

A SERMON.

LUKE VIII. 18.—“*Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.*”

THIS admonition, our Lord himself, who spake as never man spake, thought it necessary to address to those who had the advantage of his personal ministry; and the same or similar language is of frequent occurrence in Scripture. Every advantage indeed which Divine Providence has bestowed upon us, is a trust of which we must hereafter give account, and those which tend more immediately to our improvement in piety and virtue, are a trust of the most important kind. Religious instruction, therefore, is by no means to be despised or neglected by those who would wish to render that account with joy. Those whose duty it is to administer such instruction, and those whose duty it is to receive it from their lips, are alike bound to take heed—the former what and how they teach, the latter how they hear. Through the fault of either, that religious instruction which ought to produce the greatest benefit to mankind, may, and frequently does, fail of the effect designed. Let the ministers of religion then for their part beware lest by mismanagement in their sacred office they cause the blood of others committed to their charge to be required at their hands; and on the other hand let the people also take heed. For when we find the Son of God himself, and his inspired Apostles, admonishing all so emphatically to do so, it is plain that the ruin of immortal souls is not always to be attributed to the negligence or incapacity of the appointed pastor, but that they may and do frequently miscarry through their own fault alone, and notwithstanding the possession of every advantage with respect to guidance and instruction.

When it pleased God to commission inspired persons to give religious instruction to men, the admonition, “*Take heed how ye hear,*” had, it must be confessed, a force and meaning which in its full extent cannot now belong to it. To the dictates of such instructors implicit and unhesitating obedience was due, as to the word of God himself proceeding from their lips. And the same may be said