

HORACE.

A preacher is generally above the mass of hearers in intelligence and information. He too often thinks himself, if not actually entitled, still in a position to treat them as inferiors, as children. He gives them evidences he would scorn to accept himself; he presents as his habitual thoughts, what he has only discovered with great difficulty in his study, and makes a lever of what would utterly fail to move him, were it applied to himself. He presents a series of little pictures, sometimes pedantic, sometimes merely pretty, and expects them to be received seriously by every body but himself. He means them to be edified by his sermon, though had he heard it from another, it would have been sharply criticised. In dealing with his congregation, he employs a coin he would not receive himself; in a word, he lacks *sincerity*.

The truth of the principal proposition, is not the only thing to be considered in a sermon; we must also see that the arguments we employ in

proof, are sound; artificial forms must be avoided, sophistry held in horror, and true eloquence attained by abandoning all pretension to it. One rule will suffice; let us only give to others what we have received ourselves, and let us give it in the form which has satisfied our own minds. Beginning with earnestly seeking truth for ourselves, we can, when it is apprehended, transmit it to others as proved and tested.

Sincerity, which the youngest christian can give, will do much more than the false expression of beautiful sentiments. I know it requires courage, if not skill, to depict oneself truly. But this courage is attainable, the more especially as the felt confession of weakness is an elementary part of christianity both for pastor and people. Each minister without lowering his office, without desecrating the pulpit, without startling his audience, may say, "I am a miserable sinner." This weakness is his strength, instead of repelling, it attracts, especially in an opening ministry.

This precept easy to give is I know, difficult to follow; with a little more conceit I should say it was impossible to do so, for I have been attempting it myself the last twenty years, and have not yet succeeded?

The creases of habit will not yield to the hot

iron of criticism; it is impossible to make them disappear. I work the instrument vigorously, but the mark remains; the truth is, it has got, into the stuff, and the material itself must be changed. For the defect here is really within, though the manifestation of it is without. I swell my voice to cover the want of substance in my discourse; I make magnificent gestures, in the hope of imparting grandeur to trifling thoughts. "How very wrong," did you say Horace? Certainly, but you do just the same. You use brilliant words to cloak puerile ideas. Our animation is neither from the Spirit of God, nor even our own soul; it is the carnal man which excites our vanity, and will not let us leave the pulpit without an effort to produce emotion. Alas, how unsuccessfully? You do not touch the heart, Horace, you only irritate the nerves. Again I say, it is when conscience tells of inability, that vanity prompts the false covering of gesture and style.

Horace finds it impossible to be simple, so he affects to be philosophical, I mean metaphysical; and as his hearers have not the right, and probably not the power, to detect inaccuracies, he enjoys his reputation in safety.

A medical student once said to me: "I am sure I shall pass my medical examination, but I

dread the surgical one." I asked why. "Because," he replied, "in surgery I must cite facts, name bones, arteries and muscles which have been counted and classified by science. In medicine there is nothing of the kind; I may say the contrary of what my professor and every one else thinks, no one can prove I am wrong, and if opposed, I have a sure word for settling the business."

"What is it?"

"Oh, I have only to say, after some splendid blunder, That is my opinion, and the matter passes. It even gives me the appearance, if not of knowing more than others, at least of being an independent thinker. It does not convince, of course, but it produces a good effect."

This young student would have made a first rate metaphysical preacher. He would have divided, distinguished, confounded, talked of the objective and the subjective, the self and not self, with the chance of persuading his hearers that he was too deep for them, and at any rate leaving himself at liberty to say to objectors, that is my opinion. It is so decidedly your's Horace, that you are left in undisturbed possession of it. To avoid disputing it with you, your hearers says: "Mr Horace is very profound, he is a great me-

taphysician; still we like plain John Smith better. We always understand him, and sometimes he convinces us.”

But I stop. My picture gallery must not degenerate into an exhibition of caricatures. I have said enough of what should be avoided, let me endeavour to point out briefly what should be done.

