

ARTICLE V.

THE THREE FUNDAMENTAL METHODS OF PREACHING.—
PREACHING EXTEMPORE.

(Continued from Vol. xxix. p. 195).

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§ 5. *Preaching Extempore.*

WHEN a stranger stands before a noted cylinder-machine in the Ardwick Print Works at Manchester, England, he is bewildered by its complicated processes. The yellow or purple cloth is applied to one part of the machine; it is drawn between the main cylinder and the rollers; and, in a few minutes, from another part of the machine it comes forth, not the plain yellow or purple fabric, but variegated with eighteen or twenty different colors, arranged in festoons of leaves and flowers, in crimson arches or scarlet curves. One textile fabric is ornamented so as to gratify the taste of a European princess, another to captivate an Asiatic king; this fabric is modestly adorned for a Fellow at the university, that is highly colored for a half-civilized African. While the stranger walks around this apparatus, he regards it as almost a work of magic. He examines the mordant, the color-boxes filled with brilliant or rich or modest dyes,—more fascinating, some of them, than the Tyrian purple,—the rollers engraved in intaglio and colored by those various dyes, the wheels and bands drawing the fabric when saturated with the base under those sharply-engraved rollers; then he sees that all this apparent magic is the result of explicable laws.

The process of extemporaneous oratory has been compared to the working of such a complicated machine. A man who was not intending to utter a word is suddenly called to address an assembly. He understands the subject which he is to discuss, and his thoughts rise, one after another, in a

fit arrangement. These thoughts awaken within him the appropriate feelings; and the thoughts and the feelings suggest the proper words in their proper places. They affect the tones of his voice; they prompt the expressive gestures. The sound of his own words and the meaning of his own attitudes react upon him and heighten his excitement. New images crowd upon him; illustrations before unthought of occur to him and startle him. The thoughts which had a plain base when he began his address come out now adorned with blooming metaphors. He fears that he may conceal the main idea under the similes which are flowering out as he speaks; he culls some of the flowers, and rejects others. He sees the danger of covering up the great principle by a multiplicity of details; he selects a few of the details, and dismisses the many. He watches his auditors, as well as his theme; he finds that one argument has not produced its intended effect; he introduces new proof which he had designed to omit. He perceives that his appeals to the sensibilities of his audience are more effective than he anticipated; he abridges an exhortation which a moment before he intended to lengthen. Studying the symmetry of his theme, as well as the ornamentation of it, — the appropriateness of his thoughts, words, and tones to his hearers, as well as to his subject, — he does not allow himself to be diverted from the substance of his argument; he turns to his own use the very events which are fitted to confuse him, and causes the distracting scenes of the hour to promote the unity of his efforts. His complicated processes seem to be mysterious; yet there are laws of thought and instincts of expression which make these efforts not only easy to him, but exhilarating. There are many processes of mind which before we engage in them appear simply impossible, and soon after we have entered upon them afford us intense delight. — It must be remembered, however, as the subsequent paragraphs will show, that all extemporary speech is not so strictly *aus dem Stegereife* as the preceding illustration may seem to imply.

I. The Extemporaneous Element in Sermons and its varying Degrees.

One preacher decides on his particular mode of expression and commits his words to paper; another makes the same decision, and commits his words to memory. In the pulpit each of them utters his words as pre-determined. One reads them; the other recites them. The man who preaches extempore is distinguished from the men who read or who preach memoriter, in this respect—he does not finally decide on his particular mode of expression until he is ready to speak. Some of his words may have previously suggested themselves to his mind; but before he is about to utter them he does not regard them as the determinate words which he *must* employ. Certain writers on homiletics make the impression that an extemporaneous address not only *may*, but *must* be unpremeditated. If this impression be the right one, a minister can never preach extempore on any subject of which he had formed a definite opinion before he entered the pulpit. Every unpremeditated speech is, indeed, extemporaneous; but every extemporaneous speech is not unpremeditated. If a man, instead of reading his discourse from a manuscript, or reciting it from memory, delivers it in words which he first resolves to use at the moment of uttering them, he is said to preach *extempore*, because he preserves himself to so great a degree in an extemporizing state of mind.¹ In this state of freedom to select his forms of speech, he will be apt to select new thoughts and new forms of thought at the very instant of expressing them.

That sermon may be most fully extemporaneous which is delivered on a theme not suggested to the minister until he begins his sermon upon it. In certain parts of our country it has been common to employ a test like the following for determining a man's fitness to enter the sacred office.

When Rev. William Elliot "first began to preach, there was a certain Dr. G. in his neighborhood, who would not allow that he [Elliot] was called to the work of the ministry, seeing he was a man of limited edu-

¹ See § 1. I. above.

cation, unless he could preach from a text given him at the very hour at which his meeting was appointed. Mr. Elliot, who had entered the ministry with great diffidence, and who was willing to get rid of the responsibility of the sacred office if he could honestly do so, consented to submit his call to the test proposed by Dr. G. A meeting was appointed in the week-time. Information was spread in relation to it. The hour arrived; the people came together; and the text was given him, which was: 'A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about' (Ex. xxviii. 34). He looked at it awhile, and could see nothing in it. He read the opening hymn, and while the people were singing he looked at it again; but, not discovering a single idea which he could hold up before the assembly, he began to think he must confess that he had no call to the work of the ministry. However, he thought he would go as far as he could. So, when the hymn was sung, he said, 'Let us pray.' In this exercise he enjoyed in an unusual degree the aid of the Holy Spirit. During the singing of the second hymn, he was constantly revolving his text in his mind, but no ray of light seemed to fall upon it. In this state of embarrassment, he saw nothing before him but the announcement, so mortifying to his friends and so gratifying to the Doctor, that he had been deceived in the notion that he was called to preach. But he had been assisted thus far in the meeting, and it still seemed right and proper that he should go as far as he could; so he would read the text, and then, if he had nothing to say from it, he would make his confession. He read the passage; impenetrable darkness still rested upon it; but it was not time to stop until, according to custom, he had read it a second time. And now, suddenly, light bursts upon his soul. The text seems full of the gospel. The golden bell suggests its precious sound among the people, awakening, directing, comforting the souls of men. The pomegranate suggests the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The high-priest's robe points to the righteousness of Christ. He finds enough to say. He preaches an evangelical discourse; he preaches with an unwonted fluency; and the question seems to be settled in every mind that he is called of God to preach the gospel."¹

As we see that one sermon may be extemporaneous in reference to its very subject, so another may be extemporaneous in reference to all but its precise theme; a third, in reference to all but its theme and the arrangement of its main thoughts; a fourth, in reference to all but its theme, the arrangement and illustrations of its main thoughts; a fifth, in reference to nothing at all except its language. So various are the degrees of the extemporaneous element

¹ Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit, pp. 238, 239.

in sermons belonging to the extemporaneous class, that while a man is excogitating one of these sermons, he may go so far as to write; not, indeed, as a writer, but as a cautious thinker; not using his manuscript as a record, but as a regulator of his ideas; not aiming to fix in their definite relations the phrases which he will pronounce in the pulpit, but striving merely to confine his attention to the ideas expressed in these phrases. Whenever he writes a sentence for the sake of impressing on his mind the terms which he will use in public, he borrows aid from the "written" or the "memoriter" mode, and just so far ceases to be a pure extemporizer.

II. The Qualifications, in their Varying Degrees, for Preaching Extempore.

In order to obtain perfect success in this form of eloquence, a minister must have an intellect quick to see, strong to grasp, and steady to hold the truths appropriate to his discourse; a power of reading the countenances of his hearers, detecting the needs of the moment, and uttering the words adapted to those needs; a fertile imagination; an acute and deep sensibility, assuming the phase of a fitting interest in his subject, and also in his audience; a modest, but still a courageous, temper; a firm and steadfast will, controlling his thoughts and emotions, and making himself "master of the circumstances" in which he speaks; an active sympathy with his auditors and a magnetic power over them; a rich, or at least a large vocabulary; an easy elocution; a natural impulse, as well as moral choice, to express what he thinks and feels, and thus draw his hearers into harmony with himself. The minister who has all which is implied in these requisites was made for preaching extempore, as a nightingale was made for singing. We are pleased, however, with the linnnet and the lark, although they can never warble like the nightingale.

A preacher may want some, and yet may have so many, of the above-named qualifications as to promise a fair,

though not a full, measure of success. He may be, like Lammennais, so far deficient in "collectedness, presence of mind, self-reliance, and self-control" that he ought not to venture on preaching an unwritten sermon to even a small company of children.¹ A man of sound mental health, however, is seldom in this condition of impotence. The imagined inability to speak extempore is, in general, a result of mental disease. A minister may be able to preach without notes on one subject, but not on another; before one audience, but not before another; one part of a sermon, but not another part. This appropriateness of his services to his own characteristics may not only save himself from failure, but may also save his pulpit from monotony.

A preacher, for example, has a vigorous intellect, but not a vivid imagination; he should then extemporize a didactic, but may write a descriptive, sermon. He has a profound sensibility, but not a power of controlling it; then he should extemporize an argumentative, but may write a pathetic, discourse. He has a quick sympathy with his audience, but not a ready command of words; then he should extemporize a sermon on a familiar subject, but may write on a subject lying out of the circle in which he is at home. "Non omnes possumus omnia." There has been an effective orator who had only one eye; another who had only one arm. Here a man has converted his indistinct articulation into a means of impressive speech; there he has derived a new power from a curved spine. Scores of clergymen have turned a slow articulation into a source of increased emphasis. Hundreds of them may do for their minds what Demosthenes did for his vocal organs. While regarding themselves as "destitute of the organ of language," they are every day preaching extempore, without knowing it. Their fluent remarks in the evening conference,

¹ John Calvin in another sphere undertook to subdue nature, as many can subdue it in some degree. While acknowledging that he was not born a poet, he says, in allusion to the only poem which he ever wrote: "Quod natura negat, studii pius efficit ardor." — Felix Bungener's Life of Calvin (Edinburgh ed.), p. 150.

in the chamber of the sick, in the parlor interview, may be easily expanded, or perhaps contracted, into sermons. All the conversation of some men is preaching. In talking most familiarly with a friend, Dr. Emmons would unconsciously divide his remarks into Proposition, Proof, and Improvement. Men who plead their inability to extemporize in the pulpit will extemporize in lengthened interviews on business, and where their facility of expression fails, they will consult a memorandum — either recite it from memory, or read it without lifting their eyes from it. Many of these men would be successful in preaching impromptu, if they would yield in the pulpit, as they do in conversation, to the peculiar bent of their own natures ; speaking freely what they are qualified to utter without notes ; reading or reciting what they are unfitted to utter otherwise ; not losing heart or resolution in extemporizing one sermon because they have not the aptitude for extemporizing another ; obeying the laws of their constitution, which are the laws of God.

Before we consider the benefits or the evils of extemporary preaching, it may be well to consider the rules for it. The observance of these rules is a condition of the highest success, and the neglect of them is a cause of the frequent failure in this method of discourse. It is to be remembered, however, that, as there are varying degrees in which men pursue and are qualified to pursue the extemporary method, so the following rules are in varying degrees conditions of success in it.

III. Rules for Extemporary Preaching.

1. The direction more fundamental than any other is : Cherish an earnest religious spirit. Mr. Spurgeon is excelled by many as an extemporaneous orator ; not by many, however, as an extemporaneous preacher. Why ? He does not seem to be laboring for a thought or a word ; to be making any effort for the attainment of any grace of language or elocution ; to be arraying himself in a Sabbath costume, or assuming any appearance which his daily life in any degree

falsifies. A minister's expressions must be the fresh outflowings of his own heart, or they will not reach the hearts of others. A *man* must live behind his sermon; not a professional man, but a real, breathing man of God. Not only his words, but his life also, must be eloquence — “a visible rhetoric.” An occasional piety is not enough; an habitual goodness must glisten in his eye and warble in the tones of his voice. Oratory is in the soul rather than in empty air.

It is not through an arbitrary fiat of the Creator that a fervid Christian sentiment makes a sermon effective; it is through the laws of the human constitution, which, resulting from the appointment of God, are the channels of his supernatural influence. The rules of sacred rhetoric do not *meet* the spirit of the Bible moving in an opposite direction, but *follow* it moving in the same way. They are philosophically involved in, or else they indirectly result from, the general direction to maintain the spirit of love to God and love to man. Rhetorical rules prescribe that an extemporaneous preacher feel an absorbing interest in his theme; thus they demand piety, which involves this very interest. They prescribe that he have, and that he manifest, an attachment to his hearers; thus they require piety, which includes this very benevolence — a respect for the immortal beings who are addressed and a desire to make their immortality a blessing to them. If every good man, then of course a good minister, is “a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river,” and sendeth her branches outward to meet men, as well as upward to meet God. The canons of rhetoric demand that a man who speaks impromptu be so confident of success as to be free from perturbation in his discourse, that he be ready for what Sir Edward Coke terms “the occasion sudden, the practice dangerous.” Now, a Christian spirit involves the faith which overcometh the world, removeth mountains, and is the analogue of natural courage.¹ These laws prescribe that he be

¹ In “The Heart of Mid-Lothian” Jeanie Deans on her way to the Duke of Argyle, is represented as saying, “I hae nae doubt to do that for which I am

free from self-consciousness and love of display; thus they require the religious temper, prompting him to hide his life with Christ in God. Rhetorical rules insist that he have a resolute volition, bearing and urging him along through all the scenes which might otherwise divert and interrupt him; the religious principle includes this volition, and induces him to exclaim: "I cannot but speak the things which I have seen and heard." Masters of rhetoric prescribe that an orator be able to control his feelings: a sanctified will is a power of self-control; besides, the feelings of a devout man do not need the same curb which is required for the undevout. Quintilian, Cicero, and Horace tell the orator that he must sympathize with his hearers; this fellow-feeling with them is an attendant and a source of a desire to communicate his own mind to theirs; and this desire, conjoined with this sympathy, helps to give him the personal magnetism which is one secret of extemporaneous oratory: but the earnest religious life involves in itself these talismanic elements; it is the action, action, action on which sacred oratory depends; it is the fulfilment of the promise: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." On philosophical grounds, then, the success of extemporaneous preaching presupposes a Christian spirit in the minister; and the more fervid this spirit, so much the more effective, *ceteris paribus*, will be his discourses. There are many other reasons which justify the oft-quoted saying of Quintilian: "Non posse oratorem esse nisi virum bonum."¹ It is remarked of Paul Veronese (and what is true of a painter and his works is emphatically true of a preacher and his sermons): "An amiable piety was the foundation of his precious qualities, and did not diminish the agreeableness of his intercourse. He did not believe that without virtue one could be a painter of the first rank;

come — I canna doubt it — I winna think to doubt it; because, if I haena full assurance, how shall I bear myself with earnest entreaties in the great folks presence?"—*Waverley Novels* (Parker's ed.) Vol. xii. p. 34.

¹ Quin. Inst. Ora. lib. xii. cap. 1.

and he often said: 'Painting is a gift from God. That which crowns all the qualities necessary to a great painter is probity and integrity of life.'"¹

This general rule comprehends many specific ones. Among them are the following:

A. Think more of doing good than of doing well. One of Pascal's aphorisms is: "Think nothing about talking well, except when it is proper to be eloquent; and then think as much as you please about it."² *Then* think as much as you please, provided that you do not please to think much. There is, indeed, a healthful love of perfection, and this is a stimulus to the soul. A man should not be *satisfied* until everything which he does is done perfectly; but in this indolent world he may be *gratified*, if anything which he does is done well. He should aim at a higher mark than he will reach; so he will reach a higher mark than if his aim had been lower. The more advanced his faculties and attainments, so much the more effective may be his sermon. His effort should be to make his sermon as useful as amid all his unfitnesses he can make it, and thus to acquire a kind of relative, while he despairs of an absolute, perfection. But in order to do this he must think more of his subject, and less of himself; more of making other men Christians, and less of making himself a perfect orator. If a man preach for the sake of pleasing himself, he will lose what he hopes to earn; but if he forgets his own pleasure and preaches for the sake of improving others, he will gain what he is willing to lose. Absorbed with love to the truth of God, he keeps open a magnetic communication between that truth and his own soul, and this is a main channel through which the truth passes into the souls of his hearers. Volumes of homiletics are compressed into that hackneyed saying of John Milton: "True eloquence I find to be none but the serious and hearty love of truth; and that whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know

¹ Galerie des Peintres, le plus célèbres: Vie de Paul Véronèse, p. 2.

² Thoughts on Eloquence and Style, xxxiii.

good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others — when such a man would speak, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command; and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.”

B. Cherish a deeper interest in the approval of God than in that of man. Mr. John Mason, in his “Student and Pastor,” advises: “View your theme in every light; collect your best thoughts upon it, and consider how Mr. Addison, Mr. Melmoth, or any other writer you admire would express the same.”¹ But when a preacher thinks more of such critics than of his final Judge he will speak in the fear of committing some literary blunder, and will thus be apt to rush into the very mistake which he dreads. He will be embarrassed by his mispronunciation of a word, or his violation of a grammatical rule, instead of being emboldened by the truth and buoyant with the hope that God will bless it. But is there not a wholesome fear of offending, and thus injuring some miniature Addison or Melmoth? Yes; many eminent orators, like Martin Luther, have never entered the pulpit without a tremor. This tremor has been stimulating; but a good servant may be a bad master. An *excess* of such fear deters many from attempting to speak extempore, or prevents their success in the attempt. They feel the danger of committing this or that verbal error, which they do commit simply because they are thinking of it. They are mortified if they lapse into a pardonable mistake, and this mortification plunges them into an unpardonable one. If a sailor climbing the mast thinks much of falling, he will fall. When a swimmer becomes timid, he sinks. Several rhetoricians have said, in the aphoristic words of Oliver Goldsmith, that “to feel one’s subject thoroughly, and to speak without fear, are the only rules of eloquence.” Now perfect love casteth out all such fear as brings “torment” and confusion of mind. The desire to gain the approval of God modifies, without expelling, the desire to gain the approval of Mr.

¹ Pages 35, 36 (2d ed.).

Addison and Mr. Melmoth; it also modifies the chagrin resulting from having disgusted them. If we desire to *be* perfect in his view more than to *be esteemed* perfect by the high-priests of letters, we shall be raised above disquietudes concerning our blunders in orthoepy and syntax. He smiles on his servants who speak boldly as they ought to speak, even if they are guilty of an awkward gesture. A felt harmony with the Framer of our spirits is like a band of music cheering us onward in our discourse. The loudest plaudits of a congregation are less enlivening than the still small voice of conscience as it anticipates the decision: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

We do not plan the construction and relative positions of the pipes for conveying water into a city, until we ascertain whether there be streams and springs copious enough and pure enough for satisfying the citizens; still we have not provided for the wants of the city by merely finding a river or lake which will furnish a supply of water; we must introduce the water into the houses and gardens and playing fountains, by a net-work of hidden conduits. So while all rules of sacred eloquence are nugatory unless the orator have a fountain of religious feeling within him, yet there are some processes better than others for enabling him to serve as a channel transmitting that feeling into the hearts of other men. We must consider, therefore, some subordinate rules for extemporary eloquence.

2. Take a healthful view of your own talents, and regulate your speech according to them. Every rule for Whitefield is not imperative on Wesley. There is a healthiness of soul which results, it may be, from healthiness of body, and forms one condition of a preacher's success. Remember the law of "the herb, yielding seed *after his kind*, and the tree yielding fruit *after his kind*." The elm affords a grateful shade although it never yields a rose. "Cuilibet in arte sua credendum est." One man may illustrate the benefits of the extemporary method in his exhortations, but would bring it

into disrepute if he should adopt it in his narratives. While not attempting to do what others do and you cannot, you may venture to do what others cannot do and you can. This was the wisdom of David when he went to meet Goliath. Under this rule are comprehended several others. Among them are the following :

A. Never yield to a morbid spirit, as if it were necessarily a humble one. There may be no pride in forming a high estimate of one's self, if the estimate be fair and just ; the virtue of humility does not consist in forming a low opinion of one's self, when such an opinion is not merited. It is often the diseased rather than the lowly mind which leads a man to depreciate his own talents ; and the temper which is easily disheartened may sometimes come from an overweening, rather than a deficient, love of esteem. There are men who are bold enough to write their sermons while they know that they want some requisites for perfect composition ; but they are not bold enough to extemporize while they know that they possess many requisites for that service. They are more dispirited by their want of some, than encouraged by their possession of other, aptitudes for their work. They extemporize, therefore, with a despondent aspect and despairing tone. *If they dared* they might speak without a manuscript more forcefully than with it ; but their sense of imperfection in some things makes them anticipate a failure in everything, and causes their "free speech" to be less free than their reading from "the papers." If they would not yield to a sickly temper they might say with one of Walter Scott's heroines : "I have that within me that will keep my heart from failing, and I am amaisure sure that I will be strengthened to speak the errand I came for."¹

B. Do not imagine that a few mortifying failures prove your unfitness for free speech. The example not only of Demosthenes, but of other eminent men, may encourage us to persevere in an exercise which balks our hopes at first.

¹ Waverley Novels (Parker's ed.), Vol. xii. p. 25.

“In the study of the law,” says Mr. Gray, “the labor is long and the elements dry and uninteresting; nor was ever anybody (*especially those that afterwards made a figure in it*) amused, or even not disgusted at the beginning.” “The famous antiquary, Spelman,” says Burke, “though no man was better formed for the most laborious pursuits, in the beginning deserted the study of the laws in despair—though he returned to it again, when a more confirmed age, and a strong desire of knowledge, enabled him to wrestle with every difficulty.”¹ In like manner the preacher best fitted to extemporize is apt to experience the most formidable obstacles at first. He will succeed if he be intrepid enough to endure a few mortifications, and he will be intrepid enough if he reflect on his aptitudes for self-improvement. *Fit fabricando faber.* When Dr. Thomas Scott, about the year 1777, was struggling with the difficulties of preaching without notes, he said despairingly: “It does not signify, it is impossible that I should ever be able to preach extempore”;² but he was not permanently disheartened, for he seldom, after that year, preached a sermon which he had written. A minister will not extemporize well, unless, like Dr. Scott, he be humble enough to use imperfect powers, and hopeful enough to make his two talents four, and his five talents ten. He will not have success unless he expect it, and he will not expect it, unless after a careful study of his own fitnesses, he believe that God has called him to preach extempore, and will bless an imperfect service if it be well meant. The minister who adopts as his motto “Perfection or nothing,” “*Aut Caesar, aut nullus,*” will sacrifice a good which he has the power of doing, to the imagination of a good which may be possible for some other men but not for him. Mr. Wordsworth, in his Preface to “The Excursion,” has the following suggestive remark: “Several years ago, when the author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being able to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of *his own mind,*

¹ Warren's Law Studies, pp. 704, also 21.

² Life of Scott, p. 77.

and examine how far nature and education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them."

3. Continue the practice of elaborate writing as an aid to the practice of extemporary preaching.¹ "Maximus vero studiorum fructus est et velut præmium quoddam amplius longi laboris, *ex tempore dicendi facultas*: quam qui non erit consecutus, mea quidem sententia civilibus officiis renunciat et solam scribendi facultatem potius ad alia opera convertet."² Foreign critics say of Americans, that we begin the culture of speech-making before we "begin the culture of thought"; we "dissolve instead of crystallizing truth in words"; we do "not estimate a phrase at its precise value," do "not regard a word as a thing too precious to be squandered." What is thus said of Americans may be said of nearly all men who speak much and write little. They are apt to ramble rather than go forward. They expose every unwritten address to the suspicion of being cumbrous, or slovenly, or vague, or erratic, even when it is not so. If ministers would adhere to the habit of writing a model discourse as often as they can, they would be habitually storing their mind with seed-thoughts which would germinate in healthful extemporary sermons. This habit would lend a factitious and also a real value to all their addresses, would give to them both force and authority, would break up a popular association of the loose and superficial with the unwritten. As the stones of a cathedral are fitted to each other in the distant quarry, so the structure of an extemporary sermon is often predetermined in the elaborating of a written one. Theology was Dr. Priestley's work and chemistry his recreation; but he is thought to have accomplished more in his amusement than in his labor. Writing is regarded as work, and extemporizing is looked upon as play; but unless the work be solid, the play will be frivolous. Cicero says of himself: "Fateor me oratorem

¹ See § 2. I. 1 above.

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² Quintilian, x. 7.

non ex rhetorum officinis, sed ex academiae spatiis extitisse.¹ On the same principle, when a man is devoting all his energies to the writing of one exact and well-proportioned discourse he is preparing himself for numerous extemporaneous addresses; he is excavating a dam which will result in turning a thousand spindles.

The example of Dr. Thomas Scott is often cited in favor of sermons which are extemporaneous in thought as well as in language, and are not intermingled with discourses elaborately written. "For more than five and thirty years he never put pen to paper in preparing for the pulpit, except in the case of three or four sermons, preached on particular occasions, and expressly intended for publication; yet no one who heard him would complain of crudeness or want of thought in his discourses: they were rather faulty in being overcharged with matter, and too argumentative for the generality of hearers."² While residing in London as preacher at the Lock Hospital, Lecturer at St. Mildred's, Broad Street, and also at Lothbury, he conducted his Sabbath services in the following manner.

"At four o'clock in the morning of every alternate Sunday, winter as well as summer, the watchman gave one heavy knock at the door, and Mr. Scott and an old maid-servant arose, — for he could not go out without his breakfast. He then set forth to meet a congregation at a church in Lothbury, about three miles and a half off; — I rather think the only church in London attended so early as six o'clock in the morning. I think he had from two to three hundred auditors, and administered the sacrament each time. He used to observe that, if at any time, in his early walk through the streets in the depth of winter, he was tempted to complain, the view of the newsmen equally alert, and for a very different object, changed his repinings into thanksgivings. From the city he returned home, and about ten o'clock assembled his family to prayers: immediately after which, he proceeded to the chapel, where he performed the whole service, with the administration of the sacrament on the alternate Sundays, when he did not go to Lothbury. His sermons, you know, were most ingeniously brought into an exact hour; just about the same time, as I have heard him say, being spent in composing them. I well remember accompanying him to the afternoon church in Bread Street (nearly as far as Lothbury), after his taking his dinner without sitting

¹ Orator. c. 8.

² The Life of Dr. Scott, p. 148.

down. On this occasion I hired a hackney-coach : but he desired me not to speak, as he took that time to prepare his sermon. I have calculated that he could not go much less than fourteen miles in the day, frequently the whole of it on foot, besides the three services, and at times a fourth sermon at Longacre Chapel, or elsewhere, on his way home in the evening : and then he concluded the whole with family prayer, and that not a very short one. Considering his bilious and asthmatic habit, this was immense labor ! And all this I knew him do very soon after, if not the very next Sunday after he had broken a rib by falling down the cabin-stairs of a Margate packet : and it seemed to me as if he passed few weeks without taking an emetic " ?¹

This remarkable record of Dr. Scott does, indeed, in some, but not in all respects, oppose the theory of preaching maintained in the present and in the second section of this Treatise. He was not engaged during the week in writing sermons, it is true ; but he was composing works on theology and comments on the Bible, all of which were afterwards published and republished, sometimes in eight, sometimes in ten, octavo volumes. These compositions were, instead of elaborate sermons, the " bark and steel " for his mind. Such was his energy of mental application that when about fifty-three years of age he began to make himself a master of the Hebrew language, and when about sixty he began to acquire the Arabic. His enterprise as a theological instructor, together with his assiduity as a theological author, saved him from the dissipating influences which tend to unnerve the man given up to frequent speaking and no writing.

4. Discipline your mind rigidly in such exercises as will be of immediate advantage to your sermons. He who preaches extempore ought to be a solid thinker, able not only to look *over* a subject easily, but also to look *into* it, and *through* it. If he not only knows the truth, but also knows that he knows it, he will go forward, like a man treading on firm ground, and will avoid that vacillating spirit which betrays itself in incoherent language. " Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." A man may accumulate many ideas, and be unable to master them — may take a heavier load than he can

¹ The Life of Dr. Scott, pp. 147, 148.

carry. It is said that Bayle not only had a contempt for the mathematics, but was utterly ignorant of even the first propositions of Euclid. The mathematical discipline, however, is important for an extemporaneous orator. Eminent advocates have been wont to demonstrate a difficult geometrical theorem immediately before they commenced an argument in court. Their minds were steadied, thereby, for the legal conflict.

As a minister may gather numerous ideas, and yet fail in the power of severe thought, so he may be able to think vigorously, and yet be destitute of that knowledge which will afford matter for his sermons. Therefore the rule is not: Discipline your mind rigidly, *and also* accumulate knowledge; but the rule is: Discipline your mind rigidly *in accumulating* such knowledge as will be useful to your hearers. This general direction includes various subordinate ones:

A. Study the Bible with especial care. Arrange for yourself, in a logical or rhetorical order, the more important illustrative or proof-texts. Commit them to memory in their fitting relations. They *are*, and they *give* intellectual and moral wealth. When the speaker is perturbed, and his mind becomes a vacuum, these inspired words will rush into it, and give relief to him, as well as comfort to his audience. If he be like the "Boanerges Stormheaven" of Sir Walter Scott, he will be able to close a stormy sentence with a biblical text, and thus to redeem the sentence from the charge of mere windiness. The hearers wonder how he will come down from his flight in the air, without striking suddenly on the ground or rock; but he saves himself from the fall by catching at a verse of scripture, and then rises, like a swallow flying upward from the earth which it has well-nigh touched. If an illiterate minister can thus glide out of the region of "extemporaneous nonsense," then an educated minister can add new wealth and dignity to his discourses by quoting scriptures instinct with thought. One text will remind him of another, and the other will disclose

new treasures of wisdom ; and he will not wander in search of ideas, for " it is not he that speaks, but the Spirit of his Father which speaketh in him." The richness and fulness of many a biblical text is illustrated by the legend of the Dresden egg. A young prince sent an iron egg to the damsel who was betrothed to him. Not knowing its inward worth, she threw it on the ground. The shock started a hidden spring, and a silver yolk rolled out. Taking up the yolk, she touched another spring, and a golden chicken revealed itself. She touched a secret spring in the chicken, and discovered a crown in it ; she touched a spring concealed in the crown, and was surprised to find therein a diamond marriage ring. The verse of the Bible may be a short one ; but it contains a diamond within the gold, and the gold secreted in the silver, and the silver hidden in the iron ; each outward cover opening into a concealed, but rarer, treasure.

Providence has doubtless made a great inequality among men in their power of verbal memory. No power, however, is more capable of improvement than this. A clergyman may be expected to make this improvement by a discipline at least equal to that of a statesman. After William Wilberforce had reached his sixtieth year, he committed to memory the whole of the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, as he walked day after day from his lodgings to the House of Commons.¹ His speeches, as well as character, illustrated the advantages of this discipline. It is recorded as a rhetorical fault of the Virginian, Samuel L. Straughan, that he would often quote nearly a hundred texts in a single extemporary sermon.² The ability to commit such a fault is a rare excellence. It is, indeed, often conjoined with a weak judgment. Mr. Samuel Warren describes a collier whom he had known in Somersetshire, named Victory Purdey, who had the whole Bible by heart. " Mention only one word of any verse, and he would tell you exactly where it was to be

¹ See *Life of Wilberforce*, Vol. v. p. 45.

² *Annals of the American Baptist Pulpit*, pp. 516, 517.

found, *cum pertinentiis*, with unfaltering readiness and precision. Not a step further, however, could poor Victory go. As far as *reasoning* went he was an idiot. He could no more have put two texts together than he could have flown."¹ Such instances, even if painted in exaggerated colors, afford a real solace to some men who are unable to speak without their manuscript. From their want of memory they infer their possession of genius. They forget that Seneca remembered "two thousand names in the same order in which they were spoken to him"; that the greatest orators in the world have been distinguished for their power of recollecting words; and that a verbal memory, combined, as it may be, with "the understrapping virtue of discretion," is essential to the highest power of extemporaneous eloquence. Indeed, one of the greatest rhetoricians of the world has said: "Tantum ingenii, quantum memoriae."

B. Study the truths of theological science. Form for yourself a syllabus of them. Express each of these truths in terse, suggestive language. Repeat that expression often, and engrave it on your memory. Let a single brief paragraph be such as will intimate the nature and relations of the truth, as a single bone intimated to Cuvier the whole anatomical structure of the animal to which it belonged. A jurist is advised to commit to memory hundreds of legal maxims, each one unfolding a legal principle, each one suggesting a condensed treatise on law. Books of such maxims are printed for him. If a preacher would write in a volume a system of such religious aphorisms as he has framed for himself, he would find that volume one of his best means of discipline. The objector says: "What is committed to paper is but seldom committed to the mind." Dr. Johnson supposed that "the act of writing distracts the thoughts, and what is twice read is commonly better remembered than what is transcribed." But that which a man writes *and* which he also repeatedly reads is better remembered than that which he reads without having written. On the memory

¹ Law Studies, pp. 791, 797.

of ordinary men, if not on that of Dr. Johnson, the act of writing tends to make a deep impression; for, first, it prolongs their attention to the thought; and, secondly, it is, as it were, a kind of *touch*, and brings a new sense to aid the eye, and two senses are more impressive than one. If a clergyman, when he has written an elaborate sermon, will reduce various parts of it into terse, pithy expressions of truth, and will add them to his collection of aphoristic statements, he will be constantly accumulating hints for his unwritten sermons. These hints will divide and subdivide themselves into the materials for saving him from "extemporaneous platitudes." He will enjoy the fruit which he has gathered with his own hands. He will more freely use the property which he has earned than that which he has inherited or borrowed. If Dr. Emmons had listened to unwritten discourses tinged with such apothegms, he would not have called "extempore" preachers "pro-tempore" preachers, and said that "the most important requisites for an extemporaneous preacher are ignorance, impudence, and presumption; it is a great blessing to be able to talk half an hour about nothing."

C. Persevere in the habit of reading religious truth in the book of nature, in the secular sciences, in the useful and fine arts, in history. There are "sermons in stones," in water-wheels, in noble actions, in wars, in shipwrecks. Pictures are in sermons, and sermons in pictures. We are astonished at the variety of knowledge accumulated by the great painters of Europe. Leonardo da Vinci was a musical performer and composer, a poet, sculptor, architect, engineer, anatomist, chemist, astronomer, mathematician; he was skilled in mechanics and various branches of natural history; he anticipated many discoveries of modern science. He and other great painters acted on the principle that there is a *commune vinculum* between all the arts and all the sciences. In an eminent degree is there a connection between theology and other studies. Therefore it is said that a minister must know something of everything, although he cannot know

everything of anything. If he know nothing except theology, he does not know theology. A man who is *merely* a preacher will be a lop-sided one. Dr. Thomas Scott began his ministerial life without a decidedly evangelical spirit. "For several years," he writes, "I scarcely opened a book which treated of anything besides religion." His biographer adds that, afterward, "when his mind was made up and well-stored with information upon theological questions, . . . his reading became as various as he had the opportunity of making it. No book which furnished knowledge that might be turned to account was uninteresting to him." He read "the Greek tragedians and other classic authors," also such works as Thornton on Paper Credit, Locke's Treatises on Money, etc., etc.¹ He often repeated the saying that a clergyman should wander through all the fields of literature, but should bring back to his profession, as a bee to its hive, all the fruits which he had gleaned. If a man be a mere thinker, there is danger of his being a bald preacher; if he be a mere reader, there is danger of his becoming desultory in the pulpit. He must think in order to read well, and must read in order to think well. "There be two things to be avoyded by him [the lawyer, says Coke] as enemies to learning — *praepostera lectio et praepropera praxis.*" There are two things to be avoided by the clerical scholar — the habit of merely professional thinking and the habit of merely discursive reading.² If he be able to illustrate religious truths by allusions to the stars and the mines, to the depths of the ocean and the heights of the mountains, to what he has seen and heard, as well as read, he will avoid the *hiatus* to which ill-trained extemporizers are exposed, and will not be driven to take up their cry: "A fronte praecipitium, a tergo lupus."

As the mental application of a man who preaches *ex libidine*

¹ Life of Dr. Scott, pp. 72, 73.

² "I was disposed to think well of him [a man who had recently entered upon public life] till I heard him say that for the last four years he had READ *fourteen hours a day!* I have never thought anything of him since. From that time, whatever I have seen or known of him, has convinced me that he spoke truly." — Quoted by Mr. Warren in his "Law Studies." p. 123.

should be *extensive*, as well as *intensive*, he will combine both of these qualities in applying himself to systems of logic and mental philosophy. These systems are intimately allied with Biblical truth, suggest various arguments for it, various answers to the objections against it, various illustrations of it. Robert Hall could never have excelled as he did in extemporary speech, unless he had also excelled as a logician and mental philosopher. When wearied and sickened with the drudgery of his profession, Mr. Choate happened to see for the first time a copy of Sir William Hamilton's "Reid." He revived at once, and exclaimed: "Here's food. Now I will go home and feast. There's true poetry in these metaphysicians."¹ They inure a preacher to think for himself; they stimulate him to express definite ideas; and "hearers," says Dr. Emmons, "will always give you their attention, if you give them anything to attend to."

D. Accustom yourself to speak extempore in an orderly and apposite style on the more difficult themes of sermons. If you can manage hard themes in private, you can manage easy themes in public. Daily express your thoughts on some doctrine or duty; explaining the nature of it, the reasons for it, the objections to it. Extemporize thus from day to day on the whole system of dogmatic and practical theology. After you have perused a book, state the substance of it in accurate language. Classify your ideas on one theme after another until you are able to speak on it without much premeditation. Select the most embarrassing subject on which you have been reading, marshal your thoughts upon it as suddenly as you can; express them aloud in a style as coherent, concise, and appropriate as possible. Pursue these exercises not only in private but also in the social circle. One of the best methods of discipline which ministers can adopt is, to frame and criticise extemporaneous plans of sermons in a society formed for the purpose. A text is given out; no member of the society knows beforehand what the text is to be; every member is required to frame at once

¹ Dr. Brown's *Life and Writings of Rufus Choate*, Vol. i. p. 304.

the syllabus of a sermon on the topic thus unexpectedly proposed; each one presents his syllabus for criticism within a few minutes after he hears of the subject; he thus learns to think for himself, to think rapidly as well as consecutively, to think amid some distracting influences. He learns the faults to which he is most exposed in sermonizing; for his easily besetting faults are those which present themselves in his unpremeditated movements. He has an incentive to prepare himself for these impromptu efforts by storing his mind with knowledge and acquiring a habit of self-control.¹ Precisely here is the usefulness of debating societies. They furnish the gymnastics for an extemporaneous preacher. He learns in them to think rapidly and warily; to look at a subject on all sides; to look at the past and the future impression of his words. William Pinkney, Sir Samuel Romilly, Lord Mansfield, were indebted for no small degree of their eminence to their exercises in such associations.² "Burke's fondness for the pursuits of a statesman, if not first acquired in debating societies, was certainly first manifested and greatly augmented in them. . It is stated of that able politician that the acquaintance with history which marked his future life, and which tended to the development of much of his political wisdom, was fostered by occasional meetings of the incipient Historical Society, — "an institution," says the biographer of Curran, "which, as a school of eloquence,

¹ During the years 1836-47, when the author instructed classes in Homiletics, he often met them for the extemporaneous framing and criticising of plans of sermons, and noticed that some of the students formed better plans under the stimulus of this exercise than they formed in their private study.

² Many American orators (Henry Clay, for example, as recorded in his Memoir by Colton, p. 25), have been indebted for their extemporary skill to the same exercise of social debate. Sir Walter Scott has thus stated one principle on which the usefulness of this discipline depends: "Under the influence of any partial feeling, it is certain that most men can more easily reconcile themselves to any favorite measure, when agitating it in their own mind, than when obliged to expose its merits to a third party, when the necessity of seeming impartial procures for the opposite arguments a much more fair statement than that which he affords it in tacit meditation." — *Waverley Novels* (Parker's edition), Vol. xii. p. 218.

was unrivalled, and has given to the bar and the senate some of their brightest ornaments.”¹

Here, as elsewhere, we perceive that the clerical profession is kindred to the legal, and the gymnastics requisite for the one are also requisite for the other. It is a suggestive fact, that the lawyer is often advised to discipline himself on a theological treatise. He has been required to go through a drill on “The Religion of Protestants a safe way to Salvation,” — the great work of Chillingworth, which has been recommended as a model of reasoning by Lord Coke, Lord Mansfield, Archbishop Tillotson, John Locke, Lord Clarendon, Mosheim, Gibbon, Warburton, Hallam, and many others. In his popular and practical Introduction to Law Studies,² Mr. Warren prescribes the following exercitation on at least the second chapter of Chillingworth’s treatise :

“Take first a birds-eye view of the whole chapter; and then apply yourself leisurely to the first half dozen pages. Pause after reading a few sentences; look off the book into your mind, and satisfy yourself that the *thought*, not the language, is *there*, fully and distinctly. Go thus through the work, carefully marking the stages of the argument, the connection of each thought with the other, and the general bearing of the whole. Set your author, as it were, at a little distance from you. Watch how warily he approaches his opponent.” Can you discover “a defect or a redundancy either in thought or in expression? Can you put your finger anywhere upon a fallacy? Try; tax your ingenuity and acuteness to the uttermost! Having thoroughly possessed yourself of the whole argument, put away your book and memoranda, and try to go over it in your mind. Endeavor to repeat it aloud, as if in oral controversy; thus testing not only the clearness and accuracy of your perceptions, but the strength of your memory — the readiness and fitness of your language. Let not a film of indistinctness remain in your recollection, but clear it away, *instantly*, by reference — if necessary — to your book. Not content even with this, make a point, the next day, of writing down the substance of your yesterday’s reading, in as compendious and *logical a form* as possible, and go on thus, step by step, through the whole argument. Having so looked minutely at the means and the end, at the process and the result, at the whole and its parts; having completely mastered this celebrated argument in all its bearings, you will be conscious of having undergone unusual and severe exertion — of having received an invaluable lesson from one of the subtlest and most powerful disputants — one of the closest

¹ Hoffman’s Course of Legal Study, Vol. i. pp. 808–810. / ² pp. 218–224.

and most skilful *reasoners*, whom perhaps the world ever saw. All the faculties of your mind — many of them, it may be, till then dormant and torpid, will have been drawn into full play; will have been, as it were, set upon the *qui vive*. You will see at once both your weak and your strong points, and guide your future efforts accordingly."

E. Adopt various methods for regulating the instinct, and gaining the art of expression. A man may be moved by the dictates of conscience to make his thoughts known, but he will speak with the greater power if his natural impulses come to the aid of his sense of duty. When he is in a normal state and is reflecting on the subject of his discourse, his thoughts sooner or later classify themselves and enlist his affections; then comes the impulse to tell what he thinks and how he feels; this is the instinct of expression; it rises and falls neither too soon nor too late. Sometimes, however, the instinct is abnormal. It is too active in one man and impels him to express his thoughts when they are only half-formed, to disclose his feelings before they are fully harmonious with his subject. The pear falls before it is ripe. This man may be voluble as an extemporizer, but is inconsequent and superficial. In another man the instinct is too inactive, and leaves him to shrink from expressing his thoughts and especially from exposing his emotions. This man, if he speak extempore at all, is too slow and seems to be sluggish. The pear hangs on the tree until it is spoiled. If a minister aim to perfect himself in "free speech," he will so educate his instinct of expression that it shall rouse him to utter his thoughts and feelings just when they are most inspiring. Let him rightly train himself, and then after meditating on his theme and bringing his heart into unison with it, he will be not only prepared, but impelled to speak. Nature and habit will conspire with conscience and benevolence. His business will be his pleasure; and a man commonly does well what he loves to do. His sermon will be a relief to him. He aches if he does not express the sentiments of his heart. His future reward, his present duty, his present happiness, give a triple reason for his exclamation: "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel."

The minister must discipline himself not only in the *instinct*, but also in the *art* of expression. We may reasonably expect that he will be as diligent as the statesman is in gaining a command of his mother tongue. Lord Mansfield not only translated all Cicero's orations into English, but also re-translated the English orations into Latin. Edmund Burke was not only familiar with Demosthenes, Cicero, Plutarch, but he committed to memory lengthened passages of the Latin poets, especially Virgil, Horace, and Lucretius. William Pitt, before he was twenty years of age, *had read all* the works of *nearly all* the ancient classical authors, and sometimes "dwelt for hours on striking passages of an orator or historian, in noticing their turns of expression," etc. For the purpose of obtaining a mastery of language, Lord Chatham not only addicted himself to the translating of Demosthenes into English, but he also read Bailey's folio Dictionary *twice through* with discriminating care. Other statesmen have devoted much time and labor to the critical study of Shakespeare,¹ Milton, Dr. Barrow, Dr. South, also grammars of their native and of foreign languages. They have aimed in this manner to gain not only that copiousness, but also that preciseness, of utterance which Charles James Fox ascribed to William Pitt: "I never hesitate for *a* word; Pitt never hesitates for *the* word." President Brown says that no man "could make a more clear, convincing, and effective statement; none held all the resources of the language more absolutely at command"² than Mr. Rufus Choate. It is instructive, therefore, to peruse Mr. Choate's remarks on the methods of learning the felicities of our language. The following are records of his familiar conversation:

"The culture of *expression* should be a *specific study*, quite distinct from the invention of thought. Language and its elements, words, are to

¹ A minister who had not proved all things and held fast that which is good, ended a sermon against the study of the drama with these words: "What will you think of the time you have wasted in reading your Shakespeare when you arrive at 'that bourne whence no traveller returns?'"

² Dr. Brown's *Life and Writings of Rufus Choate*, Vol. I. p. 295.

be mastered by direct, earnest labor. A speaker ought *daily* to exercise and *air* his vocabulary, and also to add to and enrich it. . . . Dictionaries are of great service in this filling up and fertilizing of diction. Pinkney had all the dictionaries which he could buy, from Richardson to Webster. You don't want a diction gathered from the newspapers, caught from the air, common and unsuggestive; but you want one whose every word is full freighted with *suggestion and association*, with beauty and power. . . . In addition to translating, *talking* is an excellent discipline. It exercises all those words which one has at ready command. You want to *use* your stock continually, or it will rust. Buchanan, the foreign missionary, once observed that he doubted not he had laid up in his memory one hundred thousand words which were never employed, but which by a little use he would fully command. . . . If you want really to master what you think you know, *tell* it to somebody. I once knew a man who learned very many complete pages of Addison, and retailed them out in conversation. He was thus practising very much the same thing as extempore delivery, in original words, of other people's thoughts; a practice I much approve of.¹

The preceding remarks suggest the mutual harmony of a minister's duties. We need not fear that because he adopts a vigorous mental discipline he will become an anchorite. Mr. Warren, in his Law Studies, quotes the rule of Sir Henry Finch: "*Study* all the morning, and *talk* all the afternoon." In his system of parochial visitation the minister learns as well as teaches; he finds every parlor in his diocese a school for himself; he forms the habit of unfolding his thoughts and emotions when they are needed, of using those plain Saxon words which are fitted to touch the hearts of plain men. This habit grows upon him, until it generates an internal demand to express himself in that style which the incidents of the hour suggest. If he read a sermon in the pulpit he will change its inapt phrases for words which are inspired into him by the scenes amid which he reads. He learns to deliver a discourse as he conducts a dignified conversation. He is instructed by his parishioners in the best rules of eloquence. One of the most popular writers of the present century has remarked: "I have read books enough, and observed and conversed with enough of eminent and splendidly cultivated minds, too, in my time; but I assure you I

¹ Parker's Reminiscences of Rufus Choate, pp. 248, 249, 250, 258, 259.

have heard higher sentiments from the lips of poor uneducated men and women, when exerting the spirit of severe yet gentle heroism under difficulties and afflictions, or speaking their simple thoughts as to circumstances in the lot of friends and neighbors, than I ever yet met with, except in the pages of the Bible."

5. Make a special as well as general preparation for each one of your extemporaneous sermons. Before you begin to preach, be sure that you are able at once to decompose your subject by analysis, and instantly recompose it by synthesis. Like various other rules, this may be modified by circumstances. Some men may preach on many themes, and many men may preach on some themes with but little work immediately preceding. The work has been performed in the remote past. When a lawyer is accused of exorbitant charges for his extemporaneous advice, or a physician for his extemporaneous prescription, he replies: "That advice, that prescription, has cost me three or ten years of study." "How long a time have you spent on that sermon"? was a question addressed to Dr. John M. Mason, Dr. Lyman Beecher, Dr. Eliphalet Nott. "Ten years," "twenty-five years," "thirty years," have been the answers. Dr. Ezra Stiles Ely once remarked, that he could preach on two thousand biblical texts with only five minutes for the study of each one. Perhaps he could. Perhaps his hearers would not agree with him. Perhaps he was able to do what the majority of ministers would be foolhardy in attempting. Perhaps the men who would be most apt to imitate him are the very men who would be most apt to fail.¹ When Sir Samuel Romilly, who has been called "the model lawyer," was overladen with public duties, he would often enter the courtroom, learn there the particulars of the cause he was to argue, and then, without any antecedent knowledge of it, would speak upon it like a master. But not every man is

¹ Dr. Ely had several peculiar aptitudes for an extemporaneous orator. When about sixty years old he preached four hours in a single day and was not wearied. He was also a man of exceptional memory, and exceptions are perilous when regarded as rules.

Sir Samuel Romilly. Daniel Webster did not profess to be an extemporizer in thought as well as language. Talking of his own unwritten speeches he applied to himself the following words of Alexander Hamilton: "Men give me some credit for genius. All the genius I have lies just in this: When I have a subject in hand, I study it profoundly. Day and night it is before me. I explore it in all its bearings. My mind becomes pervaded with it. Then the effort which I make the people are pleased to call the fruit of genius. It is the fruit of labor and thought." On another occasion Mr. Webster said: "Whenever I am invited to address my fellow-men, I never feel that I am treating them with suitable respect unless I appear before them in my best attire and with my most carefully prepared thoughts."

The special preparation for an extemporary sermon may be made in various ways. Of these, neither can be authoritatively prescribed for all preachers, but each may be safely recommended for some.

A. One of these methods is the *spontaneous*. While sitting by the bed of an invalid, or walking in the fields, or engaging in familiar conversation, or examining a picture or a statue, or listening to the sermon of another man, or writing an elaborate discourse of his own, a minister is startled by entirely new thoughts on some entirely new theme. These first thoughts are the best which he will have on this theme. Let him seize them just as they are, and hold them fast. Let him commit them at once to paper. They may be delicate and as evanescent as the aroma of a flower. Robert Hall stated to a friend, that when projecting his sermon on Modern Infidelity "he had risen from his bed two or three times in the middle of the night, to record thoughts, or to write down passages that he feared might otherwise escape his memory,"¹ tenacious as that memory was. If every minister could preserve a record of his own original plans of sermons, the record would be to him one of the books which are books. As these thoughts rushed of

¹ Recollections of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. i. p. 107.

their own accord into his mind, so they will penetrate the minds of his hearers. Not all thoughts, but *these* thoughts are exactly apposite to an extemporary sermon. They are like the first impressions, the "author's proof" of a picture, and are blurred by much handling. If elaborated into a written discourse their simplicity, naturalness, brightness, will be marred.

B. Another mode of preparing to preach extempore is the *tentative*. On some themes the first thoughts are not the best; they are not only crude, but also confused. They must be re-arranged again and again. Sometimes a man (Dr. Lyman Beecher often adopted this mode) writes down the first idea which occurs to him on his subject; then the second, although it may be strangely disconnected with the first; then the third, perhaps discrepant from either; he reaches the tenth, it may be, or the twentieth; then, perhaps, he reviews them all; at length new ideas suddenly dart into his mind, and, as if by a new turn of the kaleidoscope, the old and the new arrange themselves in a logical or graceful or affecting order; he has no further use for his manuscript; he is ready to preach a discourse of which those disjointed notes would give to a stranger no intimation. Those notes are no more the first draught of his sermon than the tuning of the instruments of an orchestra is the prelude of the symphony.

Sometimes his ideas will not come into a fit arrangement by any of his unaided efforts. He then reads a book relating to his theme. He reads not for the purpose of plagiarizing from his author, but for the sake of refreshing his own exsiccated mind. The water which is poured into a dry pump brings up the deeper water of the well. Under this fresh influence a single phrase, perhaps a single word, striking his eye, brings all his thoughts into an order which might never otherwise have occurred to him; he throws the book aside; he has the plan of a sermon entirely different from that of the volume. It is his own frame, enclosing a picture which is also his own.

In ordinary cases, the man who adopts either of the preceding methods will be the readiest to improve his sermon while he is preaching it. In the repose of his study his mind is creative; it will be much more so amid the excitements of the pulpit.

C. A distinct mode of preparing to preach extempore is the *exact*. Adopting this mode, a man is not satisfied with a general plan or with first suggestions; he examines and re-examines his schedule *ab imis unguibus usque ad verticem summum*. He settles the particular sequence of his thoughts, from the first in his Exordium to the last in his Peroration. He pre-determines not only the shadings of his argument, but also the gradations of his sighs and tears. If his plan were written down, it would be a complete index to his discourse. But it is not written; or if it be, it is not written for the sake of its words. The author intends not only to choose his words in the pulpit, but also to deviate, as his inspiration prompts him, from his pre-conceived plan. "When the topic rises, when the mind kindles from within, and the strain becomes loftier, or bolder, or more pathetic; when the sacred fountain of tears is ready to overflow, and audience and speaker are moved by one kindred sympathetic passion, then the thick-coming fancies cannot be kept down, the storehouse of the memory is unlocked, images start up from the slumber of years, and all that the orator has seen, read, heard, or felt returns in distinct shape and vivid colors. The cold and premeditated text will no longer suffice for the glowing thought. The stately, balanced phrase gives place to some abrupt, graphic expression, that rushes unbidden to his lips. The unforeseen incident or locality furnishes an apt and speaking image; and the discourse instinctively transposes itself into a higher key."¹

D. A still different method of preparing an extemporary sermon is the *slavish*. In this method the author does not pre-determine his words, therefore his discourse belongs to the extemporary class; but while he retains the body he does

¹ Edward Everett in his *Memoir of Webster*, pp. lxx, lxxi.

not retain the soul of extemporary speech, for he does not intend to deviate from his prescribed order of thought. His framework is finished, and is of cast-iron. It were ordinarily better to prepare such a sermon for delivery with notes than without them. A pastor has been known to write such a sermon with a design to preach it extempore, but afterwards to abandon that design, and to read it from manuscript. It proved to be an epicene discourse, having the virtues neither of the written nor the free speech. Many a pastor has merged his extempore sermon into a memoriter one by pre-determining his order of thought so minutely that he could not avoid associating with it a pre-determined order of words. If a man preserve the extemporizing state of mind in reference to his words merely, he is *just within* the line of extemporary speech, and suffers all the inconveniences of that border life; but so far forth as he does not preserve this state of mind with regard to his words, he is *outside* of that line. As a boy learning to skate uses a skating-chair, so a minister learning to preach *ex libidine* may let his memory now and then supply his lack of invention. He is not an extemporizer, but a learner. Mr. Zincke gives the following suggestive account of the first two sermons which he delivered without a manuscript:

“I divided each discourse into chapters, each chapter being a distinct part of the subject; and each chapter I divided into paragraphs, each paragraph being a distinct step in the treatment of what was the subject of the chapter. To each chapter was prefixed a Roman, to each paragraph an Arabic numeral. Between the paragraphs I left small intervals, in which I wrote, in a few words, a heading of the contents of the paragraph. The headings I afterwards copied on one side of half a sheet of note-paper. This enabled me to see at a glance how I had treated my subject, and to judge more easily than I could do by turning over the pages of the *ms.* whether my method of treating it was natural and logical. On Saturday I again looked over my two sermons, in doing so, making perhaps more use of the short abstracts than of the complete *mss.* And again on the Sunday, I gave the half-hour preceding each service to the final consideration of what I was then about to preach. These two subsequent studies enabled me to make several improvements both in the way of additions and omissions; because what I was endeavoring to do was to form each sermon into a connected and coherent whole, from which everything must

be eliminated that had not a definite purpose. My sermons, then, having been written in the course of the previous week, after much consideration of the subject, and having been again studied on Saturday, and once more referred to before the service on Sunday, the result was, that when I entered the church I almost knew the ms. by heart. The line of argument and every explanation and illustration were distinctly before my mind. In consequence, I did not anywhere pause for a thought or a word. I had no idea that this was to be regarded as extemporary preaching, yet I was not dissatisfied with it for a beginning."¹

6. Strive to regulate yourself so that, in preparing and delivering your discourse, your mind may work naturally and easily. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." Nature in the pulpit appeals to nature in the pew.

A. As the day for preaching draws near take especial care to keep the body in the state most favorable to the action of the mind. The healthiness of the sermon may depend upon the health of the animal system. One of the most celebrated extemporizers in the world is indebted for his success in no small degree to his physical regimen. We must confess, however, that some of the most effective sermons ever preached have been prepared in defiance of all hygienic rules. The account of John Livingston's discourse at the kirk of Shotts, while it illustrates the good influence of obeying the moral laws, intimates also the evil influence of disobeying the physical laws of God. He says of himself:

"I never preached a sermon which I would be earnest to see again, in wryte but two; the one was on a Munday after the communion at *Shotts*, and the other on a Munday after the communion at *Holywood*; and both these times I had spent the whole night before in conference and prayer with some Christians without any more than ordinary preparation; otherways, my gift was rather suited to simple common people, than to learned and judicious auditors." On the morning of June 21, 1680, after he had passed his sleepless night at *Shotts*, "there came such a misgiving of spirit upon him, in considering his own unworthiness and weakness, and the expectation of the people, that he was consulting to have stolen away somewhere, and declined that day's work; but thinking he could not so distrust God, he went to preach, where he got remarkable assistance in speaking about one hour and a half, from *Ezekiel xxxvi. 26*,

¹ *The Duty and the Discipline of Extemporary Preaching*, pp. 50, 51.

26, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water,' etc. Here he was led out in such a melting strain, that, by the down-pouring of the Spirit from on high, a most discernible change was wrought upon about five hundred of his hearers, who could either date their conversion, or some remarkable confirmation, from that day forward. Some little of that stamp, he says, remained on him the Thursday after, when he preached at Kilmarnock; but on the Monday following, preaching at Irvine, he was so deserted, that what he had meditated upon, wrote, and kept fully in memory, he could not get pronounced; which so discouraged him, that he resolved not to preach for some time, at least at Irvine," etc.¹

B. Choose a subject on which you can speak with safety, freedom, and interest. "Select a theme requiring an argumentative treatment," is one rule rashly given. Some men speak freely in extemporizing an argument, others are confused in it. "Preach an expository sermon," is a rule given too indiscriminately. Some preachers easily succeed in the exposition of the Bible; others must write their exegetical discourses or they become indefinite and vague. "Take a very limited theme, so that you can survey the whole of it at one glance," is a rule given too imperatively, obeyed with good results by one man, but leading another to "preach himself out" in a few minutes. "Take a very extensive subject," is a rule given too authoritatively. If we expound a passage of the Bible, it is said, we should take a lengthened passage, so that when persecuted in one verse we may flee to another. The attempt to obey this rule will make some preachers *vagrant*. "Take a subject which you may divide into parts as numerous as possible," says one; "take a subject which you may divide into only a few salient points," says another. The comprehensive and wise direction is: select for your extemporary sermon that subject which you know to be congenial with your faculties, tastes, and peculiar experience.

C. While preparing and delivering your extemporary discourse, keep your mind sacredly under the influence of your subject. The ruling desire of one man is to comply with

¹ "Select Biographies," p. 194; also, "Scots' Biographia Evangelica," (4th ed.) p. 216.

the laws of rhetoric ; he becomes hard and stiff: of another man, to awaken some emotion which his theme is not fitted to arouse ; he becomes artificial, it may be sensational. The true orator lets the idea come out: the declaimer tries to say something smart or sublime. The subject impressing the soul exalts it, as the atmosphere pressing on the mercury raises it in the barometer. One feeling manifests itself naturally in a smile, another in a frown, another in a blush ; and all feeling, if it be not interfered with by some artificial influence, expresses itself well, because naturally, in words. Let a preacher keep himself under the power of his subject, and his phrases, if we may borrow a simile, will fall over that subject as drapery over a statue, and will adapt themselves to its distinctive outlines as the drapery rises and falls with the protuberances and depressions of the body which it clothes.

It is particularly important for the minister to avoid all distracting influences during the hours immediately preceding his discourse. In those hours he sometimes refuses to converse, partly because he needs his physical strength for the pulpit, and partly because his conversation diverts his mind from his sermon. Immediately before rising to preach, it is wise for him to glance rapidly through the entire plan of his sermon, else he may have lost his train of thought during his introductory exercises. Experiences not altogether unlike the following of Mr. Bautain, are not altogether uncommon.

“ One day I had to preach in one of the principal churches of Paris. It was a solemn festival, and there was an immense audience, including part of the Court then reigning. As I was ascending the pulpit I perceived a person whom I had supposed absent, and my mind was carried away suddenly by a train of recollections. I reached the pulpit-landing, knelt down as usual, and when I should have risen to speak, I had forgotten not only my text, but even the subject of my sermon. I literally knew no longer what I had come to speak upon ; and, despite of all my efforts to remember it, I could see nothing but one complete blank. My embarrassment and anguish may be conceived. I remained on my knees a little longer than was customary, not knowing what to do. Nevertheless, not losing head or heart, I looked full at my danger without being scared

by it, yet without seeing how I was to get out of it either. At last, unable to recover anything by my own proper strength, — neither subject nor text, — I had recourse to God, and I said to him, from the very bottom of my heart, and with all the fervor of my anxiety: ‘Lord if it be thy will that I preach, give me back my plan’; and at that instant, my text came back into my mind, and with my text the subject. I think that never in my life have I experienced anything more astonishing, nor a more lively emotion of gratitude.”¹

D. Guard against overestimating the evils which will result from your literary or elocutionary blunders. Errors in religious doctrine or sentiment ought to be corrected as soon as perceived, but errors of mere style or delivery may work no permanent mischief. The fear of such errors, however, embarrasses a man often, and makes his discourse tame. When Virgil says: “*Audentes fortuna juvat*,” the homilist may translate the phrase: Heaven will aid the man who feels, and has reason to feel, confidence in his success. An honest preacher has reason to feel confidence, even although he lapse into literary errors which mortify him. Sometimes he receives a new impetus from the mistake which he has made, and he is stimulated to put forth a degree of energy unusual to him. Sometimes his error is not detected by a single one of his auditors, and all his chagrin is gratuitous. Still more frequently, perhaps, a mistake which mortifies him is thought by his hearers to be an excellence. The history of the bar and the senate abounds with instances like the following. When Professor Tristram Burgess was making a speech in our National Congress, he directed his eagle eye and pointed his fore-finger toward his opponent on the floor, and in this threatening attitude made a lengthened, truly emphatic pause. “That pause was terrible,” said a fellow representative to Mr. Burgess afterward. “To no one so terrible as to me,” responded the orator, “for I could not think of anything to say.” Twenty-five years after Henry Clay had emigrated from Virginia to Kentucky, he was sent as a delegate from the latter State to the former; and while addressing the Virginia Legislature he described,

¹ Bantain’s Art of Extempore Preaching, pp. 258, 259.

with much pathos, the interest which the emigrant feels in the scenes of his childhood, in the homes and graves of his ancestors. While he and his hearers were deeply affected he began to quote the verses :

“Breathes there the man —”

“But his memory which rarely failed was this time at fault. He paused a moment, closed his eyes, and pressed his forehead with the palm of his hand, to aid his recollection. Fortunately for him, his audience supposed that this pause and act were occasioned by the depth and power of his emotions, which certainly were deep and powerful, and so were theirs. The lines came to him in good time, and when he pronounced the words in the most feeling manner :

‘Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land?’

there was a profound sensation pervading the assembly, which was manifested in many instances by involuntary tears.”¹

E. When you adopt the extemporaneous method, do not scruple, if you need, to borrow aid from the other methods of preaching. Men who believe in indiscriminate rules, are apt to prescribe, appealing to the authority of Quintilian : “Take no paper into the pulpit with you ; no plan of the sermon, no initial words of sentences, no hints of illustrations.” It is wise for some, but rash for others to follow this rule. The impetuous torrent of a man’s feeling may be checked by his stopping to look at his memorandum. He cannot read it if he does look at it. His soul is aglow with thought, and is not cool enough to understand his illegible signs of thought. By turning his eyes upon his sermon-card he lets it intervene as a partition-wall between himself and his audience. Not every man, however, is so afflicted with

¹ Colton’s *Life and Times of Henry Clay*, Vol. i. pp. 70, 71. This incident has been generally narrated in a far more emphatic style than that adopted by Mr. Colton. His misquotation of Scott’s “*Lay of the Last Minstrel*” is corrected in the text above.

genius that his onward flow of emotion is interrupted by the sight of his memorandum. Sometimes an orator prepares a mnemonic schedule for the very purpose of augmenting his interest in his theme and his sympathy with his auditors. He is saved from mental perturbation by knowing that if he should forget the right thought at the right moment, he has close at hand a remembrancer of it.¹ Perhaps he will never use it, but he feels safer, if he has a sermon-card with him; just as an agile mechanic, working near the eaves of a house, is more secure if he be bound with a cord to some fixture on the roof. The word "brief" suggests the fact that some of the most eloquent advocates, as well as statesmen, have not scorned the help of mnemonic schedules. It was a common practice of Robert Hall, to sketch the plan of his discourse, "specifying a few texts, and sometimes writing the first sentence; this he regarded as digging a channel for his thoughts to flow in." Professor Tholuck of Halle, would be called, on the whole, a memoriter preacher; yet he borrowed so much aid from the extemporaneous method that it is not always easy to classify him. He often dictated to his amanuensis a sermon on one Sabbath morning between five and seven o'clock; reviewed the sermon at the same hours on the next Sabbath morning, and delivered it at nine o'clock on that very morning. His tenacious memory grasped and held a large part of what he had written, but his sentences as they were uttered received a new wealth of beauty from his rich imagination. On the other hand, Rufus Choate would be called, on the whole, an extemporaneous orator; but he borrowed assistance from the written method.

¹ Dr. Ebrard gives the following rule for a man preaching *memoriter*, and would probably give a similar rule for a man preaching *extempore*: "When the sermon has been concocted, let the preacher, on a quarto sheet (no more is needed) draw off a *mnemonical sketch*; that is, indicate the thoughts or those clusters of thought, accordingly as his memory is strong or weak, by a single phrase, or mnemonic catch-word. Let him set down these in a tabular way, strikingly, so that the lines may fall into shapes to seize the eye. Now let him throw aside his manuscript and try, by the aid of this paper, to reproduce the sermon; that is, to invent afresh equivalent expressions."—Quoted in Dr. James W. Alexander's *Thoughts on Preaching*, p. 153.

He sometimes continued to write his argument until the very minute of his rising to address the jury. "The notes of his speeches," says President Brown "were generally very ample and complete. To a student who was going to take the depositions of some witnesses where he could not be present, he said: 'Take down every adjective, adverb, and interjection that the witnesses utter.' His brief too, was always full, though in addressing a jury he was entirely untrammelled, and often hardly referred to it. In addressing the court he sometimes seemed to follow his notes closely, almost as if he were repeating them, laying aside page after page as he proceeded."¹ "He trusted," says Mr. Parker, "to no inspiration of the moment in his speaking. Everything that could be prepared was prepared; every nerve, every muscle, that could be trained was trained; every energy that daily practice could strengthen was invigorated."²

F. Graduate the extemporaneous element of your discourses according to your fitness for meeting the just demands of your hearers. If a minister be reasonable, he is annoyed by his want of this fitness; if he be unreasonable, his auditors are annoyed by it.

"Distrustful sense with modest caution speaks
It still looks home, and short excursions makes;
But rattling nonsense in full volleys breaks,
And never shocked, and never turned aside,
Bursts out, resistless, with a thund'ring tide."³

If a minister ventures to extemporize before a congregation by whom he expects to be overawed, he should prepare himself so much the more studiously, and enable himself to borrow aid so much the more readily from notes either read or recited. He should adopt all possible methods of preventing his embarrassment in the pulpit on the Lord's day. In the private and social exercises already recommended⁴ he should fortify himself for the public exercises of worship. The Roman soldier was drilled wearing heavy armor, so that

¹ Memoir of Rufus Choate, p. 280.

² Reminiscences of Rufus Choate, p. 124.

³ Pope's Essay on Criticism.

⁴ See § 5. III. 4.

he might feel free on the battle-field where his armor was lighter. The young preacher may learn a safe lesson from the lawyer. Professor Washburn of Harvard College unites with other jurists in recommending moot-courts as accustoming the student to accurate discrimination, rapid arrangement of thought, independent judgment, precise expression, and the control of all his faculties. "While the ordeal by which he [the law-student] is tried in making his early efforts is by no means slight or inconsiderable; the consequences of a first failure are far less formidable than they would be in an action in court; and it brings with it far less of discouragement than to break down from embarrassment or want of self-possession at the expense of a client, and in the presence of a jury, before whom he is quite as much on trial as the party he represents."¹ If a lawyer ought not to imperil the estates, a preacher ought not to endanger the souls, of men by attempting to control the thoughts of others before he has learned to control his own. In his first sermon he should be more self-poised than 'the soldier in his first battle, who does not give up and run away, simply because he is afraid to do so.' He should not only accustom himself to extemporaneous speech in circles for discussion and mutual criticism, but also in familiar meetings of Christian friends whom he can address without fear. Unless impelled by necessity he should not extemporize before a large congregation in the temple until he feels at home in extemporizing before a small company at the private house; he should not venture to speak unwritten words before a literary audience, until he can be free from trepidation in addressing the unlearned. Just before the intrepid Patrick Henry made his speech on the stipends of the clergy, he saw his uncle, — an educated man and a minister of the gospel, — approach the court-house. He expressed his regret at seeing his uncle, and requested him to leave the ground: "Because Sir, you know that I have never yet spoken in

¹ Lectures on the Study and Practice of Law, by Emory Washburn, LL.D. pp. 68, 69.

public, and I fear that I shall be too much overawed by your presence to be able to do my duty to my clients," etc. etc.¹ John Foster did not hesitate to preach extempore on a difficult subject in a small place and to "a small assemblage of old friends"; but he says: "I am always quite certain I should have no 'liberty,' as we of this profession name it, if I should venture *extemporaneously* in large places to which one is totally unaccustomed. And then, as I have absolutely *no memory* at all, my premeditations are totally useless to me, unless, as I go on, I secure them *in writing*. Therefore, for these occasions, I am obliged to write nearly half as much as what is to be said. The consequence is most wretched; for unless I have a *long time*, after this writing is done, to read many times over the said indited sentences and hints, so as to have some little command of them beyond the immediate reach of my eye, I am hampered and stiffened in the delivery, having neither the *certainty* of reading, nor the *ease* of speaking."¹ At the present day, however, a young man will rush before auditors, some of whom are more highly educated, and many of whom are more devout than himself, and will preach an unwritten sermon with humiliating confusion of mind and of language. He excuses himself by saying: "I ought not to be disconcerted." Yes, but you are so, and you are to follow rules adapted to what you are, as well as what you ought to be. — "It does not become a bishop to be overawed by men." Not in the discharge of his duty; but you rush onward before your duty. There is a command that men preach the gospel to every creature, but no command that every creature preach the gospel extempore.² You owe a certain degree of respect to your auditors, especially when they are superior to you; you put yourself into a false relation when you preach *down* to them; until you have gone through a more vigorous discipline you must use your utmost effort for preaching *up*

¹ Wirt's Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry, pp. 23, 24.

² Life of John Foster, Vol. i. p. 46.

³ Incidents, etc., of Rev. Edward T. Taylor, p. 90.

to them. — “But I must learn to speak extempore, and the way of learning to do a thing is to do it. I cannot acquire the art of swimming by means of a hand-book on swimming; I must plunge into the sea.” If you preach for the sake of practising rhetoric you are violating the most essential rules of rhetoric. An inexperienced surgeon does not begin his practice by amputating the limbs of “kings and priests.” You are not doing a work of *necessity* when you are learning your trade on the Sabbath-day; neither is this oratorical discipline a work of *mercy* for your hearers. Mercy to them requires that you speak in a manner for which you have disciplined yourself on secular days. You are to try your experiments in elocution before a debating club, a company of critics. You ought to learn such maxims of the anatomist as “Fiat experimentum in corpore vili”: and also, “In capite orphani discit chirurgus.” Men do not come into the temple at the hour of worship in order to be excruciated by your experiments in preaching from the treasures of your own mind. — “Is it not with extemporization as with the art of swimming: whoever dares to swim, swims; whoever dares to extemporize, extemporizes”? There are two questions: first, can a man extemporize? second, can he draw men to hear him the second time? May he not, as Congreve expresses it, ‘have that everlasting rotation of tongue that echo has no chance with him, but must wait till he dies to catch his last word’? Words, and more words, and nothing but words, — a man may dare to utter them, and not be a preacher. Not *every man* can preach extempore; but *nearly every educated minister can train himself to preach so.*

7. When you have been successful in an extemporary sermon make it the basis of a written one.¹ Often the most edifying discourses which a man works out in his library were first delivered by him *sur le champ et de son fond*. His happiest thoughts may have vanished from his memory; but the general train of them was recalled; and the spirit of

¹ See § 2. II. 6 above.

the first sermon enlivened the second. Sometimes, by the arts of phonography and tachygraphy, he may obtain an exact copy of the words which came gushing from his heart. "In short, Sir, the man is inspired," said Dr. Parr of Robert Hall. "There is no man," remarked Hannah More, "in the church nor out of it, comparable to Robert Hall." If the stenographers of *his* day had been faithful to the men of *our* day, they would have preserved to us rare treasures of wisdom. As he pronounced his discourse on Modern Infidelity, he seemed

"Not touched, but rapt; not wakened, but inspired."

We can easily credit Mr. Cottle, when he says: "This sermon I was so happy as to hear delivered, and have no hesitation in expressing an opinion that the oral was not only very different from the printed discourse, but greatly its superior. In the one case, he expressed the sentiments of a mind fully charged with matter the most invigorating and solemnly important; but, discarding notes (which he once told me always hampered him), it was not in his power to display the same language, or to record the same evanescent trains of thought; so that in preparing a sermon for the press no other than a general resemblance could be preserved. In trusting alone to his recollection, when the stimulus was withdrawn of a crowded and most attentive auditory, the ardent feeling, the thought that burned, was liable in some measure to become deteriorated by the substitution of cool philosophical arrangement and accuracy for the spontaneous effusions of his overflowing heart; so that what was gained by one course was more than lost by the other."¹

As some extemporizers in copying their sermons have indulged themselves in too much correction, so others have contented themselves with too little. Perhaps they were unable to write with elaborative care what they had spoken with marvellous power. More learning might have made them dull. "Omnia non pariter rerum sunt omnibus apta."

¹ Recollections of Coleridge, Vol. i. pp. 104-106.

We read of John Bunyan that "in the middle of winter he would sometimes have more than twelve hundred hearers before seven o'clock in the morning of a week-day; and when he visited the metropolis, one day's notice of his preaching would bring many more than the place of worship could contain." "It is said that [John] Owen was in the practice of frequently hearing Bunyan preach when he came to London, which led Charles II. to express his astonishment that a man of the Doctor's learning could hear a tinker preach; to which Owen is said to have replied: 'Had I the tinker's abilities, please your Majesty, I would most gladly relinquish my learning.'" ¹ The heart of Bunyan in the pulpit came into close contact with the hearts of his hearers. His sermons were poured forth from his inmost soul. Some of them were afterwards given to the press. We are thankful for their marks of his genius. But if he had possessed the power of revising his sermons, of adding the sound logic and comprehensive philosophy which ought to characterize a written discussion, to the natural, lively, graphic style which does characterize his unwritten effusions, he would have made the race doubly indebted to him. So we may say of Whitefield, Summerfield, and other preachers whose power of moving men evanesced with their breath. They had more eloquence for their own day than patience for the days which came afterward. The majority of ministers, however, have no such excess of genius as need interfere with their retaining in a permanent and improved form the thoughts which flashed upon them in their extemporary speech. The evening preachment in the remote schoolhouse will be the very soul of the discourse which afterward subdues the great congregation.

¹ Ivimey's History of the English Baptists; Gillies' Collections, as cited in Orme's Memoirs of Dr. Owen, pp. 305, 306.