

Seeing then that we must use this art, without which the greater part of our work must lie undone, and seeing too that our society affords peculiar facilities for the cultivation of the art, it seemed to me a fitting thing to preface our work for another year with words that might serve as an introduction to the study and practice of Oratory.

I was the more urged to the choice of this subject that I felt that many of us altogether neglect the study and practice of this art, and all of us fail to pursue it on scientific principles. And lest I should appear over bold in speaking on a subject upon which great men have spoken from Aristotle's time till now, I claim for these words not the merit of setting forth new truths and methods, but that they recall to us methods and truths proved by men of other days and by applying them to our present needs, seek to make the old new. I would further hope to point out difficulties we all have felt but perhaps have not been able to define, and thus take the first step to their removal. Indeed, I shall be willing to bear the charge of presumption if by these words men in this college are stirred to earnest study of this art of Oratory. Oratory is almost our only weapon with which we are to do battle for the truth, and a mighty one it is, but useless it lies like Odysseus' bow, until its master comes, then in his hands it does his will to save his friends, to slay his foes. Our study then should make us masters of the art and our practice skilful in its use. Here, at the outset of this course there meet us those who object to any formal study of Oratory and to all oratory by fixed rules and methods. "Such study," say they, "tends to make the orator artificial and affected. Oratory is a natural gift. Let a man be filled with his subject and then speak naturally, forgetful of rules and art." But, gentlemen, we never speak naturally but we speak by rule. Eloquence is a gift of nature to some degree. Yet Eloquence never speaks but in harmony with nature's laws. Rules spring from our knowledge of nature by experience. Rules are but the crystallized experiences of success. Action by rule is most effective because most natural; but of rules two things must be true, they must spring from nature, and must become part of our nature.

Speaking by rule is artificial only when the rule is not of nature, or when, being of nature, it has failed of becoming part of our-