

5. THE FACULTY OF SPEAKING IN PUBLIC.

The recent convocation of McGill College reminded us that for years efforts have been made to induce that important Institution, and especially its High School Department, to give more attention to the Faculty of public speaking. It is generally felt and deplored that these, generally speaking, excellent schools are, nevertheless, deficient in teaching the pupils to read and to speak the English language, a matter which is, in our view, of primary importance.

It is not, however, in Canada alone that this neglect of the power of utterance and expression is felt. The same state of things exists in England, and we insert the following article on the subject from a late number of the London *Times*, in the hope that its thunder may ring in the ears of every manager of a school or college in Canada, until the deficiency complained of be remedied:—

We should only take up needless time if we were to attempt an enumeration of the splendid examples and emphatic admonitions in favor of early, constant, various, and systematic training, in the case of everybody called upon to speak in public. The early statutes and usages of our Universities bear witness to the paramount importance of the faculty in the estimation of our forefathers. The old scholars of Oxford "disputed" their way from term to term, from one degree to another. Till the Restoration we believe we are justified in saying that no sermon was ever read in the University pulpit, and even elsewhere a manuscript was as great a confession of weakness as a printed book would be in these days. Yet these were ages in which the Universities had a far stronger hold on the nation than they now have. They were not behind ours in solidity of scholarship, in depth of philosophy, and strength of conviction. The art of speaking did not dilute learning and weaken vigour of mind, but ministered to them. Scholars then not only held their own, but went forth, and taught, and persuaded, and governed the world.

In this age, however, which brooks no comparison with any age that went before it, it is a plain fact, which cannot be disputed, that neither at our Universities, nor at our public schools, nor in any other places and systems of education in vogue amongst us, is any attempt made to teach the art of speaking. What may be adduced in the way of exception is utterly inconsiderable. Up to the age of three, and twenty, it is matter yet to be ascertained whether the intended clergyman can read a verse in the Bible as it ought to be read; whether the intended barrister can make a legal statement, attempt to convince without disgust, or to persuade without making himself ridiculous. He may at that age be able to do many things seldom required. He may be deep in Greek and Roman antiquities, and be able to construe and even scan any chorus; he may write Greek and Latin verses in a dozen metres; he may be a good mathematician, and even compose a tolerable essay. He may have these and many other accomplishments, which may never be called into practice once in a whole life, except in the production of written sermons, or in some correspondence of unusual gravity. What, however, every man must do in one way or another, what is the common gift of all classes, all professions, all ages from infancy, what is the first and foremost difference between man and brute, and between one man and another, is left to chance, without any assistance whatever from schools or universities. Some men have naturally better organs of articulation, some are in better society and more among good talkers than others; some are more sociable; some begin to talk a year or two before others, and have that start upon them; some prefer society to study from mere idleness; some are early seized with an ambition to be orators. Nature and circumstances interfere in many ways, and make one man a speaker, another a mute, and others all shades between these extremes, but education in these days has nothing to do with the result. A schoolboy is all his time declining, conjugating, parsing, construing, scanning—all grammatical and critical exercises;—reciting first Latin doggerel about genitives and præterites; then, it must be admitted, Latin and Greek speeches and poetry. The Universities merely complete this course of training. But the habit of mind imparted by all these exercises is rather adverse to method, facility, and elegance of expression than conducive to these qualities. It often helps to make men hesitate, boggle, and stammer, be at a loss for a word, or give two or three words instead of one, contradict themselves, explain, repeat, and fall into every voice of utterance. The question, as Lord Stanhope very properly says, does not refer only to public speaking. The tongue is continually called into service, and is always liable to failure for want of a proper training.

The result is lamentable, and often disagreeable. The first education that the country can give offers no security whatever that a man shall not offend and disgust when he should please and inform. Enter church after church, in the metropolis or elsewhere, and you shall hear the prayers read by a machine, and the sermon read by a drone. The supplications are solemn without being serious; the exhortations have only that gravity that conduces to sleep. The one is a pious form, and the other an unpleasant necessity. It is not our present purpose, and certainly is no wish of ours, to enlarge upon defects which are the staple of almost every conversation in respectable

houses between the hours of one and two on Sunday afternoon. Nor is this state of things confined to the Church. Hundreds of excellent gentlemen aspire to Parliament, and get in or not with the same ultimate ill-success. The moment they try to speak, all their feelings, thoughts, facts, and purposes either crowd to the tongue or fly altogether, and leave it utterly bankrupt of words. Those who can speak do not often bring credit on the gift. Indeed in this country there is nothing which is so often the subject of a sneer as fluency of speech. It has become an affectation with many that they cannot express themselves, and they find excuse enough alike in the shortcomings and excesses of others. A large part of the wisdom, the experience, and the actual power of the country is unrepresented in Parliament, through the taciturnity or defective expression of our public men, while, as a natural consequence, many who have little else than a ready command of words obtain an influence beyond their just worth. —*Montreal Witness*.

6. POWER OF MONOSYLLABLES.

To one whose attention has not been drawn particularly to the subject, it will be surprising to call to mind how many of the most sublime and comprehensive passages in the English language consist wholly or chiefly of monosyllables. Of the sixty-six words composing the Lord's Prayer, forty-eight are of one syllable. Of the seventeen words comprising the golden rule, fifteen are of one syllable. The most expressive idea of the creative power of Jehovah, is expressed entirely in monosyllables: "And God said, let there be light, and there was light." One of the most encouraging promises of Scripture is expressed in fifteen words, all but one of which are monosyllables: "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."

VIII. Educational Intelligence.

CANADA.

—THE ANGLICAN SYNOD.—CHURCH SCHOOL EDUCATION.—Dr. Bovell's motion to petition the Legislature on the subject of School Education, having been brought up, he (Dr. B.) said he was certain that this was but a reasonable demand. It did not strike a blow at the system of education as in existence, but would give them power to take advantage of the bill under another mode. It had been said that if they got the Bible into the Common Schools, that would satisfy them; but were they likely to get it? He saw no chance of it. The present system of education had been tried and proved to be an utter failure. Why should they be compelled to submit to a system which in their view would utterly deprive them of bringing up their children in that way in which they should go. It might be said that education could be given children at home. That was a very plausible system at first sight, but who were they that did such a thing? They were very few, he imagined. He therefore hoped no division would be taken on the subject, but they would be permitted to get what they all desired—that the children would be instructed properly in the word of God, and be an orderly, happy and religious people. (Applause.)

J. W. Gamble, Esq., subscribed *ex animo* to the principles expressed by his friend, who had spoken in reference to the religious teaching which children should receive. But he had always been a strong advocate for the Common School system, for he had seen the benefits which had been derived from it. He did not believe it possible for the Synod to adopt the report because it did not even place their position in the best possible point of view, nor ask for the thing which they had a right to ask for, if they obtained it on that ground at all. Another reason why they should not adopt the report was that all it asked was that the sums they were assessed, should be returned in order to support these Schools. If the Churches in the City could undertake the education of the children of its members, it could not be done in the country. But if they were to adopt the plan at all, why should not the Church of England be entitled to her portion of the Parliamentary grant to Common Schools, as well as to her portion of the local assessment. If they were entitled to anything they might as well claim their entire right. But provision was already made in the statute for what they were now seeking, for which they had the word of the Superintendent of Education. Under these circumstances it was far better to act under the existing statute than to seek to come out in a Separate Denominational School. This was a far better course than to go down to the Legislature. They might, however, if they chose go down to the Legislature and throw in their weight with the Roman Catholics for Separate Schools. Mr. Gamble continued to say that the country was now well cut up in School sections with efficient teachers, in nine-tenths of which the Bible was read as a class book (no, no). Gentlemen might say