

The winter of death and the grave must soon come down upon us all. No work can then be done for God : no seed sown ; no harvest gathered. Let us so live and do that we may rightfully lift our eyes to the Happy Land whose flowers are never blasted by winter, whose shores are never darkened by death ; where Christ's presence makes perpetual summer and where those who had sown on earth in tears enjoy a reaping time of endless joy.

PREACHING AND HEARING.

The present generation of preachers seldom make their sermons extend beyond an hour ; the vast majority scarcely exceed half an hour ; but there is here and there a man capable of speaking and even of riveting the attention for two hours. This can be accomplished only at the expense of most distressing and destructive physical effort ; and we cannot say that we ever saw it done to edification. The current has set in so strongly in favour of brevity, that a sermon to be acceptable must be either short or very brilliant, or very powerfully delivered.

In lately reading of the illustrious John Howe we were struck with the difference between his day and our own in this respect. The following was his manner of spending an ordinary fast day. He began at nine o'clock in the morning with prayer which lasted a quarter of an hour, "in which he begged a blessing on the work of the day ; and afterwards expounded a chapter or psalm, in which he spent about three quarters of an hour ; then prayed for about an hour, preached for another hour, and prayed for about half an hour. After this he retired and took some little refreshment for about a quarter of an hour more, (the people singing all the while,) and then came again into the pulpit and prayed for another hour, and gave them another sermon of an hour's length ; and so concluded the service of the day about four o'clock in the evening about half an hour or more in prayer."

This certainly was a heavy day's work for minister and people : who but the earnest and mighty Puritans could have stood it !

We imagine however that we should sit delighted for seven hours listening to incomparable author of the "Living Temple."

Under some men half an hour seems longer than a whole hour under others : and in like manner the time feels short and the work of preaching is easy to the minister who is addressing an attentive and docile congregation. It may be hard to listen to dull sermons : but who can tell the anguish of preaching to a listless, sleepy, scornful audience ! If you wish to blast and wither everything genial in the preacher's heart, if you desire so shrivel up his soul as with the frost of intellectual and moral death, listen listlessly to his discourses ! The serious gait, the attentive ear, the eager eye, the glowing cheek marking a sympathizing and anxiously attentive audience, will open flood gates of eloquence where otherwise all would be apparent drought and barrenness. Thus ministers and hearers act and react on each other. Bad hearers make a dull preacher ; and a dull preacher generally manages to secure bad hearers.

A Princeton Reviewer has well said that force in preaching does not mean "vehemence, much less violent extravaganzas of argument, or noisy appeal, or mock pathos, or profuse imagery, magnificent or vulgar, or stentorian explosions, with proportionally formidable gesticulations, stampings and grimaces. Much of this sort often destroys force. The most gentle, deliberate, tender, subdued modes of address are often the most effective, and therefore the most forcible." We have never seen or heard a truly great preacher indulge in extravagant gestures and violent noises.

Vinet, himself one of the most eloquent of modern preachers, has remarked that to be eloquent is "not to add something to the truth but to render to it its own : it is to put it in possession of its natural advantages. It is to remove the veils which cover it ; it is to leave nothing between man and the truth." The great object of the preacher is, ought to be, to do justice to the truth ; and the hearer should always be in search, not of eloquence but of truth. First the true, and then the good, and last of all the beautiful !