

Interferal.

From the Repertory.

PULPIT ELOQUENCE.

The department of pulpit eloquence is confessedly unrivalled, whether we consider the grandeur of its object, the multitude of its resources, or the interest of the subjects which fall within its province.

Yet while this is acknowledged, its friends have often to deplore the absence of a just exhibition of its real capabilities. Distinct excellencies, it is true, are not wanting. In one, we see a depth of judgment truly admirable; in another, a sublimity of conception which could not be surpassed, and in a third, a tenderness and earnestness of feeling, which penetrate us with every emotion at the will of the speaker. But that constellation of glories which should surround and irradiate the pulpit, as with a zone, it is scarcely within our hope that we shall often realize.

Yet, instances of this exalted excellence might be cited—of men, who, in the service of the Redeemer, were, by turns, all love, all energy, all imagination, all reason, all tenderness. Such perhaps, to mention none other, was the late lamented Sommerfield.

If the heathen orator could aspire after something inexpressibly vast and glorious, (*aliquid immensum infinitumque*), surely the standard of the Christian preacher should be nothing lower than perfection. In this view, the criterion proposed in the following sketch, though high, is not exaggerated; and while the literary beauties of the essay cannot fail to impress every mind, the moral excellence and truth of the portraiture will as surely approve themselves to every feeling heart. It is with unmingled pleasure, therefore, that we call the attention of our readers to so masterly a contribution.—Eps.

One of the deepest and most palpable defects in pulpit eloquence is *uniformity*. The preacher ever appears in his own identity. He does not personate his subject. He is not subdued, or melted, or elevated, or wrapt, according to his theme. The root of the defect is *incompleteness of mental constitution*. One man has logic, another has imagination, a third has pathos. In the finished orator these must contract an intimate, a sublime alliance. Of all their energies he must have an absolute command. Suppose that, in the creation of this fair world, the infinite mind had put forth all its attributes, save that which, might I so speak, I would call the imagination of God; the source of all things grand, and all things fair. Where would have been the loveliness of the flowers, the majesty of the mountains, and the glory of the sun? Suppose again that every attribute but love had been in exercise; where would have been that matchless charm of nature's countenance which, to a heart that can feel, is nothing less than a paternal smile? Especially suppose that intellect, discriminating, grasping, intellect, had not held absolute dominion in that mighty work: where would have been the unity of purpose and result which stamps it with the seal of divinity? The orator must be pre-eminently the image of his Maker. An intellect which would be all the force of another man, must for him discharge the office of commander. An imagination which would utterly dazzle and bewilder ordinary minds, must be to him the calm light of his path. A heart which would consume another man, must be to him a genial warmth. He must be able to hold in strong captivity the entire man. He must have *panoply* of mind. He must have all the divinity that is ever given to mortals.

But, though completeness of mental constitution be the first in order, as a requisite for the highest

eloquence, there is another, which is equally indispensable. It is the *power of expression*. Manner is not a thing *extrinsic* and *incidental* to eloquence; it is an *element of its life*. Without an *adequate, a corresponding* manner, a man may be gigantic in intellect, but he will be a giant in chains. His imagination may be splendid as the sun, but it will be a sun in eclipse. His heart may be a fountain ever so rich and deep, but it will be a fountain covered with ice. That he may be able to put his hearers in possession of his entire state of mind, his words must be a transparent medium for his thoughts, his voice must be an instrument of vast compass and most thrilling tone, his eye must be the mirror of his soul, his every limb must be instinct with energy and life, his whole exterior must have an air, a speaking, breathing air, in deep congeniality with the inner man. I recur, for illustration, to the same source as before, the sempiternal source of eloquence, as of all things bright, and powerful, and fair. Go forth in sorrow in an autumnal evening, when the moon in "majesty of loveliness," will give such virtue to her smile, will so imbue with sweetest charity her mellow light, that where you looked for beauty only you find sympathy; and, from a distant admiration you are kindled into love. Whence hath she this deep charm, this power, all voiceless as she is, to soothe as with essential potency, the bleeding heart? It is, that through the aspect of that meek, but most majestic moon, there comes to you a voice which, through a brighter countenance hath said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is the soul of the eternal which you feel. The whole expression of that evening scene, so tender, yet so high, so overflowing with love, yet whispering of awe, is but the *air* the *manner* of him who hath endowed his excellent works with utterance of his glory. But, are completeness of mental constitution, and the power of expression, *all* the indispensable requisites to a deep, and rich, and various eloquence? No: there is yet another, which, if the pulpit orator have not, he is destitute of his main spring. He must be *enamoured of truth*. He must contract an exquisite taste for its essential and eternal beauty. I would rather say, he must himself *be truth*; for it must be the vital element of his soul, as he must not be a *page*, nor a *volume*, but an encyclopedia of truth. In other words, he must be intimate with the transcendent mysteries of the cross, in all the depth and harmony of their bearings, and he must keep his equilibrium when pressed by their resistless urgencies, because he is pressed on every side. From *such* an indwelling of truth must flow a zeal which is always glowing, but never inflamed. There are yet other qualifications which, though in *principle*, they may be included in what I have already said, it is yet essential to specify. The orator must *know himself*. In the light of his countenance "who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men," he must *deeply* know himself.

He must have much of what Milton, with his own felicity, calls that "seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books." He must have been an intimate *observer* of men, in various ranks and walks of life.

He must expand, and strengthen, and refine his *social* character, by cultivating dignity, and independence and courtesy of manners. Most men seem not to know the fact, but it unquestionably is a fact, that the habitual *manners* of a man are no small part of his *entire being*. The foundation of manners is deep in the mind and heart.

He must be shrinkingly alive to all the decencies and peculiarities of time, and place, and circumstance, and character. These things must have upon his mind the force of law.

He must commune with the Eternal Spirit, not in his