

leum, which raises no dust either to the preacher's books or his throat, as he walks back and forth weaving his sermons.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

HOMILETIC SPECTACLES.

Beecher and Spurgeon.

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"WHAT kind of glasses do you use?" asked a young minister of a preacher of experience and distinction.

"I use *homiletic spectacles*," was the reply.

"And pray, sir, what are they?" asked the young man. To which the senior responded:

"I look at everything through my preaching. I am ever on the alert to find, not so much topics from which to preach, as illustrations for abstract truth. I find my truth or topic in the Bible; I find my illustrations here, there, and everywhere. I try to look at everything homiletically—art, science, history, and the newspapers, as well as the Bible; and especially I try to look at the commonest affairs and incidents of life in this light, for here I find the most apt and merchantable supply of illustration. And in this I have no so great teacher and example as Christ Himself."

In this the preacher was right. This matter of illustration requires the greatest attention. We must never be obliged to stop to explain the illustration, or by any obscurity to lose the attention of the hearers. Illustrations may be good to those who understand them, and bad for those who do not. Illustrations do not always throw light on the subject. Sometimes the train of thought is lost by the introduction of an illustration. The hearer stops to think of the illustration, and loses the object of it. The illustration should be more simple than the thing illustrated. While the truth of the Gospel may be greatly enforced by illustrations, it is of the first importance that the hearer be familiar with the illustrations; and the more familiar the better. This is the striking characteristic, as we

have intimated, of Christ's discourses. He leads His hearers from what they know to what they do not know. And in this particular, Mr. Beecher, as a preacher, in our opinion, not only excels his contemporaries, but his predecessors. If to our inquiry of this Samson of the pulpit, "Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth?" he should vouchsafe a reply, he might say that it is in the dexterous use of the commonest incidents of life in the illustration of abstract truth. Mr. Beecher's range of truth, as it appears in his discourses, is not, as we apprehend it, so wide, nor so grand, as that of many other preachers; indeed, no one can read his sermons without discovering a certain narrowness of range—a monotony of thought. He is ever moving along in certain lines of truth.

In freshness of theme, Beecher is not to be compared with Spurgeon. Mr. Beecher never digs out new truth as does Mr. Spurgeon. In a recent life of Mr. Beecher, the editor, to show the variety of Mr. Beecher's topics, has given us the texts and themes for two years. But Mr. Beecher's themes are like Mr. Beecher's self: though they seem to change, they are not essentially new. His mind moves in a circle, and he is very apt to repeat himself. He takes a new text; but as his text is generally a mere motto, and his topic a suggestion of his own mind, he very soon falls into the rut of an old line of thought with new illustrations. There is much sameness in the theme. Mr. Beecher once said to one inquiring about his manner of preparation for the pulpit, that "his way" was like that of the old Maryland housewives: to make up a good batch of dough, put it into a cool place, and when she made biscuit for breakfast or dinner, to cut off a piece and make them up and bake them. Now, if this is "his way," it is no wonder that Mr. Beecher's sermons taste as much alike as a woman's biscuit.

This is not Mr. Spurgeon's "way." He goes to the granary every time he wants to make a loaf, and gets some fresh grain. He finds each harvesting