

gratulate the club on its having been able to secure for the initial number of the series this excellent study of Haliburton by its distinguished member, Mr. Blake Crofton.

Contributions.

EXTEMPORE PREACHING.

LET us avoid exaggeration on this subject. There have been great preachers who did not preach extempore. Chalmers could not, Henry Melville did not, Dean Alford latterly always read, Canon Liddon reads. For my own part, I think that the most of the sermons which are read are better than most of those which are preached extempore; and for preachers who can do both I strongly recommend the use of both methods. The writing and reading of sermons will improve the extempore ones; and the habit of delivering without book will improve the reading.

Making all allowance, however, for exceptional cases, it cannot be doubted that extempore speaking has important advantages. A speaker can stand face to face with his hearers, as a reader cannot. It is easier to speak naturally than to read so; and this manner of address produces an impression of spontaneity on the part of the speaker. These are obvious advantages of considerable weight.

How should an extempore sermon be prepared? This is a serious question. No sermon should be extemporaneous in the full sense of the word. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the folly and wickedness of speaking in the name of God to human beings without earnest preparation. There are three ways in which preparation may be made. (1) The sermon may be written and committed to memory. This involves an unusual power of recalling the exact words written down, and it has a tendency with many to produce a certain stiffness in delivery. It is impossible to condemn a method pursued by Massillon, Bourdaloue, Ravignan, by Bossuet in his earlier days, and by many other great orators; but it will not suit the majority of speakers. (2) A second method is the writing of the sermon and the reproduction of the substance of what has been written without attempting to repeat the exact words, except perhaps in the opening and closing sentences. With beginners it is strongly recommended to write their sermon two or three times, making an analysis or outline after each writing, and then composing from the outline. This, of course, involves a great deal of labour, but it will, in the long run, lead to the saving of labour. A man who cannot make up his mind to practise some such method with, at least, some of his sermons, may as well give up the idea of being an accomplished and finished extempore speaker. (3) A third method is merely to prepare notes and meditate, instead of writing, the development of the subject. Undoubtedly this method will suffice for experienced speakers. At one time it was used by Canon Liddon. It seems to have been the method of one of the greatest, perhaps the very greatest, of modern preachers, Lacordaire. But

it cannot be effectual unless a man has great power of mental concentration. Those who are less endowed in this respect will find writing a great help. Certainly for beginners such a method will probably lead to very slipshod composition, and this is the beginning of certain failure in speaking. For young preachers, the second method is recommended. First prepare a sketch. Then write from it freely, modifying as you find it necessary. After revising and correcting, make a careful analysis and preach without endeavouring to reproduce the exact words written. Whether you read your sermons or reproduce them without your manuscript, it is much more convenient to write only on one side of the paper.

Passing by the general qualifications of consecration to God and a competent knowledge of Holy Scripture, Church History, and Theology, as needing no emphasis to be laid upon them, I would remind you that, whilst from its higher side, a sermon is an inspiration, a message from God (if it is not this, it is an impertinence), it is no less, on the other side, a work of art; and this is emphatically true and necessary in the case of an extempore sermon. Hence the need for laborious study.

The great hindrances to success in this work, as in most others, are conceit, sloth, and despondency. Perhaps one-third of those who undertake the work of extempore preaching think that they can do it well enough without much toil or trouble. Another third probably imagine that they will never preach well, whatever they do. Both are mistaken. No man can become a really good speaker without much labour; and most men of average abilities may become edifying and interesting preachers, if not great orators, by taking the necessary pains to become so. It is difficult to say whether despondency or presumption is the more dangerous foe to excellence. Of course, a certain nervousness about speaking is a help instead of a hindrance, so long as it does not become overmastering. It is well known, too, that a certain appearance of deference towards an audience, even if amounting to a kind of a nervous tremor, if it does not go too far, has been thought an advantage rather than the contrary. I have mentioned sloth as a hindrance. It is, perhaps, the worst of all, in every department of life and action.

Unity and method, which are necessary in all kinds of preaching, are peculiarly so in extempore address. Without this principle it will hardly be possible for the preacher to make his utterances coherent and consequent. Put down in a phrase or in a sentence the *subject* of your sermon. Take care never to lose sight of it. Make a brief and natural introduction; and see that your peroration brings home the points of the lesson that you are seeking to enforce.

Study the best models of pulpit oratory, especially the best English and French. Among modern French orators may be mentioned Lacordaire, Adolphe and Horace Monod, Bersier, and Père Hyacinthe; but there are many others of great excellence. You should also make a point of hearing eminent speakers. But avoid anything like imitation of voice, manner, action. Study the secret of their power, and imitate their mind and their method, the whole spirit of their work. You will hardly ever succeed in imitating the best