

LECTURES ON PREACHING.

BY HENRY WARD DEVEREEUX.

In July, 1871, a Lectureship was founded by Mr. Henry W. Sage at Yale College, and named by him the *Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching*. A course of twelve lectures is annually to be delivered on this foundation before the classes in Theology, by preachers selected and appointed by the Faculty of the Divinity School of Yale College. The following are extracts from the Sixth Lecture on "Rhetorical Drill and General Training:"—

There is, in certain quarters, a prejudice existing against personal training for preaching, in so far as it is affected by posture, gestures and the like. There is a feeling abroad in regard to it, as though it would make a dramatic art out of that which should be a sacred inspiration. You know that a man needs academic and professional education in order to preach his best. But the same considerations that make it wise for you to pass through a liberal education, make it also wise for you to pass through a liberal drill and training in all that pertains to oratory.

THE VOICE.

It is, however, a matter of very great importance what end you seek by such training. If a man is attempting to make himself simply a great orator, if his thought of preaching is how to present the most admirable presence before the people, and how to have tones that shall be most ravishing and melting, and if he considers the gesture that is appropriate to this and that sentence—in short, if he studies as an actor studies, and as an actor properly studies, too,—he will make a great mistake, for what are the actor's ends are but the preacher's means. On the other hand, as a man's voice is that instrument by which the preacher has to perform his whole work, its efficiency is well worthy of study. For instance, the voice must be elastic, so that it can be used for long periods of time without fatigue, and the habitual speaker should learn to derive from it by and by the power of unconscious force. There is just as much reason for a preliminary, systematic and scientific drill of the voice as there is for the training of the muscles of a man's body for any athletic exercise. A man often has, when he begins to preach, a feeble and low voice; each one of his sentences seems like a poor scared mouse running for its hole, and everybody sympathizes with the man as he is hurrying through his discourse in this way, rattling one word into the other. A little judicious drill would have helped him out of that. If his attention is called to it before he begins his ministry, is it not worth while for him to form a better habit? A great many men commence preaching under a nervous organism. They very speedily rise to a sharp and hard monotone; and then they go on through their whole sermon as fast as they can, never letting their voice go above or below their false pitch, but always sticking to that, until everybody gets tired out and they among the rest.

VARIOUS TONAL ELEMENTS.

If a man can be taught in the beginning of his ministry something about suppleness of voice, and the method of using it, it is very much to his advantage. For example, I have known scores of preachers that had not the slightest knowledge of the *explosive* tones of the voice. Now then a man falls into it "by nature," as it is said; that is, he tumbles into it accidentally. But the acquired power of raising the voice at will in its ordinary range, then explosively, and again in its higher keys, and the knowledge of its possibilities under these different phases, will be very helpful. It will help the preacher to spare both himself and to spare his people. It will help him to accomplish results, almost unconsciously, when it has become a habit, that could not be gained in any other way.

There are a great many effects in public speaking that you must fall into the conversational tone to make. Every man ought to know the charm there is in that tone, and especially when using what we call the vernacular or idiomatic English phrases. I have known a great many most admirable preachers who lost almost all their sympathetic hold upon their congregations, because they were too literary, too periphrastic, and too scholastic in their diction. They always preferred to use large language rather than good Saxon English. But let me tell you, there is a subtle charm in the use of plain language that pleases people, they scarcely know why. It gives bell-notes which ring out suggestions to the popular heart. "There are words that men have heard when boys at home, around the hearth and the table, words that are full of father and of mother, and full of common and domestic life. These are the words that afterward, when brought into your discourse, will produce a strong influence on your auditors, giving an element of success; words that will have an effect that your hearers themselves cannot account for." For, after all, simple language is loaded down and stampered through with the best testimonies and memories of life. Now, be sure that your theme is one of interest, and worked out with thought, if you take language of that kind and use it in

colloquial or familiar phrases, you must adapt to it a quiet and natural inflection of voice—for almost all the sympathetic part of the voice is in the lower tones and in a conversational strain—and you will evoke a power that is triumphant in reaching the heart, and in making your labours successful among the multitudes.

But there is a great deal besides that. Where you are not enforcing anything, but are persuading or encouraging men, you will find your work very difficult if you speak in a loud tone of voice. You may fire an audience with a loud voice, but if you wish to draw them into sympathy and to win them by persuasion, and you are near enough for them to feel your magnetism and see your eye, so that you need not have to strain your voice, you must talk to them as a father would talk to his child. You will draw them, and will gain their assent to your propositions, when you could do it in no other way, and certainly not by shouting.

On the other hand, where you are in eager exhortation, or speaking on public topics, where your theme calls you to denunciation, to invective, or anything of that kind, it is then that the sharp and ringing tones that belong to the upper register are sometimes well-nigh omnipotent. There are cases in which by a single explosive tone a man will drive home a thought as a hammer drives a nail; and there is no escape from it. I recollect to have heard Dr. Humphrey, President of Amherst College, who certainly was not a rhetorician, on one occasion speaking in respect to the treatment of the Indians. He used one of the most provincial of provincialisms, but he used it with an explosive tone that fastened it in my memory, and not only that, but it gave an impulse to my whole life, I might say, and affected me in my whole course and labour as a reformer. It was the effect of but a single word. He had been describing the shameful manner in which our Government had broken treaties with the Indians in Florida and Georgia, under the influence of Southern statesmanship. He went on saying what was just and what was right, and came to the discussion of some critical point of policy which had been proposed, when he suddenly censured his argument, and exclaimed, "The voice of the people will be lifted up, and they shall say to the Government, YOU SHAN'T!" Now, "shan't" is not very good English, but is provincial, colloquial, and very familiar to every boy. It carries a home feeling with it, and we all knew what it meant. He let it out like a bullet, and the whole chapel was hushed for the moment, and then that rustle followed which showed that the shot had struck. It has remained in my memory ever since.

(To be continued.)

THE PLEA OF INSANITY.

The frequency with which the plea of insanity is advanced in the trial of murder cases, and the increasing disposition of juries to entertain it favourably, are becoming, both here and in England, prominent features of modern criminal practice. The explanation of these facts need not pre-suppose the existence of an unusual amount of insanity at the present day; other and sufficient reasons are easily found. A refined civilization quickening and exaggerating the sympathetic sentiments and susceptibilities, has developed in this generation a strong repugnance to the infliction of severe and revolting punishments, such as the death-penalty. The horror of condemning a man to a terrible doom thus often outweighs the feelings of indignation aroused by the commission of a bloody deed, as well as the known necessity of condign punishments to prevent future outrages and repress the insolence of crime.

This general sentiment inclines juries to avail themselves of any reasonable pretext to avoid convicting of a capital offence. The plea of insanity is so general and successful, because it furnishes a very available and defensible ground for indulging this merciful disposition, a purpose for which it is eminently calculated by virtue of the confusion existing in the popular, and it may be added, the scientific mind on the entire subject of *dementia*.

Physicians and physiologists are called upon the stand; are examined and cross-examined; every difference of opinion magnified ten-fold by the art of opposing counsel—until finally a mass of the most incongruous and contradictory dicta has been elicited. Out of this a hopelessly confused jury is to construct a verdict on which a man's life depends.

What wonder, that men in such a predicament refuse to take upon themselves the responsibility of

the criminal's death, and acquit him rather than incur the risk of visiting with human vengeance on whom the judgment of God has set apart.

There is, it may be truly said, no subject in the mixed domain of moral and physical pathology, at once so full of inherent difficulties, and much enveloped in quackery and superstition, as insanity. The whole border-land of sanity and insanity is in fact utterly befogged. "What constitutes mental integrity, and when does the mind become unsound? At what point does an idiosyncrasy become a monomania? When do eccentricities begin to indicate mental derangement? How far in fact is a marked individuality itself perfectly consistent with unimpeachable sanity? These are all questions full of the most subtle embarrassments, requiring for their correct determination a council of psychologists and physiologists, but which in fact must be settled to the best of their knowledge and belief by the first dozen impartial men that can be found.

When may a person be called well, and when called ill? Upon reflection, this appears to be by no means a simple question. For the daily necessities of mutual comprehension, we broadly describe each other as sick or well, and yet we know that few persons are in perfect health, and few so sick that all their physical functions are perverted. It is a question of infinite degrees, shading imperceptibly into each other. It would be impossible to state, except by some arbitrary rule, the precise point at which a man ceases to be well, and becomes sick. Now, if we suppose the life of the man to depend upon the decision of a precisely similar question concerning his mental state, we can vividly imagine the nature and difficulty of the problem before a jury, sworn to make true deliverance between the Commonwealth and a murderer pleading insanity. We must, however, further remember that a question of sanity or insanity is far more difficult than any question of the state or relations of our bodily faculties, by reason of the more subtle and complicated nature of the mental and moral attributes. Nor should we forget that moral insensibility is not, in the eye of the law, to be confounded with moral incapacity; for the former implies only depravity—the latter, legal insanity. This distinction is, indeed, clearer in theory than in application, but it is very material, since without it every hardened villain might claim impunity by virtue of the very induration of his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, does unquestionable insanity imply entire inability of self-control and insensibility to the influence of rewards and punishments; for in all well-managed insane asylums the inmates are chiefly controlled by a system of rewards and deprivations consequent upon conduct.

The uncertainty involving the subject of insanity is on the whole so great, that in theory it appears capable of bringing the entire administration of justice into an anarchical condition. But practically the common sense of the community—a criterion not to be expressed in rules of general application, but fitting itself like a plastic measure to the peculiarities of individual cases—will doubtless prevent such a result, except where the death penalty impends, and any plausible argument for acquittal is easily credited by merciful juries, and generally acquiesced in by the public. The tardy infliction, and frequent ultimate evasion or remission of the extreme penalty, still further indicates the general sentiment on this subject. It is not too much to say that at present homicides stand more chances of escaping the vengeance of the law than any other class of criminals.

The only remedy for this state of things is the substitution for the death-penalty of some punishment—such as perpetual imprisonment—which, not being so excessively repugnant to the humane spirit of this generation, shall have some chance of being enforced. We should then doubtless witness a marked falling-off in the number of insane murderers; and "experts" in insanity—or mad-doctors, as the English call them—would find their quasi-judicial occupation gone.

There is one other point: An insane person with a mania for homicide, although not fully amenable to law, may still be as dangerous to the community as the most cool-headed of Thugs, and there is no more right for turning him loose upon his fellow men, than there would have been for hanging him. Our law imperatively requires amendment in this respect. A jury acquitting a homicide for whom insanity has been pleaded, should be required to specify whether they had acquitted him on that