bringing to their duties much of the mind and cultivation demanded by the times, it is, as we fear, but too certain, that we may abide comparison, not merely with any one state of protestant Christendom, but with the whole of them taken together.

From the review with which we have been occupied in this chapter, it is plain that the manner of preaching which has proved effectual at one time, must not be relied upon as promising to be no less effectual at

all times. The causes which affect the character of the people, must always affect the manner of the preacher. Human nature, viewed in its great elements, is changeless as the heavens, but viewed as it may be affected by external influences, it is ever varying like the clouds. We are observant of these varieties, as they serve to characterize the several races of men in the different regions of the earth. The map of the geologist, with its many colours, indicating the distinct layers on the surface of the globe, is not more diversified than is the mental, moral, and social complexion of the families and nations of mankind, though all made of one blood, and sent off from one stock. But strong as are those lines of separation between different races and nations, they do not exhibit a greater variety than may often be seen in the history of the same people upon the same soil, if we take in a large space of their story, and compare the men of one age with their remote progenitors in another. The whole transition belonging to social life, reaching from the lowest barbarism to the highest refinement, may thus pass before us. Within the space occupied by this great change, many lesser changes are included. Men become more known by class and gradation. These classes become distinguished by different habits of thought, feeling, and usage. Culture, prejudices, passions—all pass under new influences. Hence modes of producing impression which possessed eminent fitness as applied to the men of one century, may

be wholly wanting in suitableness as applied to the men of the next.

But obvious as all this may seem, it is to be marked as one of the besetting infirmities of our nature, that men frequently adhere pertinaciously to old means, when the difficulties to be overcome have assumed a new form. No doubt, it is much less costly to move on thus in the old track than to venture upon striking out a new path. It not only requires less thought, and a less sacrifice of ease—it incurs less censure. We flatter ourselves, moreover, that our conduct in this case carries with it the test of experience, and the sanction of reputable precedent. But it ought to be very plain to us, that the true lesson to be learned from such precedents is, the importance of endeavouring wisely to adapt the means to the end. It is that we should study the men of our time, as our fathers studied the men of their time,—and that we should mould our instructions accordingly. Its teaching is, not that we should continue the apparatus unchanged, but rather that we should subject it to new construction, and new modes of operation, from time to time, so as to meet the ever-changing forms which may be given to our common depravity, by the constantly-shifting influence of the different elements of society. In the history of the pulpit, next to its dependence on its theme, and on the divine blessing, is its dependence on this kind of adaptation; and it is one of the most instructive and interesting facts observable in the

divine dispensations, that the social world should have been made subject to these ceaseless changes, in order that the church, in place of moving on in one mechanical routine, might be aroused, from point to point in her history, to put forth her skill and power in new forms, in order to meet these new exigencies.

Our doctrine, therefore, is, that the past has had a preaching of its own, and that so it must be with the present. The preaching of the reformers was a preaching of its own order; the same may be said of the preaching of the puritans; and the same, again, of methodism. But *our* preaching must not consist in a ceaseless iteration of the elementary principles of protestantism, as in the first of these instances; nor in the skilful wielding of a cumbrous theological learning, as in the second instance; nor in an announcement of little more than the doctrine of salvation by repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as in the third instance. Romanism is no longer the great antagonist; our people are no longer a nation familiar with the forms and phrases of a technical theology; and the great object of our vocation as preachers, is no longer to arouse the dormant faith of the worldly and the thoughtless, but to convince the gainsayer, and to build up the church of God in the intelligent, the holy, and the moral, —and to do this in the face of a generation more wakeful and scrutinizing than any that has arisen in the history of nations. Need it be said on this subject,

that if we hope to be strong we must dare to be original? Is it not plain, that the past can have no model to furnish, inasmuch as the past has had no times like ours? And with regard to the present, is it not manifest that the states of Europe can scarcely be said to have any preaching in them that we should be concerned to imitate? Our idea with regard to what preaching ought to be, must not be derived from what has been successful in the past, nor from what now obtains elsewhere, but from what is before us in the example of inspired men, and from what is demanded by the age in which we live. In the preaching of reformers and puritans, and in that of episcopalians, nonconformists, and methodists, much may be observed from which we shall do well to learn, but much must be added to what may be so learned, and added purely from our own studious and devout consideration.

CHAPTER VII.

ON A SELF-EDUCATED MINISTRY.

The time appears to have arrived, in which, with a view to the greater efficiency of the Christian ministry, it will be important to exercise a much greater degree of misgiving than formerly, with regard to what may be expected in relation to a permanent discharge of the duties of that office, from merely natural talent, or from self-culture. That some change in this respect is needed, is now very generally felt. But on this point change must have its limits, and must not be entered upon rashly. Our usage in this respect has resulted from circumstances and necessity, and by the same law it must still be regulated.

Unhappily, it is not a small portion of our population who are subject to deep poverty, and who seem to be wedded to the suffering, and to the degraded social condition, natural to such poverty. It is scarcely necessary to say, that the spiritual wants of these classes must on no account be forgotten. In such connexions, the ministry of religion must continue to be in some degree peculiar, and as a case of exception. Good natural ability, a fair amount of

knowledge, a ready and impressive delivery, and a heart intent on contributing to the spiritual improvement and comfort of the poor, must continue to be the main qualifications demanded in the case of a somewhat large class of religious teachers, if the multitudes who have their place as on the lowest verge of our civilization are to be brought at all under the influence of religion. The bigot, the inconsiderate, the frivolous, the vain—all such persons will continue to cast their reproach on preachers of this description, upon the ground of their limited education, and on our general ministry as being identified with them. But a glance at the spiritual destitution of so many myriads among our countrymen, for whom no better provision can be made, must suffice to render every mind imbued with the spirit of the gospel proof against reflections of that nature. To subordinate the pride of learning, to a feeling of compassion toward spiritual natures perishing for lack of knowledge, should be no work of difficulty with men holding the office of Christian ministers.

Nor should we forget, that in such departments of labour, the natural ability of the comparatively uneducated, must carry with it a much greater promise of success, than the merely acquired ability of minds possessing little original capacity. We see every day, that the man of little technical scholarship may be a man of power, while the man who has been most

patiently trained to such scholarship may be a man without power.

We should bear in mind, also, that the distance separating between the social habits of the teacher and those of the taught, must be in no case very great, if there is to be the degree of sympathy between them which is necessary to success. Gentlemen who pride themselves on the aristocratic character of the associations and tastes which their manner of education has been calculated to bring along with it, are not likely to be among the most suitable persons to do the work of an evangelist among classes whose rough and hard lot has its place at the lowest point beneath their own. The gulf which intervenes between such parties, is commonly found to be much too wide to allow of any real intercommunion of thought or feeling. Who can need be reminded of the distance which separates between the habits of a college and those of a colliery?

Nor is this all—not only would one uniform standard of ministerial education deprive us of much suitable agency for communicating religious instruction, and for communicating that instruction where it is most needed, but it would manifestly have left our churches without the eminent services which they have derived from the labours of many highly-gifted men, who, by persevering self-culture, have become ornaments of their respective denominations. It must always be

truly refreshing to the right-minded to see nature vindicate the claims of her high bestowments, after this manner, against the force of circumstances. Literature does not scruple to contribute her memorials to the honour of the uneducated poet. Science does not respect the sagacity the less which has made its way to a solution of her abstruse questions, because that sagacity has been for the most part self-regulated and self-sustained. Shall religion be less generous than they?

But while the proper answer to such a question must be obvious, we must not suffer the illusions of hope on this subject to neutralize the lessons of experience. For one self-educated preacher who has become eminent, it were easy to name a multitude whose self-reliance in this respect has been painfully misplaced. We may add, also, that for one able minister of the New Testament, who has become such by the force of merely natural talent, it were easy to mention hundreds who have owed their success to early educational advantages, much more than to any original mental superiority. Thus the rule is on the side of preliminary education, and the exception—the very rare exception only remains, to hold out the possible prospect of success to the preacher who shall enter upon the duties of his office in the neglect of such education. To the labours of the ministry in some of its humbler departments, such a man may not be found incompetent, provided the absence of early

initiation shall be in a measure supplied by sedulous habits of reading and reflection. But the instances in which minds exposed to the influence of such disadvantages, ever rise superior to them, are so unusual, that the man who should calculate on being the happy exception in such a case, would betray, in the very indulgence of such a hope, an ominous infirmity of judgment.

In this respect, as in respect to everything Christian, men are generally seen to reap as they have sown. If the seed time has been comparatively neglected, the harvest time is affected accordingly. It is not only the hand of diligence which maketh rich, but the hand of diligence put forth in its season. Power is from knowledge, and knowledge is no longer from miracle, but from labour—and from labour which must be commenced early, if the knowledge acquired is to be of great compass, and is to be used with great effect. Men incapable of mental effort, not unfrequently aspire to become Christian ministers; but encouragement given to such persons is cruelty to them, and often so much deep wrong inflicted on the churches which happen to be committed to such oversight. It is observable, that men who once put their hand to this plough, in however humble a connexion, rarely look back; and we oftentimes see a long life embittered with disappointment and mortification, as the result of that sort of mistake on this subject at its commencement, which a little judicious fidelity

might have sufficed to prevent. The man himself, those dependent upon him in after life, the churches with which he becomes connected, and the character of our ministry generally—all share in the mischiefs consequent on this want of honest caution and discountenance at the fitting season. If the chief office of our colleges were only to test the incompetency of this class of minds, and to secure to them the needed council before they become too fully committed to the work, even such a service to our churches should be deemed of no small value.

It is one thing to begin the labours of the Christian ministry with a degree of promise, and in such manner as to secure a transient popularity, and another to be so trained, instructed, and self-governed, as to be capable of putting forth new strength as the race proceeds. Such is the natural effect of early mental discipline, and such effects are rarely observable except as the result of such discipline. It must be remembered, that minds wholly without education are now much fewer everywhere, and that ministers deficient in that respect must, in consequence, be fewer. The discernment which can at once detect the signs of mental poverty in the case of the feeble or the indolent in the pulpit, is more diffused, and the failure of every preacher incapable of bearing such scrutiny, has, of necessity, become more certain and speedy. It may have been well in the early stages of methodism, to send forth preachers of almost any sort,

when it was not found possible to obtain the services of preachers of the best sort. But a policy which may have been wise in circumstances of one description, may be unwise in circumstances of another description; and it may be doubted, accordingly, in our own case, whether it would not have been well, in many instances, to have spared something from the quantity of our preaching, if we might thereby have improved its quality. Even our smaller churches are generally sustained, in a great measure, by a few educated families, to whom the ministry of men inferior to themselves in general cultivation must necessarily be, in a great degree, unacceptable.

We know that a ministry characterized by a very small amount of qualification may do some good, but it will also do harm, and the harm resulting from such incompetency would sometimes appear to be much greater than the good. It may do more to expose religion to contempt, than to secure it reverence. It may serve to repel men from the sanctuary, rather than to attract them toward it. The persons to whom it proves a good may be few and feeble, compared with those to whom it becomes as a stumbling-block. In this manner, it may contribute more to destroy souls, than to save them. Such is the evil especially to be apprehended, when imbecility and indolence become fixed in a pulpit through the abuse of an endowment. In such case, an incompetent ministry becomes an instrument of portentous spiritual mis-

chief in a double sense, inasmuch as it not only consists of a ministry which must operate, in the main, as a defective or a false representation of religion over a whole neighbourhood, but must effectually preclude another ministry, which would probably come as a great regenerating and saving power over that neighbourhood! The mischief done in this case, and the good prevented, are inseparable from great guilt, and that guilt, while it rests in part upon the preacher, will rest in part probably on those who, without due consideration, have accredited him in that character.

If the observations with which we commenced this chapter are borne in mind, it will not be supposed that we mean to intimate in these remarks, that no man should be recognised as a preacher who is not, in the common meaning of the expression—a scholar. We have shewn that we are far from so meaning.

We may add also, that as we would not restrict our ministry, in every case, to persons of a collegiate education, neither would we wish to see the advantages afforded by our colleges restricted to such students only as may be capable of applying themselves with success to all those higher branches of study with which their colleagues generally are expected to become familiar. The aptitudes of the human mind vary continually, and in such cases, it must be, as we humbly think, the wisdom of the tutor, to consult those aptitudes, within certain limits, so as to secure

to each pupil the kind of efficiency which nature has placed the most within his power.

On the whole, if we would profit by the past, so as to regulate our course wisely toward the present and the future, it will be important that we should fix our attention on a much higher standard of natural talent as necessary to warrant our giving encouragement to any man to become occupied with preaching; and that we should hesitate much more than has been deemed necessary in past times, to become parties in sending persons forth as settled ministers, even though possessed of unusual natural capacity, who have not passed through a considerable course of preliminary instruction.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE VALUE OF A GOOD ELOCUTION; AND ON THE MEANS OF ATTAINING IT.

THE aim of every well-regulated system of education is to discipline the mind. It will be of a nature to ascertain the strength or weakness of capacity in the pupil, and to give to his capabilities promptitude and power as the result of exercise. But in the instance of the preacher, education must extend much beyond this point. It must embrace the communication of large and various knowledge, and not merely the

formation of the habit which may qualify a man to make such acquisitions. It may leave much to be done in this way, but it must do much. It must send the student forth capable of entering immediately on the discharge of his proper duties; and, in general, it must see that he possesses all the means and aptitudes necessary to success, if he is really to succeed. It is an education carried on until the moment of action, and it should be an education concerning itself immediately with whatever is necessary to efficiency in action. In this view it should not be more favourable to habits of reading and thinking, than to habits of public speaking. The well-disciplined and the well-furnished mind, should not be deemed more indispensable than the well-trained utterance.

In the experience of the dissenting minister, the value of everything within the range of mental discipline and acquirement, must depend, almost entirely, on his ability to express himself in the presence of large assemblies with freedom, appropriateness, and force. In the absence of a considerable measure of such ability, his career must be a failure. Whatever may have been the cost incurred in his education, it must have been, in this case, incurred in vain. In proportion, also, as a man shall be at fault in this particular, and be in other respects a man of talent and attainment, two causes must operate strongly against his continuing to retain any place in the ministry among dissenters—on the one hand, his superior and culti-

vated mind will not allow of his being satisfied, while falling manifestly below mediocrity in his proper vocation; and on the other hand, a consciousness that he might employ himself with much more effect in other ways, can hardly fail of disposing him to become so employed. Let the system in our colleges, therefore, be such as to make our students scholars, without making them preachers, and before long you may expect to see them dwindle rapidly from divines into private tutors or schoolmasters, or, perhaps, you will see numbers of them relinquish the ministry altogether, and give themselves wholly to literary or secular pursuits.

The case in this respect is widely different between the educated and the uneducated. The dissenting minister of very limited ability, and of little or no education, may meet with much to humble and vex him, but his vocation as such, after all, may embrace more of the creditable and profitable than it would be in his power to realize in any other social connexion. But this must be less the case in our ministry, in proportion as it shall come to consist, in a less degree, of such men: the educated being manifestly much less shut up to an endurance of the mortifications attendant on failure, than the uneducated.

Should it be necessary, therefore, in order to secure to the students in our colleges an agreeable and effective elocution, we do not hesitate to say, that it would be wise to bestow as much attention on this branch

of education as upon the study of the Greek language. We speak thus strongly on this point, because there would seem to have been great deficiency in this respect in most of our collegiate institutions, and because there is special danger that this deficiency will become more observable, rather than otherwise, as we raise the standard of scholarship. Readiness in speaking is so much a natural gift, and consists so often with the superficial in almost everything else, that men of real power, and solid acquirement, are oftentimes disposed to hold such talent in little estimation, and not unfrequently cease to be themselves men of ability in speaking, in the degree in which they become men of thought and learning.

We scarcely need say that such a course of things is the result of a radical error in judgment—an error, so childish and absurd, that a man pretending to sagacity in anything, should blush to find that he has allowed himself to be ensnared by it. The want of sound practical sense in cases of this sort is so manifest, as to afford strong presumption, that the man who has thus failed in relation to the pulpit, will hardly succeed in relation to any other object. Nothing could be more plain, than that it became him, when purposing to take upon himself the office of a preacher, to be constantly mindful of the fact, that no attainment could be of value to him in that capacity, except as it might be popularized, and made to subserve his power as a speaker. But of that fact he has

not been mindful, and he has failed—failed deservedly, inasmuch as his failure has resulted from a negligence of those means, attention to which should have been seen at a glance as strictly necessary to success. We repeat, therefore—let our students fail in the matter of elocution, and, so far as regards their ministry among protestant dissenters, it will matter little in what else they may succeed.

It is our happiness to see rising among our churches a much stronger feeling in favour of collegiate institutions. But if this feeling is to be perpetuated and increased, the subject adverted to must no longer have its place as a matter of subordinate importance in a ministerial education. Our congregations judge of scholarship from its real or supposed effect as seen in the pulpit. It is a good thing, in their view, in proportion as it gives a man power to interest and instruct an auditory, and only in that proportion. If it should generate speculative notions of taste, which only cause a man to hesitate and fail in addressing his fellow-men more than he would have done if devoid of such notions, its effect will be regarded as an evil, rather than as a good. Our young ministers must not only *know* how things ought to be done, but be capable of doing, in a good degree, according to their knowledge, if their knowledge is not to become more an occasion of weakness than of power. In a word—it is as our colleges produce able preachers, that they will be sustained, and

only as they so do—scholarship from the press being an element of power which bears much less directly and obviously upon our interests, as protestant dissenters, than ability in preaching.

It is the more important that this subject should be pressed in connexion with college education, inasmuch as what is not learned in this respect during the years of college life, is rarely, if ever learned. It too commonly happens, that the student, on becoming a pastor, ceases to be a learner. When he has made that transition, his faults as a preacher may be sufficiently scrutinized, but very few will venture to remind him of them directly, or in such manner as might lead to improvement. He will then be left to conjecture from the conduct of men, as to what their thoughts may be concerning him, very little being allowed to escape them on that subject in conversation, especially if the case should be one which might justify expressions the contrary of the laudatory. Hence it is observed, that the elocution with which young men leave our colleges, is generally that which adheres to them to the end of their days—habit becoming necessarily stronger from indulgence, and indulgence becoming fixed as the effect of being little exposed to disturbance.

Nor should our congregations be censured on the ground, that they never fail to visit negligence in this respect, with the kind of penalty which is seen to be attendant upon it. No preacher should need to be

reminded, that to guard against inflicting pain upon an auditory by a wearisome monotony in utterance, is as much his duty, as to guard against exhausting their patience by a ceaseless iteration of common places in thought and language. There may be as much bad taste in the mode of delivery, as in the matter of expression or illustration, and fault in the former shape is likely to be a much more general impediment to edification than in the latter.

> "Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant
> More learned than their ears."

To conciliate, and to interest, is hardly more the province of the mind, than of what falls upon the ear, and meets the eye. To be negligent with regard to voice and manner, is to be wanting in one of the most natural modes of expressing respect towards an auditory, and the speaker who shall seem to be wanting in such respect, should not calculate on being respected. We speak of fault in regard to such things as the result of negligence, because it is so, in a very great degree, in the majority of instances, and the sins of negligence are next in their criminality to those of design.

The dignified and agreeable in deportment, is no less the result of study, than elegance of mind; and as it is with manners and mind, so is it with the voice. Nature may do much more in some cases than in others in these respects, but the finest bestowments of

nature owe their development to education. Civilization is not an accident, but a science—a study, and as it is with the state of things distinguishing the civilized from the barbarous viewed as a whole, so is it with all the parts which constitute the whole. It is not more true of the memory, the imagination, or the reason, that they become powerful by means of exercise adapted to their improvement, than it is that the intonations of the voice, and the proprieties of manner, may be thus improved. The ploughman and the courtier owe the difference distinguishing them, in the modulations of speech, and in everything belonging to external appearance and habit, not to anything that distinguished them as infants, but purely to the different processes through which they have passed in arriving at manhood—processes, which shew what may be done in the matters adverted to by education, what may be left undone, and what may be worse than left undone. The distance may be great between the most polished—as in this case—and the least so; but in every step of the gradation between these extremes, men become what they are, from an adapted agency in circumstances, or from direct training, and scarcely at all from accident. So manifestly is this the case, that it is not too much to say, that the great majority of public speakers who have failed, might have succeeded; and that the majority of those who have succeeded, might have become eminent, if they had only given themselves to

labour, in order to success, somewhat in the manner of the orators of antiquity.

In the ancient world, no man regarded the path to office or power as open to him, except as he had become a successful student in the art of public speaking. Men who aimed to be great as commanders, regarded their proficiency in that art, as next in importance to their knowledge in military tactics. The war of words was as regularly anticipated by them as the war of the sword. How to address their soldiers with effect, and how to debate or negotiate with skill, was a part of their education, and a part scarcely less laborious than that which related to the ordering of a campaign, or the conduct of a battle. No art was more a matter of regular apprenticeship, or less a matter left, after our manner, to spring up as it may, from the chance of natural fluency, or the exigencies of actual life. Learning to speak, was as much an affair of school exercise, as learning to write, the former department of instruction being made to embrace fully as laborious a discipline as the latter. Men practised oratory in the presence of each other, in the presence of their teachers, and in every mode which, by exposing them to the severity of criticism, promised to detect their faults, to inure them to effort, and to ensure success.

No man can become a great orator without the aids of great mental power and resources, but it is remarkable that the greatest orators in antiquity were men

who had to overcome very formidable natural impediments in the way to that greatness. It was not permitted that the crowns they wore, should seem to have come to them as the easy fruit of mere natural talent. They were received rather as a just reward, coming in the train of invincible perseverance. Such were the faults of Demosthenes, both in elocution and action, that nothing could seem more hopeless than the failure of his early efforts. The early experience of Cicero was not greatly more promising. His feeble lungs were to him what an impediment in speech had been to Demosthenes; and the undignified gesture of the Greek was hardly more incompatible with success than the excessive vehemence of the Roman. But it was possible to overcome these defects, and as the result of severe and protracted discipline they were overcome. We have all heard of the exercises of Demosthenes, when he addressed himself to "the noise of the waves," on the sea-shore, in order to realize the power and self-possession necessary when exposed as an orator to "the tumult of the people." Cicero travelled through many lands in search of the best teachers, and in the daily practice of his art, and rose only by slow degrees to the eminence which he attained. It was thus with all great men in those times. Oratory was their study, a study pursued with a degree of system and ardour proportioned to its importance, and if we hear more of Demosthenes and Cicero than of many who were famous as orators

in their time, this has happened in part from the accidents attendant on the history of literature, and in part from the fact, that to occupy much space in the eye of remote generations belongs only to the highest order of genius.

In these observations concerning the method and the ardour with which oratory was studied by the ancients, it is by no means our intention to beget in the mind of young men generally the persuasion that to be as great as Demosthenes they have only to be as persevering. It is no doubt true of the great orator, as of the great poet, that he must be such from the gifts of nature, more than from rules applied by art. We bear in mind, also, that oratory, as studied by the preacher, should be, in many respects, a very different thing from oratory as studied by secular men. It is not ambition, nor the love of fame, but the spirit of benevolence and piety that should prompt the Christian minister in bestowing attention on such studies. His effort should not be a labour to become great, so much as a labour to be found faithful. It is effort in which the apostolic injunction, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee," is regarded in its application to this department of his natural ability, in common with every other. In this view, such effort is not only consonant with the spirit proper to the office of the preacher, but is distinctly enjoined by the responsibilities inseparable from that office. Hence the plea of spirituality, in place of serving as a pretext on the side of indolence in this

particular, should be felt as suggesting the strongest motive to assiduity. The pious Mr. Simeon, of Cambridge, spent more time, toward the close of his life, in preparing to read his sermon with effect, than some men bestow on the preparation of the sermon itself. The study of Whitfield, also, with a view to impressive delivery, was much greater than would seem to have had place in the history of all the preachers to be found with in some of our counties. We want no "start theatric" manner—but the modesty and power of nature.

It will be perceived that in these remarks we contemplate preaching as to consist, not in reading sermons, but in such extemporaneous delivery as obtains at the bar and in the senate. We account it, on the whole, one of the greatest mischiefs that have befallen the church, and the cause of religion generally, that any other mode of communicating instruction than obtains in those connexions, should have become prevalent in the pulpit. In the history of Europe, the practice of reading sermons is almost peculiar to England; and one of its effects has been, to render preaching, which should have been the most popular form of public speaking, in the great majority of instances the least so. It is a practice which became prevalent among us subsequent to the Restoration, and became established as the invariable usage of preachers in the church of England, and as the general usage among nonconformists, by the close of the seventeenth century.

We are not ignorant with regard to the objections usually made to extemporaneous preaching. But these objections consist almost entirely of arguments derived from a misconception of the practice intended, or from its abuses only. It does not follow because the language of a discourse is extemporaneous, that the substance is unpremeditated. It is not to be supposed because a speaker has not stored his memory with words, that he has not been careful to store his mind with thoughts. Nor does it follow because the greater part of an address is clothed in language supplied at the moment, that this must be the case with every part of it. We say not, that no good has come to our pulpit literature, or to religion, from written sermons, we only say that the good which has so come might well have been spared, for the sake of the much greater good that might have been realized by a different method. No man of sense would be understood to intimate that extemporaneous discourses always display the best judgment or the best taste. We reason from the general effect of the practice, and not from its exceptions or its parts. Every man knows that the contrary practice of reading sermons, is no guarantee that the sermon read will be well read, or will be at all worth reading. It often happens, that the men who only read sermons, never write them, and not unfrequently they betray a lamentable want of discernment even in availing themselves of the labours of other men. We advocate extempo-

raneous preaching, not as demanding less labour or less talent than the opposite practice, but as being more natural, more impressive, more adapted to the ends of preaching, and as involving, when entered upon with the due amount of preparation, the most wholesome exercise both of the mental and moral faculties. We no more mean that the extemporaneous preacher should be a mere rhapsodist, than we mean that such should be the character of pleading at the bar, or the character of oratory in the senate.

The great French preachers, who were more attentive to the finish and beauty of style than any class of preachers in the history of the pulpit, were men who delivered their discourses, in our sense, extemporaneously; and the "Dialogues on Eloquence" by the refined and pious Fenelon, are especially adapted to form preachers of that description. "If pastors," he writes, "applied themselves to all the particular duties of their function, as administering the sacraments, directing pious souls, and comforting afflicted or dying persons, it is certain they could not have much time to make elaborate sermons, and learn them word for word. 'The mouth ought to speak from the abundance of the heart,' and communicate to the people the fulness of gospel knowledge, and the affecting sentiments of the preacher. As for what you said yesterday, about getting sermons by heart, I had the curiosity to seek out a passage in St. Augustine, which I had read before; it is to this purport:

'He thinks that a preacher ought to speak in a more plain and sensible manner than other people; for since custom and decency will not permit his hearers to ask him any questions, he should be afraid of not adapting his discourse to their capacity. Wherefore,' says he, 'they who get their sermons by heart, word for word, and so cannot repeat and explain a truth until they see their hearers understand it, must lose one great end and benefit of preaching.' You see by this, sir, that Augustine only prepared his subject, without burdening his memory with all the words of his sermons. Though the precepts of true eloquence should require more, yet the rules of the gospel ministry will not permit us to go further. While a priest, who ought to be 'a man of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,' should be diligent in rooting out ignorance and offences from the field of the church, I think it unworthy of him to waste his time in his closet, in smoothing periods, giving delicate touches to his descriptions, and inventing quaint divisions. When a man falls into the method and employment of these pretty teachers, he can have no time to do anything else; he applies himself to no other business or useful kind of study; nay, to refresh himself he is oftentimes forced to preach the same sermons over and over again.—What! shall a dispenser of the divine mysteries be an idle declaimer, jealous of his reputation, and fond of vain pomp? Shall he not dare to speak of God to his people,

without having ranged all his words, and learned his lesson by heart like a school-boy?" *

These are objections to memoriter preaching. The objections of Fenelon to the practice of reading sermons are still more strongly expressed. Some rare occasions there are, on which it may be well to deliver a whole discourse memoriter, or even to read; but among the persons who have been truly obliged to adopt either of these methods as a general practice, there are few, we suspect, that should have become preachers. Multitudes, who seem to be wholly dependent on such methods, have become so purely through habit—habit which has derived its licence from custom, and its strength from indulgence.†

Every argument that will apply to freedom of utter-

* Dialogues concerning Eloquence, 172—174.

† "This leads me to consider the difference that is between the reading and the speaking of sermons. *Reading is peculiar to this nation, and is endured in no other.* It has indeed made our sermons more exact, and so has produced to us many volumes of the best that are extant. But after all, though some few read so happily, pronounce so truly, and enter so entirely into those affections they recommend, that in them we see both the correctness of reading, and the seriousness of speaking sermons, yet every one is not so happy. Some, by hanging their head perpetually over their notes, by blundering as they read, and by a cursory running over them, do so lessen the matter of their sermons, that as they are generally read with very little life or affection, so they are heard with as little regard or esteem. Besides, the people (who are too apt to censure the clergy) are easily carried into an obvious reflection on reading—that it is an effect of laziness."—*Burnet's Discourse of the Pastoral Care*, chap. ix.

ance in preaching will apply in favour of the same kind of utterance in prayer. In this case, as in the former, the freedom for which we plead is not a freedom precluding all forethought, but such as allows thought to be clothed for the most part in the expressions of the moment, such as may admit of allusion to passing seasons and events, and of that expansion and warmth which is so natural to the mind when it becomes really interested in such exercises. So far are we from pleading for the kind of free prayer which has no relation to preparatory mental discipline, that we should delight to see the manner of prayer accounted of no less importance, as an object of study, than the manner of preaching. Such an attention to the subject would secure to the young minister a fixed and scriptural idea concerning the nature of prayer, and could hardly fail to familiarize his mind with modes of thought, and scriptural examples, of a nature adapted to impart fluency, order, variety, appropriateness, and withal richness and unction, to the devotional exercises in our public services, such as even those of the contrary practice would often be constrained to approve and imitate.

Among the persons distinguished by their place in the court or the cabinet during the reigns of Charles II. and James II., there was no man who possessed, on the whole, a better knowledge of his contemporaries, or of the times in which he lived, than the Marquess of Halifax. His sagacity as a statesman was allied with

great refinement and power of thought, and with an unusual command of language as an author; and we scarcely need say that he is not to be suspected of any leaning, on general grounds, toward the practices of the nonconformists. But it is in the following terms that his lordship has expressed himself on the comparative claims of free prayer and forms of prayer. "I am far from relishing the impertinent wanderings of those who pour out long prayers upon the congregation, and all from their own stock—too often a barren soil, which produces weeds instead of flowers, and by this means they expose religion itself to contempt rather than promote men's devotion. On the other side, there may be too great a restraint put upon men whom God and nature have distinguished from their fellow-labourers, by blessing them with a happier talent, and by giving them not only good sense, but a powerful utterance too, which has enabled them to gush out upon the attentive auditory with a mighty stream of devout and unaffected eloquence. When a man so qualified, endued with learning too, and, above all, adorned with a good life, breaks out into a warm and well-delivered prayer before his sermon, it has the appearance of a divine rapture; he raises and leads the hearts of the assembly in another manner than the most composed and studied form of set words can ever do; and the 'pray we's,' who serve up all their sermons with the same garnishing, would look like so many statues, or men of straw in the pulpit, compared

with those who speak with such a powerful zeal, that men are tempted at the moment to believe that heaven itself has dictated their words to them." *

What can be more important in relation to public worship, than the kind of service, which, when well conducted, is found capable of producing such impression, even in such quarters? Indolence, under the mask of a pious humility, may allege that the true spirit of prayer is from God, but so is the true spirit of preaching also, and both are included in the apostolic admonition—"Neglect not the gift that is in thee."

* This passage is cited in "Watts's Humble Attempt," 161—162.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE INFLUENCE IN ITS RELATION TO THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL.

THE great distinction between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations, consists in the latter being eminently "the ministration of the Spirit." In connexion with the former dispensation, there was a Divine Influence—and not only such as enabled the prophets to deliver the will of God, but such as illumined and purified the minds of all true worshippers, constituting of them—in those times as in the present—the real church of God, as distinguished from the merely outward or visible church. But neither as the source of inspiration, nor as the power which enlightens and sanctifies the spiritual worshipper, was the Holy Spirit then present with the church, in so large a measure, as since the ascension of our incarnate Lord to his throne as Mediator. It is written concerning the prophets in those times, that "they inquired and searched diligently—searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should

follow."* But on the ascension of the Redeemer, the promised Spirit was poured out—that Spirit of whom Christ spake when he said—"He shall teach you all things."† From that time, John could say to Christians generally—"Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."‡ Subsequently to the day of Pentecost revealed truth was made to embrace all things appointed to be known by man, in respect to religion, during his connexion with this world; and as the word was complete, so was the divine influence which accompanied it, that henceforth "the man of God might be perfect," being thoroughly furnished, so far as related to divine provision with a view to his guidance and aid, "unto all good works."

But the success of the written truth thus perfected, depends on the descent of this perfected influence of the Holy Spirit, and the effects always dependant on this conjoint influence, have their place in an intimate relation with human agency. Paul exclaims—"Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."§ In this scripture, the power which ensured success is from God, the immediate agency is from man. "I have planted," says the same apostle, "Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth

* 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. † John, xiv. 26. ‡ 1 John, ii. 20.
§ 2 Cor. ii. 14.

anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."* Hence the exhortation: "We, then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."†

It is thus manifest, that the same relations, between human agency and the divine, which are observable through the natural world, have place in the spiritual world. There is a province which the Infinite has reserved to himself, and there is a province which he has devolved upon man. The mariner cannot control the winds and waves, but he may calculate on the safety of his voyage in proportion as he shall have made the best provision to secure it. The husbandman cannot call forth the sunshine or the shower, nor can he determine or comprehend the secret processes of vegetation; but he may expect the abundance of harvest, according as he shall have employed the means which are placed within his reach, manifestly in order to that end. It is thus in respect to all the pursuits of life. Everywhere the habit of expectation is, that as men sow, so they will reap; that the hand of the diligent only maketh rich; and that labour only can lead to eminence.

Such is the constitution of nature, and such is the law of providence; and the spiritual economy made known to us in revelation is in harmony with both. This obvious analogy between the natural and the

* 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7. † 2 Cor. vi. 1.

spiritual, is in strict accordance with reasonable expectation. As nature, providence, and revelation proceed from the same perfections, it was to have been expected that they would be found bearing upon them the same impress. In natural husbandry, the harvest is from the use of means, and in proportion to the use of them. The influences of the elements, and the mysterious transformations which take place beneath the soil, are from God; but the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, only as it is made subject to the labour of man: and such is the law recognised in the following questions: "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" *

It was not a matter of necessity, that the diffusion of religious knowledge and feeling should depend, after this manner, on the kind offices of religious men. But while the power of God might have sufficed to have accomplished his will by some other process, altogether excluding the agency of man, it has appeared good to his wisdom and benevolence to accomplish it by this process, in which that agency is made to be so prominent.

But the law which prescribes the use of means at all, in this connexion, must be understood as enjoin-

* Rom. x., 14, 15.

ing that we use the best means, and that we use the best means in the best manner. If we do anything in relation to this object, it must be good that what we do should be done well. If the former be morally incumbent upon us, the latter must be no less so; and to this effect are all those inspired exhortations which require the ministers of religion to give themselves wholly to such exercises as reading, meditation, and prayer, so as to make full proof of their ministry, to divide to every man his portion in his season, and to acquit themselves as workmen not needing to be ashamed. If there be meaning in language, the meaning of such language must be, that religion generally may be expected to be prosperous in the world, as the ministry of religion shall become characterized by eminent ability—the ability which consists in the best culture of our natural powers, with a view to the best discharge of our spiritual duties.

The apostle of the Gentiles possessed much of this kind of ability by education, the rest of the apostles were made to possess it by miracle. In this manner we are taught, that the influence of the Holy Spirit, from which the preaching of the gospel derives all its success, was not meant to supersede our obligation to seek the conversion of men, by the use of all such means as may seem to carry with them, in the greatest degree, the natural promise of success. Those who thus honour God, by endeavouring to serve him with their best, God will honour. But shall he ac-

cept the lame as sacrifice, or send down the signs of his approval on the service which involves no real effort of mind or heart in his cause? No; the influence of the Holy Spirit comes not as a bounty upon indolence, but as a stimulus to exertion. Its office is not to give the human faculties a licence to slumber, but to supply them with motives to wakefulness. Its descent upon the church is not as the creeping torpor which betokens disease, but as an element of activity, bespeaking moral and spiritual health.

In short, while, on the one hand, it is not possible that the Christian minister should entertain too deep a sense of his insufficiency to accomplish that change in the spirits of men which needs to be wrought in them; on the other hand, it is not possible that he should be too deeply impressed with that sense of responsibility, which may constrain him to labour for the salvation of men as though their salvation depended wholly on his own efforts, and to expect success only as he shall be found so labouring.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE CONNEXION BETWEEN PIETY AND USEFULNESS IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

We have seen, that in some religious systems, much more importance is attached to ecclesiastical observances, than to preaching. In such connexions, edification is subordinate to formalism, and everything else has its place and character in consistency with that leading error. Men are accounted safe, not according to what they are spiritually or morally, but according to what they are ecclesiastically. The signs of the true church come to consist of matters relating to polity, and not of evidence relating to piety. And as the true church is to be known by marks separate from her piety, it is only consistent that her ministers should put forth their official claims on grounds separate from considerations of that nature. Hence, according to this scheme, to find the true church, we must look to the one point of apostolical succession; to find the true priesthood, we must do the same; and we must do the same again, if we would distinguish the true Christian from the crowd bearing that name.

In the esteem of these eminent purists, what men

are, as good or bad, is in fact as nothing, compared with what they are, as obedient or disobedient with regard to certain matters of ecclesiastical prescription. The institutional in religion, is not accounted by these persons simply as means, relating to the moral and the holy as the end, but it is, in effect, both the means and the end. To be institutionally right, is to be altogether right. The point to be determined is not the relation of the spirit to Christ by faith, penitence, and the renewed affections of the devout mind; but the fact of having been baptized, confirmed, and communed by the hands of a duly-appointed ministry. The piety of a Watts, or a Doddridge, can weigh as nothing, against the fact of their having received the waters of baptism, or the elements of the eucharist, from hands which were not episcopal. Thus everything is determined by a point of polity—the true church, the true ministry, the true Christian. In this manner, revealed religion has become a piece of political machinery, adjusted to subserve the ambition of a priesthood. The simple institutes of the New Testament are converted into a mere frame-work of priestly and secular domination. The power to be derived from them, in this form, constitutes their great value, in comparison with which their relation to truth, morals, and godliness is a question of no moment. Such is Romanism, wherever its tendencies have full development, and strictly of this tendency are all the distinctive principles of Puseyism.

Among all the forms of delusion which have been foisted upon men to frustrate the purposes of the Christian religion, this is the most subtle, elaborate, and destructive. Not that it embraces anything new. We find no evil in Romanism which may not be traced to tendencies common to human nature; nor anything which has not had its place in those systems of false religion to which the infirmities of human nature have given existence from the earliest times. Romanism is to scriptural Christianity, what paganism was to the scriptural theism of the ancient church. Formalists among protestants often became papists, as formalists among the Jews often became idolators. In the ancient paganism, and in the servile copy of it which has been transmitted to us in modern Romanism, we see the same advantage taken of the weakness of human nature, and the same general substitution, in effect, of the ceremonial services of religion, in the place of religion. With all its pomp and pretension, accordingly, Romanism is at heart a stale and vulgar thing, old as the earliest apostasies from revealed truth and goodness, and strong through the weakness of the human intellect, and the low sense-bound condition of human passions.

The great criminality in every system of this nature is, that it tends to perpetuate the intellectual and moral feebleness of human nature, rather than to remove it; and that it deigns even to profit by infirmi-

ties, from which it should have been especially concerned to set men free. It comes, accordingly, in many respects, as an evil rather than a good, inasmuch as it uses the sanctions of religion to uphold things in their own nature the most irreligious. It puts itself forth under the name of truth, and succeeds by that means in giving a new power to falsehood. While it arrogates an exclusive claim to sanctity, it may be seen eagerly employed in undermining every principle of morals. This it does as often as it is heard giving names of piety to the passions of the persecutor, and to the forms of injustice, oppression, and cruelty natural to those passions. In this manner, under the covert of a zeal for religion, the bigot may often be seen making war upon the very instincts of humanity—the moral sentiments of the heart, being effaced by the immoral dogmas of authority. Was it not thus in the case of the priest and the Levite when they passed by on the other side? Was it not thus in the case of the multitude who said—"Not this man, but Barabbas?" Has it not been thus, more or less, among all people?

It is one of the provisions made in every system of this sort, that the people should not concern themselves about the character of their minister, except to ascertain that he has been appointed to his office after a certain manner. That he should be a regular man, is a point about which they cannot be too scrupulous, but whether he be a good man or not, is a matter not

meant to come under their judgment. His ministrations as a priest, are in no respect vitiated by faultiness in his character as a man. If regularly appointed, his hands are equally the channel of the divine blessing, whether those of a Judas, or a St. Paul. It is not from man, but from God, that the power comes, which imparts efficacy to priestly services, and God will honour his own sacraments, by connecting his own power with them, whether administered by the hands of the pure or the impure.

This theory, which, in common with so much beside, exhibits the gospel as giving the first place to the ceremonial in religion, and only a subordinate place to the moral, would be sufficiently difficult to receive, could we regard the office of the Christian minister as designed to consist in nothing more than the administration of sacraments after a prescribed form. But the flagrant impiety in this case is, that, with a daring measure of consistency, the abettors of this doctrine do not hesitate to apply it to preaching, as well as to the more formal official services of the ministry. Men, it seems, should be willing to receive all ministers regularly sent to them, and simply because they are so sent, in the capacity of teachers, as well as in the capacity of persons deputed to perform ceremonies. The man so sent may not teach the truth, he may inculcate doctrine strongly the contrary of the truth—but the most defective, and even the most erroneous teaching, from the lips of a

minister deputed to his office after a particular manner, should be preferred to instruction never so ample, or never so truthful, from the lips of a minister not so deputed!*

We are happy in the knowledge that there are very many among our episcopalian brethren who would be as the first to repudiate a doctrine so manifestly opposed to the spirit and letter of the New Testament, and hardly less opposed to the simplest elements of morality as recognised in common life, and to the readiest dictates of common sense. But it is nevertheless true, that episcopalians whose creed as such is fraught with this measure of folly and impiety, are found almost everywhere, and that minds of this misguided complexion would seem to be increasing rather than diminishing.

Widely different is our own doctrine on this subject. We regard the ordination of the congregational pastor to his office, as being in no respect less valid than that of the episcopalian, and as being even more orderly, taking the New Testament as the model of order in such matters. But it is not by means of such tests that we judge concerning the probable success of the Christian ministry in any case. We regard some modes of appointment to the ministerial office as more scriptural than others, and as being on that account

* For a passage from a sermon, printed by the Rev. H. Melville, in which this frightful doctrine is broadly inculcated, see Note (A), at the end of this volume.

preferable; but our expectations in regard to the probable usefulness of a Christian minister, are not at all influenced by circumstances of that nature, but purely by the measure of ability and piety which such a person may bring to the discharge of his proper ministerial duties.

Are we wrong in this conclusion? We think not. The great business of the Christian minister is not to be employed in the administrations of a ceremonial law, but in labours tending to build up the human mind in habits of "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." By the nature of his vocation, his attention is fixed on the moral condition of man—on man in a condition resembling an edifice in ruins. It is important that he should be capable of judging with some intelligence in respect to the original appearance of this now smitten and desolated structure. Cast down, and mouldering as it may be, it still retains many traces of its departed greatness. Its fragments are so extraordinary, and only so partially mutilated, that the imagination can in a measure reconstruct the whole, and realize to the eye, not only its ancient space and altitude, but the proportions, the harmonies, and the elaborate beauties by which it was once pervaded.

But to judge with intelligence in regard to the condition of human nature in its primitive state, interesting and instructive as that may be, must be a matter of less moment than to be capable of looking wisely upon the condition in which we now find it. It is

plain that man, in place of being as lord over all creatures, has ceased to be master of himself. In every power he is more or less a slave—enthralled in intellect, enthralled in heart, enthralled in appetite. His piety is gone, his moral susceptibility is everywhere deeply impaired. The knowledge of God is no longer the great science of the understanding, the love of God is no longer the great passion of the heart—and in the train of this diversion of the intellectual and moral powers from their proper objects, have come darkness, defilement, misery, and ruin. Enough of the proper in perception and feeling remains to entail the condition of the accountable, but not enough to ensure the blessedness of a moral restoration. Still, such is the nature of this chief workmanship of God, that even in this state it presents the aspect of a surpassing, a mysterious grandeur. It is as a temple overthrown—as the palaces of the mighty when brought low.

But it is the office of the preacher to labour toward the perfect restoration of this noble edifice. It is incumbent on him to be ceaselessly employed in endeavouring to restore all the parts of this building to their due place, and to keep his mind intent on that point when the whole will not only be made to exhibit all the beauty, life, and joyousness which were once so natural to it, but will become vested with this its ancient glory even more abundantly than before. The cross is to this fallen creature as the symbol of forgiveness. The promise of the Holy Spirit is as the

return to his nature of the light, and purity, and peace which had forsaken it. The progress of this great spiritual change, is that process of transformation which endeth not until men have "put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and are renewed in the spirit of their mind, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In the course of this transformation the human mind exhibits itself in states of the greatest conceivable variety, both as regards apprehension and feeling; external circumstances are constantly effecting these inward changes and habits of the spirit; and religious and moral questions are thus constantly arising, which require to be dealt with in the exercise of a Christian knowledge and wisdom.

Must it not, then, be manifest, that if there be any department of human occupation demanding intelligence, it is the department assigned to the Christian minister; and should it not be equally plain, that if there be any pursuit among men in which a strong passion with regard to the object pursued is necessary to perseverance and success, it is so in this case? The theme committed to the preacher is the Divine Nature, considered in all the forms in which it has been made known as related to the nature of man. It may be said, accordingly, to embrace everything that can be known in relation to God, and in relation to ourselves. It is a theme, moreover, the applications of which are

beset, in one view, with every kind of difficulty and discouragement, through the whole process of that spiritual change in the condition of human nature which it is designed to realize and perfect. Hence, to a just discharge of the duties of the Christian ministry, knowledge is indispensable; and not less so patience, forbearance, and all the charities which belong to a state of eminent piety.

It is not our manner to expect excellence in any of the pursuits of life except as the heart has been given to them. We so judge in relation to science, literature, taste, commerce—everything. On this general ground, we conclude, that men without religion, can never be at home in the ministrations of religion. The heart devoid of sympathy with devout affections, can bring no real warmth or affinity to its labours, when employed professionally in endeavouring to inculcate such affections. Such a man may be acquainted with the theory of evangelical truth, and may preach it, but the exercises of his mind upon subjects of a spiritual nature must be so much cold and reluctant service. Every anxious spirit looking to him for counsel, must be to him as a reprover. Every sick chamber, must be to him as a scene calling him to the discharge of most unwelcome duties. Every house of mourning, must be the place of his presence from necessity only, and never from choice. His worldly passions may derive some gratification from the social accompaniments which attend upon the office on

which he has obtruded, but the duties belonging immediately to that office must be to him as a series of tasks,—his career as a minister of religion being as a chain, all the links of which have been so many acts of self-denial!

There is a hidden strength which can make the yoke even of this arduous service easy, and its burden light, but concerning that strength such men have no knowledge. In connexions where the minister of religion can put forth his claim to support on the ground of having been duly observant of a certain prescribed course of ritual services, men may begin their ministry in such a temper of mind, and may become grey-headed in it only to deteriorate more and more, rather than to improve. But in connexions where the people possess the power to free themselves from the burden of such spiritual incompetency, they naturally find the means of doing so; and where matters may not come to that issue, it commonly happens, in the case of such men, either that some great transgression breaks forth and sweeps them suddenly away, or else, that the constant recurrence of their habitual infirmities is found to eat away their reputation as a canker, reducing them ere long to a state of feebleness and contempt, whatever may be the amount of their acquirement or natural talent. Such is the prospect, which the history of the Christian ministry among protestant nonconformists, has placed before every man entering upon the sacred office among us without deriving his great motive to

this spiritual calling from the spiritualities of his own character. That power which animates the soul of the poet, the artist, and all other aspirants in the affairs of the world, must be in the man who would look with success to this vocation—viz., a congeniality of nature with the object, sufficient to induce a commanding love of it. It must become his choice, his taste, his passion. This will be his great security against halting, dulness, or insufficiency in any form.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE DUTY OF CHURCHES IN RELATION TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

The religion of the New Testament is eminently social. It contemplates the formation of churches; and it is explicit in respect to the duties which members of churches owe to each other, and in respect to the obligation of churches, as such, with regard to their common Christianity viewed in its relation to the world at large.

It is an obligation devolving immediately upon every Christian church, that it should serve as a depository of revealed truth, and as an agency to perpetuate the knowledge of the gospel, and an observance of its institutes. Every church formed after the man-

ner of the churches of the New Testament, consists of persons who have become associated on the ground of their common faith in the truths of the revelation committed to them, and with a view to cherishing those mutual affections which truths of such a character naturally tend to call forth and strengthen. It is not permitted that these persons should pursue their spiritual pilgrimage alone. It is enjoined, that, having given themselves to Him who died for them, they should give themselves to each other according to the will of God.* In this manner the multitude of those who believed in Jerusalem "were together;" and so it was in every city where the gospel was published with success in the age of the apostles. Hence, all men making profession of the faith of Christ are admonished, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together; and it was everywhere the custom of such persons, in primitive times, to hold regular assemblies, and to meet especially on the first day of the week, to break bread, and to seek the edification to be derived from social prayer, from hearing the word of God, and from Christian fellowship.† What the first churches were in these respects, they were as a model to all churches. Every such society was meant to be as an ark to the truth received from heaven, and as a conservator of those institutes which derive their authority from the same source with that truth.

* 2 Cor. viii. 5. † Acts, ii. 44. Ibid. xx. 7. Heb. x. 25.

But as the idea of perpetuity in respect to those objects is inseparable from our notion of the being of a church, so the idea of diffusion is inseparable from every just view of the responsibilities of a church. The kingdom of God is like leaven, and the church is the agency by which that leaven is to be made to penetrate the surrounding mass, until the whole is leavened. Christians are associated into churches, that they might act only more effectually as the lights of the world. Hence it does not more pertain to the church to uphold the truth, than to propagate the truth. Nor is it to uphold the institutes of the gospel purely for its own sake; but that others may be constrained to an observance of them, and to an observance of them for the sake of that truth which they embody, or which they are meant to subserve.

By the church, we understand, not the ministry of the church, but its people, of whom alone it is constituted; and by the obligations of the church, accordingly, we understand the obligations, not of any particular class of men, but of the great Christian brotherhood. The church was not made for the ministry, but the ministry for the church. It is no part of Christianity, that we should account the voice of a priesthood, as the same thing with the voice of the church. The utterances of a clergy carry no just authority along with them, without the concurrent utterance of the laity. In the first age of the gospel, the Christian ministry derived its authority in great part immediately from heaven. In subsequent ages,

the continuance of this ministry has been dependent on the authority permanently vested in the church, and exercised by the free suffrage of the church towards that end.

It is the province of the ministry to ordain; but to choose the men who may be deemed eligible to ordination, is the province of the people. Some exceptions to this rule may occur, but in churches at all properly constituted these will be rare, and will be exceptions in appearance more than in reality. Until some church shall have recognised the man desiring the office of a minister as being a Christian, and as competent to the duties of that office, the ceremony of ordination would be felt as bearing upon it all the marks of intrusion and disorder. With the church is the power in this case, and with the church, in the main, rests the responsibility.

But while these observations point to nothing more than the manifest *rights* of the church, they suggest that rights of so much importance must carry with them obligations of no less importance. The ministry of the church is to arise out of the church—it is to originate in it, to be sustained by it, and to derive its complexion from it. In the more regular times which have followed upon the age of miracles, to perpetuate the Christian ministry is not so much the office of the ministry itself, as that of the people for whose sake the ministry is instituted. And if it be in an eminent sense the duty of churches to see that the Christian ministry is perpetuated, it must be their duty

to see that it is perpetuated in the best possible form.

If the great object of good men in becoming thus associated is usefulness—the strengthening and diffusing of everything Christian—it is plain that the ministry must be the grand instrument of that usefulness; and that the means, accordingly, which may conduce to give the highest degree of efficiency to that instrumentality, must possess the strongest possible claim on their practical regard. Among protestant dissenters, the strength of all other agencies, in the various departments of usefulness, is manifestly dependent on the strength of this particular agency. It is as the fountain to the streams. Let our ministry be made good, and everything else will be good. In some connexions, the ecclesiastical machinery is so arranged, that everything which may be determined as a matter of routine or system, is so determined, and as little as possible is left to depend on the accidents of competency or incompetency in the persons admitted to the office of the ministry. But among protestant dissenters it is far otherwise. Congregationalism, especially, always supposes the presence of intelligence and piety. Where these are found, it realizes the elements which are in affinity with itself, and its working is harmonious, generous, and noble. But where these are wanting, its very excellences become so many facilities to mischief—much as when the immunities of civil freedom pass into the hands of the ignorant and the worthless.

But while the character of everything good among us is in a great degree dependent on the character of our ministry, it should be obvious, that as it is felt to be the duty of each church to act upon this principle in relation to the manner in which its own pulpit and pastorate are filled, it must be no less its duty so to act with regard to the character of our ministry viewed generally. It must not only be incumbent on every such community to maintain a ministry of this description, so far as it may, in its own instance, but it must be no less the duty of such parties to do what in them lies towards securing a succession of such ministers, and towards diffusing our peculiar principles, and our common Christianity, by multiplying the services of such a ministry. If it be the duty of each church to support a ministry of this character, it must be the duty of all churches to combine in favour of a general ministry which may be so characterized. The ministry which is good for the parts, must be good for the whole; and as regards the means by which such a ministry may be best provided and diffused, what may not be done by the parts, may be done by the whole. We do not hesitate to say, that our ministry is, under God, in its relation to our churches, what our machinery is in its relation to our manufactures. It exhibits, pre-eminently, the combinations of skill and power on which we depend, next to the Divine blessing, for all our success, and in neither case must we expect to see the means necessary to success assume

the needed construction and adaptation from accident, or spontaneously, but as the result of steady calculation, ingenuity, and effort. Even in the affairs of providence, success is from above, but the means are with men. We admit this truth more emphatically in its relation to everything Christian, and, most of all, is it applicable to everything belonging to the history of the Christian ministry.

So long as a church is permitted to luxuriate beneath the dropping fruit of its own vine, or fig-tree, it may be little considerate on this topic. But let its able pastor be removed, and the difficulties attendant on the effort to supply his place, may possibly suggest some new thoughts concerning the wisdom of looking toward such exigencies before they arise. One is sometimes tempted to think, that the perplexities which not unfrequently belong to this juncture in the history of some of our churches, have a little of the retributive in them. What wonder if churches which have done little, or nothing, toward strengthening our general ministry, are seen languishing and suffering for a while as the consequence of its weakness? Is it not fitting that the sins of churches, as well as of individuals, should be sometimes brought in this manner to their remembrance? Our usages in this respect will not be in a healthy state, until the claims of our colleges, shall become as much a matter of principle and regular observance, as the claims of our missionary labours at home or abroad.

It is to be regretted that when the sons of the more wealthy families among dissenters direct their thoughts to the Christian ministry, they so often become residents in Oxford or Cambridge, and take their place as clergymen in the established church.

Objections made by such persons to our colleges simply as places of residence, have not been so applicable to them of late years as formerly. We know not that the sons of the most opulent will find anything in the arrangements of our leading colleges of which just complaint may be made as compared with what is known to obtain very generally elsewhere. In regard to society, also, such seminaries generally contain everything which a candidate for the office of the Christian ministry should be anxious to obtain; and with regard to instruction, should he, at the end of his course, prove deficient in that respect, it will generally be from the want of application on his own part, much more than from any want of access to adequate means of assistance. We must admit, that in some quarters, our academic system is still defective in these respects, and the sooner such defects can be removed the better; but the time has come, in which no man desirous of avoiding any such inconvenience or disadvantage, need be at great pains in doing so.

But it is not the transition from the indulgences of an opulent home, to the more common level, which is inseparable in a measure from college life, that is chiefly felt by such persons. Nor in many cases must

we attribute the preference shewn by them, mainly, if at all, to the more favourable social position of the clergyman, compared with that of the dissenting minister. In not a few instances, the conduct we blame in these persons, is the natural result of conduct for which we are ourselves to blame. It may be, that these young men have seen the dissenting minister exposed to so much vulgar annoyance, from the purse-proud on the one side, and from the spiritually-proud on the other, as to have lost heart when contemplating an entrance upon the same office in the same circumstances. It may be, that from this cause, more than from any other, the incipient disposition has arisen, to questioning as to whether these things *ought* so to be, and that in this manner the mind has been put upon that track which has ended in the conclusion, that a system which seems to make a better provision against such coarse intrusiveness must be on the whole a preferable one.

Very commonly, indeed, the causes of such defection are sufficiently manifest, and of a kind for which little excuse can be urged. The schools in which the young ladies and gentlemen have passed the most susceptible years of life, and the notions and tastes which they have very naturally derived from those sources, have been such as to enable any man of discernment to foresee, that so soon as they should feel themselves at liberty, they would choose their religion, as they choose their millinery or their tailoring. To

a mind which has no real sympathy with piety, dissent can rarely appear as an affair of much value.

But while there are men, and even churches, who libel our polity, by the base manner in which they abuse the noble freedom it concedes to them, it must be no matter for wonder, if young men of piety, and honest meaning, but who are conscious that they do not possess the hardihood, or the power, necessary to contend with a "fierce democracy," should draw back from the probabilities of such a conflict. If our ministers are to be subject to rude and coarse treatment, then, in the name of consistency and humanity, let it be understood that we desire none save coarse-minded men to be ministers. It is, however, only reasonable to conclude, that the causes which are prompting our churches to so much laudable effort in favour of our colleges, will prove to be of the kind especially adapted to abate the force of such evils in the connexions where they may still have some existence.

CHAPTER XII.

ON SOME POINTS OF CAUTION NECESSARY TO PREACHERS AND HEARERS.

Much has been said in the preceding pages, concerning the necessity of intelligence and effort, if the pulpit in our age is to be to society what society demands. But we have written to little effect if it has not appeared, that the preaching we regard as demanded from the ministers of religion in our time, is far from being the kind of preaching which is characterized by an unnatural straining after the novel, the startling, or the great, either in thought or language. Neither the discourses of our Lord, nor those of his apostles, were of this order. In their preaching, we see the effort of teachers whose object was a lucid and impressive exhibition of truth; that truth being so exhibited, simply with a view to bring men habitually under the influence of truth, and so to enable them to realize the holy and the happy. Their preaching was not of a kind to make men wonder, so much as to make them thoughtful. In general, there was a comparative repose in their utterances, the excitement of the moment being little

valued by them, except as it might arise from the rational conviction likely to continue beyond the moment. The instructed and the disciplined mind, and the natural manner, in the Christian minister, may be of great value, but it must never be forgotten that it is the truth—"the truth as it is in Jesus," and that truth apprehended by men in its own solemn reality, which must accomplish everything really Christian that is accomplished by our ministry.

While we are thus cautious to assign its due place to revealed truth, apart from which all human agency is as nothing; it is important, also, that ministers and congregations should guard against the unreasonable in aim or expectation, with regard to preaching of that more intellectual kind, which in some connexions is so much needed. Great sermons can be preached only by great men. Preachers who forget this, and aim at an object beyond their reach, only make their littleness appear less. Congregations, also, which contract the habit of regulating their expectations of the useful, according to the frequency with which their attention is roused by the brilliant, betray in that habit a great feebleness of judgment, and great poverty as regards the tone of spiritual feeling which pervades the New Testament.

Even great men, if they must preach often, can preach great sermons only very rarely. The few preachers of our time who have resolved not to appear in the pulpit, except as they could bring some

elaborate performance before the people, have been obliged to restrict their pulpit labours to a single sermon a week, and even that amount of such labour has proved to be beyond their powers. In the case of preachers who are at full liberty to choose their occasions, this uniform elevation in preaching may be practicable; but in the case even of the most able men, who do not possess that liberty, it must be otherwise. In the Romish church, the practice of regarding Lent, and some other intervals, as special preaching seasons, has operated in favour of occasional preaching characterized by unusual power. The most memorable discourses in the history of the French pulpit were delivered at such times. Among protestants, those seasons are less a matter of observance. With us, the men who preach at all, are expected to be preaching constantly; and thus continuity of the same kind of labour is, of necessity, fatal to the kind of preaching which must involve great labour in any form. It may be greatly to the reproach of men who preach very rarely, that they do not always preach well; and much to the dishonour of not a few among such men, that they do not enrich our pulpit literature in a much greater degree; but nothing can be more preposterous than to conclude, because a minister is capable of delivering himself in powerful discourse on some occasions, he must be capable of so delivering himself on all occasions. Much facility, no doubt, is derived from practice, but we still think it

true, that our best preachers must preach less, if they are to preach better.

On the whole, we may be assured on this subject, that what is not found to be practicable, was not meant to be obligatory. The kind of service to which ministers are unequal, is the kind of service which is not needed. Had it been necessary that the church should be largely supplied with preaching of the high order adverted to, the Head of the church would have provided for his own to that effect. It is not necessary that all preachers should account themselves called to be great preachers: nor is it necessary that great preachers should be such at all times. In this matter, the demand generally made, has respect to a comparatively humble range of instruction, and the supply furnished by providence has always been conformable to the nature of this demand. The obligation devolving on the Christian ministry, and that which the church has a right to expect from its ministry, is, that preachers should be *teachers of the truth to the extent of their power*—the possible in this case, being the expedient, and that on which the Divine Influence may be expected to descend, so as to accomplish, in the best manner, all the purposes intended by the institution of the Christian ministry.

NOTE (A).

"But if a sermon differ from what a gospel sermon should be, men will determine that Christ could have had nothing to do with its delivery. Now this, we assert, is nothing less than deposing Christ from the ministry assigned him in the text." (Heb. viii. 2. — A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.) "We are far enough from declaring that the chief minister puts the false words into the mouth of the inferior. But we are certain, as upon a truth, which to deny is to assault the foundations of Christianity, that the chief minister is so mindful of his office, that every man, who listens in faith, expecting a message from above, shall be addressed through the mouth, aye, even through the *mistakes* and *errors*, of the inferior. And in upholding this truth, a truth attested by the experience of numbers, we simply contend for the accuracy of that description of Christ which is under review. If, wheresoever the minister is himself deficient, and untaught, so that his sermons exhibit a wrong system of doctirne, you will not allow that Christ's church may be profited by the ordinance of preaching; you clearly argue, that the Redeemer has given up his office, and that he can no longer be styled the minister of the true tabernacle. There is no middle course between denying that Christ is the minister, and allowing that, whatever the faulty statements of his ordained servant, no soul, which is hearkening in faith for a word of counsel, or comfort, shall find the ordinance worthless, and be sent away empty.

"And from this we obtain our first illustration of our text. We behold the true followers of Christ enabled to find food in pastures which seem barren, and water where the fountains are dry. They obtain, indeed, the most copious supplies—though perhaps even this will not always hold good—when the sermons breathe nothing but truth, and the sacraments are administered by men of tried piety and faith. But when everything seems against them, so that on a carnal calculation, you would suppose the services of the church stripped of all efficiency, then, by acting faith on the head of the ministry,

they are *instructed* and *nourished*, though, in the main, the given lesson be *falsehood*, and the preferred sustenance *little better than poison*. And if Christ be thus always sending messages to those who listen for his voice—if he so take upon himself the office of preacher, as to constrain even the tongue of *error* to speak *instruction to his people*, &c."—Melville's Sermons, vol. i., sermon 2.

The *italics* in the above extract are marked by myself. Christ, it will be remembered, prayed concerning his disciples—"Sanctify them by thy *truth*, *thy word* is truth." But here is a preacher who, that the exclusive pretension of his own particular priesthood may not be open to impeachment, would invert this manifest law of Christ's kingdom, and teaches that error, coming from the lips of his order, may sanctify as well as the truth, and is even in doubt whether error does not sometimes do that office better than the truth! It must be a somewhat desperate pressure, which has prompted a man of intelligence, and, we must hope, a man of piety too, in order to retain his ecclesiastical position, to do a violence of this sort to everything intellectual, and to everything moral in the consciousness of his nature—persuading himself that all the apparent difference, the long reasonably supposed difference, aye, and the clearly alleged difference in holy scripture, between the spiritually healthful in doctrine, and the spiritually poisonous, is, after all, rather imaginary than real! Transubstantiation contains no greater absurdity than this; and in regard to its tendency, the Romish dogma must be harmless compared with such opinions. It is not, it seems, the integrity and influence of truth, that must be regarded as the great object of the Divine solicitude, so much as the perpetuity and power of a precise order of ministers. How few are the men of sense who could not more readily become infidels, than believers in such a doctrine concerning the God of revelation!

THE END.

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