

PREACHING AND SERMONS.

ZION CHURCH, MONTREAL, 7TH OCTOBER, 1883.

I have called the subject of my discourse to-night **Preaching and Sermons**. My object is to clearly define, to myself and to you, what I mean by the terms, and to say what I conceive the preacher's function to be. And I use the two words, **Preaching and Sermons**, because of some general criticism which has been passed, declaring that a certain kind of preaching does not produce sermons, but only essays or lectures. There is a pretty wide-spread notion among church-goers as to what a sermon should be, and any departure from the lines marked out by that notion is deprecated or disowned, according to the temper of the critic. Let us see how this has come about.

It may very well be said that the Christian era introduced preaching into the world. True, the Prophets of Israel were preachers; they made proclamation of righteousness—they criticised, they condemned, they denounced, they implored in the great name of Jehovah. But they were not stated and appointed preachers; they were not a class set apart and consecrated to a special office and work, as the priests were. Their cry often startled the people, for it broke upon them like thunder from a clear sky; when they were most self-satisfied—most intoxicated by their own wantonness, then came the Prophet's warning or rebuke, crashing through the noises of their rioting and sin. That done, and the preacher's work for the time was done—duty fulfilled, he went back to work or prayer. The last of the Prophets was the first regular preacher. John the Baptist undertook to inaugurate a social and moral revolution; by great and startling sermons he heralded a greater than himself. Jesus Christ was essentially a preacher; He preached to the Jews, to his times, and adopted all the true methods which the true preacher must always adopt to reach and influence the hearts of his hearers. Peter was a preacher, so also was John—so was Stephen, and, in a still greater degree, was Paul. But after their day preaching was not so much cultivated; a few of the great