

SPECIAL  
ARTICLES

## Our Contributors

BOOK  
REVIEWS

## MONOTONY OF MANNER.

By Knoxonian.

Dr. Ormiston used to say that to him one of the most mysterious things in this world was how a man could speak in public for half an hour in exactly the same tone. The Doctor could not have done it. When in good form it would have puzzled him greatly to speak one minute in the same key. Speaking monotonously was not the Doctor's forte. There are men, however, who can speak for any given time in precisely the same tone. They never rise. They never fall. They never put on more emphasis. They never take any off. From the first word to the last amen the sound never varies. Some people think the sound is very solemn. So it is. It is also sad. Some think a continuous sound of this kind is undoubted evidence of great learning—of high philosophy. Probably. Others believe that monotony of voice is evidence of superior piety. They have a suspicion that a man who goes up and down the scale when he speaks is not converted. To speak continuously on Do is with them evidence of regeneration and high spiritual attainments, but if the preacher goes up the scale occasionally and comes down again to Do they hint that he is theatrical—that he is a play-actor, and probably not converted. Monotony, however, is not a good thing even if some people do admire it. Monotony brings on the soporific, empties the church, drives away the young people, spoils the collections, injures the throat and does several other bad things.

Monotony of voice is of several kinds and every kind is bad. One of the worst kinds is what may be called low monotony. By low we don't mean morally low; for monotony, though it often makes people feel wicked, has no moral qualities in itself. By low we simply mean low on the scale. The speaker begins on Do and he sticks to Do until he finishes. His introduction is on Do, his arguments are on Do, his illustrations are on Do, and his final appeals close on Do. He sticks to Do with as much tenacity as Winniepeg mud sticks to one's boots on a wet day. Now Do is a very good, respectable note, but nobody wants to hear a whole service or a long speech on one note. Oatmeal is a splendid article of food and has done much for Scotland and Presbyterianism, but nobody wants to live on oatmeal all the time. Continuous speaking on Do has just one redeeming quality, it helps you to go quietly asleep.

Loud monotony is not any better than its twin brother, low monotony. The speaker afflicted with this kind of monotony goes right up the scale on the first sentence, and never comes down until he is done. He went up there perhaps to avoid low monotony, utterly forgetful of the fact that loud monotony is not any better than low. In fact, it is worse, for you cannot go to sleep and escape it. One of the worst mistakes a speaker ever makes is to suppose that to be forcible, pathetic, or eloquent, he must be very loud. Were this true a fog-horn would be eloquent. The eloquence is in the thought and the feeling with which the thought is expressed—not in a continuous bawl.

One of the most soporific forms of monotony is caused by putting the same amount of stress on every word in a sentence, and the same amount on each sentence. It is utterly impossible to avoid monotony of the most doleful kind if this is done. There can be no variety if every word is uttered with the same force. The same emphasis

on every word means no emphasis on any.

Another very unpleasant kind is what might be called the fluent variety of monotony. The speaker stands composedly, and with great fluency utters words, words, words in a smooth, continuous, never-ending stream. For a good illustration of what we mean, stand beside your water-barrel or cistern on a rainy day and listen to the water flow into it from the pipe. There is no change, no variety, nothing but one quiet, smooth, continued flow. This is, perhaps, the worst soporific of all kinds of monotony. One of the worst things about it is that the orator hardly ever stops. There is no reason why he should. He has the faculty for uttering a continuous stream of words, and as there are thousands of words there is no reason why he should not go on all day.

The sing-song variety of monotony is very common, and would be very distasteful were it not so common. The speaker starts every sentence or paragraph on the same key, and comes down at regular intervals. No matter what kind of thought he is uttering—no matter what emotions it should awaken—he must have his little slide down the scale at the regular time. To one who never learned to do this thing it is a mystery how the man can come down with such amazing uniformity. Another form of sing-song is that in which the speaker always slides up and then down. Up and down he goes with the regularity of a machine, and those accustomed to hear him can tell without much trouble the number of upward and downward inflections that must take place in a given time. There is one variety of sing-song which is slightly comic. The speaker gives the tail-end of his sentence an upward slide and leaves it in the air. He winds regularly up on the rising inflection. A very respectable English writer recommends this method of reading and speaking on the ground that it is lively. He says many of the French read and speak in this way. That may all be, but an Englishman who ends his sentences in the air is almost certain to make people smile at first and then grow weary. Monotony of any kind grows wearisome, and brings on the soporific.

Closely allied to monotony of voice is monotony in gesture. This contributor does not dare to enter upon the profound question of gesture. On general principles, however, it may be said that if it is necessary to saw the air the sawing should not always be done in the same way. If the text must be pounded to take the meaning out of it there should be some variety in the pounding. As a rule, the greatest speakers have few gestures, and the few are of the simplest kind. Dr. Arcey McGee rarely made any gestures. Edward Blake never saws the air. George Brown used to make somewhat forcible gestures at times, but they were in keeping with his intensely vigorous style. Perhaps the best rule is never to make any gestures if you know you are making them. Spurgeon has an admirable lecture on gesture, illustrated by drawings, which contains all that most speakers need to read on the subject. If an examination of the models makes one feel that he is looking into a looking-glass it will do all the more good.

The causes that produce monotony in delivery are various. Extreme nervousness is one of the worst. No man can go up and down the scale if he is afraid. It is impossible to do so. Self-control is absolutely essential to good speaking.

An untrained voice is very likely to be monotonous. A voice that has been allowed to form bad habits in the way of sing-song is almost certain to continue in one form or another of monotony. Sometimes these habits stick to a man through life. It is almost impossible to break them up when thoroughly formed.

Sluggish thinking is responsible for a great deal of monotony. A live, active mind will usually express itself in a variety of tones unless bad habits of delivery have been formed.

There is one kind of monotony that the best preachers find much difficulty in guarding against—the kind that arises from careful verbal preparation of sermons. The more attention you give to the composition—the more you work on the words—the more you elaborate and prune and polish, the more difficulty you usually find in avoiding a stiff, monotonous delivery. The finer the composition the harder it is to deliver with a pleasing variety of tone.

How can this difficulty be avoided or lessened? To answer such questions is one of the purposes for which we have six colleges.

## A WORD OF EXPLANATION.

We gladly make room for the following letter sent to the Editor of the "Presbyterian." Toronto.

In your issue of May 23rd, are two statements about the Indore Co. that I fear will mislead and that in the interests of truth it is well to correct.

On page 844, after sneaking of the progress of the Indore College you say, "The General Assembly of India has selected it as the school for the training of Native Ministers." Again on page 858 under the heading "Foreign Mission Parliament" after again referring to the Mission College are the words, "It is worthy of note that the General Assembly of India has selected Indore College as the Training School for Hindi Native Preachers."

Now it is the College at Indore under Mr. King to which you have been referring. It will therefore surprise you to know that the General Assembly of the Indian Presbyterian Church has in no way recognized or selected the Indore College for any of its special work.

What was done for this. A year before a Committee was appointed to consider the whole question of Theological training. That Committee in its report to the last Assembly gave the names and conditions of all the training institutions in connection with the different Missions of the church and of course included that of the Malwa Presbyterian, which has been carried on by Mr. Wilson for a short time each year in the Rains with more or less regularity since 1894 in different places but latterly in the College building at Indore. This is not under Mr. King and is in no way connected with the College proper, though for convenience sake it is held now in the College. This training class along with all the training classes held by the different Missions were recognized by the Assembly but no special distinction was given to that held by Mr. Wilson over that held by any of the other Missions.

You further say "the establishment of a distinct theological faculty is under consideration." The training of a few famine boys in the merest rudiments of christian knowledge for a few weeks each year, though most important, does not constitute a Theological College or justify a Theological faculty.

OBSERVER.

Jhansi, June 26, 1907.