

The most difficult punishment a hearer ever has to endure is to see and hear imitations of the oddities or peculiarities of great men. "The contortions or gyrations of some celebrated living preachers, greatly as they may infringe the canons of the schools, are often interesting and impressive because original and spontaneous: but when poorly mimicked by second or third-rate imitators, they become disgusting enormities. Affectation of any sort, but especially in preaching the truths of God, is its bane. It is to all products of the mind, and especially to sacred oratory, precisely what hypocrisy is to religion—its negation and ruin. And this truth cannot be too intensely realized by all concerned."

Hearers sometimes fail to catch portions of sentences uttered by the preacher in an undertone—uttered thus for no reason but because he has got into a bad habit. We have known preachers the first few sentences of whose prayers were always inaudible.—This should not be so, and a little care would readily obviate all difficulty.

Hearers should prepare for their part of the day's services by meditation and prayer; but it is doubly imperative on the preacher to prepare. The truths of the Gospel are many-sided and infinitely varied in their bearings and relations. The man of God must "meditate upon these things." Dr. Adam Clarke has said, "I have preached perhaps five thousand sermons, on all kinds of subjects, and on a great variety of occasions, and I did not know beforehand one single sentence that I should utter; and were I to preach before the king, or the two universities, I must preach in this way or not at all." To follow Dr. Adam Clarke's example in this respect would be ruinous to ninety-nine out of every hundred ministers, and it would be a cruel injustice to a christian people. A great mind richly stored with knowledge and blessed with rare powers of thought and utterance may, like Dr. Clarke, dispense with study for a special occasion, but ordinary mortals cannot do so without the most inexcusable temerity. To hear the mindless drivel of some preachers is most distressing; they have not studied their subject: and their discourses de-

serve the compliment paid by Coleridge to a poor production submitted to him:

"Your sermon must eternal prove,
Good sir, it cannot fail;
For 'tis incomprehensible,
And lacks both head and tail."

If these victims of mental indolence would but write and read their sermons, it would be a great relief to the sensitive auditor.

This leads us to say a word on using the manuscript in the pulpit. Our church very wisely has no iron rule on the subject. If discourses are read oratorically, they will be heard with satisfaction; if they are studied carefully and delivered without the "paper" so much the better. The *Princeton Reviewer* says, "The free, impassioned Chalmers carefully wrote his discourses. The severely correct, elegant, classical, yet eloquent discourses of Robert Hall were unwritten. Edwards, reading from a manuscript most closely written, caused spasmodic uprisings and shrieks in congregations as he depicted to them the case of sinners in the hands of an angry God. Those sermons of Griffin that now overawed, now transported vast audiences of all descriptions of people, now causing the obdurate sinner to tremble on the brink of the bottomless pit, and anon lifting the humble and contrite spirit to the third heaven, were written with great care, the author often re-writing, and cutting out every thing superfluous. Davis, a model of the most striking pulpit oratory, probably the prince of American preachers, who almost invariably produced the profoundest impression on the largest audiences, whose discourses, heard by Patrick Henry, kindled that great orator to his efforts of patriotic eloquence,—usually wrote his sermons with great care, and carried them into the pulpit; but, like Dr. Griffin, delivered them with freedom, not being confined to his manuscript."

The lesson of all lessons is that preachers should preach as ambassadors for Christ, and as "dying men to dying men"; and that hearers should listen as to God's message of mercy to their souls.