

But, as years rolled on, as the evil effects of the Revolution diminished and its benefits increased, literature began to again claim attention. Circumstances were now more favorable for its study. Cities were numerous. Education could be easily acquired. A closer intercourse was established with foreign nations and foreign literature. All those advantages had most beneficial results, and their influence soon became abundantly manifest. Poets historians, novelists sprung up, many gaining world-wide and lasting popularity. But it was not in those branches that America most excelled. Freedom was now no longer wanting, nor—as might be expected—were her orators. Webster, Clay, Calhoun and Everett is a brilliant array of names, of which any country might well be proud. Those men became eminent in the different forms of oratory, with the exception, of course, of pulpit oratory.

In this branch, America seems to be somewhat deficient, for, although it has innumerable examples of truly eloquent and learned preachers, yet we do not find any of them that could compare, for instance, with Bossuet, Bourdaloue, or Massillon, of France. For this lack of excellence in pulpit oratory, the explanation has been given that the American character is of such a nature as not to require extraordinary efforts on the part of their clergy. It is unnecessary to consider whether the reason is satisfactory or otherwise, as its merits or defects will be plainly visible to anyone who has occasion to read the daily newspapers.

American literature in general, has, with some reason, been accused of being provincial and feeble. But, in describing that particular branch, termed oratory, no two words could be more inappropriately applied. The speeches of Calhoun, Clay and Webster, especially the last, manifest such a strength of intellect and force of expression, as are to be found only in the highest masters. Moreover, judged by the qualities that should be found in any great orator, namely, extensive knowledge, sound sense, keen sensibility, solid judgment and a wide command of language. American orators rank little inferior to the world's greatest.

To one name alone shall I direct particular attention. Any sketch, however

cursory of American oratory that did not notice the acknowledged pre-eminence of Daniel Webster, could scarcely serve any good purpose whatsoever. Born, in the town of Salisbury, New Hampshire, in the year 1782, Webster, the peer of Burke and prince of American orators, received his first rudiment of learning from his mother and afterwards completed his education at Dartmouth College. Choosing law for a profession, he applied himself diligently to its study and after practising at the bar for eight years, with unusual success, he was elected to Congress. His maiden speech was a surprise to the nation and became the subject of universal admiration. Henceforward he rapidly arose to distinction until eventually he became one of the giants of Congress. His consummate oratorical ability soon was recognized through the length and breadth of the land, so that he was repeatedly called upon to exercise his skill before meetings other than those assembled within the walls of parliament. He delivered the Plymouth oration, on the first settlement of New England, as well as two Bunker Hill speeches, one in 1825, at the laying of the corner stone and the other eighteen years afterwards, when the monument was completed. In 1826, he spoke in commemoration of Jefferson and Adams, and on the following year was elected to the senate, the scene of his celebrated reply to Hayne, "which for genuine oratorical powers is probably the greatest speech that has been delivered since the oration of Demosthenes on the crown." Of the three preceding orations "their spirit is that of the broadest patriotism, enlightened by a clear perception of the fundamental importance of the Federal union between the states, and an ever present consciousness of the mighty future of the United States, and its moral significance in the history of the world. Such topics have often been treated as commonplace and made the theme of vapid rhetoric, but under Daniel Webster's treatment, they acquired a philosophical value, and were fraught with most serious and earnest meaning. These discourses were conceived in a spirit of religious devotion to the union, and contributed powerfully towards awakening such a sen-