

There is perhaps no speaker by whom ordinary rules are more ignored than the lecturer. The manner of treating a subject is generally in his case as important as the subject itself, for it is that which gives to the address its distinctive character. We have now lecturers in great numbers and variety, who exhibit talents and acquirements of a high order; and we are too refined and progressive to listen with patience to the wearisome, nondescript, *Mechanics' Institution* things which were called lectures in our younger days, though we still preserve specimens *inter alia*, of the prosy gentleman, who bewilders his auditors in a maze of technicality and scientific speculation; the sensational mountebank, who seeks to tickle his hearers by poetic flights and racy anecdotes; and the lecturer who has "a mission"—who plays on one string—who is mad on one topic, and raves by rote.

With all due respect for the cloth, our pulpit is not what it might be or what it should be in earnestness, efficiency, and simplicity. With how many of the hundreds of sermons which we constantly hear do we charge our memories? There is nothing to which we listen more constantly and complacently than that is not only as soon forgotten, but which we do not expect or intend to remember, than the ordinary Sunday sermon. How is it that our few popular preachers occupy the prominent positions they do, but for the melancholy background of the numberless drones? To be naturally fluent is sometimes a dangerous gift in a preacher, because it leads him to trust to the inspiration of the moment rather than to previous study. A barrister must confine himself to his brief, and he knows that to plead before a judge, a jury, and a watchful opponent, without having mastered his case, would not only prejudice the interests of his client, but would injure his own professional prospects. The sense of responsibility should make it even more apparent to a preacher that, in order to the delivery of an effective discourse, careful preparation is essential.

Whatever inducements there may be in parliamentary oratory to wander into fields foreign to the subject of debate, there are certain considerations which render it hazardous. The fear of losing the ear of the House, the consciousness of the speech being reported, the likelihood of its publication, and the sense of responsibility to a body of independent, and sometimes of hostile, constituents make it probable that no public address is more carefully prepared or more nervously delivered. Success as a parliamentary speaker demands much study and practice. How little can the uninitiated know of the training which matures a Gladstone, a Bright, or a Disraeli; or which gave such readiness and effectiveness to the public appearance of the late Lord Derby and Palmerston! We are assured that even Sheridan, with his readiness and nonchalance, never failed to the end of his parliamentary career to feel a sense of responsibility in rising to address the House, and has been known to say, "I feel awfully nervous to-night. I shall be sure to speak well."

Few have an idea of the ordeal undergone by a diffident and inexperienced speaker in his earlier efforts. If he does not entirely lose his self-possession, a little tact on his own part, and the patience and encouragement which the House, as a rule, extends to an untried member, will generally carry him through. It is related of Lord Ashley, afterwards third Earl of Shaftesbury, that soon after he had entered the House of Commons he rose to speak in support of an Act for granting counsel to prisoners in cases of high treason, but found himself so embarrassed that he was unable to proceed. The House cheered him, and, recovering from his confusion, he happily converted the difficulty of his situation into an argument of illustration in favour of the Bill. "If I, sir," said he, addressing the Speaker,—"If I, who rise only to offer my opinion on the Bill now depending, am so confounded that I am unable to express the least of what I intended to say, what must be the condition of that man who, without any assistance, is pleading for his life?"

To make a good after-dinner speech requires a special talent. A man may be eloquent on paper and ready and witty among his friends, but the moment he rises to propose a toast or to return thanks he generally carries him through. It is related of Lord Ashley, afterwards third Earl of Shaftesbury, that soon after he had entered the House of Commons he rose to speak in support of an Act for granting counsel to prisoners in cases of high treason, but found himself so embarrassed that he was unable to proceed. The House cheered him, and, recovering from his confusion, he happily converted the difficulty of his situation into an argument of illustration in favour of the Bill. "If I, sir," said he, addressing the Speaker,—"If I, who rise only to offer my opinion on the Bill now depending, am so confounded that I am unable to express the least of what I intended to say, what must be the condition of that man who, without any assistance, is pleading for his life?"

When so many are given to talking, how rare it is to find a good listener! To listen agreeably and encouragingly is not a mere negative quality. It is an art as much as talking is, but it is lit-

tle understood, and much less practised. A good listener evinces intelligence and manifests an air of respectful attention. Even if he has previously heard the narrative, or is familiar with the knowledge that is being imparted, he exhibits a certain amount of interest. Let him tell us the difficulty of this acquirement who has tried to practise it on all occasions, however uninteresting the communication and however tiresome the speaker.

Uneducated people experience considerable difficulty in expressing their ideas fluently and connectively. They are guarded in their choice of words, sometimes from a fear of rudeness, but generally from a natural reticence or diffidence. They express their feelings in an artless way, and often convey their impressions more suggestively by their simplicity than if they aspired to grammatical precision. Have you ever observed the courtship of a couple in the humbler walks of life? You in similar circumstances, would discourse without an effort, to an interested listener, on literature, or sentiment, or the topics of the day. For lack of the resources which training and education supply, they exhibit their attachment, by playfulness and innocent diversion—by pushing, or pulling, or chasing, or teasing, with the accompaniment of laughter and screaming; and all this is to them as naturally and as mutually enjoyable as intellectual conversation is to more fortunate individuals who possess the gift of the gab.

There is another class of ignorant people, however, who are vulgar and vicious, and who make no attempt to speak with refinement, or modesty, or self-control. They are, in this respect, like children who, before they have learned to talk intelligibly, express their disapprobation and dislike, in their imperfect manner, by striking blindly at the object that stands in the way of the gratification of their desires. An observer of the social habits of the lower orders may perceive how their ill-regulated passions fail to find other modes of manifestation than vulgar abuse, cursing and swearing, or the never-failing *argumentum ad hominem* of fists or feet. We suppose this may be accounted for as being the fittest method which their dull intellects have been able to discover of giving expression to their feelings, so that when they disagree, or desire to show their displeasure, they seem to have no other means of doing so. Whatever leads to the extension of their vocabulary must consequently be a blessing, in enabling them to make use of speech with discretion, and to see that violence, degradation, and abuse are unnecessary and contemptible.

There are in the same rank in life working men who are poor and unlettered—knowing nothing of science, or politics, or books—not given to talking, but, on the contrary, are thoughtful and reserved, who can upon occasion become eloquent and instructive on matters pertaining to doctrine, and experience. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and "the power of grace loosens the tongue of the dumb." It is surprising how intelligence improves the utterance; but there is nothing that so enables a man to control his passion, to exorcise the raging devil in the heart, and to curb the otherwise untamable and unruly member, as the sense of responsibility which religion confers. It does more than merely neutralize the evil; for while it keeps the tongue in check in all that is objectionable, it enables him to speak with moderation and wisdom.

Does any one desire a new sensation—a something to interest, instruct, and profit? If so, let him attend some of the meetings for Christian fellowship, which are not now by any means uncommon or exclusive, say a Methodist class meeting or love feast—that revival of the *Age of the early Church*—in any part of the kingdom, in Cornwall or Yorkshire all the better, and he will understand something of the nature and attractiveness of the assemblies whereof it is affirmed "they spake often one to another."

There is no talent with which we are endowed whereby we exercise a greater power for good or evil, and whose influence is more pervasive and indelible, than that of speech. The word once spoken cannot be recalled. Like seed in the heart and memory of the hearer, it produces its appropriate fruit, and its repetition tends inevitably to the increase of the harvest. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." This is the secret of the danger. But "a word spoken in season, how good is it!" We are surprised how, by seizing an opportunity as it is presented, we sometimes say something that, "like a nail fastened in a sure place," arrests the attention; and we do not know that he is more blameworthy, all things considered, who does mischief by inconsiderate and sinful talk than he who refuses to take occasion to reprove it.

The responsibility of speech is not made a matter of serious consideration mainly, we believe, because the offenders are so universal and so undisguised. Evil-speaking does not shirk the sense of modesty, reverence, and self-respect as it ought to do, and we listen to it as complacently as if it could not be avoided, and much in the spirit in which the Quaker is said to have reproved the profanity of a sailor: "Sweep away, friar," said he; "thee must get all that bad stuff let out of thee before thee gettest to heaven." Without the expression of decided disapproval and rebuke the curse is not likely to be speedily removed.

We have said that the written word remains; and it is does so in a sense in which the spoken word does not. But does the trifling chatter, the gossip and scandal, the flattery and deceit,

"the foolish talking and jesting that is not convenient," pass away like its echo? Does it give no uneasiness, and cause no pain, and leave no trace; or is it, like Uncle Toby's oath, a something that is recorded? As there is such a thing as talking sensibly and profitably, there must be the converse; and indeed there are few habits against which in Holy Writ we are more frequently and seriously warned. "Let every man," it enjoins, "be swift to hear, slow to speak." "If any man among you seem to be religious and brideth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain." "He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile."

Observant students of the *genus homo* to whose writings we have access, with rare exceptions, take occasion to refer to and lament this general defection and taint of corruption. The remedy does not consist in the application of general rules, or in the discovery of an infallible and universal panacea, so much as in personal effort and example, and in the faithful and constant recognition of the encouragement, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man;" and of the truth, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

W. MACLERIE.

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

LONDON, Sept. 22.

A NEW paper is promised, entitled *Big Ben*.

NEXT year Hyde Park will be still more extensively and beautifully laid out with flower-beds.

MR. WILLING's real rain has been plagiarized at the Paris Grand Opera, where they have now got a real live rainbow.

A STATEMENT has been circulated that a Cabinet Council will be held immediately on Mr. Gladstone's return from his cruise.

THERE are no fewer than seven vast new hotels now in course of erection in London, four of them with about 1,000 bedrooms each.

LIFTS from the shore to the top of the cliffs have been proposed for sea-side places. Shanklin has been the first to go into the enterprise.

SINCE the announcement of the marriage of Miss Fortescue with Lord Garmyle £10,000 worth of her photographs in all sizes are said to have been sold.

HASTINGS has renewed its contract for lighting the parade with the electric light. It is the softest thing to walk to (lover-like), except the squinting moon.

A DASHING and crushing reply to Lord Hartington's speech on the Liberal Bill is promised in pamphlet form, so that it may be distributed largely over the country.

IT is gossiped in well-informed ministerial circles that Sir William Harcourt goes next session to the woolstack, and Sir H. James becomes the Home Secretary.

MR. OSCAR WILDE will honor the Town-hall of Old Wandsworth with his presence to explain to the natives what his impressions were of the people of the United States.

AT a sale of orchids in Covent-garden recently, there was realized for one specimen of new arides in flower the sum of 235 guineas. It is believed to be the highest price ever obtained at an auction for a single plant.

THERE is a proposal to have the whole of the Thames brilliantly lighted from Kew Bridge to Richmond. This would certainly add completeness to the idea of the new lock and the splendid shoreage which would then be won.

THE intention of the Metropolitan Board of Works to demolish the churches of St. Mary-le-Strand and of St. Clement Dunes, in order to widen that portion of the Strand in which they are situated, will meet with formidable hostility.

YET another theatre is to be built in London. The new venture will be the farthest west of any—namely, in the Edgware road. The wonder is that they do not come up faster, for managers are all making their fortunes with frightful rapidity.

A MEMORIAL is to be raised in his birth-place to the memory of Dr. Johnson, the celebrated "spellist." Josh Billings, who has also done much in that way to make him renowned, might be employed by the hour to write the inscription.

IT is reported that Earl Granville has mounted a bicycle, the tricycle being too slow for him. What an interesting sight it would be, on the

opening day of the session, to see a file of Her Majesty's ministers mounted on bicycles and tricycles.

MR. FAWCETT means to carry still further into effect his oft-declared preference for female labor. Regulations have been framed for holding competitive examinations for the situation of female sorter in the London Post Office.

MR. MATHEW ARNOLD goes to America next month. He will be there with Lord Coleridge, Mr. Irving, some forty to fifty members of Parliament, half-a-dozen English journalists, and more English people than ever were in America before.

THE Salisbury Club, which has been closed for several weeks, will reopen to its members shortly. The club-house has been thoroughly re-decorated, and the committee have secured the services of one of the best *chefs de cuisine* in London.

THERE is a proposal on foot which, if it is carried out, will enable the journey to Calcutta to be performed in a week. The route would be by rail to Constantinople, and thence by a new line, to be made, between Candahar and Constantinople.

IT is as well to give the warning that cabs will be tremendously scarce all over London on Wednesday next, as the fraternity of drivers intend to enjoy themselves at Lord's Cricket ground all day long, when everything that is amusing in the field sports way is to be provided for their gratification.

IT is said that the pretty American actress, Miss Minnie Pinner, who is playing at the Grand, is under a contract in which there is a penalty of £30,000 if she marries or engages herself to be married before five years. Go, get thee to a nunnery at once!

THE irritation caused by Lord Derby's offensive circular to the Australian Agent General is taking somewhat potential form. A great public meeting is being talked of, and from the demeanour of the men who have the project in hand is likely to be carried out.

"We shall have to give it up." That is what a keen French politician has just said in reference to Tonquin, and that seems to be the general opinion of most of those Frenchmen in London who think at all about the matter. It seems, moreover, to be the point to which negotiations are now tending.

THE building of residential chambers seems to grow apace in London. Many residences of this kind are springing up with wonderful rapidity. Suites of rooms like these let for very high rents. On the whole, the distressed householder ought to think twice before taking refuge in chambers.

IT seems that the lady at Kensington has not been employed by the Queen to write her memoirs, but that the lady is doing so from her own motives, and from her own point of view. Doubtless it will be a work conceived in the best spirit, as the firm of publishers which has accepted it is of the highest standing.

A LIBERAL contemporary, a great admirer of the Grand Old Man, regrets, while alluding to the weight of the Emperor of Austria, that there is no record of the weight of our Premier, and thinks he might be courteously asked to supply the deficiency. This is indeed adulation. We may inform our friend that, from a Conservative point of view, he sits very heavily upon us.

WHAT will the Poet-Laureate do for the Premier in acknowledgment of that most generous tribute to poetry and him which makes the Kirkwall speech memorable, and for permitting him to read some of his poetry before a Czar? If he will give us an ode worthy of himself, or revive the spirit of the Norse ages, and sing to us of the greatest statesmen of the age, Englishmen to-day and hereafter will have cause to thank him.

THE labors of the Permanent Committee on the equipment of the army are now closed, and their report will in a few days be forwarded to the War Office, where, no doubt, it will be only pigeon holed until questions begin to be asked next session. Altogether the "Practical" Committee this season surpass in numbers those of any previous years, and the people are wondering what the outcome of so much experimental work and deliberation with closed doors will be.

THE British Museum reading-room is once again open in the evening till eight o'clock, to the great joy of the students who find it impossible to be in Bloomsbury during the day. How much the extra hours are appreciated can be seen by any who visit the institution during the winter evenings. The electric light is a great success there; it does not flicker and it does not dazzle, and only once has there been any accident. For an experiment this is very striking, and the thanks of the students are due to the trustees for their enterprise.