

tively small. While, therefore, the ministry as a whole has intellectually advanced proportionately with the advancing intelligence of the country, its *professional* education can hardly be said to have essentially changed its "style" of preaching, except in two or three sections of its great field.

The early Methodist preaching was universally *extemporaneous*, and this fact had much to do with its style. It was an exceptional fact in the Protestant ministry of the times. Bishop Coke wrote out his sermon for the Episcopal Consecration of Asbury; Ezekiel Cooper wrote his on the death of Asbury, and both were immediately printed; but neither, I think, was read before the congregation. For nearly fifty years no sermon was read in an American Methodist pulpit, except one or two of Wesley's printed discourses, which the book of "Discipline" required to be read annually. Both the preachers and the people had conscientious scruples against manuscript preaching. Durbin was the first who placed a "sketch," or "skeleton," of his discourse on the open Bible; and I can remember how, in his occasional visits from the West to the East (visits which were a sort of ovation in the churches), devout Methodists of Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York, used to deprecate the influence of his example, though his manuscript was the barest outline of his subject, and though they often sobbed or "shouted" under the extemporaneous eloquence with which he used it. The first Episcopal reading of sermons in the denomination was by Bishop Baker, who was consecrated as late as 1852; he was a scholarly and very devoted man, but excessively diffident, and the people sympathized with his spirit and excused the innovation, especially as it had already been introduced somewhat extensively among the subordinate branches of the ministry in New England, where the Bishop began his career, and was a general usage there in other denominations.

The habit of extemporaneous preaching had an important moral effect on both the ministry and the people. It did not relieve the preacher from the task of study, though it relieved him from the drudgery of writing. Extemporaneous discourse requires, probably, more thorough preparatory meditation than the manuscript sermon. The early Methodist preachers were noted as "sermonizers," but they were still more noted as "exhorters;" for, having the outlines of their discourses well premeditated, and being, at the same time, untrammelled by the manuscript, their sensibilities had freer play in the pulpit, *impromptu* thoughts or illustrations and pointed applications were more readily available. They ascended the desk expecting these advantages, and praying that they might be inspired by the Divine Spirit. Their diction naturally became more that of the common people; their manner more colloquial; the sympathetic interest of the congregation was more readily awakened, and the interaction of both