

and antagonism in some minds. They would exclude everything from the pulpit that is not grave and solemn, just as they would from a funeral. They think it beneath the dignity of the ambassador of heaven and a discord upon the proprieties of worship to be perfectly true to human nature. It is an instructive fact, however, that in the history of preaching, the times of reformation and revival, of earnest awakening from formalism, and the summons to action and earnestness of life have been the very times of the revival of wit in preaching.

The aim of the pulpit is broad and comprehensive. Its scope is not limited by its chief objective point, the proclamation of the Gospel. Its ethical function, as well as its evangelism, calls for pungent common sense, touches of nature which "make the whole world kin," the wit as well as the pathos of men. While its fulcrum is the cross, its leverage extends to every form of folly and sin, to every phase of human experience.

While, therefore, wit and humor have no entrance upon the holy of holies of our faith, they are not excluded from the courts of Christian ethics; and they may work as efficiently for social purification and reform from the pulpit as they do through secular literature, the platform, or the drama, where their power is so readily confessed. True, these keen-edged weapons and tools need to be handled by men whose minds are enlightened and whose hearts are touched with a divine charity for humanity to give them value. The biting acid in the hands of the artist produces the most exquisite etching; in the hands of spite or frivolity it burns away the very features of humanity and corrodes the brightness of social life. In the absence of an earnest and philanthropic aim, sarcasm, satire, any form of wit, as directed against the faults and vices of men, becomes a ghoulish impertinence; only when originating in righteousness and used with a discriminate wisdom it becomes medicinal—cauterizing to heal, chastising to reform, laughing to scatter gloom, and flashing its electricity not to blast, but to reveal the secrets of the heart and quicken torpid consciences into sensibility. Wit is never an end in itself, but always a means to an end, relaxing the rigidity of opposition, routing prejudices, edging well-worn truths, spicing illustrations, illuminating logic, enlivening attention, and clinching well-driven truths.

#### ITS ETHICAL USE.

It is a healthful and tonic ingredient in preaching when it blisters a turgid vanity, startles stolid insensibility, cleaves the mask of hypocrisy, lays the ghosts of a disordered imagination, rips off the lion's skin from the jackass, plucks the peacock's plumes from the jackdaw, or answers the pretentious sceptic according to his folly. There is still call for it, as in earlier days, in rebuking excess and fanaticism in the fashions and passions of the world's great masquerade.

There are many notions and practices among men and women which admit of no serious argument, either offensive or defensive, and yet these