

which he had discussed to the consciences of his hearers. When his text was too long or too replete with matter to be all advantageously expounded, he noticed only such portions throughout it as were of chief importance, or made selection of one small consecutive part. Origen has, for one text, Jer. xv. 10—xvii. 5, and for another, he has 1 Sam. xxv. 1—xxviii. 25; and in discussing the latter, he says, "It contains too many matters to be treated at once, so that a few things may be advanced on each, and he will discourse on those only which relate to the witch of Endor." From what he adds in this connexion, we might, probably, without rashness, infer this curious and not uninteresting fact, that the primitive discourses usually extended in delivery to about an hour: he says, "If he should treat every part of the subject, he must occupy not only the one hour of their assembly, but several."

Great care seems to have been used by the primitive preachers to render their discourses practical, and to adapt them to the capacities, attainments, and spiritual condition of their audience. A judicious modern who reads such specimens of their pulpit oratory as have been preserved, may frequently lament their paucity of doctrinal statement, or their confusedness of expository illustration, but he will seldom complain of their defectiveness of hortatory appeal, or of their inattention to the immaturity in knowledge, or the stolidity of spiritual taste, which may have characterized their hearers. Justin Martyr, in words in which we have already quoted, says, "They made sermons by way of giving instruction as to the excellent things which had been read, and of holding them up for imitation; and Origen says, "If their auditors were wise and intelligent, they discussed to them the profound doctrines of the gospel; but if their

auditors were babes in knowledge and had need of the milk of the word, they withheld from them such matters as are deep and mysterious.

The resemblance which the modern Expository Lecture bears to the ancient Sermon or Oration, ought to draw attention to that species of discourse in districts where it is little known, and to heighten the taste for it where it is already so much relished. Expository preaching possesses the high recommendation of fixing the special attention of a hearer upon the word of God. If an audience could be made to listen each with an open Bible in his hand; if they could, as the preacher proceeds, be incited to trace, from sentence to sentence, and from doctrine to doctrine, God's own unerring testimony; and if they could, at the close of each service, be sent away to 'search the scriptures,' to 'compare spiritual things with spiritual,' to 'meditate upon the law of the Lord,' and to experience 'a longing of soul after God's statutes;' they would then, doubtless, be in the way to attain, in the highest degree and the noblest excellence, the results of Christian instruction;—having their thoughts primely fixed on that which is emphatically 'profitable for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness,' they would, with the blessing of heavenly influence, be 'thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' A modern methodical discourse, when the doctrines of it are sound, and the spirit of it is devotional, and the practical appeals of it are faithful, will not fail, indeed, to 'feed the flock of God;' and it will not be the less successful that a *textual* discourse is virtually but an expanded exposition of scripture, and that even a pulpit essay, when stamped with the impress of truly evangelical preaching, abounds with scripture quotations and allusions; the Expository Lecture—the Oration which explains, verse by verse, or clause by