

PULPIT ELOCUTION.*

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No one, no matter who, can make language really effective in the delivery without giving some attention to the art of delivery, the art commonly called elocution, which Worcester defines as "the manner of speaking; oral expression; pronunciation; delivery; utterance." One writer on the art says that elocution may be defined as simply "the intelligent, intelligible, correct, and effective interpretation and expression of thought and emotion in speech and action." Another says: "It is the appropriate utterance of the thoughts and feelings presented in written language." A definition I prefer to either of these is this: Elocution is the art of speaking language, written or unwritten, so as to make the thought it expresses clear and impressive.

Of the three places where we hear most public speaking and reading—our churches, our theaters, and our courts of law—the place where we hear the best elocution is the last; and the place where we hear, as a rule, the worst is the first. The reason we hear the best elocution in our courts of law is because there the speakers are most earnest, and they are most earnest because there they are most occupied with the thoughts expressed by the language they speak. There, more than anywhere else, the intelligence of the auditor is addressed. There, more than anywhere else, the speakers are eager to convince. There, less than anywhere else, the speakers appeal to the emotions.

The speaker that habitually addresses himself to the emotions of his auditors is in great danger of becoming artifi-

cial, while he that addresses himself to neither the emotions nor the intelligence of his auditors is in equal danger of becoming monotonous; indeed, he is in great danger of becoming a mere mumblor. The Methodist pulpits furnish us with the best examples of the first class of speakers; the Episcopal, with the best examples of the second.

The delivery of no one will be wholly bad if he has thought to convey that is worth conveying, provided he fully comprehends the thought—it may not always be his. The speaker that extemporizes is commonly more effective than the speaker that speaks from a manuscript, for the obvious reason that the extemporizer is more fully occupied with his subject. I say commonly more effective, because it is possible for some persons, persons that have successfully cultivated the art of delivery, to be quite as natural and effective in delivering a lesson conned as when both thought and language come to them as they proceed. To arrive at this point, however, native aptitude has always to be supplemented with much study.

Altho much importance has been attached to the art of elocution as far back as the history of civilization goes, there is, nevertheless, one class of persons, a part of whose duties it is to speak in public two or three times a week, that appear for the most part to attach no importance to it whatever.* I mean the preachers. They, at least many of them, seem to care not a whit whether their delivery is good or bad.

In Methodist pulpits it is too often the fashion to vociferate—to rant, as the stage calls it—with all the physical energy the speaker chances to possess; while in the Episcopal pulpits very many go to the other extreme. They go through the entire service, sermon

* The long and successful experience of Mr. Ayres in training men for the pulpit and the platform, makes his suggestions of special value to the preacher.—EDWARDS.

* The Rev. Dr. Buckley is a notable exception. Dr. Buckley is a staunch advocate of elocution, if it is of the right sort, and was for a time the pupil of an elocutionist named TAYLOR.