

partially; for gradually it was learned that preaching was not enough, except when preachers were exceptional, because of brilliance of imagination or beauty of diction. Puritanism has not been able to hold its own, for it could not fill every pulpit with a great, even a uniformly interesting preacher. Fathers and mothers kept their pews from loyalty of soul, no matter how the preacher halted, but the sons and daughters, having little or none of their parents' fine chivalry and self-sacrifice, went off to where the service had interest for their mind or heart, or both. To meet that demand of the times the Puritan branch of the Protestant Church is making an effort to combine the sacramental with the preaching. In some antique places, where the human mind develops slowly, a determined stand is made against the movement, and there are still congregations where organs are not tolerated, although I believe the choir leader is allowed the use of the sacred tuning-fork; but such instances only doct the area covered by the church, and, in the main, the churches are seeking to combine an ornate service with popular preaching. I think the effort is a failure, and will fail yet more disastrously—not because beautiful prayers in sublime language have failed to interest and stir the heart—not because music has lost its charms in places sacred to man's worship of God, but because that part of the service, which our people have been to regard as the essential, informing, and vitalizing force in the service, that is, the sermon, has ceased to interest, and the preaching has failed to fulfil the general expectation.

It may be that preaching has not fallen into decay; I think it has not. Sermons are as well conceived, shaped and delivered now, as ever they were; as great preachers live as ever lived; men live and speak who are as keen in intellect, as subtle to analyse, as bold in search, as eloquent of tongue, as the best men of the best days gone by. We have men as fervent in piety and as faithful in word as the christian pulpit ever knew. No, there is no decadence in the preaching, but there is a very marked decadence in sermon-liking on the part of the people. Take what are commonly understood as sermons—that is, discourses based on texts of Scripture, with their divisions and sub-divisions, their general heads and exhortation—and how much interest have they for the general congregation? Little or none at all. They are scarcely heard with attentive ears. Congregations are, on the whole,