

LECTURE XVIII.

PREACHER'S CHARACTER WITH HEARERS.

THE hearers' apprehension of their minister's character is a most important element in his power of persuasion. If I be reminded that this is a truth belonging rather to pastoral theology than to rhetoric, I shall reply, that the element is one which it is impossible to separate from the effectiveness of sacred oratory. The pastor's character speaks more loudly than his tongue. This consideration is immeasurably more weighty in the case of the sacred than of the secular orator. Aristotle¹ announces this maxim, that the latter must establish with his auditors a character, first, for discretion, or knowledge and judgment; second, for probity; and third, for benevolence, or good-will toward them. If the speaker is suspected of ignorance or infirmity of judgment, his advice cannot carry weight and his arguments will be despised. If he is evidently intelligent and shrewd, but of doubtful integrity, the plausibility of what he advances will be felt; but the more ability he shows, the more will the people fear to commit themselves to his opinions; for they have no guarantee of moral principle that he is not employing these forces of his genius, manifestly so powerful, to

¹ Rhetoric, B. ii, ch. 1.