

The Church Times.

HALIFAX, SATURDAY, AUG. 7, 1857.

THE PULPIT.

We believe it to be a defect in the pulpit oratory of the present day that it is too artistic. Our preachers labour after accuracy of style and perfectness of composition, and what they gain in this way in the estimation of the few critical ears in their congregations, they lose in their influence upon the minds of the mass. Preaching is in fact fast becoming a something to be judged of by well rounded periods, and a soft insinuation of the precepts of Christianity, rather than by a forcible inculcation of the rugged truths and requirements of the Gospel. It has reversed the apostolic mode—and endeavors to save souls, not by its "foolishness" but by its wisdom. We may be the more assured of this, if we compare the written discourses of the fathers of the Reformation, with the pulpit orations of our own day. We shall find the former labouring to impress the conscience, the latter to impress the imagination. If again, we examine the sermons of the men who more recently have sprung up to impress the human mind with a sense of religion—who have become leaders of religious movements, founders of sects, and enunciators of rules of faith—we shall find that they very rarely attain to a high standard of eloquence or powerful reasoning. The ideas are not their own, they are scriptural rather than original, they cleave to their text, their language is plain and bold, based upon a firm conception of truth, and forcible rather than elegant or imaginative. The impression they make seems to be the greater the nearer their approach to a delineation of the spirit of Christ in his own words—their preaching is his doctrine or as taught by his apostles, not so amplified as to lose its strength, and just so much so, as to make it suitable to the capacity, and awakening to the consciences of their hearers, as the revelation of eternal truth, their guide through life, their consolation in death, and as they have received it in this life, their eternal great reward. Such men have led and will lead their fellows in preference to those who explore the arcana of spiritualism to reconcile them with the finite reason of their followers. They take a firm grip of the Word, and in their hands the Word is a two edged sword, smiting to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, the joints and the marrow. The student of their power is often surprised that he must look in vain to themselves, for any traces of the extraordinary influence which moved the hearts of the multitude. There is nothing that is very new to him in their repetition of the gospel tidings, or the gospel threatenings—and he would often rather turn to the text, and think upon it himself without their commentary. The theologian would find much more intellectual pleasure, much more to admire, perhaps, in the laboured disquisitions of the modern pulpit, penetrating the depths of science and the subtleties of logic to find analogies with the spiritual instruction which it is the intention thereby to impart. There may be a charm in this for his understanding which the other did not possess, educated as he has been to its standard. He finds no difficulty in mastering the depths of his author, and rises impressed with his learning and judgment and spiritual mindedness. There is even a disposition to condemn by comparison, the plain and practical illustration, beyond which the minds of the mass cannot go, and which when it issued from the lips of one to whom God had given boldness of utterance, had such power. But this latter kind of preaching is to the few and not to the many—and it is the impression upon the many that makes the popularity of the minister, and so far as the sermon is concerned, the standard of his usefulness. It is rather preaching out of the Gospel to them, than the Gospel. It is like dividing Scriptural truth with some other creature, and the former loses by the process half its power upon the mind on which its simplicity alone can act, and half of its attractiveness also.

We have been led to the foregoing observations which are not however of much importance, by two books that have been placed in our hands during the past week—one entitled "The Life and Ministry of the Revd. C. H. Spurgeon"—and the other "Sermons by the Revd. C. H. Spurgeon." Mr. Spurgeon is a young Baptist minister, who has recently created a wonderful sensation in Great Britain. The former, so far as we can discover, presents nothing that is remarkable, except a relation of the exceeding popularity of his ministry. And in the latter we can find nothing that may be deemed to be of the highest order of eloquence. They are precisely of that description which united with sincerity and boldness in the orator, would gain in the preach-

ing what they lose in the reading. They have evidently undergone a careful correction; but withal they seldom reach to a very exalted style of imagery. There is nothing of the rapt Isaiah conspicuous in them, and very little of poetic conception. They manifest no very high powers of reasoning, but the Scriptural truths are enforced with sufficient plainness throughout, and often with homely illustration and homely language. One of the strongest points is the personal appeals to the sinner. There is a boldness and novelty about that which must make itself felt by those who might long remain untouched by the stereotyped phrases of ordinary preachers. We may add, that throughout, a vanity is discernible, that sometimes leads one to question the sincerity of Mr. Spurgeon's piety. It is a thorn in the flesh which he must effectually eradicate, ere he can possess in his own estimation or that of others, a heart right with God. As he advances in age and true wisdom, he may be led to modify his exalted opinion of himself. The author who sketches his life tries to excuse this frailty. He says—"There are those who think Mr. Spurgeon very audacious in adopting as his motto, *Cedo nulli*, 'I yield to none.' But it seems to us that he would have been really more audacious if he had made the multitude of his counsellors, or any one of them, the keepers of his conscience, and of his reason, the regulators of his zeal, and the taskmasters who should assign him his field and his work." It must be recollected that Mr. Spurgeon is only twenty three years of age; but such a boastful display of self reliance is inexcusable, nor does it look in the least as if based upon a humble dependence on the Divine aid to direct his steps.

The popular acceptability of Mr. Spurgeon's preaching has led many earnest men, divines and others, to enquire into its cause. It has probably instigated the attempt of the Bishop of London and others, to bring the teaching and preaching of the Established Church before the people at Exeter Hall. But the secret of Mr. Spurgeon's success is not to be found in mere doctrinal teaching. At the present day a very high order of education is deemed requisite in the clerical character. We have no doubt that it is essentially necessary, although it may sometimes unfit the minds which receive it, for that assimilation with the habits of thought of the generality of their hearers, which in the utterance is best calculated to impress them with the words of eternal life. The education which clergymen receive, fits them to be the associate, and to impress the minds, of the educated—and it really seems, that just in proportion to their advancement in human wisdom and refinement, and their reliance upon it, do they lose their hold upon the hearts of the people. The educated do not in general comprise one half of the flock, the pastor is content with their judgment upon his labours, the other half may echo their opinion, but a careful examination will show that they are not satisfied with it. The spiritual food of these last is made up of condiments quite unsuited to their unsophisticated palates—and to them it may well be doubted whether the pulpit ministrations are sufficiently plain, impressive or intelligible. Any improvement in the mode of preparation for so holy an office as the cure of souls, that would supply this defect, is well worth the seeking—is well worthy the attention of our universities and theological schools. The success of a man like Mr. Spurgeon, who with a moderate share of human ability, can so impress his fellow men with a sense of their sinfulness, and direct their attention to its remedy, ought to be to them all the subject of thoughtful consideration. For this among other things he may have been ordained. The great anxiety of the Church as to the best mode of reaching the hearts of the million, may be relieved by a careful study of this new light which has burst upon the religious horizon, and although it has appeared without her pale, and in some respects under questionable circumstances, through God's blessing it may be turned to advantage, and may diffuse a permanent brilliancy over the religious teaching of the world, preparing the way for that superior enlightenment, when all the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

The following paragraph exhibits a good amount of Railway progress in New Brunswick, and will no doubt have a perceptible effect upon our Prince Edward Island trade in the autumn:—

"The Railway between the Bend and Shediac was opened on the evening of Monday the 10th inst. A train, consisting of the engine, tender, and first class and two second class carriages, went from Moncton to Shediac and back in two hours. We learn from the *Westminster Times*, that a public meeting has been called for the purpose of getting up a demonstration, in order to have it opened with public honors."

Extract of a Letter from the Rev. Thos. H. Vail, one of the most eminent of the Clergy of the Diocese of Rhode Island, to the Rev. P. Tocque, dated July 13th, 1857:—

"Within the last season, in March last, the Rev. Wm. Stow, the Baptist Minister of that denomination in this place, declared for our Church, withdrawing from the Baptist communion, and applying to be received as a Candidate for Orders in our Church. He has been admitted, and will probably be ordained in October next. There seems to be, from what I can learn, a considerable dissatisfaction among the ministers of that denomination—the more intelligent and thoughtful among them—with their Independency, leading them oftentimes into sad excesses, and furnishing no sure protection or security for the truth as it is in Jesus.

"I suppose you have seen notices of the Memorial Movement, as it is called, in our Church—the effort is to make our Church in practice what she is in theory and profession, really Catholic, adapted to the necessities of the age, and prepared to make an effective aggression upon the vast body of infidelity, error, and vice in the masses around us. Our Bishops appointed, at the last General Convention, a Commission on Church Unity—to enter into correspondence with Dissenting Bodies which may be disposed to confer on the subject, and to furnish a medium of communication between our Church and other portions of the Body of Christ. They also sanctioned the separation of the three distinct services of Morning Prayer, the Litany, and the Communion Office, in circumstances where such separation may be advantageous or proper."

We find it stated in the papers, that the first message transmitted by electric telegraph across the Atlantic, will be the following appropriate one:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Efforts have been making of late to raise money for ecclesiastical purposes, by deputations and delegations from the Sister Provinces, and for Religious Societies. As a writer in the last *Church Times* states—"the time has come when Churchmen should remember first of all, the wants of thousands in their own Communion and Diocese who need their aid,"—these wants are becoming more pressing than ever. Our clergy who see the hands of their people pretty frequently in their purse, and doling out large sums for foreign objects, and thus acquiring a character for liberality, must feel rather sore sometimes at being obliged to resort to such doubtful means of raising money, as tea parties and bazaars afford. It appears, however, to be their only resource, and whatever may be the ideas of their propriety, the aid thus imperatively needed has been gratefully acknowledged. One such is shortly to be held at Stewiacke, where the Rev. Thos. Dunn officiates, and we hope that his friends in this City will to their best to make it profitable, the object being to pay off a debt contracted in the erection of buildings for a Parsonage House.

The American Steamship *Columbia* arrived at New York on Monday afternoon. She brought Liverpool dates to the 5th inst.

Cotton market firm. Sugar market dull—sales limited. Breadstuffs dull; slight decline in prices. Provision market quiet. Tea firm. Consols for money 90½. The British Government has introduced a Bill into Parliament for the embodiment of the militia of the Kingdom. The French Ambassador has suspended relations with Turkey. Senaro succeeds Concha in the Government of Cuba.

STILL LATER.

Telegraphic Despatch to the Merchants' Reading Room.

The Cunard Steamship *Persia* arrived at New York on Wednesday evening. Liverpool dates to the 8th inst.

Cotton Market quiet. Breadstuffs dull with a downward tendency. Flour very dull with a decline upon previous quotations. Wheat and Corn also dull. Sugar Market dull, with a declining tendency. Consols for Money 90½. The ships with Atlantic Cable sailed on the 5th. The Italian conspirators have been convicted. The Bishop of London (Bloomfield,) is dead. Nothing further from India. The Steamer *Khersonese* is withdrawn from Liverpool and Portland line for India.

TEMPERANCE INTELLIGENCE.—The members of the Catholic Total Abstinence Society walked in procession through the principal streets of this city on Saturday last. A considerable number of the body are juveniles, who marched four abreast. The whole presented a very creditable appearance; there being a goodly display of banners, &c., and each member wore a medal dressed with green and white ribbon and so on. The procession was headed by the really fine