

describe it in words. We cannot set bounds to it, and say, "in this it consists," or "in that." A fluency of language, a copious supply of figures and tropes and metaphors, an earnest manner, or a theatrical style, may be all aids to good speaking, but they no more constitute true eloquence than a mass of linen and thread and buttons, constitute a shirt. It is in mistaking these for oratory, that so many fail. It is hard for them to believe that the simplest language and most unobtrusive style, may be made the vehicle of the truest eloquence and the most attractive speech.

They have no faith in the ordinary language which they are accustomed to use every day, and fancy that something above and beyond this is necessary to strike the attention of their hearers, and to merit their applause. "Many young writers and speakers," says Whateley, "are apt to fall into a style of pompous verbosity, not from neglect, but from an idea that they are adding perspicuity and force, when they are only encumbering the sense with words. They seem to prefer the merit of high-sounding sentences to that of sense, on the principle that people sometimes admire as eloquence what they do not understand, if only elevated and high-sounding words be arranged in graceful and sonorous periods."

Many again, owing to the circumstances in which they are placed, arise to speak, not because they have anything to say, but because they have been called upon to do so, or, worse still, because their vanity prompts them to make themselves heard. That this is destructive of good speaking also is evidenced by the fact that people who speak from such a motive cannot conceal that they are speaking as it were "against time," and will call off the attention of their hearers from what they are saying to the manner in which they are accomplishing their task; for it may be laid down as a rule, I think, that just so far as a man allows the attention of his audience to wander from what he is saying to the manner in which he is saying it, he falls just so far short of being a good speaker. True eloquence is not obtrusive, does not force itself upon your notice as such. As true politeness does not consist merely in a strict observance of social rules, in outward civilities, in a pompous manner or a courtly speech; or as true gentility does not live alone in the cut of your whiskers or the cut of your clothes, so true eloquence does not consist in those things which appeal to the outward senses only and make no lasting impression upon the mind. Like true kindness, it is silent, subtle and unseen. It is more like the sunshine which imperceptibly cheers you with its ray, than the lightning that startles you with its flash. It is more like the summer rivulet which steals silently along through the meadow, than the swollen freshet of spring, which dashes over everything in its mad career.

"Whatever," says Whateley, "is attributed to the 'eloquence of the speaker is so much deducted from the strength of his cause.' If anything of design peep out in the management of the subject it destroys the effect; or, to put it in another way, if there is any art of which *celare artem* is the basis it is this. I will give

you an instance; in a review of Scott's celebrated novel "The Heart of Midlothian" there is this passage:—

"We cannot bestow the same unqualified praise on another celebrated scene—Jeannie's interview with Queen Caroline. Jeannie's pleading appears to us much too rhetorical for the purpose and for the occasion; and the Queen's answer, supposing her to have been overpowered by Jeannie's entreaties—"This is 'eloquence'—is still worse. Had it been eloquence it must necessarily have been unperceived by the Queen."

So far, indeed, has this principle of concealing all pretension to, or effort at eloquence been carried, that in that much-admired piece of oratory, the speech of Mark Antony, we find the speaker, with affected humility, purposely disclaiming all knowledge of rhetoric, all intention of practising on them by the arts of speech:—

"For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
Action nor utterance, nor the power of speech
To stir men's blood;
I am no orator as Brutus is,
But as you know me all, a plain, blunt man,
Who speaks right on and tells you that
Which you yourselves do know."

In this, the most effective piece of oratory of which we have any knowledge, there is nothing but the simplest language—there is not a single metaphor, there is no effort, no apparent effort, that is, at arrangement; no attempt to add to the force of the language by the use of any of those meretricious graces which so many mistake for eloquence.

It need not be understood from this, however, that ornament can not be used, and used with effect too; but it must be when the matter is able to support it, and by a master hand.

Allow me to give you an instance of this also. In Milton's celebrated essay on the Freedom of the Press, there is the following passage:—

"Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unsealing her much-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance, while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also which love the twilight, flutter about amazed at what she means, and in their hideous gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms."

Here we have the highest style of ornament used with the most undoubted effect; but a monkey in kids and swallow-tail would not look one whit more ridiculous than would be the speech of an inexperienced speaker decked out in the gorgeous imagery here used. Nothing but the highest cultivation, combined with strong natural talents, will enable us to attempt such flights with safety.

Take one more example of eloquence without ornament. It is the concluding sentence of Mr. White-side's address to the jury in his defence of Mr. Duffy, one of the Irish patriots of '40:—

"Your patience is exhausted. If I have spoken suitably to the subject, I have spoken as I have