

ent of the character for success of the preacher, or that there are no sermons, however feeble and unimpressive in utterance, that are not calculated to do good, if only we would receive the good. To a certain extent, this last proposition may be true, but it is not true far enough to cover the defect in ministry. Nor can it be said that the great topic of christian instruction is less calculated than other topics to move the minds and feelings of man; for it is undeniable that there are none which can be made to tell more powerfully. In spite of man's natural insensibility to the truth, and the coldness of his common love for it, this truth, when rightly and earnestly presented, finds sources of interest, and stirs springs of emotion in him, which nothing else can possibly do. There is in it an attraction for his intellect, his imagination, and his heart, which the loftiest range of mere forensic or political oratory does not reach. However indifferent men may be to spiritual doctrine or spiritual duty, it does not account for the prevailing unimpressiveness of the average sermon. If this were true, then it would not be true that, with the very same materials to work upon, another kind of application of the same truths, by preaching, has proved immensely successful. There is a right and effective method of preaching, as of everything else. Where it is continuously dull and ineffective, one is warranted in saying that it is because of a chronic and insufferable weakness in the style, the manner and the general character of the minister.

Without attempting to explain fully what is wrong in the prevailing character of preaching, or suggesting the best means of improvement, it may be said that in this day of general intelligence, the power and influence of the preacher must, in ordinary cases, be proportionate to the elevation at which he stands above

his hearers, in intellectual capacity and spiritual force and discernment. Such elevation is obviously very difficult. In a large number of pulpits in this country, the minister not only does not stand above the hearers, but does not even stand on a level with them as to most subjects of ordinary culture, while in regard to his special subject, he is wholly unequal to the task of bringing them anything of a fresh and informing character. Such a temper as this in the pulpit has a natural tendency to be dull, to do its weekly work with a listless formality, and the stereotyped impressions are positively repulsive and wearing to most people. There is nothing of warmth or light, or anything approaching a living root of interest in such sermons. A sermon that is destitute of any real elements of interest, which does not impress or hit an audience, can be of no practical benefit. After it is over, those who have given a languid, limping attention, may endeavor to recall something that was said, but in vain. Nothing was said worth recalling. Far worse is the man whose effort is to arouse the feeling of alarm. He does not understand that there is a great difference between stern and strong speaking, and that style of preaching which runs along on a high pitch of shrieking denunciations; what theatrical critics call ranting. It is to be doubted whether such a style as this can be made the instrument of any great religious awakening. Certainly this manner of preaching can never be a general means of moral elevation and acceptance. But even that is better and more appealing than the sensational style; generally, a very small mental and physical equipment, and a theme, that as completely hides the man, as it overwhelms his intellectual grasp, when he comes to meet it in the pulpit, instead of the newspaper. The whole object of this preacher, generally a loud-voiced