

they came to be ministered unto instead of ministering. Light travels faster than sound; and let the illumination of the thought be seen first, rather than allow the reverberation of a wordy introduction thereto to be heard first.

Why this admonition? Because from first to last our diligent aim should be not to divert the hearer's attention from the thought to the vehicles or adornments of the thought. Some writers on oratory have commended rapidity of utterance, just because it gives the listener no time to loiter and lag behind in the discourse. How know we that in consuming minutes to introduce our parable we may not tempt our hearer to a diversion? If it be an illustration from nature, and we pause to define the latitude and longitude of its origin, going into fields, or woods, or mountains to bring it for our use, they who hear us may unwittingly take an excursion into these realms and fail to get back in season to take the train of thought, which has moved on without them. To win and hold attention to the subject under consideration should be the preacher's strenuous aim. Wandering thoughts in his hearers constitute the principal obstacle to this end. All his art and diligence must therefore be employed to concentrate attention upon his theme. Illustrations by all means, but look out for preludes and prolegomena thereto.

2. As belonging to the same kind of misuse, we would mention the habit of extended elaboration of illustrations.

We remember hearing an eminent preacher, in addressing an unusually intelligent audience, spend five or ten minutes in expanding and expounding a single illustration. It was one so simple in itself that it only needed to be stated to be instantly understood. But in its use the speaker compelled the illustration to give its pedigree, to recite its autobiography, and to declare its intentions of marriage with the idea to which it was about to be joined, the train of thought, meantime, having been side-tracked and made to wait for this ponderous illustrative engine to be attached to it. Altogether there was a decided loss to the discourse by this mistake.

Instantaneous illumination is the art most to be coveted in the use of similes and parables. As a lightning flash will irradiate a whole landscape and reveal its entire outline in the twinkling of an eye, so a well-used illustration may instantly light up a range of thought. And it is the trait of true "sons of thunder" that they know how to lighten brilliantly.

Mr. Spurgeon, preaching on the perseverance of the saints, after affirming that the Christian may lapse many times from his integrity without being ultimately lost, says: "The believer, like a man on shipboard, may fall again and again on the deck, but he will never fall overboard."

Dr. South, in a pungent denunciation of spiritual indolence, calls idleness "the rust of the soul, which first soils its beauty and then eats out its strength."

Which comes first in order, penitence or faith? Which is prior, regeneration or repentance?—are questions much discussed. Andrew Fuller