

there is some refinement of taste and a considerable share of general intelligence amongst our Presbyterian people; while some will be found in many congregations, who possess a large stock of knowledge and are on the whole correct and judicious in their literary tastes. This of the young is true to a very considerable extent. It will be well for you to keep this in mind. There are few, indeed, of the rising generation who, from the education they are receiving, cannot detect gross solecisms in language or serious blunders in grammar. I believe you to be incapable of grave offences of this sort, but let me urge you to guard against even trivial inaccuracies. Nor should it escape your notice, that from the wide circulation of much printed matter that is really well written, multitudes of reading persons in our day have acquired the capacity of seeing what is at least seriously faulty in style. A style in the pulpit, which would have given no offence to their fathers or grandfathers, would be intolerable to many in the present generation. The preacher, who depends mainly for effect on his peculiarly refined style, would do well not to go to the pulpit at all; but carry this sort of thing to some other place and seek for success from it there. Yet, the preacher, who addresses an audience in a style or manner *essentially* bad need not wonder if even good matter fails to produce any good effect. Whatever is offensive to correct taste either in language or delivery must impair and in some cases destroy altogether the effect of truth.

When it is said, that the Saviour "spake as never man spake, and spoke as one having authority," I cannot but think that there must have been much in his style and delivery, peculiarly pleasing and forcible. In contemplating the grandeur of the truth which he uttered, are we not apt to overlook the style and manner of delivery, which may have affected many, who could but imperfectly appreciate the doctrines which he taught? One cannot doubt, that the sermon on the Mount was delivered in a manner admirably fitted to enlist the attention and move the feelings of the hearers. We know how exquisite the style is, and may we not infer that the delivery was in keeping with the style? We instinctively shrink—the feeling is commendable—from speaking of the Saviour as an orator. Yet, when we think of the perfection of His wisdom, the purity of His motives and the warmth of His feelings, we may reasonably conclude that his delivery was perfect. This, at least, may be boldly affirmed, that they do no honour to the Saviour and no justice to His truth, who deliver that truth in a style, feeble, coarse or inaccurate, and with a manner, cold, vulgar, or affected.

But if Gospel truth labours under disparagement when thus addressed even to illiterate persons, it is easy to see that it may be fatally marred, when thus addressed to persons of some education and taste. Such hearers, if pious, may *try to listen*, but they listen with pain and with hardly any profit; but if not pious, they naturally turn away with disgust. Were the

disgust only felt for the ill cultured and slovenly speaker, I should see but little cause for regret. But when the evils we deprecate awaken, as they often do, disgust to the truth itself, there is ground for bitter lamentation.

Let me not be mistaken—I do not mean that the bulk of the people that you are to address are highly educated. What I mean is simply this, that the mental condition of the greater part to whom you are to minister is such, that to do them justice, you will require to be careful and diligent in preparing your discourses, as well as careful in the delivery of them. Depend on it, that either a want of due mental culture, or of suitable care on your part will not fail to offend the taste and pain the feelings of your judicious hearers. Nor can I think well of the minister who is satisfied with himself, because an ignorant people may not detect his literary inaccuracies, or be disgusted with his careless performances. If the people are ignorant, he ought to aim not merely to instruct their consciences, but to improve their understanding and refine their tastes. To be satisfied with a poor performance, because the people may not detect your deficiencies, is certain to expose you to detection and severe reprehension, whenever you happen to speak to persons of a higher order of mind. Nor should it escape observation, that a man of correct taste, earnest and thoroughly industrious, while most alive to the spiritual interests of his people, will *indirectly* but very effectually elevate their thinking and cultivate their taste.

In a word, let the intellectual attainments of your audience be what they may, your reasoning ought to be clear, direct and conclusive; your language simple, accurate and forcible, and your delivery solemn, natural and earnest. All this you may attain to, although neither men of genius, nor of the highest order of talents, if so be, you have a moderate share of education, are diligent in your studies, and thoroughly in earnest in the work of your Master. The slothful fancy all things easy, or the easiest things impossible, while the man of a feeble conscience realizes but very imperfectly his responsibility to *do his very best* to make the best things effective. He whose chief aim is to make a respectable appearance is not a hopeful man, and will not be a fruitful minister; but he that does not aim even at this, is at once hopeless and despicable. He not only wants piety, who does not strive to do his best, he wants that sense of honor, which you often find in men of the world, when they strive to do their best in performing their duties. And one cannot but think, if some ministers knew to what an extent their want of mental culture, their sloth and bad taste in the composition and delivery of their discourses impair their usefulness, they would not err as much as they do, in finding the true cause of their want of success in the work.

If men were to reflect, how perilous popularity is in the pulpit, fewer would lament the want of it. Pulpit popularity can indeed—it is well that it is so,—be possessed but by few. And even when possessed in a high degree,

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