

## SORROW AND SOLITUDE.

(IN RELATION TO THE PREPARATION OF THE PREACHER).

It is often said that the patience with which many congregations endure poor preaching is one of the marvels of the age. There is truth in this saying. Defend the average preacher of this day as we may, point as often as we will to the examples of able and effective preaching, apologize as we like for the quality of the sermons which are confessedly poor, it remains a solemn and portentous fact that the preaching of the day is not on the average up to the mark which defines efficiency. It is not enough to declare that the average preacher is fully equal to the average lawyer. That may be freely admitted. The average preacher should be much superior to the average lawyer—more effective in argument, more powerful in appeal, more masterful in the presentation of his case, inasmuch as the end to be gained by the preacher is infinitely more important than that which the lawyer seeks. If the average lawyer is weak the effect upon the world will not amount to much, for men will still seek the aid of lawyers when they need them; but if the average preacher is weak, and fails to interest the congregation in divine truth, the day will come when men will pass him by, and, not recognizing their need, will fall into habits of religious neglect and spiritual apathy. While people are still in the congregations on the Lord's day they should be addressed by men whose power shall be felt by them.

A thousand things might be written in admonition of preachers. Let two suffice for this article. Two conditions of power in a preacher are sorrow and solitude. The heart never grows great until it aches; it is never divinely tender until it has been bruised; until it has suffered alone it will not suffer with others. Here is the initial demand for the growth of a sympathy without which no preacher can be powerful. Jesus suffered the agony of the temptation before He began to preach. Because He was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief He entered with infinite tenderness and understanding into the sorrows and griefs of others, and the common people, and the publicans and sinners, heard him gladly. John the Baptist, mighty