

cisely as they occurred. This variation of statements I attribute partly to the imperfection of the human mind. It does seem to be impossible that a fact should pass through it without being slightly refracted, as light is in water. It will take some complexion from the wishes of the mind that receives and transmits it, as light, in passing through a coloured medium, takes the hue of that medium. We are often struck with this, in hearing the same story related by several persons. Suppose, in the first instance, we all hear it from the same individual, himself the actor or spectator in the scene. Afterwards, one, and another, repeat the occurrence. Probably no two will tell it just alike. Some slight variation of phraseology, or a different tone of voice, or a significant look thrown in, in the narrative, will give a different complexion to the story. In addition to this necessary individuality, which attaches to everything which men say, there is often superinduced a habit of exaggeration, of which, perhaps the individual himself is not conscious, yet which become so inveterate, that it may be said that the man who has it never tells the truth. He never states things exactly as they are.

This is a danger to which men of great conversational talent, or of remarkable powers of description, are particularly exposed. A man who finds that he is capable of telling a good story,—that he can, at any time, draw a crowd around him, and excite the mirth or wonder of his auditors,—is tempted to tell a good many stories, and, where the facts are rather meager, to help them out, and to set them in suitable relief, by a little from his imagination.

So the man who has gained a brilliant reputation as a writer, who knows that every thing he pens is caught after by the public, and read with eagerness, and who is conscious of great descriptive talent, is under constant temptation to disregard facts, or exaggerate them, or to violate nature or probability, for the sake of effect. Unless he is careful, he will soon be more anxious to say what is brilliant than to say what is true.

Nor are Preachers wholly free from this temptation to exaggerate; to go beyond what is written; to overstate the truth for effect. It is with a popular preacher as it is with a popular writer. When he finds that he is able to produce an impression by harping on a particular subject, or by an exciting appeal to the imagination, he is tempted to run his subject or his appeal beyond the truth. What zealous Preacher does not sometimes, in the heat of