

tory is inconsistent with a very high degree of civilization, and, for the same reason, that the drama, however great may be the excellence of the writings or the actors, cannot again flourish in England to any thing like its former extent. When the great mass of the people think for themselves, and whenever the middle classes are very far advanced in general knowledge and acquirements, they have naturally a dislike to every thing which depends for its effect upon delusion."

"The present deficiency may, however, be partially ascribed to another cause, 'that vice of much speaking, which is the fashion of the present day.' Every man representing a popular constituency is expected to say something. On the hustings, in his own town, the admired of all admirers, possibly the most wealthy, frequently the most personally beloved man in his neighbourhood, holding political sentiments in accordance with the majority of those whom he addresses, every successful candidate is a triton among minnows."

"The favourable audience to which he has been in the habit of addressing himself, charmed with his ready command of words, remember not the old and trite, but at the same, perfectly just remark, that it is not every ready or even eloquent speaker who is an orator. They applaud him to the very echo, he fancies that he has succeeded,—he takes but little farther pains,—he, upon almost every occasion, pours out in his place in Parliament his empty verbiage, or his common place observations,—he is delighted at seeing himself at due length in the reports of the following morning,—a few more clap-traps, or well-pointed personal remarks, have procured from his party some hearty cheers; and for these loquacious babblings, this accomplished person and applauded speaker is proclaimed to the world as an orator. But of oratory, in its pure sense—of that lucid arrangement of facts—of that convincing method of selecting details—of that ready flow of the best chosen words, placed in the most appropriate situations—of that keenness of perception which detects the weakest points in an adversary's statements, and either puts old arguments in a new light, or discovers yet an unexhausted fund—of that fertile imagination, which can, at the same time, win the attention, move the passions, and enlist the sympathy of the hearer,—but above all, of the extensive, the copious, the nervous, the majestic orator, there exists at the present day but few examples."—*Dublin Review for October, 1833.*

In another modern publication entitled the Bench and Bar, by the author of the Great Metropolis, he gives the following sketch of the present state of eloquence at the Bar and in the Senate:

"I cannot conclude these volumes without adverting to the fact, that true eloquence has, of late years, most grievously declined at the English Bar. I am not sure whether there be not now a greater number of sound lawyers in Westminster Hall, than at any former period; but surely, no one who knows any thing of the subject will pretend that, in point of genuine eloquence, the Bar of the present day can admit of a moment's comparison with that of a former period. At present I know of no master spirit in Westminster Hall. We look in vain for an Erskine or a Brougham, we look in vain in our Courts of Law even for such men as but lately conferred a lustre on Scotland and Ireland, by the brilliancy of their forensic displays in either country. We cannot boast either of a Jeffery or of an O'Connell. Whence is this? What is the cause of this decline in the true eloquence of the English Bar? I have heard various reasons assigned for it, but I cannot concur in any one which has yet been mentioned to me. The most common hypothesis is, that there is now a greater number of cases before our Courts, and that consequently those Barristers who possess the greatest abilities are retained in so many cases, that they are, to a certain extent, obliged to make their forensic exhibitions a matter of mere business, which, it is said, precludes that attention to their matter and style which is indispensable to the loftiest order of eloquence."

"It is worthy of observation, that there is at the present time, and has been for a number of years, the same dearth of genuine eloquence or oratory—for in this case I regard the terms as synonymous—in the Legislature as at the Bar. We have no Fox among the present members of the House of Commons—none that can for a moment be compared with the Burkes, or Sheridans, or Pitts, or Cannings, who, night after night, were formerly in the habit of entrancing that Body by the splendours of their eloquence."—Vol. 2. p. 203.

It is not to be inferred from these extracts, that public speaking, at the present time, does not possess some of its best attributes. These writers draw the contrast between the present style of eloquence, compared with its palmy times in Athens and Rome, and in the age of Chatham, Fox, and Burke. They do not deny to the speakers of this day excellencies, even of a refined and exquisite order. It would be indefensible to say that eloquence has lost all her powers of inspiration, while Lyndhurst, Brougham, Stanley, and Harvey, are masters of the British Senate—while Benson, Melville and Chalmers charm their audiences with their sublime illustrations of the Christian doctrine—while Follett, Talfourd and Phillips are the leaders of the English Bar—while Clay and Webster rule by the influence of mind the destinies of the great Republic,—and the French and Irish Bars have each a host of men, fitted by their persuasive powers, to perform the high and responsible duties of an intellectual and noble profession.

The orator of the present day is more closely confined to facts, truth, and logical induction; he speaks to the judgment—he ad-

resses men who reflect—the reporter is there to convey to the press the words and metaphors as they fall from the tongue; and although he may address an audience upon whom he might successfully try some of the strong and lighter arts of rhetoric—he is restrained by the consciousness that he has to pass through a wider ordeal, and to stand, with his opinions and language recorded, before a reading and critical public.

Why then, it may be asked, has oratory declined? Is it because the human intellect has deteriorated? No. In all the pursuits of science, and literature—in genuine and substantial knowledge—we are superior to the classic ages. They had then no correct knowledge of the laws of Nature. In physics and in logic, or the science of mind, their knowledge consisted in theories, which it has been our pursuit to investigate and reject. In the two fine arts of architecture and statuary they have enjoyed an unquestionable pre-eminence; but even this may be ascribed to peculiar causes—to climate, mythology, and the power of commanding, for one great object, the energies and labours of a people. But in all the other fields of intellectual enquiry—philosophy, poetry, history, the belles-lettres, tragedy, and novel-writing—a species of literature to the ancients unknown—we can produce names who far surpass any rivals to be found in ancient times.

Eloquence then, it may be fairly argued, has not reached the same perfection—if perfection it be—which it did in Athens or Rome, because the public man addresses himself to a different audience—is not animated by similar excitements, and cannot expect the same rewards. Let such men as Brougham, O'Connell, Lyndhurst and Stanley, be subjected to the same exclusive and elaborate training, and cultivate one single oration for a period of months—give to them such a throng as gathered around Demosthenes or Cicero, when they spoke on the affairs of the state—let them have an audience who would respond with such exquisite sympathy, and reward with such boundless and enthusiastic applause the boldest figures, and the chastened and ripe expressions of a patient and elaborate study—let the destiny of a nation depend upon the one effort to persuade and guide—and let their triumph be rewarded by national confidence, intellectual power, and the highest honours of the state; and such is my belief in the mysterious benevolence of Providence—such the nature and inherent elasticity of the human mind—such its powers and facility of meeting the universal principle of means to ends, that these men would rise to this other and higher standard, and equal, if not surpass, the fame of the great masters who have preceded them. The saying is significant, "the Schoolmaster has been abroad," and intelligence and reason have come to controul and restrain the imagination.

Again, no question now is settled by the single oratorical display of one master mind. The people read and think. London, Paris, New York have no rostrums, to which the nation comes from all points of the compass. Each County, District and State, has its public men and its hustings. Governments are no longer metropolitan. There are Elections, Debating Societies and Institutes, planted in every little circle. The volume, the pamphlet, the review, the newspaper, scatter abroad the seeds of enquiry and intelligence—transfuse through the mass the essence of genius—implant the comprehensive thoughts and the speculations, however far they may reach into futurity, of the statesman into the broad field of the national mind—they are reflected upon—reproduced and re-published; and while knowledge is thus more generally diffused, there is less labour to be achieved, and less honour to be acquired, by any one mind, however highly gifted or cultivated.

Are not these causes sufficient to account for the differences between ancient and modern eloquence, and to vindicate the theory I have endeavoured to reason out, that if Demosthenes or Cicero had lived in this age, their fame as orators would not have been so brilliant and transcendent. Be it remarked, however, with becoming humility, that upon this subject we can only speculate. It is a pure question of metaphysics which we are unable to reduce to certainty. Nature may have created only one Demosthenes—one Cicero—one Newton—a Shakspeare and a Scott; upon these she may have conferred higher attributes of divinity, there is a curtain beyond which we cannot pierce, and before it we must bow,—for, with all our knowledge, we know little of the lamp which burns within.

To conclude, in my first paragraph I ventured to say that our

"In the first place, then, we find it impossible implicitly to agree with Mr. Hume or Dr. Blair that eloquence has declined in modern compared with ancient times. The eloquence of the two periods is certainly different: but its difference consists entirely in the means now and formerly employed, by orators, to win the consent of their auditory. These means must, at all times, be suggested by the condition of society; which is itself dependent upon the state of the intellect and its development in the men or nations who are to be persuaded or convinced. Now certainly the nations of antiquity were more governed by their sensations and passions, more by their feelings and less by their reason, than those which have risen to greatness and civilization in modern Europe. The entire difference in the state of past and present oratory is owing to this single cause—for, from it, have arisen a variety of modifications in the forms of Government, and consequently of debate, all of which have a tendency to diminish the influence of enthusiasm in national councils, and to bring the concerns of men, as much as may be, within the pale of ratiocination. Impassioned eloquence, less frequently resorted to, because less effective now, may have declined; but the eloquence of reason never flourished as in later nations."—*Edinburgh Review*, vol. xxxv. p. 160.

present enquiry would not be without its utility here. You have seen one curious effect of diffused intelligence. It would be improper and indelicate to point out the characteristics of the speakers in our own Province, and to inquire, by personal reference, if they come up to the standard of modern times. I venture not to touch them, although if I were I believe I would carry your testimony in saying, that whether we turn to our speakers in the Legislature, the Bar and the Pulpit, and to some fresh importations from a land famed for oratorical brilliance, there are to be found indications of that spirit of improvement, that progress of mind, which is pushing forward this rising Province so rapidly. Let me part with the same tone of kindly suggestion so often repeated here. Let us go on and improve ourselves, and those who are to succeed us. Let us cultivate here, as we have done, a knowledge of philosophy and letters—let us widen our own acquisitions; sharpen the judgment and refine the taste, for be assured that your lecturers and speakers will both improve from the respect you will naturally inspire,—and that in each revolving season you will thus work out more happily the beneficial influence this Institute must exercise upon the education, prosperity, and social relations of the capital.

LAWYERS IN PARLIAMENT.

The reason that more attention has been directed to the failure of great lawyers in the House of Commons than of other people, arises from the fact, that few lawyers enter the house, without being preceded by a high reputation, if not for positive eloquence, at least for a dexterous use of their learning and powers, acquired in other fields, and directed to other objects. High expectation is thus excited, which is scarcely ever realised. It is well known that Canning originally belonged to the Whig party, and was to have been brought into Parliament under their auspices. When some observation was made on Mr. Jenkinson (afterwards Lord Liverpool), a very young man, who had just then been introduced by the Tories, Sheridan rose and said, "that his friends, too, in that house would be able to boast a youthful supporter, whose talents and eloquence would not be inferior to those of the eagle of the ministry." It is said that Sheridan at this time knew that Canning was no longer with his party, and thus chaunted his praises only to awaken expectations that he trusted might disconcert the youthful aspirant when he should take his seat. Erskine's high reputation at the bar was the cause of his failure in the house. Lord Thurlow, who succeeded in making a great impression in the house, is always thought to have done so because his reputation as a lawyer had not preceded him. It is not, to be denied, however, that the habits of forensic oratory do not qualify, or rather do, in some degree, disqualify an individual for success in Parliament. Wit and humour, so foreign to the severe reasonings and close deductions to which the lawyer habituates himself, are the prime elements of success in the House of Commons. When somebody asked Sheridan how it was he succeeded so well in the house, he replied, "Why, Sir, I had not been there very long before I found three-fourths of the members were fools, and the whole loved a joke. I resolved, therefore, not to shock them by too much severity of argument, and to amuse them by a sufficient quantity of humour,—this is the secret of my success."

Erskine's career in parliament greatly disappointed his friends and the world,—who expected great things from the brilliant advocate. The first time "when he rose to speak in the House of Commons," says Mr. Espinasse, "he was received with marked attention, and expectation was high in every part of the house. It was a total failure. Mr. Pitt had prepared himself to take notes of his speech, and had leaned forward, as if to catch every word which fell from him. After listening to him for a few seconds, he flung the paper on which he had prepared to take notes, on the ground, with a look of lofty supercilious contempt so peculiarly his own. Erskine was one of the party opposed to him, and it was said to be a *ruse de guerre* to lower the estimation in which his talents were held." Lord Brougham's observations on Erskine's parliamentary career are too important to be omitted. "It must be admitted," says he, "that, had he appeared in any other period than the age of the Foxes, the Pitts, and the Burkes, there is little chance that he would have been eclipsed even as a debater; but he never appears to have given his whole mind to the practice of debating, and he possessed but a very scanty provision of political information. Earlier practice, and more devotion to the pursuit, would, doubtless, have vanquished all these disadvantages; but they sufficed to keep Mr. Erskine in a station far beneath his talents as long as he remained in the House of Commons."

So great did Murray show himself in parliament, that the ministry displayed no inclination to part with him. When the Chief Justiceship became vacant by the death of Sir Dudley Ryder, Murray naturally expected to have been appointed to it. Offer after offer was made to induce him to continue in the House of Commons. He was offered the chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster for life, with a pension of £2,000 a year; permission to remain Attorney General (worth, with the private practice it brought, £7,000 a year), and the reversion of the first tellership of the Exchequer for his nephew, Viscount Stormount. He refused this offer, reminding the ministers of his repeated declaration, that he would receive no appointment not connected with his profession. Hoping to subdue his obstinacy by raising their biddings, they offered him a pension of six thousand (instead of two