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## ONE SERMON A DAY.

THIS is the freshest topic up for discussion. It is going the round of the United States Press. Surely there must be something in sermons after all, that they should set on fire the editors of papers the world over. There is bound to be a yearly run upon the subject of pulpit discourses. At one time, it is the question of extempore preaching; or at another, of the length of a sermon. In some form or other the discourse proves itself to be a matter of general interest. This year it comes before us in the shape of the enquiry, whether it would not be better for all parties concerned that there should be only one sermon in every church on the Lord's day. The continual discussion of the subject of sermons ought surely to enforce the conviction that the pulpit is not after all losing its power.

To some it may appear useless to argue against this new proposal. It is self-evident, they say, that a minister will be able to prepare better discourses, if he be allowed more time for study, and not to be distracted by the necessity arising from the preparation of two or more sermons for the one day, of having several concurrent trains of thought in his mind at one and the same time. The pastor it is alleged would certainly have more leisure for the discharge of parochial duties. There is doubtless some truth in this. It is illustrated in the ministerial life of Dr. Guthrie, who divided the labours of Free St. John's with Dr. Hanna. Never were there two such colleagues in the one charge. What the one had to perfection was almost entirely wanting in the other. The people enjoyed the privilege of listening to two preachers, who were eminent in opposite directions. Dr. Guthrie by his powerful eloquence and panoramic pictures drew the masses together and moved them to the heart. Dr. Hanna by such learned and exquisitely beautiful lectures as those which make up his classical work, "The Life of Our Lord," attracted the thoughtful and educated. While there was in the former the thrilling power that crowded the aisles, there was in the latter that which a refined audience could highly appreciate and enjoy. There was also in Dr. Hanna a simplicity and directness which was edifying to every person. And so between them they kept together one of the largest congregations, and their intercourse was entirely free of jealousy.

While acknowledging so much, we have to look at other men, who have kept up two services during a life time, and have power stronger and brighter every day. Anderson and Eadie were excellent examples of this,

both ministering to the same congregations from dawning manhood to old age, and giving the fruit of their pulpit utterances in the valuable form of philosophical treatises and learned commentaries. What is wanted for a minister to conduct two services on the Lord's day, and perhaps one during the week, is to preach the Gospel in several different ways. Let him give an exposition in the morning, a sermon at the second service, and a running commentary on the Wednesday. The result will be that each contributes some valuable element to the other. The exposition and sermon prepared concurrently will not exhaust the mind. The study of Scripture which exposition renders necessary will give richness and fulness to the sermon; while the sermon will prove an antidote to the prolixity which might result from a purely expository style. But we should say that the attempt to prepare two discourses of a similar kind would prove exhausting both to the preacher and his hearers.

There is something to be said for two sermons from the people's point of view. It is seldom that a whole family can be present at one and the same service. The mistress and maid in many instances must go to church time about. In others, the husband and wife must divide spiritual privileges between them. And while in country charges, where pastors have to supply several stations on the same day, such must go to church on alternate Sabbaths, it is evident that in the city congregations could not be kept together upon this principle. The two services in the latter case are necessary to give the members of working families their proper share of religious ordinances. The one sermon plan would entirely fail to accomplish this end.

But after all, is there anything in this, when it is notorious that the second service even in city churches is but poorly attended? This is not so universally, we are glad to say. Especially in the old country the afternoon congregation is frequently larger than the morning one. But in Canadian cities, except when there is some special attraction, the evening diet of worship is not well attended. All we have to say is that it would be better for the churches, better for the ministers, and better for the people, if both services were equally well attended. It must be discouraging to a pastor who has carefully prepared his sermon, to find that a large percentage of the membership of his congregation is made conspicuous by vacant pews. The only proposal we think of making is for ministers to try the effect of giving up the evening sermon. It is almost certain that the people would burst open the church doors and crowd the aisles, if there was any attempt to ease off, even in this hot weather, with one sermon a day.

## RELIGIOUS FROM HOME.

AT this season of the year many of our readers are enjoying a brief respite from labour at the seaside or in some quiet country district, where alone or with their families they have for the time thrown aside the conventionalities of town or city life, and

have given themselves up to thorough enjoyment. Change of scene and of climate is most desirable for all in the heated season imparting as it almost invariably does, new life and strength alike to young and old.

In selecting a place in which to spend the vacation season, care should be taken that the spiritual interests do not suffer.

We have frequently been astonished to hear of some of active Christian men taking their family for the summer months to a district where there is neither a Protestant Church nor a public religious service of any kind on the Lord's day. Much more common however is it for Sabbath-observing and church-going people at home to absent themselves from public worship and spend the Sabbath in boating or driving when from home during the summer vacation, even in places where there is a church of their own denomination within easy reach.

It is incalculable the injury that is thus done to the cause of religion. We recently heard of an active office-bearer of the Church who frequently spends a few weeks of the summer in a quiet country district but whose face is scarcely ever seen within the walls of the church of his own denomination in this rural retreat, and we were not surprised to learn that some of this man's family are becoming sceptical in their religious opinion.

We know of one and have heard of other French Roman Catholic districts in the Province of Quebec visited every summer by large numbers of English Protestants from various parts of the Dominion whose desecration of the Lord's day has caused the very name of Protestant to stink in the nostrils of these simple French Canadians, and that notwithstanding their own very low views as to the sanctity of the Sabbath.

And not long since we were told by the minister of one of our churches in a place of summer resort that several of the better class of his people thought of leaving the neighbourhood because of the very pernicious example set before their children by many of the summer visitors, from whom better things might have been expected.

The religion which is only manifested in one's own town or when one is in company with those of his own neighbourhood or congregation is not the religion of Him who said "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." We know how manifold the temptations are when from home and away from the restraints of home; how difficult it often is in boarding-house or hotel life to keep one's self unspotted and to hold fast the profession of one's faith under adverse circumstances; how difficult especially to keep the younger members of one's family from contamination with that which is evil. There is all the greater need therefore for watchfulness and prayer.

Perhaps there are few occasions in which a Christian's influence for good may be more felt than when from home, enjoying a few days or weeks recreation at a place of summer resort, mingling with strangers among whom are the worldly, the openly hostile to