

EDITORIAL SECTION.

SERMONIC CRITICISM.

Sentimental Treatment of a Text.

THE lamentation of King David over Absalom, recorded in 2 Samuel xviii. 33, is a most remarkable burst of profoundest grief. The whole verse reads:

"And the king was much moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The following theme and treatment have been submitted to us:

Theme: A father's sorrow over his dead son.

Treatment: Presentation of the grounds for the sorrow.

1st. The natural fatherly feeling over the loss of a brilliant and favorite son.

2d. The human feeling of "a great, responsive, sensitive heart" over human suffering and sorrow,—analogous to David's feeling when Saul fell (2 Samuel i. 19-27).

The objection to this treatment of the text is that it is merely sentimental. It is also inadequate and superficial. The intensity of David's grief requires some profounder reason. Such reason is found in a complete understanding of David's relations to Absalom and to his fate. There is involved:

1st. The grief of a pious father over the death of his favorite son. This is natural affection.

2d. The grief of that father over a son lost—gone down to perdition. Compare the hopeful aspect of David's grief when Bathsheba's child died (2 Samuel xii. 17-23).

3d. The grief of that father over a son lost through his own agency. He had married Absalom's mother, a heathen woman, resulting in Absalom's being brought up as a heathen, and had set him an example of evil. So David had himself fixed on his son

the mark of doom by his agency in his birth and training and the paternal influence over him.

The theme is: "A pious father's lament over a favorite son dead and doomed by the father's agency. This was enough to call forth the will: "Would God I had died for thee!"

Eloquence of the Pews.

WE have long been convinced that the chief inspiration and eloquence of the pulpit come from the *pews*, and that if the pews for any reason decline to furnish it the preacher is doomed to fail. An enthusiastic people in the pews will rouse the dullest and deadest of preachers. We have known absolute transformations to occur in this way. On the contrary, a dull and unresponsive people is enough to paralyze the heart and tongue of a Gabriel.

But when failure seems to result from the pastoral relation the preacher pretty uniformly gets the credit of it. Now we submit that this is not fair. There are some instances in which failure is most assuredly not the preacher's fault.

We give a single typical case as a warning to our ministerial readers who may be seeking a change of pastorate. It is the case of a church that was once strong and once had a special mission in the world, but has overlived its strength and outlived its special mission without finding another. Perhaps most of its old constituency has removed beyond the bounds of the parish. A vacancy occurs in its pulpit, and, quite unconscious of the change that has come over it, the church proceeds to search the world for a man worthy to be its preacher.

We have known various instances where only an imported article would serve the purpose. In many of these cases the imported article was ready