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FOOLISH BOASTING OF THE FUTURE.

BY THE REV. JOHN FRASER, MONTREAL.

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."—Prov. XXV. 1.

The men of our day full of faith and hope, with their faces turned toward the future, are too ready to forget the lessons of the past. Bent on worldly success, let them not be deceived by the world, but listen to the teaching of more than worldly wisdom. A greater than Solomon is here. We might suppose that our text refers only to the immediate to-morrow, and regards merely the minor morals in forbidding boasting; but we shall find that it affects our interior spiritual being, and has a bearing on our whole hereafter.

This foolish boasting is from pride.

Its root is the first and worst sin of nature. All of the affections and passions are social, demonstrative and practical. They express themselves in words and actions. They call for interest and sympathy. Joy says, Come and rejoice with me. Love is not subjective but objective. And pride proves no exception to this rule.

As this vain confidence in the future is most naturally shown in words, boasting is proverbially put for any manifestation of it. But it may be shown in works, no less than words, for actions speak louder than words. Nay, it may be shown most strikingly, as it is manifested most frequently, by inaction. In nothing do the children of men more betray this intonation than in neglecting any preparation for eternity.

Avoid pride. It cannot prosper. Angels fell by it. And this your pride is the original type, stamped with the primal curse. It is aspiring to be "gods," and intruding into the Divine domain, the future. It is seeking to be "like God, knowing good from evil," whereas "you know not the good or evil before you all the days of your vain life which you spend as a shadow."

All of proud and foolish boasting, the most foolish is boasting of future time.

What are your own but your sins and sorrows? What have you to boast of, unless you glory in your shame? What are all the morrows you ever will have or can have? "A span is all that you can boast; an inch or two of time." Even this is not yours. You have only the passing present; not like the Divine One, embracing all the eternities, but narrowed almost to nothing between the other two tenses of time.

However men may differ in other things, so as to leave room for the entrance of this evil passion, in regard to time all are absolutely on a level. The rich and poor, the young and old, the well and sick, "meet together" in being sure only of the passing moment. Like the children of Israel, who were on "an equality" receiving the manna which came down every day small as the coriander seed, so do we receive these golden moments. Where all are alike there can be no ground for distinctions. This is to narrow a foundation on which to rear so boastful a superstructure.

Therefore men intrude into God's domain of the future, as into a building lot convenient to their own which would be unoccupied; thus rendering themselves liable to summary election for trespass. They are more extravagant than those whom the Latin poet satirized for building out into the deep, as if Rome had not room for them. More foolish than the foolish builders who built on the sand, they build castles in the air.

Let us misunderstand me, I may say that it is not only lawful but necessary to form plans and make provision for the future. But this is to be done in the spirit of humility, dependence and prayer. If we build on what hangs to God, we are to do so seeking his permission and seeking his blessing. As the Apostle James expressed it, say, "If the Lord will we shall live, and do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boasting, all such rejoicing is vain."

This foolish boasting of the future is most common.

We meet it in everything good and bad, public and private. If we read national bulletins, we learn that they are forever on the eve of important events. Their favorite generals are about to achieve victory and push the enemy to the wall. When, disquieted, we turn to religious experience, we find it too much like the Hebrew verbs—without any present tense, but consisting of some small promise for the past, and large promises for the future. Everybody seems to have opened a credit account with everybody else, and is anxious to be taken on trust.

As you will find in families a child regarded as a beauty or prodigy, who is pampered though the others are neglected, so amongst the days the morrow is the universal favorite. It is invested with the interest and promise of youth. It reflects the rays and lancy of hope. The rising sun has all the worshippers. The Joseph; he will raise the family to influence, honor and happiness. God grant that he prove not an Abimelech.

Yet, untaught by experience, men say, This time I will repent. This year I will be happy. This scheme will succeed. Their possessions in the new world, with its mines of gold, silver and diamonds, as they imagine, will pay the debt of the old.

Therefore, this verse is connected with the following: "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." As much as to say, "Do not boastingly tell us what great good things you are to do in the *pau-lo-post* future; do them, and then everybody, even a stranger, can speak of them. If you must publish your own praises let it not be the office of the tongue, were lip-service; do it by many achievements. If you wish to blow your own trumpet, do not sound it before thee, as the hypocrites do, and every arrogant knave of a pretender. Boast not thyself of to-morrow. Leave it for to-morrow to boast of thee."

Boast not of to-morrow, for it is no better than yesterday or to-day.

No better did I say? It is not so good. In themselves considered, all days are alike; but from tendencies, influences and habits; to-mor-

row points an empty boaster the way he is travelling from bad to worse. It is an interior yesterday—a very ordinary sort of to-day. It is a faint copy—a faded *fœcimitis*. It is a new edition struck off from old worn out types. It is the exhausted air breathed through thousands of lungs. It is like land covered all over with mortgages. Would you boast yourself of a second-hand article? And to-morrow is no better.

The golden age of life is not in the future but the past. It is not time as it comes from our hand, but as it comes from the hand of God. That is the cream of our existence—the first and best. Whatever our views of primogeniture, there is a right of primogeniture belonging to the beginning of life. God made yesterday; man makes to-morrow. The first of life, like the first day of the week, is the Lord's Day. It had the birthright. To-morrow is a day of the week—a working day—a prosy and worldly day. O how unlike that early heavenly season, divine in its inspirations and possibilities.

Why, then, regard every to-morrow with a complacency which you regard no yesterday? Is life before you like Eden, and behind you a waste-howling wilderness?

Men whose nature, wandering down the stream of time, as I have seen the stupid animals travel down a stream seeking to quench their thirst. They trouble and pollute it as they go farther and farther from the fountain head, yet look for clear water.

Will you never learn that the future inherits a taint and bias from the past ever more and more exaggerated? Its very form is determined for it. It abides by the laws of habit as its fixed rule. The morrow is but a stream from the fountain—a branch from the root. "Boast not, therefore, against the natural branches; but and if thou boast thou bearest not the root, but the root thee."

That which makes men thus foolishly boast of the future is from themselves; therefore it is vain boast not thyself of to-morrow.

They will take the raw material of life, they fancy, and work it up into a fabric, rich, beautiful, and happy. They will improve upon the text. They will avoid its mistakes, and not repeat its failures. This will show the results of experience. Is not life, they ask to live and learn? Yes; could they learn a little humility, so as to apply their hearts to wisdom.

Yet nations are as presumptuous now as in the days of King Ahaz. "The bricks are fallen down, they say, but we will build of hewn stone; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars." And such fools are still ready to pull down in order to build larger. It would show some sense, when forced to build, rather than to build of smaller size, and of a less costly material.

Such a one would say, "I cannot rise to eminence, I will aim at contentment. Instead of being troubled about many things, I will strive to be 'faithful in a few things.'" If the Lord will I wish to carry on business in a small way. The sun of prosperity has set, but I will light the candles of industry. At my time of life and in my circumstances I would contract my aims. I would not extend my line and endanger my connections in face of an enemy. I cannot wash my hands in innocence, but may in penitence. I cannot attain now eminent holiness, but may the Lord grant me some measure of humility."

The uncertainty of the future is nothing compared with the uncertainty in ourselves, or rather the certainty that human weakness, sinful habit, and the spirit of procrastination will soon be too strong for us. When will men learn that, instead of their being able to count on self as a source of strength, it only complicates the case by introducing an element of difficulty and disorder? You may now see particular mistakes you make, or obstacles to be overcome, and prepare accordingly; but there are thousands of others which you cannot see, for which you are unprepared and cannot prepare.

"What!" you exclaim in astonishment, "are we then brought to this pass? Are we bound down by this hard necessity? Can we not cut ourselves loose from the wreck of the past? Are we under hard, iron, inexorable law, and not under grace? Is there no hope? May we not grow wiser and better?"

There is indeed hope; for though under law, it is a law of grace. Repentance is never in vain, nor prayer through Christ unavailing. It were as much against my own personal feeling as against my official duty to discourage any one. The very design of Christianity is to rescue from the wreck of the past and establish on a better basis.

But he has yet the alphabet of Christianity to learn who is not cured of this foolish boasting. If your self-sufficiency is not cut up by the root, you "know nothing yet so as you ought to know." Instead of boasting of what you will do, you have enough to repent of what you have done. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Or works? Nay; by the law of faith."

Boast not of to-morrow for you know not what a day may bring forth.

The future is proverbially dark; fortune is proverbially fickle; life is proverbially uncertain. "Let not him that putteth on his armor boast like him that putteth it off." The greatest, wisest, and most successful of men have been sobered and humbled by their experience of life.

Thus boasting, you presume and procrastinate; you sacrifice the end to the means. By grasping at a shadow you lose the substance. Life itself slips away, as you are busied about projects of living. Like the builders of Babel you build your story, as if you would reach the very Heavens from your slender foundation, and labor on till the whole topples upon you, and instead of Heaven you find the grave. Surely in a country so subject to earthquake, it were your wisdom to build only one story. Instead of plan within plan, and arrangement after arrangement, you should rather use the world as not using it, remembering that the time is short.

Any one of a thousand agencies may at any time defeat your whole design. Speak then trembling. Demean yourself humbly. Walk softly. Pass the time of your sojourning in

fear. Provoke not God to make an example of you.

He knows what a day may bring forth. It may be that you look for light, but will find darkness; for peace, but behold trouble; for healing, but no time of healing will come. And that particular to-morrow, on which you count so confidently, which you already enjoy in anticipation, which is to transfigure the future and change the whole of life—if it come at all—may not come to curse instead of to bless? May it not be a day of darkness, perplexity and sorrow, that brings forth nothing but misery? May you not be left to rue it with those that curse the day; and wish that it might not come into the number of the months, nor be joined into the days of the year? It is not of ever-morrows boasting of it, it may leave you nothing in the past or future to boast of, or to hope and wait for. As this, you must admit, is possible, will you do all you can to make it actual? With feelings how different from boasting, then—yea with chastened and subdued feelings—with humility anxiety and prayer—should you look forward to the future, or to any particular period of event of the future.

Boast not of to-morrow for you know not what a day may bring forth; and you know how little any day can bring forth.

The warning is founded not only on our ignorance of the future, but on our experience of the past. We might know by this time how little a single day can signify. Time has come to us again and again like the Sibyl with her books—always having more to ask and less to offer. The days before us, "few and evil," are against the aggravated habits of the past, and like raw recruits liable to meet veteran legions kept together by the instinct of discipline and borne onward by the tide of success. And any one day, against the whole sweep and impetus of the inveterate concentrated past, is as powerless as an individual against an armed host. One day, cannot, like a hero of old, turn the battle to the gate against a thousand.

Surely such considerations should produce something very different from carnal confidence, self-sufficiency and presumptuous procrastination. Have you yet to learn that yesterday stands for privilege and advantage; to-day, for grace and salvation; to-morrow, for judgment and retribution?

All that makes salvation even now possible is the grace of Christ; and by rejecting his time you reject his terms of help. He says, "To-day, after so long a time as it is said to-day," and your response is "To-morrow." He directs you to "seek first the Kingdom of God;" and you resolve to "seek it last." He entreats you to improve the present as the only time; and you only reply, Any time but the present.

My unconverted friend, if you procrastinate till the Lord Jesus leaves you, the work which you now delay because difficult will then prove impossible. Before that "to-morrow" to which you look forward arrives, you may lose reason, you may die, or the Blessed Spirit be grieved away, so as forever to leave you.

Or if the to-morrow to which you procrastinate be your dying day, it is a period of which to boast? Had I the privilege of the Apostle who drew spiritual analogies from the Grecian games, I would show by allusion to "the turf" that this is the most reckless gambling. The day on which sinners stake their souls, heaven and eternity, resembles a steed, neither sound in wind or limb, that is given into power of enemies to drug against the time of trial. It is to carry weight—and what weight! It is not only preferred to God's day and our day, the present, but is expected to go over the ground of a lifetime. Do you not know that it is only the day of judgment that can go over the ground of a lifetime? And will you cast away your souls on a chance so desperate?

Would a man wait in a corner where he could not move to meet an enemy in mortal combat? Would not a fleet with sea-room to engage? Would a large army remain to be cut off amid defiles?

Live to-day. As Caesar was warned to beware of the "Ides of March," we warn you to avoid to-morrow as you would the fiend. He takes this form.

You may regard the difference between to-day and to-morrow as only a few short hours—a little thing. Even were it so, your salvation may depend on little things; but the habit of procrastination is not a little thing.

"To-day is" the accepted time. It has privileges, opportunities and promises. To-day is from heaven; to-morrow is only of this world. It may be in the world to come. The difference then, between to-day and to-morrow, is the difference between doing and promising—between piety and procrastination—penitence and presumption—faith and hardness of heart.

Between the two a great gulf is fixed,"—as between light and darkness, good and evil, heaven and hell.

ENTERING HEAVEN.

At length the door is opened, and free from pain and sin.

With joy and gladness on his head, the pilgrim enters in;

The Master bids him welcome, and on the Father's breast.

By loving arms enfolded, the weary is at rest.

The pilgrim staff is left behind—behind the sword, the shield;

The armor, dimmed and dented, on many a hard fought field;

His now the shining palace; the garden of delight.

The psalm, the robe, the diadem, the garden ever bright.

The blessed angels round him, 'mid heaven's hallowed calm.

With harp and voice are lifting up the triumph of his psalm.

"All glory to the Holy One, the infinite I Am."

Whose grace redeems the fallen! Salvation to the Lamb!

"Another son of Adam's race, through Jesus loving might."

Hath crossed the waste, hath reached the goal, hath vanquished in the fight.

Hail, brother, hail! we welcome thee! join in our sweet accord;

Lift up the burden of our song—Salvation to the Lord!"

And now from out the glory, the living cloud of light.

The old familiar faces, come beaming on his sight.

The early lost, the ever loved, the friends of long ago.

Companions of his conflicts and pilgrimage below.

They parted here in weakness, and suffering and gloom;

They meet amid the freshness of heaven's immortal bloom;

Henceforth in ever-enduring bliss to wander hand in hand,

Beside the living waters of the still and sinless land.

Oh, who can tell the rapture of those to whom 'tis given

Thus to renew the bonds of earth amid the bliss of heaven?

Thrice blessed be His Holy Name, who for our fallen race,

Hath purchased by his bitter pains such plenitude of grace.

—Sunday Magazine.

PHILANTHROPY OF CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity was once charged with being un-Christian, now it is charged with being unpractical. It is said that it offers a Bible and a prayer to those who beg a loaf and a pair of shoes; that it piles up in the way of human progress a wall of antiquated Scripture declarations; that it is lost in the mire of reform; and that great humanitarian movements are therefore always begun and carried on by unbelievers, until the laggard Church is lashed into the work. It is vainly proclaimed that every reform is at first an infidel movement. All this too, is affirmed with an earnestness and sincerity that can scarcely be questioned. Sometimes it comes to us with brazen effrontery and kicks aside Christ and his Church, so that the world may have some chance for advancement.

Never was there more ignorance of fact and philosophy crowded into a single sentence than in some of those used in this direction by these haters of the Church. They ought to know, when they demand that the Church lead in reforms, that great bodies never lead in reforms, not a case can be shown where any large body has come at once to apprehend some existing evil and set itself vigorously to destroy it. In every case the first realization of wrong and outrage arises in individual minds. The reform penetrates some soul, whose groans or utterances perchance reach another soul. The circle of sympathy is small, and the voice of remonstrance is weak, but after a while it is heard. Resistance to the evil swells with the widening discovery of its nature and magnitude; bodies of men become agitated by the discussion of its character and the modes of overcoming it. It comes at length to have prestige both ecclesiastical and political, and rises in its majesty and crushes the wrong.

When, therefore, infidelity asks when did the Church ever lead in reform, we may legitimately respond by asking when did any body, any individual club, any political party, any considerable body, existing for other purposes, lead off in some new movement for the amelioration of any part of our race? The question to which this response is based on the shallow ignorance of the history of reforms, and it can in no way be pertinent to the merits or demerits of the Church as a philanthropic agency. If it be true that the Church never leads in reform, it proves nothing, for that comes of its numbers, and the necessary slowness of all great bodies that is so notorious as to have acquired the currency of a proverb. It cannot be attributed to its religious character, for that is eminently humanitarian.

We, on the other hand, affirm what is pertinent to the question, that the Church is the very first of all large bodies to move off in all true reforms. Jesus Christ, the founder of the Church, while on earth seemed to be well nigh as busy in giving relief to the immediate wants and woes of the men and women about him, as in laying the foundation of a grand economy, the consummation of which was to end in the flight of all sorrow and sighing, and the transfiguration of men into angels. He was the formation of all true religion, which before God and the Father is this, "to visit the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world,"—in other words, it is benevolence administered by pure hands. We do not mean to say that the Church has never been at fault, nor that her foremost divines have been the first of Christians to see the wrong, and demand the right; position like numbers is naturally conservative. Greatness is often lifted too high to clearly see the prints of the iron heel on the neck of him who writes in the dust. This is true of greatness as such, irrespective of its religious or political character. But is evident that the sentiment that culminates in the redress or removal of wrongs enters the Church, penetrates Christian hearts and moves them to energetic measures, not only as soon, but sooner than in most other cases. The genius of Christianity prepares it for this work. Sometimes the reform has its very birth in Christian hearts, and its first cries are heard in the pulpit itself; its first three divide pastors and people and Church members from Church members. So amid the tumult right marches on to its triumph. Fifty years before Wilberforce thundered in parliament against the slave trade, John Wesley pronounced it "the sum of all villainies," and later ages have not produced a truer characterization of the abomination. Susannah Wesley became a public speaker before the Lucys, the Annas, the Fannys, the Susans, and others of notoriety for woman's cause were born. The temperance movement had its beginnings with the ministry of Christ and it has always become a sickly child whenever taken from the bosom of its legitimate mother. Socialism, too has proved a failure whenever it has risen up in its Godlessness to actualize its principles, while Christianity sees the solitary in families. The

goal is full of abortive New Harmonies and Arcadias. Naked philanthropy has gone to the heathen world with its Christless civilization, but its deserted fields and its dilapidated mills are in dismal contrast with whole nations redeemed by Christianity, lifted in some cases from cannibalism to a high degree of civilization. The efforts of philanthropy for the million of heathen have been few and sickly and selfish, while the Church with steadfast self-immolation has sought the recovery of the nations. The Church has within the last fifty years done more for the relief and elevation of humanity in heathen fields alone, than unbelievers have done in all the world beside. To this must be added her ceaseless contributions and labors for the good of man nearer home in all departments besides. Education ~~was~~ has everything. There is scarcely a college in America that was not founded by Christians. State institutions that have lately become more common, may be ascribed more to them than to others, for they in all the States are in the ascendant in numbers, while nearly all other collegiate institutions were directly created by the Church. Girard College itself is preserved by the little salt of grace that is in it in spite of infidel testamentary restraints. Asylums of all sorts receive their full measure of support from the Church; the Church is not a whit behind others, but in advance. Not least of all must be counted the untold personal benefactions of those who are busy binding up the broken-hearted, opening prison doors, and proclaiming the acceptable word of the Lord. Millions of busy hearts and hands are stirred to activities by the love of Christ.

Indeed, it might be averred with perfect safety that a view of the earliest individual efforts at reform would greatly redound to the honor of the cause of Christ. Go back ever so far in the Christian era, and whatever godless leader in some real reform may be pointed out, it will be no difficult thing to antedate his labors with those of a Christian not less zealous or self-sacrificing than he. So that whether we compare individual philanthropy with individual philanthropy, or combined philanthropy with combined philanthropy, Christianity and the Church never suffer by the comparison. It is time to clinch these enemies of our race, and throw them on this matter of the relative merits of Christianity and infidelity as humanizing agencies. The cross of Christ is the world's last and only hope.—North Western Ad.

QUESTIONS

TO THOSE WHO NEGLECT PRAYER MEETINGS.

1. Are you always better employed? If not is it well for you to absent yourself?
2. Do you get more good to your own soul, and do more good to others, by staying away? If not, can you be acting wisely?
3. Does your own conscience justify you, or have you not sometimes a difficulty in keeping it quiet on the subject?
4. Will a death bed commend your present course, or will you then look upon your neglect of prayer meetings with pleasure, thank you?
5. Does your pastor suffer by your neglect? Does it hurt his feelings, cool his zeal, and hinder his usefulness?
6. Are not your fellow members in the Church discouraged by you, and may you not offend Christ's little ones?
7. Is not your own family injured by your neglect? What will your children think of prayer meetings, seeing you habitually neglect them? Is it surprising if they despise them?
8. Is there no reason to fear that the unconverted may be both hindered and led to think lightly of prayer by your conduct?
9. Can you have a proper concern for the prosperity of the Church, the spread of Christ's cause, and the conversion of sinners, if you never meet to pray for them?
10. And are you sure that you fulfill your duty as a church member while you neglect prayer meetings? Is neglect of duty no sin, and is there no probability of your being called to an account for it?
11. Did any one ever gain anything, either in spiritual or temporal things, by neglecting prayer meetings? If you think so, can you prove it?
12. Is there no selfishness or pride, or worldly-mindedness, at the root of your neglect? If so, ought such things to be encouraged?
13. Would it be right to give up the prayer meetings? Do you think this would please God or improve the cause? But if all the members did as you do, must they not be given up? Could not the rest find excuses for staying away, think you, as well as you? Do you not think they would, if their hearts were as worldly, or as cold, or as indifferent about the prosperity of the cause as yours appears to be?

ENCOURAGING ONE'S PASTOR.

Dr. Curry, in an editorial on the duty of a Church to its minister says:

First impressions cling tenaciously. Welcome him; call on him. Make him feel at home. Early and cordial attentions to a minister and his family are among the best investments you can make for the good of the Church.

Pave the way for his early acquaintance with your family. Introduce him to every one of them, and when you can get his ear, speak a few words about them. Pastoral work in cities at least, is exceedingly difficult and unsatisfactory. The minister must devote his mornings to studying; "companies," and the reception of calls. In the afternoon the pastor will be forth to the houses of his congregation. He is introduced into the parlor, and, after a painfully long waiting sometimes, sees one well-dressed lady, and goes on sighing for the times when the advent of the circuit-rider was the signal for the whole family to assemble to hear a message from God. It is no elegant parties your pastor wants, but an introduction to your home life. He wants the opportunity to pass an hour or two with your own family, to become acquainted with them, to find out who are Christians, to speak a word for Jesus, and to pray with them. An invitation to tea with you is worth ten times as much to you and to your minister during the first half year of his pastorate among you as at any later time.

When Napoleon was on St. Helena he was walking one day with some ladies along a mountain defile, and met a negro bearing a heavy burden. Napoleon stepped aside into a cleft in the rocks for him to pass, and when one of the ladies expressed surprise he said, "I respect the burden, madam." So we now say, in this case—respect the burden of your ministers. Help them; help them all you can. Sympathize with them. "Esteem them very highly, in love for their works' sake."

THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOUNT ALLISON INSTITUTIONS.

(Special to the St. John Telegraph.)

SACKVILLE, March 22.

They College examinations were held Thursday and Friday. All Students recommended for regular advancement in classes. Ralph Brecken and Charles Dewall Heard, both of Charlottetown, passed for degree of Bachelor of Arts. The theological examination Saturday morning was entirely satisfactory to the examiners.

Sunday morning, Rev. Andrew McKeown preached an eloquent sermon, and Sunday evening Rev. Mr. Pope of St. John preached the anniversary Sermon in Lingley Hall.

To-day, Academic Examinations in Male and Female Academies passed off very creditably. In latter particularly, students acquitted themselves admirably. Physical Geography and Geology classed very good. The standing of students in some cases reached ninety and ninety-five per cent of marks,—one whole hundred per cent in one branch of study.

A pleasing exhibition of fine arts, the product of the past year's labor, followed examination. The display reflects great credit on the skill and energy of Prof. Gray. There are pictures in pencil, water colors, and oils in a great variety, chiefly intended for the Bazaar to be held in St. John soon, the proceeds of which are intended for the Institution here.

A large number of visitors are here and more are expected for the public exhibition.

The weather is warm and delightful.

Prof. Weldon, who goes to resume his studies at Yale College, was presented by Prof. Gray and others with fine oil painting by Prof. Gray—scene, Morris' pond, two miles from this place, where Prof. Weldon often rowed. The presentation took place in the drawing room of the Ladies' Academy, with a suitable speech and reply. It was a pleasant surprise.

There was a public gathering in Lingley Hall at seven o'clock—Rev. Mr. Duncan, of Charlton, presiding. The Hall was crowded. The opening prayer was by the Rev. Howard Sprague, followed by a Piano duet by Miss Clark and Miss Chapman.

The chairman then introduced the Rev. Andrew McKeown as Alumni Orator for the occasion. He was greeted with hearty applause.

His theme was

"ORATORY AND ORATORS."

"Incentives to Oratory, with Illustrations of its Use and Power." In a happy introduction, among other things, he explained his temerity in attempting to treat his audience to a discourse on so ambitious a theme, by comparing it to the devotion of a lover the very thought of whose passion blinds him sometimes to the impossibility of what he attempts,—a lover who sees not the effort to be vain as does all the world besides. He confessed to the ambition of having paid his devotion at this shrine. He reminded his hearers that it does not follow that because a man writes or speaks on oratory he therefore claims to be an orator, any more than that the man who writes or speaks on poetry claims to be a poet,—it rarely happens that the artist is a judicious critic of his art.

Coming to the body of the discourse, he claimed that articulate speech is an endowment and an art, chiefly the latter. Men learn to talk as they learn to walk. The requisite powers are the gift of nature, but the ability to use them is acquired. Man is the talking animal as well as the "laughing animal." He alone of all creatures on earth has or can have proper speech, for Soul is the Parent Divinity of which speech is the *Logos*.

Speech is an attainment, as a cultivated art is perhaps limitlessly improvable, ranging through almost every conceivable variety; yet how few persons, even in cultivated society, derive from it anything like that degree of pleasure or advantage which it is capable of conferring. Its possession even as fine conversational powers is as rare as it is precious; while oratorical talent, of anything like a high order, has ever been held as among the most distinguished attainments of man. Of all God's inspirations "Genius is the rarest," and of all the breathings of genius the rarest is eloquence.

Oratory in its grandest conception must be ever esteemed the highest of the Fine Arts—the art of arts—the one most difficult of attainment, perhaps—certainly the one most illustrious accomplishment. A moderate degree of proficiency in public speaking may be easily attained, and is not to be despised; but the accomplished orator, who sways men—on whose lips they love to hang—is not so easily made. He needs the long, patient, laborious training of all the best faculties and powers with which humanity is gifted,—he needs the perfect development, training, and use of the whole man, physical, intellectual, and moral. In the other fine arts a man may excel, and yet be defective in some of his powers, as Milton in Poetry, without the bodily sense of sight; but for the highest excellence and effect in public speaking nothing can suffice, but the whole being brought into full and finest play. The cultivated and best use of a perfect physical organism is hardly auxiliary. (This he appropriately, nay, wittily, and with fine effect, illustrated by reference to Henry Giles, Danl. O'Connell, Danl. Webster, and Ben Butler, concerning the last of whom especially he told a capital anecdote.) He quoted Cicero in support of moral qualifications, thus:—"The speaker who would inspire lofty sentiments must first himself be the subject of them." Eloquence, whose source is sincerity, is the language of noble sentiment. The orator requires the highest and best use of

his intellectual nature also. The powers called into exercise by oratory are invention—that creative act of the mind—imagination, sensibility, taste, and expression,—the last named including the correct and copious use of strong and appropriate language and gesture. These are man's highest honors, and of them all the orator needs the simultaneous and most strenuous exertion.

There is another quality of the true orator of highest type,—yet not a single quality so much as a combination of qualities,—a result of a highly poetic temperament combined with extreme nervous susceptibility, all under the pressure and headway of powerful passion. If there is a single word that encompasses it, it is the word "inflammability," but this does not sufficiently include the idea of "sensibility." It is sensibility, but it is more than that,—it is sensibility that has strength in it. It is the element that can weep and fight at the same time—that is at once tender and true and brave. It is what gives the aroma to eloquence—the sparkle to the flowing bowl—the crest of foam on the wave—and it is the only element, perhaps which culture cannot bestow. Patrick Henry was the finest example among the moderns, and Demosthenes among the ancients; while Edward Everett, with all his mastery elaboration and high-wrought beauties, had not a particle of it. It was to this element that Mr. Webster doubtless referred when, giving a definition of true eloquence, he said,—"The marshalling of words and sentences cannot compass it; it comes, if it comes at all, like the bursting of a fountain from the earth or the outgassing of volcanic fires."

Eloquence is almost the sublimest exhibition of human power. The inspired before a vast assembly who are swayed by the invisible hand of his eloquence, as the forest by the wind, is grander than Jove hurling the thunderbolts. He stands amidst the radiance of his own thought like the angel in the sun, holding the hearts of men in his hand, and turning them whithersoever he will. He is a tree on fire with lightning.

"He hears a voice you cannot hear; He sees a hand you cannot see."

And with fierce flashing utterance, burning vehemence, brief, stern strokes, he pierces through the reason and through the passions of his audience, directly at their vitals,—spurning, trampling on all opposing wills, he hurries the souls whom he has taken captive onward ever onward to the insatiable object which impatiently beckons in the distance. Oh it is grand when in that magic word his thoughts troop into line; and clad in invincible armor of fitting expression, beat down in solid phalanx upon opposing ranks of darkness and error, overwhelming them with defeat. (This the Rev. gentleman illustrated by relating an anecdote of Wendell Phillips when interrupted by roughs in his New York audience.) In the rapt orator we behold human nature in its loftiest moods. Not till the passions are on fire does the soul reveal its strength and majesty, as it was not till Troy was in flames that the gods were seen every where mingling in the fray.

Public speaking, then, in its highest examples can never be other than the rarest of accomplishments. And yet it is worth while in some to try to be orators. The attainment is so grand in itself, and the country and age furnish so many facilities for its cultivation, and so many inducements, in opportunities for its honorable and profitable exercise, that it is quite worth while for those favorably situated and endowed to attempt its acquisition. Who has not at some time felt that he could be an orator? Who, reading or hearing some glorious speech, has not felt a thrill of impassioned utterance which filled him with the thought that he would one day be an orator? (Speaking of the field for oratory in this country, the Rev. gentleman paid the New Dominion and the intelligence and taste of its people a warm compliment.) Never fear, he continued, that the endless multiplication of books, and the superabundance of reading matter furnished by newspapers, magazines, reviews and pamphlets will supersede the necessity of the public speaker and render his occupation like Othello's—gone. They only prepare the way; they furnish the conditions of his success. What a blessing is so popular orator is no longer, as he was at Athens and Rome, the principal endeavor of an ignorant common people; are we the less prepared to appreciate and enjoy him, or any the less subject to his sway, because we have been raised from the sluggishness of ignorance, and can instantly comprehend his every thought and enjoy his most distant and delicate allusion? His task may become somewhat more difficult than was that of the ancient speaker. It may require consummate skill now to touch and set in motion all the springs of action, to humor or overpower the prejudices of educated men, to keep in ceaseless play their imaginations and sway their passions at will; but examples of the most perfect success in these things may be had from the experiences of many of our great orators. George Whitefield made David Hume—philosopher, sceptic, scoffer, though he was—start to his feet with a burst of admiration, as he closed up a sermon in these words:—"The attendant angel is just about to leave the threshold and ascend to heaven, and shall not be heard with him the news of one sinner among all this multitude reclaimed from the error of his ways?" Then, elevating his voice to its full-toned majesty, he shouted "Stop, Gabriel, stop, ere you enter the second portal, and carry with you the glad tidings of one more sinner won to heaven." He next depicted in glowing terms, the effect on Benjamin Franklin of Whitefield's preaching a charity sermon, and of his enchantment of the elite of Philadelphia in introducing the parlor, and, after a painfully long waiting sometimes, sees one well-dressed lady, and goes on sighing for the times when the advent of the circuit-rider was the signal for the whole family to assemble to hear a message from God. It is no elegant parties your pastor wants, but an introduction to your home life. He wants the opportunity to pass an hour or two with your own family, to become acquainted with them, to find out who are Christians, to speak a word for Jesus, and to pray with them. An invitation to tea with you is worth ten times as much to you and to your minister during the first half year of his pastorate among you as at any later time.

As a means of gaining political power, position, office, the value of oratory is nowhere so great as in America. Here art, enterprise, ambition, breath as free as the wind of heavens, and draw upon resources as inexhaustible as the fountain of our great rivers and lakes. Position and power arise from the people, as the mountains from the plain. The people are the sovereign; they, for the most part, confer the orders of knighthood. But the peo-