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The Sermon First.

THERE is but one opinion as to the prime work of the church. The conversion of the world to Christ is her great mission. And there is equally little difference of opinion as to the means to be employed in working out this end. The preaching of the Word is the great instrument placed in the hands of the church, and to the efficient use of this means of grace her best energies are to be directed. Keeping this in view, it is vital that agencies of secondary importance should not be magnified, and that the means of means should not be lowered by one degree in the estimation of the ministry. Church work all along the line is necessary and desirable and not to be under estimated, but in the multiplicity of means, the Gospel sermon should tower above them all. There is a growing feeling—we trust it is a mistaken one—that the sermon is not what it used to be in the service of the sanctuary, that accessories are found necessary to relieve the tedium of an hour's worship, which a few years ago were not dreamt of, and that good music and much of it is the sine qua non of the present day service. Now, it may be taken for granted that church services cannot be too attractive. The better the music, the more there should be of it, and its influence can scarcely be measured. The praise should be rendered in the very best form possible for those who render it. Too much cannot be said in this direction. The same is true regarding the offering, which is an act of worship; and of the other parts of the service, but these concern the people themselves, in the preparation of them, while the sermon and

the prayers concern the clergyman, and it is to him matter of the deepest importance. He comes with God's message of peace, with the good news of salvation, and he embodies his message in a discourse called a sermon. On the quality of that discourse the success or non-success of his ministry depends—a pretty broad statement—but, we believe fully borne out by experience. The words which go to the heart and conscience on the Sabbath are those that will bear fruit during the week, and that will bring the heart out in joyful praise, and in thanksgiving on the following Sabbath. It is not necessary that the sermon should excel in learning, nor that it be constructed on strict homiletic lines, although these should certainly supply a solid foundation, but it is necessary that it should bristle with shafts of truth and brim over with divine love; that God should speak through His servant. More of this spirit in the pulpit would soon tell on the people. Instead of the indifference complained of there would be earnestness, instead of the worldly and unconverted influencing the standard of church service, and modifying it to suit the general taste, there would be a hunger and thirst for the sincere milk of the Word and gospel truth would reign. The minister who fails to appreciate the importance of all the branches of public worship lacks a sense of his responsibility, and is a source of weakness instead of strength, but the minister who allows the sermon to be relegated to a secondary place, is surely unfit for the ministry. A desultory sermon, hastily prepared, badly delivered, should not be tolerated. It is a minister's first duty to prepare for his own peculiar work, and no excuse should be sufficient for its non-performance to the very best of his ability. Other questions are important to those who are specially called upon to deal with them. For the minister, nothing approaches in greatness, in sublimity or in beauty, the awful, the loving word, which God has given him to speak.

Home Mission Committee.

In another column will be found a copy of an overture which is being transmitted to the General Assembly by the Calgary Presbytery with the endorsement of the Synod of Columbia. This overture aims at a radical change in the central management of Home Mission affairs in the Church, and since the object is so important, and since the overture represents the apparently unanimous feeling of a large and deeply interested section of the Church, the best attention that can be given to the subject between the present time and the meeting of the Assembly will not be out of place.

The overture alleges three reasons for seeking a change, the expense of the present system, its inequitable character and the prospect that a smaller committee would do the work more satisfactorily. The new system would reduce the expense, but not to a