

## SERMONIC CRITICISM.

*Look well to your matter, and the manner will take care of itself.*—PROF. SANBORN.

*"One reason why we grow wise so slowly is because we nurse our mistakes too fondly."*

**LUTHER ON PREACHING.**—Let him speak for himself. He says: "Cursed are preachers that, in the church, aim at high and hard things, and, neglecting the saving health of the poor unlearned people, seek their own honor and praise, and therewith to please one or two ambitious persons. When I preach, I sink myself deep down. I regard neither doctors nor magistrates, of whom are here in this church above forty; but I have an eye to the multitude of young people, children and servants, of whom are more than two thousand. I preach to those, directing myself to them that have need thereof. Will not the rest hear me? The doors stand open unto them; they may be gone. I see that the ambition of preachers grows and increases; this will do the utmost mischief in the church, and produce great disquietness and discord; for they will need teach high things touching matters of state, thereby aiming at praise and honor; they will please the worldly wise, and meantime neglect the simple and common multitude."

"A preacher ought to remain by the text and deliver that which is before him, to the end people may well understand it. But a preacher that will speak everything that comes in his mind, is like a maid that goes to market, and meeting another maid, makes a stand, and they hold together a goose market."

"When you preach, regard not the doctors and learned men, but regard the common people, to teach and instruct them clearly. In the pulpit we must feed the common people with milk. Keep to the catechism, the milk. Higher and subtle discourses, the strong wine, we will keep for the strong-minded."

The following incident is noteworthy: "In the year 1529, several noted theologians preached in the presence of Landgrave Philip. When Luther's turn came, everybody expected the great reformer to preach something new and

subtle; but Luther, plainly and simply, preached on the forgiveness of sins. And when the Landgrave asked his counselors which one of the theologians they were most pleased with, they said that they must confess that Dr. Luther's sermon was the best; for from it they learned how before God, the Father, they could get forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ; and also how they could rightly pray and comfort themselves in all their distresses and misfortunes."

Luther's words and example are as sagacious and timely to-day as they were four hundred years ago. Let those who honor the great principles for which he contended ponder them well.

**UNCTION IN THE PREACHER.**—The one great need of the pulpit is *power*. Notwithstanding the conceded high qualifications of the ministry as a class, there is yet an admitted deficiency in the pulpit, judging it by its fruits, which is the best criterion. Many of our churches are crowded, and the worshipers are interested and fed, intellectually. But they are not won to Christ, to a holy, consecrated life. The machinery is perfect, and the material abundant, but *power* is wanting. It is not scholarship, training, intellectuality, piety, that is lacking. What, then, is it? It may be that the pure, simple Gospel is not always preached, and this may partially account for the lack of power. But we must look farther than this for the solution.

Unquestionably the want of *unction* has very much to do with it. There is not enough of it. Some preachers have none at all. Their sermons are as dry, formal and rigid as a lecture on science or a demonstration in Euclid. There is no *soul* thrown into the sermon. The emotional nature is not touched. The power of the Holy Ghost promised by Christ in His parting words is not felt, and hence hearts are not melted into