

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORATORY

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END, AIM AND PURPOSE OF THIS WORK

ORATORY is, in its essential elements, the oldest of the arts, for it is one that requires, for its ordinary exercise, no other equipment than fluency of speech and some degree of self-confidence on the part of the speaker. It has, therefore, been practiced for ages past, as well among savage and barbarous tribes as among civilized peoples, in evidence of which may be mentioned the striking examples of native oratory attributed to the American Indians. This being the case, it might naturally be conceived that the literature of civilization would be overflowing with oratorical productions of high merit. Yet such a conclusion would be by no means a safe one. When we come to consider the abundant examples of oratory on record, it is to find the pure gold of eloquence often sadly alloyed. The orations of supreme merit, those which have won a position in the world's best literature, are few in number, and the list of world-famed orators is less extended than in almost any other field of human art.

From this fact we can but conclude that the necessary equipment for the higher type of oratory demands far more than mere readiness in speech, grace in gesture, and fluent command of language. Back of these accomplishments must rest superior powers of thought, logical consistency in reasoning, quickness and brilliancy of conception, control of rhetorical expedients, and much of what is known as personal magnetism,