

Eugene Stock, who is expected to be in Canada shortly, will be induced to give an address for which due provision will be made. Mr. J. L. Kent, of Windsor, has kindly undertaken to act as local secretary.

THE LOWERED STANDARD.

Nobody who reads the daily press can have failed to note the remarkable frequency of crimes, great and small, at the present time. In the not very distant past we have congratulated ourselves that disregard for the laws of God and man has been exhibited in a lesser degree here than elsewhere. To-day congratulation under this head would be flattery. The terrible murders of the past few years, not those of imported fiends, but of natural home-grown criminals, the burglaries, the thefts, the breaches of trust, the violations of social obligations, are so numerous and so real as to deprive us of all reason for boasting, and to force us to the conclusion that there is something radically wrong. Criminologists attribute crime to a variety of causes, each tending to its own particular end. Heredity is a potent influence; but it operates in what are termed the criminal classes. Unless we have already created a criminal class, and certainly until recently such could not be said, our wave of wickedness is not the result of inheritance. Depressed trade is another factor. It is always held that when times are strained men's worst instincts assert themselves in the struggle for existence. Thus it happens that frauds and thefts are perpetrated with a view to obtaining what cannot honestly be secured. Our depression, however, has not been severe. Nor have the crimes been of the character which result from privation and hunger. Speaking generally, the offences have come from covetousness and selfishness, weak morals, and a want of appreciation of the duties of man to his Creator and his neighbour. Who is responsible for the conditions we are experiencing? The Churches do their duty in that they inculcate right ideas and lead into the paths of virtue. The State is equally industrious in its own peculiar way. Its machinery for punishment is designed to curb the appetite for vice. Where then is the fault? Can it be that in sowing the seeds of virtue we wait too long? Do we allow the weeds to take root before we attempt to implant sound principles in the minds of the rising generation? These propositions are closely allied to the subject of education. They cover parental duty in that department of life, Church duty in relation to the young, and the duty of the school in reference to religious and moral instruction. It is difficult, and in fact impossible, to know to what extent parental duty is performed. The degree no doubt differs in various families; but it is to be feared that its average is low. The Church or Sunday-school work is done well; but does it reach the young in respect of whom the parents are indifferent? In the Public Schools we have an instalment of religious teaching. That this teaching is efficient in the moulding of character is sometimes denied, and for this reason it is urged that it should be abandoned. The question is, whether in view of the allurements which beset the young, of the vice that is growing, of the apparent neglect of religious teaching by parents, and of the difficulty which the Churches experience in the performance of their important work, the last shred of religion should be driven from the schools. The answer is to be found in the results of this policy elsewhere. In Australia the Bible is proscribed, so far as the schools are concerned. English litera-

ture is even garbled, in order that religion may be avoided. Many good men and women come from these schools; but it is acknowledged that the standard, instead of becoming higher, is perceptibly lower. France has thrown aside religious instruction. Educationists there report that without the aid of religion, morality cannot be implanted, and that as religion is wanting the coming race is deteriorating. That the schools should take the place of the Church no one will contend; yet, remembering what the conditions are in Canada to-day, and what the consequences of religious prohibition are elsewhere, the exclusion of the very foundation of morality from the primary institutions surely cannot be contemplated without alarm.—*Mail and Empire.*

NOTES ON PREACHING.

NO. IV.—THE STRUCTURE OF THE SERMON.

"I beg to remind you at the outset," says Bishop Boyd Carpenter, "that the best things grow, and they take their structure during their growth. Anything like an enforced, elaborate, and artificial structure defeats itself." This caution is given to remind the beginner that for him, rules which in themselves are quite right and useful for those who are more experienced, may be mischievous to him. They may "mislead those who seek to apply them before they have caught the spirit that underlies them. Moreover, each man must discover methods for himself; and, if he is wise, he will regulate the structure of the sermon according to his own genius and character." The Bishop, however, refers to one general principle to which all must give heed, and of this principle he finds an illustration in the "Dry Bones" of Ezekiel. "We must have material, but we must not allow it to remain structureless material. It must be organized material, knit into form and clothed with beauty and instinct with life. In other words, our materials must be compacted of those elements which appeal to the reason and affection of our hearers. Too often sermons embody only those materials which the preacher favours, and the appeal of the sermon is limited in consequence." Illustrations are found in the argumentative preacher, who argues in season and out of season; in the preacher who is fond of instructing and packs his sermon with teaching alone; in the preacher of poetic temperament, who fills his discourse with figures and tropes and flowers of rhetoric; in the preacher of a predominately devout temperament, who may forget the necessity for instruction and conviction. All these are defective. The preacher must remember that those whom he addresses have minds, consciences, and hearts, and all these must be remembered and appealed to. "The sermon should be reasonable, instructive, convincing and persuasive." This is a good deal to ask for; but if we do not set high ideals before us, our attainments are not likely to be even respectable. It would be well sometimes for the preacher to read over a sermon—sometimes a new one, sometimes an old one—and consider how he would judge it in regard to these tests, if it were the work of another man. And so, in the preparation of a sermon, "you will find it not a bad rule to ask yourself while preparing your sermon, is there reason in what I am making ready—will it appeal to the minds of thoughtful men? But, again, ask yourself if you are providing instruction for the ignorant, and here let me say that there is cheap chatter which tells us that the clergyman is behind the age. Do not be misled by this sort of

talk. You may be tempted to assume that all your hearers have read the last review or are acquainted with the last novel. You may be tempted to touch on these things instead of teaching what you were sent to teach. Remember that there may be people who are full of the spirit of the age, but who are deficient in the ordinary knowledge which is common in a third rate Sunday School. It is not unwise to give explanations even of obvious things, if only we do so in a way which is natural and not patronizing. Be careful to have real instruction into your sermon; strive that nobody who listens can go away without some clear idea of the meaning of the text or story with which you are dealing. And this can easily be done without appearing to play the schoolmaster." Argument and instruction should, in fact, go together. Your end is to produce conviction; but conviction without knowledge, and therefore without instruction, is of imperfect advantage. But the Bishop pleads also for illustration. "There is illumination in illustration; but there is more. It is chiefly through illustration that the thought of the sermon can be brought near to the hearer's mind." But all these hints, the Bishop remarks, "are of little value unless a true *ethos* pervades the sermon. Here, if anywhere, rules are useless. The *ethos* is the outbreathing of the spirit which is in us. If our souls are set on vanity, puffed up with self, demoralized by indolence or self-indulgence, no amount of effort can avail to make the tone of the sermon what it should be. The only road to success here is the road of self-vigilance, of personal devotion, and spiritual sincerity. In this we must be men who live in the realization of God's presence and in personal communion with Him. In vain we shall strive to awaken spasmodic sentiment or create by effort the devotional feeling. We cannot in a moment contradict ourselves or counteract the subtle influence of character upon speech." So far for the elements of a sermon. Next comes the subject of arrangement. Demosthenes said that, of the three qualities of an orator, action was the first, the second, the third. For action the Bishop substitutes order. It is needed for the sermon's sake, the hearer's sake, the preacher's sake. It has been well said: "Without order in a discourse you cannot get into a subject, and without good order you cannot get out of it." "When you have decided on your subject, consider your people. Are they educated or uneducated?" Whether the one or the other, order is necessary. Dr. Chalmers took as great trouble with his sermons for poor people as with his university work. Order is equally necessary for your own good. By careless, disorderly work, "you will do harm to your own mind and character. The habit of accuracy is closely allied to truth; and the observance of order shows a kind of conscience. Disorder, on the other hand, betrays a spirit not fully alive to responsibility. Cecil said it required as much skill to know what not to put into a sermon as what to put into it. But order is not sameness." Different methods suit different men, and each one must find out his own. Indeed the same may use different methods, and obtain freshness and variety by this means. But one principle is all important, the principle of unity. "Beauty consists very largely in the happy subordination of all details to some leading idea." This is a subject of the greatest importance, and is admirably treated by Vine in his *Treatise on Homiletics*, to which we may return. Then be careful of your language. "Talk English and not Johnsonese." To sum up. "Keep clearly be-