

SIR ALEXANDER MILNE.—The *Illustrated London News* has an engraving of a handsome piece of plate presented to Sir Alexander Milne by the inhabitants of Bermuda, upon the occasion of his retirement from the Naval command of that station. Three figures standing round the stem of the candelabrum are Britannia, Prudence, Prosperity. The following is the inscription on its base:—Presented to Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, K. C. B. Naval Commander-in-Chief of the North American and West India Station, by the inhabitants of Bermuda, on the close of his Command on that Station, in testimony of their appreciation of his public service and personal character, 1834."

ORIGINAL SERMONS.

The *Saturday Review*, lamenting the dreariness of the general run of sermons now-a-days, and urging the desirability of preachers using, instead of their own compositions, good ones which have been written by others, goes on to say:—

"The composition of an original sermon is mostly accomplished in one of two ways. The first method is as follows:—the writer, after choosing his text and counting the number of pages over which his composition is to be stretched, avails himself, in the first instance, of an invaluable institution, known as 'reference to the context.' This consists chiefly in paraphrasing what has gone before—a process which has the double advantage of carrying you well over the ground, and creating an impression that you have studied the subject carefully. Indeed, the comparative value of texts to a young divine must be largely determined by the number of verses which can, without obvious impropriety, be made available for this purpose; and therefore it is always prudent, if we may be allowed to offer a suggestion, to take your text from the end of a chapter, since, if you have to go back for your context to the chapter before, the motive becomes too transparent. Our friend is now fairly started, and, on examining his own ecclesiastical verse, he probably finds that it contains a leading substantive and one or two adjectives, each of which will of course admit of being reproduced in inferior language—a change which is supposed by a stretch of courtesy, to assist in bringing out the meaning. The help of a concordance will then enable him to quote two or three other verses in which the same words are used, sometimes with a similar, more often with quite a different meaning. This is called interpreting Scripture by Scripture, and the extent to which it is to be adopted must of course depend upon the number of pages still remaining to be filled. A few technical terms are now sprinkled over the composition to give the proper theological flavour, the preacher being guided in his selection by the tastes of the party to which he happens to belong; and the whole winds up with an application of what has been said to the special circumstances of the hearers. This may be thought perhaps to require some knowledge and judgment, but in reality it needs nothing of the kind. You have merely to repeat as much as is convenient of what you have already said, and to take care to begin each sentence with 'Let us learn from this' or 'Let us ask ourselves.' The preacher who professes the second method of composition estimates his powers more modestly, and is quite content to be indebted to others for his matter. Here, however, the present system works badly in another way. The pretence of originality has to be maintained, and consequently everything must be avoided which even possibly leads to detection. The preacher is therefore either driven to choose sermons of which the only merit is a mediocrity alike undistinguished and undistinguishable, or to alter and adapt what he has borrowed so as to guard against any danger of its being recognized. In other words, he leaves out all the striking points, tones down what remains, and thus produces a whole which, though better than that attained by the former method, is still unsatisfactory in itself and eminently unimproving to the writer."

THE DICE.

FROM THE GERMAN.

For more than 150 years had the family of Schroll been settled at Taubendorf, and generally respected for knowledge and refinement of manners superior to its station. Its present representative, the bailiff Elias Schroll, had in his youth attached himself to literature, but, later in life, from love to the country, he had returned to his native village, and lived there in great credit and esteem.

During this whole period of 150 years, tradition had recorded only one single Schroll as having borne a doubtful character; he, indeed, as many persons affirmed, had dealt with the devil. Certain it is that there was still preserved in the house a scrutoire fixed in the wall, and containing some mysterious manuscripts attributed to him, and the date of the year, 1333, which was carved upon the front, tallied with his era. The key to this scrutoire had been constantly handed down to the eldest son through five generations, with a solemn charge to take care that no other eye or ear should ever become acquainted with its contents. Every precaution had been taken to guard against accidents or oversights; the lock was so constructed, that even with the right key it could not be opened without special instructions;

and for still greater security the present proprietor has added a padlock of most elaborate workmanship, which presented a sufficient obstacle before the main lock could be approached.

In vain did the curiosity of the whole family direct itself to this scrutoire.

Nobody had succeeded in discovering any part of its contents, except Rudolph, the only son of the bailiff; he had succeeded; at least his own belief was that the old folk without effort, and bound in black velvet, which he had one day surprised his father anxiously reading, belonged to the mysterious scrutoire; for the door of the scrutoire, though not open, was unlocked, and Elias had hastily closed the book with great agitation, at the same time ordering his son out of the room in no very gentle tone. At the time of this incident Rudolph was about twelve years of age.

Since that time the young man had sustained two great losses in the deaths of his excellent mother and a sister tenderly beloved. His father also had suffered deeply in health and spirits under these afflictions. Every day he grew more fretful and humoursome; and Rudolph, upon his final return home from school in his eighteenth year, was shocked to find him greatly altered in mind as well as in person. His flesh had fallen away, and he seemed to be consumed by some internal strife of thought. It was evidently his own opinion that he was standing on the edge of the grave, and he employed himself unceasingly in arranging his affairs, and in making his successor acquainted with all such arrangements as regarded his more peculiar interests. One evening as Rudolph came in suddenly from a neighbor's house, and happened to pass the scrutoire, he found the door wide open, and the inside obviously empty. Looking round he observed his father standing on the hearth close to a great fire, in the midst of which was consuming the old black book.

Elias entreated his son earnestly to withdraw, but Rudolph could not command himself; and he exclaimed, "I doubt, I doubt, sir, that this is the book which belongs to the scrutoire."

His father assented with visible confusion.

"Well, then, allow me to say that I am greatly surprised at your treating in this way an heirloom that for a century and more has always been transmitted to the eldest son."

"You are in the right, my son," said the father affectionately, taking him by the hand. "You are surely in the right; it is not quite defensible, I admit; and I myself have had many scruples about the course I have taken. Yet still I feel myself obliged upon the whole that I have destroyed this accursed book. He that wrote it never prospered—all traditions agree in that; why then leave to one's descendants a miserable legacy of unhallowed mysteries?"

This excuse, however, did not satisfy Rudolph. He maintained that his father had made an aggression upon his rights of inheritance; and he argued the point so well, that Elias himself began to see that his son's complaint was not altogether groundless. The whole of the next day they believed to each other, not unkindly, but yet with some coolness. At night Elias could bear this no longer, and he said, "Dear Rudolph, we have lived long together in harmony and love; let us not begin to show an altered countenance to each other during the few days that I have yet to live."

Rudolph pressed his father's offered hand with a filial warmth; and the latter went on to say, "I purpose now to communicate to you by word of mouth the contents of the book which I have destroyed. I will do this with good faith and without reserve, unless you yourself can be persuaded to forego your own right to such a communication."

Elias paused, flustering himself as it seemed that his son would forego his right. But in this he was mistaken; Rudolph was far too eager for the disclosure, and earnestly pressed his father to proceed.

Again Elias hesitated, and threw a glance of profound love and pity upon his son—a glance that conjured him to think better, and to waive his claim, but this being at length obviously hopeless, he spoke as follows: "The book relates chiefly to yourself; it points to you as to the *last of our race*. You turn pale. Surely, Rudolph, it would have been better that you had resolved to trouble yourself no further about it!"

"No," said Rudolph, recovering his self-possession. "No; for it still remains a question whether this prophecy be true."

"It does so; it does, no doubt."

"And is this all that the book says in regard to me?"

"No, it is not all; there is something more. But possibly you will only laugh when you hear it; for at this day nobody believes in such strange stories. However, be that as it may, the book goes on to say plainly and positively, that the Evil One (Heaven protect us!) will make you an offer tending greatly to your worldly advantage."

Rudolph laughed outright, and replied, that, judging by the grave exterior of the book, he had looked to hear of more serious contents.

"Well, well, my son," said the old man, "I know not that I myself am disposed to place much confidence in these tales of contracts with the devil. But, true or not, we ought not to laugh