

THE POPE ON PREACHING.

Important Advice from the Holy Father.

The following circular letter has been issued by His Holiness, Leo XIII., from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and is addressed to the Italian prelates and the superiors of religious orders and congregations:

His Holiness, our Holy Father Leo XIII., who has so much to heart the apostolic ministry of preaching, so necessary, particularly under the circumstances in which we live, to the perfect education of the Christian people, has learned, not without being much grieved, that in the manner of announcing the divine word, grave abuses have for some time crept in, abuses which now a days often cause preaching to be despised or, at least, barren and unfruitful.

First of all, as to what concerns the qualities required in a holy preacher, let them be careful never to entrust so sacred a ministry to one who is not full of Christian piety, and penetrated with a great love of Our Lord Jesus Christ—love without which a preacher would be nothing but "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal" (Corinth. xiii. 1); without that love he could never have that passion for the glory of God and the salvation of souls which ought to be the only motive and sole end of the preaching of the gospel.

Secondly, as to the manner of preaching, let them be careful never to be in contradiction to their teaching, but always such that it should cause men to be recognized as "ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1); otherwise, as the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, remarks, "if the doctrine is good and the preacher bad, he is an occasion of blaspheming the doctrine of God" (Comment. in Matt. v.).

Thirdly, as to the subject matter of preaching, let them be careful never to preach upon subjects which are within the proper domain of preaching. Those subjects were indicated by our divine Redeemer when He said, "Preach the gospel (Mark xvi. 15), teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxiii. 20).

Fourthly, as to the manner of preaching, let them be careful never to be in contradiction to their teaching, but always such that it should cause men to be recognized as "ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1); otherwise, as the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, remarks, "if the doctrine is good and the preacher bad, he is an occasion of blaspheming the doctrine of God" (Comment. in Matt. v.).

Fifthly, as to the manner of preaching, let them be careful never to be in contradiction to their teaching, but always such that it should cause men to be recognized as "ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1); otherwise, as the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, remarks, "if the doctrine is good and the preacher bad, he is an occasion of blaspheming the doctrine of God" (Comment. in Matt. v.).

Sixthly, as to the manner of preaching, let them be careful never to be in contradiction to their teaching, but always such that it should cause men to be recognized as "ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1); otherwise, as the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, remarks, "if the doctrine is good and the preacher bad, he is an occasion of blaspheming the doctrine of God" (Comment. in Matt. v.).

great eternal truths of that order ought to form the ordinary subjects of preaching. These great subjects are now a days unworthily neglected by many preachers "seeking what are their own, not what are Jesus Christ's" (1 Cor. xviii. 5); knowing that they are not the subjects fittest to acquire the reputation they ambition, they leave them entirely on one side, particularly during Lent and other solemn occasions. Transforming names as well as things, they have substituted an ill-defined kind of conference, designed to charm the mind and imagination without at all moving the will or reforming morals like the old sermons; not thinking that sermons are profitable to everyone and conferences generally to few, and that these very persons, if we took more pains with them from the moral point of view, if we helped them more to practise humility, chastity, submission to the authority of the Church, would by that means alone purify the mind of a thousand prejudices contrary to faith and dispose them better to receive light and truth.

Such, then, is the principal source of sacred eloquence, the Bible. But these modern preachers, in place of drawing their eloquence from "the spring of living water," turn, through an insufferable abuse, to the "dried up cisterns of human wisdom." In place of quoting texts divinely inspired, or those of the Holy Fathers and councils, they quote to satiety passages from profane authors, modern and even still living authors, and passages which often lend themselves to very equivocal and dangerous interpretations. "It is also a great abuse in preachers to treat of religious subjects solely from the point of view of worldly interests, without speaking of the future life; to enumerate the benefits which society owes to the Christian religion and not to speak of the duties which that religion inculcates; to represent the Divine Redeemer as being all charity, and be silent about His justice. Hence the little fruit from this kind of preaching, from which

to fall into discredit or disuse, as if the latter were only secondary and of less importance than discussions, and to be left to ordinary preachers and congregations. Moral preaching, on the contrary, is more necessary for all the faithful, it is not of an order inferior to the conference, and on that account the best and most renowned preachers ought at least from time to time to preach that kind of sermons with all their zeal before even the most select audiences. Otherwise the latter will be condemned to always hear them speak of errors which are often shared by a few, and never of vices and sins which are more easily found there than in less appreciative assemblies.

Many abuses are observable in the selection of subjects, others none the less serious have crept into the manner of treating them. On this subject St. Thomas of Aquin teaches admirably that to be truly "the light of the world" the preacher of the divine Word ought to possess three things: The first is skill, that he may not deviate from the truth; the second is clearness, that he may not teach obscurely; the third is usefulness that he may seek the praise of God and not his own (loc. cit.). Unfortunately, the style of many sermons now a days is not only far from having that lucidity and evangelical simplicity which ought to characterize it, but is obscured by a strange diction, is lost in abstract considerations above the ordinary capacity of the people and causes that plaint, "the little ones begged for bread and there was no one to break to them," to rise to the lips. The worst of it all is that there is often wanting that sacred character, that breathing of Christian piety and that unction of the Holy Spirit which permitted the preacher to say of himself, "My speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power." (1 Cor. ii. 4). They on the contrary, almost exclusively rely on "the persuasive words of human wisdom," paying little or no attention to the word of God and the Holy Scripture, which ought to be the first source of sacred eloquence, as the Sovereign Pontiff, happily resigning, lately proclaimed in solemn language which we think it useful to reproduce: "It is this peculiar and special power of Holy Scriptures derived from the divine afflatus of the Holy Spirit which lends influence to the sacred orator, confers

APOSTOLIC FREEDOM OF SPEECH. and imparts nervous energy and irresistible eloquence. For whoever in speaking reproduces the spirit and strength of the divine word speaks

not in word only, but in power also, and in the Holy Ghost and in much fulness" (1st Thess. i. 5). Wherefore they who deliver discourses on religion and proclaim the divine message in such a way as to use scarcely anything else but the language of human science and prudence rely more on their own than on divine arguments, and their sermons, however brilliant and they may appear, must be weak and cold, inasmuch as they want the fire of God's word, and must be far inferior to those into which the divine word infuses its power, for "the word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than a two edged sword; reaching into the division of soul and spirit" (Heb. iv. 12). Of course it must also be admitted by those of such experience that there is in the sacred scriptures a wonderful variety and a rich eloquence worthy of the greatest subjects, as St. Augustine taught and expressly pointed out (De Doct. Christ. iv. 6, 7), and, as is confirmed by the fact that the most eminent sacred orators have gratefully attested before God that they owed their fame principally to the assistance of the Bible and pious meditation" (Lit. enc. de studiis Script. S., 18 Nov. 1893).

Directions and Rules. Of this letter, let them immediately remind him of his duty; and, if that does not suffice, they shall deprive him altogether of the power of preaching, employing even canonical penalties if the gravity of the matter requires it. The Sacred Congregation knows that it can trust in all security to the diligence and zeal of the Bishops and heads of orders; it is confident that, thanks to them, we will soon see corrected this quite modern method of preaching, or rather disfiguring the word of God. Forever relieved of these worldly seductions, preaching will soon recover its pristine majesty and, along with it, its sovereign efficacy for the glory of God, the salvation of souls and the general good of the Church and society. Rome, from the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, July 31, 1894.

ISIDORE CARDINAL VERGA, Prefect. LOUIS TROMBETTA, Pro-Secretary.

QUAINT IRISH STORIES.

Interesting Recollections of Aubrey de Vere of the Olden Days in Erin Beautiful.

Aubrey de Vere, the Irish poet, has written a series of recollections, which will be published in two parts in the Century. The first portion, dealing with his childhood and boyhood, is printed in the September number, and is full of quaint stories of the olden days in Ireland. Mr. de Vere says: "My earliest recollections are of our Irish home, Curragh Chase, and I always see it bathed in summer sunshine. It was not once however as it is now. At the bottom of the lawn there now spreads a lake, but at that time it was rich meadow land, divided by a slender stream, with fair green hills beyond. The pleasure grounds now blend insensibly with the lawns and woods, but it had then a wall around it, which, as my father old friend and school fellow, Sir Thomas Acland, said on visiting us, when both had left youth behind, gave it a look of monastic seclusion. It was then divided into four grassy spaces, as smooth as velvet, and bright with many a flower bed. I can still see the deer park and the deer spreading oak and birch; the gathering of the poor on Sunday evenings at the gates of the long ash avenue for their rural dance; and the gay, through half bashful confidence with which some pretty peasant girl would advance, and drop a courtesy before one of our party, or some visitor at the "big house," that courtesy being an invitation to dance. There was also a little opening in the woods in which the neighbors danced; nor have I yet forgotten the vexation which I found myself once snatched up and carried home to bed by one of those "merry maids whose tresses tossed in flight," and who lost little time in returning to the revel.

THE OLD GRANDMOTHER. It was a time at which opposites of all sorts oddly combined. The country-gentlemen were then looked up to as so many little princes, and the poor would have gladly adopted them as chiefs, like those of old, had they cared to accept that position; yet there was a great familiarity in the intercourse of classes, it was all strangely mixed with simplicity of life. My grandmother drove about the park with her four grays and an outrider, while my father, with whom she lived, had his four blacks and an outrider; yet dinner, which was at 10 o'clock, would have been far from satisfactory to a dinner of the present day. What a stranger would have thought ostentation was often a necessity, for the roads were generally carried over high hills. I well remember my grandmother's beautiful, but melancholy black eyes: her ways at once authoritative and affectionate, and the reverence with which she was regarded by all. Nor have I forgotten her goodnight to us children: "God bless you child, and make a good man of you," nor the loud laugh once when the youngest of us, not to be outdone in civility, responded: "God bless you grandmother and make a good woman of you."

MY GRANDFATHER ALWAYS GAVE THE SAGEST ADVICE TO A FRIEND, but generally acted himself from whim. Once, when walking in a London street, he passed a room in which an auction was going on, and, attracted by the noise, he entered it. The property set up for auction was the Island of Lundy in the Bristol Channel. He knew nothing whatever about it, but when the auctioneer proclaimed that it had never paid either tax or tithe, that acknowledged neither king nor parliament, nor law civil or ecclesiastical, and that its proprietor was pope and emperor at once in his own scanty domain, he made a bid, and the island was knocked down to him. It turned out a good speculation. It paid its costs by the sale of rabbits; and when ever his purchaser chanced to pick a quarrel with England and Ireland at the same time, it was a heritage to which he could always retire and meditate. He planted

there a small Irish colony, and drew up for them a very compendious code, including a quaint law of divorce in case of matrimonial disputes. In money matters he was adventurous and unlucky. He lost about £15,000 by cards, and then renounced them. He is said to have lost about half the family property through some trivial offence given to his father. During the war he raised two regiments consisting of the sons of farmers, his own tenants, and those of his neighbors, and bestowed a captain's commission on his only son, then a boy of five.

THE LITTLE CAPTAIN. I remember my father describing the pride with which he strutted about in his scarlet uniform when the general rode out to review these regiments. "But where is the captain?" exclaimed the veteran. "Here I am," shouted the child. "But, my little man you are too young to fight!" "Not at all," was the answer, "let the French land, and"—waving his sword in the air—"I will cut off their heads!" Alas! the hard-hearted Englishman "disbanded the captain," as the poor people described his act, and the youthful warrior lost for ever the opportunity of humbling that Corsican adventurer "who had called England a 'nation of shopkeepers,'" and affirmed that the lions on her standards were only leopards.

My grandfather was the most popular of our country gentlemen, because he had a great love for the poor, and always helped them at a pinch. A young man was tried for murder, having killed a member of a rival faction in a fight. The judge, reluctant to sentence him to death on account of his youth, turned to him and said: "Is there anyone in court who could speak as to your character?" The youth looked around the court, and then said sadly: "There is no man here, my lord, that I know." At that my grandfather chanced to walk into the grand jury gallery. He saw at once how matters stood. He called out: "You are a queer boy that don't know a friend when you see one!" The boy was quick-witted; he answered: "Oh, then, 'tis myself that was proud to see your honor here this day!" "Well," said the judge, "Sir Vere, since you know that boy, will you tell us what you know of him?" "I will, my lord," said my grandfather; "and what I can tell you is this—that the very first day that ever I saw him to this minute, I never knew anything of him that was not very good." The old tenant ended his tale by striking his hands together and exclaiming: "And he never to have clapped his eye upon the boy until that minute!" The boy escaped being hanged. Such traits made a man popular in Ireland; and it is said that at his funeral the keening (funeral wail) for many a mile was such as has rarely been heard. Not long ago I came upon a letter from an English minister of the day, informing him that the patent for his peerage, an English one, was ready. It seem, however, that at the last moment he changed his mind and declined it. Possibly there was some one to whom "he would not give so much satisfaction" as that of seeing him take a peerage.

What to do with the Anarchist. Mr. Henry Holt discusses in the Forum the subject "Punishment of Anarchists and Others." The difficulty in dealing with an anarchist seems to be this: So long as he confines himself to merely denouncing the present social organization, it is practically impossible under our American laws to restrain him. If he is put in prison or in an asylum, there is no sort of security that he would stay there, for the reason that "his disorder does not prevent dissimulation," and all that he has to do to secure release is to profess a change of heart and stick to it. It is only after he has committed some crime that we are able positively to deal with him.

For this difficulty Mr. Holt suggests the following remedy: "Let the State say to the professed anarchist: You have abandoned the right to stay among us. Go elsewhere, and use whatever chances you may have. You prove yourself not fit for human society, and we shall, as a matter of course, notify all organized societies of that fact. If you come back here, we shall kill you. If you go there, they, if they are wise, will do the same. Your only possible home is your only fit home—the wild and desert places of the earth, with the other beasts of prey that man has not yet exterminated."

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