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P U L-P I T O R A T O R Y .

Oratory.

To talk is as natural as to breathe. And they are so closely related one to the other, that the one cannot be gracefully done without the culture of the other. He who breathes correctly is said to be cultured; he who speaks gracefully is said to be eloquent. The effectiveness of speech depends, very largely, upon the degree of accuracy with which the breath is controlled. One of the chiefest, if not the chiefest of the fundamental essentials in oratory, whether at the busking or the bar, in the pulpit or the bema, is now conceded to be the proper use and government of the breath.

No man need ever expect to rise to his limit of possibility who does not learn the art of correct breathing. That this art great as it is and indispensable as it is to effective oratory, is acquirable, one needs only to glance over the testimonies of the world's greatest speakers, singers and actors to learn.

Talma, "the first tragedian of his time," was a man whose control of breath was so poor that he was compelled, immediately after leaving the stage, to lean on something for support, so exhausted was he. Yet by persistent and patient effort he mastered the art to such an extent, that he subsequently reduced all his rules on breathing to this statement: "Every artist," he says, "who lets himself run out of breath is nothing more than mediocre."

Since then, no one can talk with ease, grace or potency, without mastering the laws of correct breathing, we may set it down as a maxim that, the art of chiefest concern to orators, of whatever department of life, is the art of breathing.

There are other things, to be sure, of vital and inestimable importance, such, for example, as facial expression, physical gesture, the tone and pitch of voice, etc. These are indeed the vehicles of thought but the efficiency of their service will depend upon an economical and intelligent use of one's breathing.

Oratory is not the bellowing of a bull or the warbling of a wren; not the high-flung key of the cricket or the deep-dropped tone of the lion - it is not "an affair of the lungs." It may embrace all these, but they have been so altered in the crucible of culture that they are rendered docile to the tone and touch of their master. The thunderous tones of command may sometimes be needed, and the shrieking screams of despair may occasionally be called for; but they never obtrude, they come only as the nature of the case demands, only at the wish of the speaker.

But oratory is far more than ~~[illegible]~~ silvery cadences of the voice; than rhythmical movements of the arms and hands; than expressive contortions of the face. These, these all must be, but there could be little need of them if there were no end in view which called for their culture and perfection. That were, indeed, a

miserable conception of oratory which confines its definitive ends within the range of the human voice, or the movements of human limbs be they never so nearly perfected. Singers are not, as a rule, called orators though their voices are trained to a nicety. Pianists and violinists are not recognised as orators though their fingers are as nimble as a squirrel, and their movement as graceful as a swan's. Oratory that is most deserving of the name will be found with, and its definition must be drawn from, that orator who has set for his accomplishment the greatest possible end. Oratory apart from the orator and his motive is a misnomer.

It is a difficult thing to locate the source of oratory. Almost every theory has been advanced as to where lay the real cause or origin of and what was the true nature of eloquence. Certain it is that it does not exist in the words themselves, nor yet wholly in the surroundings. But when there is that happy blending and mingling of the two we have what we may call eloquence.

Says one whose scholarship and experience place him in the position to speak: "The words of a masterpiece of oratorical genius may be caught by the quick ear of the reporter, and jotted down with literal exactness, not a preposition being out of place, not an interjection wanting; but the attitude and the look, the voice and the gesture, are lost forever. As well might you attempt to paint the lightning's flash, as to paint

the piercing glance which, for an instant, from the great orator's eyes, darts into your very soul, or to catch the mystic, wizard tones, which now bewitch you with their sweetness, and now storm the very citadel of your mind and senses. Occasionally a great discourse is delivered, which seems to preserve in print some of the chief elements of its power. - - - - But, in the vast majority of cases, it is but a "caput mortuum" which the most cunning stenographer can give us of that which, in its utterance, so startled or charmed the hearer. The aroma, the finer essences have vanished, only the dead husks remain. Again, eloquence, as Pitt said, "is in the assembly," and therefore to appreciate a discourse, we must not only have heard it as delivered, but when and where it was delivered, with all its accompaniments, and with the temper of those to whom it was addressed. We need "the fiery life of the moment," the contagion of the great audience, the infectious enthusiasm leaping from heart to heart, the shouting thousands in the echoing minster or senate. We need to see and to hear the magician with his wand in his hand, and on the theatre of his spells. The country preacher, therefore, was right who, when he had electrified his people by an extempore discourse preached during a thunderstorm, and was asked to let them print it, replied that he would do so if they would print the thunderstorm along with it.

"In every case," continues the same author, "we find that oratory, like the inspiration of the poet, or the brilliant con-

ceptions of the painter, flows from a source which is beyond the reach of human ken. The essential secret is the gift of God, and in vain do we try to grasp and to describe it by seizing its mere forms."

And the secret is as tightly locked from the orator himself, who electrifies his hearers and takes possession, as it were, of their wills and sways them by the beck of hand and the force of his personality.

The unread mind is apt to attempt to measure eloquence by an invariable standard. Such people are beguiled into the false conception that the speech which today moves them to terror or tears, to firmness or flight, must be in its nature identical with the eloquence that had the same effect upon hearers of the olden times. But not so,- the complexion of oratory has been as variant as the composition of the people addressed. Whatever may be the determining elements that give the tone-color to eloquence, a brief study of the history of oratory will convince one that it does not retain a constancy of nature. It has been swinging back and forth, like a huge pendulum of human passion, now ornate as before the Reformation, now simple and natural as during the opening years of the period of the Greek and Latin fathers; again, it is profusely oratorical as in the ancient days, then it has become more nearly conversational as in the present time.

Vainly do we study the gamut of expression in search of

the manner of speech that we can settle upon as the one always most efficacious. Unsuccessfully do we con the pages of sublime and fervent speech in a quest of locating the one unalterable source of eloquence. "It can not be brought from afar."

Yet there are some things common to all ages that may be provisionally set forth as the cause of sublime speech, of real eloquence. Oratory seems ever to have drawn its most potent surges from an effort to break asunder some galling chain that fettered the liberty of a nation, of a people and of a soul. "Oratory," says Hardwicke, "is the parent of liberty. By the constitution of things it was ordained that eloquence should be the last stay and support of liberty, and that with her she is ever destined to live, flourish and die."

Two of the greatest achievements, perhaps, ever wrought by the power of the tongue, as measured in the light both of their immediate and subsequent results, are the emancipation of the church from popery in the fourteenth century by Wicklif, and the releasing of the negro's bonds in the nineteenth century by the hand and tongue of Abraham Lincoln.

The study of the art of speaking, if we are to credit old and reliable authorities, has long since passed the state of infancy. "Oratory," says one, "was undoubtedly studied and practiced with considerable effect from almost the earliest periods. This is conclusively proved by the specimens of eloquence we find recorded in the oldest writings extant. Like

their poetry, the oratory of the Hebrews was short and sententious, but in the speeches of Moses and Samuel and in the book of Job, we have many beautiful examples of the pathetic and sublime in oratory." Many of the fathers bestowed special attention upon the art of chaste composition and impressive public address. "Some of the preachers challenge our highest admiration. They have rarely been equalled and never excelled."

Prior to the age of Pericles, no precepts of oratory had been collected. To be sure there had been orators before his time, but no systematic form of teaching. "From the time of Homer to the time of Pericles, there are no authentic orations on record." This was true from the nature of things, since practice must precede theory in all departments. Pericles, therefore, in this sense, may be considered the father of oratory.

As late as the close of the fourth century there were only two schools which, to any extent, taught oratory. One at Alexandria, the other at Antioch. But it would seem that the style of oratory as taught by these schools was considered, by the preachers of that age, as unfit for the expression of gospel truth. One writer says, "The habits of style here contracted (at the schools of polite learning) were unfavorable to the simplicity of the gospel, as they nourished vanity and love of display in the pulpit, by no means diminished by the frequent custom of loudly and even boisterously applauding the preacher

when he uttered a fine passage." "To some," he adds, "this was exceedingly offensive, but too often the preacher was susceptible to its injurious influences."

The distinction, therefore, if a distinction can be made, between the oratory of the platform and that of the pulpit - in earlier times at least - lays in the fact that simplicity of style and directness of utterance characterized sacred oratory, while the ~~most~~ more florid and ornate belonged to the secular.

The Pulpit.

It is somewhat interesting to learn that the pulpit, as such - although a term now as familiar as the object for which it stands - is of comparatively late origin.

The first reference, perhaps, in which the English term is used is found as far back as the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Whatever may have been the style of this pulpit, it certainly was unlike the first ones of which we have any authentic records. Nehemiah 8:4, would make this a place large enough to accommodate fourteen persons, including the speaker or reader, and being made of wood.

"The etymology of the word," says one who has made an exhaustive study of the subject, "is evidently traceable to the Latin pulpitum, Italian and Spanish pulpito, and French pulpitre or pupitre. Martinius further de~~vines~~rives it (though somewhat

fancifully) from πολφὸς or βολβὸς because it swells or rises like a bulb. By all the foregoing, an elevated stage for the purpose of oratory is clearly indicated, except, it may be the French derivation, which rather signifies a desk only." So far as architectural structure goes this would seem also to agree very well with the "tower of wood" mentioned in Nehemiah 8:4.

From certain writings descriptive of the place and posture of the speaker who addressed his congregation, we learn it was more commonly done from the "ambo" or reading desk, and in a sitting position. This we also know to have been the custom of several of the most noted preachers, by frequent allusions found in their writings.

Now the "ambo," which was an enclosed stand, built up, in some instances, to almost the height of the reader's shoulders, was large enough for only one. The Ambo supplanted the Pulpitum, which in turn gave way to the Rood-loft (though may be not used for sermons), and this brought into demand the Pulpit.

Previous to the year 1400 A. D., few if any pulpits were known to exist, with the exception of one in Cambridgeshire, about 1340. In a recent number of Harper's Weekly was shown, among other relics given to Prince Henry, a Reading Desk from the Cathedral at Naumburg, made in the shape of a cleric, and supposed to date back to about 1250.

By a canon of 1603 every church was required to have a pulpit. From this it is seen that much attention was given to

the style of the sacred desk. It is impossible to tell to what extent the individual church drafted its own plans touching this part of the building; but in a less or more degree it seems to have been in the hands of an authoritative body.

This survey of the older conception of the pulpit, of its style and its function, is all the more interesting when placed side by side with a modern conception as set forth not long since, editorially, in the New York Observer.

After accrediting Rev. Dr. John M. Mason with bringing about the change in the pulpit the editor says; "A pupit on a platform has a broad base. The utterances therefrom should teach and treat themes of widest interest. All knowledge to a preacher, as to Lord Bacon, may be his province, made tributary to the gospel, and utilized to show that theology is the crown of all sciences. A pulpit on a platform means a pulpit open to light from every quarter, and shedding light on all that concerns human hearts and minds from the Word of God uplifted and central thereon; that the Divine Word contains the principles of right living for us wherever we are placed, and the principles of right thinking whatever problems confront us in the home, in the social and business circles, in the church, in the college, or in the commonwealth.

"Christ is the perfect pattern of the preacher; though ordinary pulpit accessories He seldom possessed, He knew what to say and how to say it. He could make truth beautiful and yet

diversified; powerful and beautiful also. Whether His pulpit was in the synagogue at Nazareth, or whether it was a ledge upon the Mount of Beatitude, a fisherman's boat upon the Sea of Galilee, a curb-stone by the well of Jacob, or a couch at the communion table in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, His words were 'as apples of gold in baskets of silver' perfect truth uttered in perfect taste."

The restrictive functions of the pulpit of the past vanishes, like many another custom of that time, in the broadened view of the present.

The Orator and Preacher.

The man before his message. Not infrequently the oratorical world has been stirred to its greatest depths by orators the moral tone of whose lives, taken in their normal condition, was much below par. This cannot be stated as a rule, without exceptions, though it has, perhaps, a broader application to modern eloquence than to that of the Greek and Latin periods.

Among the Greeks eloquence was taught as the occupation of a life. "The course commenced with the infant in the cradle, and continued to manhood. Letters, the sciences, arts, were to be mastered upon the theory that an orator must be a man of universal knowledge. Moral duties were taught for the reason that none but a good man could be an orator." It is a regretable truth that so lofty a standard does not find a wider recog-

nition in the curriculum of present day oratory. Yet even an indifferent study of the past century reveals a lamentably low moral standard among many of the greatest orators.

But such cannot be within the domain of sacred oratory. Here the orator must be, above all things else, a man whose life as a man can square itself with the requirements of an exalted standard. Not that he must pass beyond the reach of the thrusts of the caluminator - the most nearly perfect life could not do this. But the preacher's morals cannot be laid aside, like his clerical robes, when he leaves the pulpit, and assumed again when he enters it. There must ever be a genial companionship between his public and private life; for the potency of his service will be regulated, in the long run, by the purity of his heart. Man though he is, and man-like he must live, alike in his occupation and recreation, yet always and evermore as the preacher-man. He need not expect to live like a sinner in private and preach like a saint in the pulpit. Incognitos will not assist him, masquerades will not conceal him, for as a man thinketh in his heart so is he.

The man in his message. In the days of the Old Testament prophets, when the nation was younger and their conceptions accordingly cruder, it was thought that the prophets, because inspired, were only big talking machines; that their humanity had nothing to do with their message since it never touched the message so as to color it. Humanity was, so to say, like the

two banks, between which flow the many streams, indispensable but only a channel.

But those days and their ideas along with them, have been compelled to abdicate the seat of power. Now and then, it is true, an advocate of this view may be found, but as for forming a cogent element in the key-tone of the world's thought of to-day, they are insignificant; even their influence has waned to a vanishing point. The message of power that today crosses lips of true eloquence, is all the more effective when recognised as coming from the heart of a man, the chastity and confidence of whose lips has surcharged every sentence with a sympathy that leads all to a ready response that come under its electrifying power. There is never an attempt to separate a man from his message. Indeed quite the opposite is the end aimed at today. The man is sure to be in his message, but above all and best of all, the message must be in the man. Out of the heart must come the message and the thoughts for the message whose ultimate issues shall be life.

The man after his message. In a certain sense, paradoxical as it may seem, there is no such thing as a man's being after his message. It were a short-sighted view indeed that would end a preacher's message with his doxology from the pulpit.

Much is said about random speech, or speaking into the air; but as a matter of fact, all speech, random or to the point, has somewhat of this character. But long years after the voice

heard on the occasion of its deliverance has been hushed, the message, his message, lives and may be found at work in the hearts of men.

"I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth I know not where;
Long after in an oak,
I found the arrow still unbroke."

But a preacher severs his connection with, and saps the strength from, an otherwise effective labor, when he is recklessly inconsistent with, and carelessly indifferent to the tenor and spirit of the message of which he has delivered himself. The man-life before, within and behind the sermon has a most vital relation to the source of effective speech as heard from the pulpit.

The man who reflects soberly upon the functions of the preacher-man, the ambassord of God, the steward of the mysteries of God, the representative of a soul before God, and is not startled into a painful consciousness of the responsibilities that devolve upon him, had better move with uncovered head and unsandaled feet; for he walks the verge of disaster.

And what are the functions of the pulpit? M'g'r. Felix Dupauloup, of Orleans, speaks thus of the object set before a Christian preacher: "Men who," he says, "undertake the ministry of the Word in a serious manner do not speak in the pulpit for the mere sake of speaking, but to teach, to convert, and to

save souls."

The orator should be an honest and sincere man. "The beauty of goodness," says Plutarch, "has an attractive power; it kindles in us at once an active principle; forms our movements and influences our desires, not only when represented in a living example, but even in an historical description."

The message without God. Whatever else may be said with regard to eloquence, secular or sacred, it has for its source, of the suggestion at least, an object exterior to, and more often than not, superior to the speaker. This object may be the nobility of character and sterling manhood, as embodied in a life known by the speaker. Or it may be, in some instances, the reflexive action of a subjective ideal. But all forms of effective oratory are more or less the in-breathing influence of an occasion, an object or a person - within or without the speaker - that is generally superior to the speaker.

This is preeminently true of sacred oratory. Religious eloquence, in the truest sense, is tongue-tied if God is not its author and finisher. In Him this sort of speech must live and have its existence. This does not set aside humanity as a channel, nor does it make it and leave it a mere channel. An agent of this kind has been chosen, in the world-purpose of God, as the means by which to carry on this campaign of humanity for humanity's kind. And so long as this is the object, this

the channel, one need not expect to find the currents of the message uncolored and unaffected, by the varying personalities of the channels through which they must flow. This co-operative working of the human and the divine, sometimes more human, sometimes more divine, has registered its law on all things mundane.

The message with God. In the realm of life where man's will is influenced by the power of man's speech, are three divisions, viz., the political platform, the dramatic stage, and the sacred pulpit. At least these are the only two that claim our attention in connection with the third, which forms the subject of this paper.

There is need but for a brief study of these three methods of oratory to find the mark of distinction that separates them. This distinction lies in the short-lived effects of the first two as compared with the effects of the last one.

The political speaker does at times rise to a lofty height of effective eloquence. The enthusiasm of his soul, accompanied by the magnetism of his personality, sometimes does leap from man to man, until a vast concourse of people are burning with the spirit of ~~the spirit of~~ the speaker. Such was the case, for example, at the Chicago Convention, when a young man having no prestige or prowess, coming as it were from the rank and file, stepped upon the platform with a soul full of ambition and enthusiasm, and electrified the thronging minds and won for

himself the nomination to the highest honors his country confers upon man. But where are those glories of yesterday? The chill winds of reality have driven them all away.

It is not an unusual thing to see tears start simultaneously from thousands of eyes as they peer through the haze of some semi-lighted theatre, at the actor who is reproducing some pathetic or heart-touching life scene. Nor is it a rare sight to see an equal number of people, or the same number of the same people, whose cheeks go blanch with horror, or shrink with terror, or shiver with fear, as they listen to some tragedian concoct and work out his diabolical schemes, as only the skilled actor can.

But these effects too, are transitory, their life is of but a moment's duration. Mighty as they are at the first, their force is soon spent, and they fall back, like the billow broken on the crag, to lie in ineffectual passivity, until some succeeding actor has given them life and power.

Not so with the man who stands behind the sacred desk, conscious of his mission, as he is of the source of his power. He speaks, not for the glory of the occasion, nor the praise of the hour, nor for any self-aggrandisement; but for the glory of the crown, for the praise of his king, for the uplift of his fellows and all for the endless hours of eternity. A good deed well done never dies. The only ernest for a permanent and effectual oratory is the unction of the Holy Spirit. God may honor the

efforts of the politician and the actor, but he blesses and binds only the message that has been indicted by Him and delivered by His chosen servant.

Long shall abide the work of man if God be in it; soon shall it topple and fall into oblivion if He be excluded. "For if this work be of man it will come to naught; but if it be of God, you can not overthrow it."