

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

THE BIBLE AND ORATORY.

By R. G. MacBeth, M.A.

Genuine oratory has never lost its power over human assemblies. The press speaks to larger multitudes and exerts immense influence, but the nameless power of personality cannot be put into ordinary print. It has been said that the phonograph would supplant the living voice, and Bellamy thought that some day people would dispense with public gatherings and listen through such instruments to the addresses and sermons of public men. Those who have listened to speeches by Gladstone through the phonograph and have also heard the living man know these theories to be absurd. The instrument is better than nothing, but one misses the flash and fire of the eye, the play of passion on the leonine face and the crash of that organ voice which fell upon the listener as a shell that hurtled through the air to the place at which it was aimed.

The Bible above all printed books is the home of true oratory. This arises in part from the supreme vividness of its language. There are phrases in the Bible which stand unmatched in human speech, phrases which flash their meaning into the heart of the reader or burn their pictures upon his soul. And this is not all. The Bible is so absolutely supreme in this quality that to get hold of its expressions prevents the speech of any man from being commonplace. But the Bible, sharing this characteristic in some degree with other books has a distinct quality which they do not possess. It is the quality of Divine inspiration—the breathing, the heart-beat of God which fills the Book with the power of a living personality whose influence dominates the reader. It is this which prevents the stories of the Bible becoming as oft told tales. It is this which fills out the story of the Crucifixion and causes us to hear the shouting of the angry mob, the creaking of the wooden cross as it is lifted into its place and that shows us the cruel spear piercing the quivering heart. The Psalmist voiced the aspiration of universal humanity when he cried out for the Living God. Because we live we refuse to be satisfied with a dead God. The Bible answers our longing because in it a Living God speaks to us.

When we add to this the wonderful power of the human instruments that God used to convey his thought we do not marvel that the oratory of the Bible stands supreme. The addresses of Moses have a majestic power about them which we vainly look for in mere human speech. Irony is one of the greatest weapons in public discourse but it is one of the most difficult to use. Elijah's irony in the appeal to the prophets of Baal is a series of master-strokes unequalled elsewhere. The splendid defences made before kings and courts by the Apostle Paul show us the peerless lawyer while his address on Mar's Hill is the kind of classic we should teach in our schools to-day. Such are some of the great examples of Bible oratory. To the end of time successful orators, who stir the human heart to action, must go to this Book for language where-with to vivify their meager speech.

Paris, Ont.

A WORD FOR THE MINISTER.

(By J. B. Halkett, Ottawa.)

We all know the tendency to belittle the minister's efforts. How often is the string of supposed inattention in visiting harped upon; such a remark as "the minister has not entered my doors for months" frequently made? As a son of the manse, and knowing somewhat of the life peculiar to a faithful pastor, the writer has no sympathy with the utterance. On the contrary, when heard he wonders more and more why a reason never accompanies the observation to show cause for change in the ministerial course. Is it that the grumbler is not living up to his profession, or perchance neglects the ordinances of the Church? Ask him and we imagine he would feel insulted, and would call, in such a case, a visit an unwarrantable intrusion. Has he sickness either himself or in his family and the minister never goes near his house? The answer will be in the negative, for every one knows this charge cannot be brought against the ministers. Why then selfishly require time which the pastor can so profitably employ elsewhere? We are well aware ministers endeavour to visit every member once a year, but often that is impossible, simply from the magnitude of the undertaking. Surely then, some charity might be extended, and the will taken for the deed. It requires but a moment's reflection for a reasonable person to assent to the proposition. Referring more particularly to the work of a city clergyman, while at the same time not presuming to vindicate his thousand and one engagements, we imagine it would not be difficult to fully occupy the six days from Sabbath to Sabbath. For instance, considering the mental labour which must attend the preparation of two sermons a week for a critical and highly intelligent congregation, three days for study is meagre allowance, but even that limit is liable to be broken in upon by this one or that wishing advice, oftentimes assistance, in one way or another. Oh! but says some one, "It is an easy thing to write a sermon." Yes, just try and prepare a paper to take half an hour in delivery and then answer. In addition to the three days we add two for visiting the sick and burying the dead, perhaps the most trying portion of a minister's life, of which a layman has but a faint conception, and there only remain twelve hours out of the week for much needed rest or recreation, for, bear in mind, a minister is but human after all, though many are prone to think he is impervious to fatigue, and has no business to be occasionally out of sorts.

Now, would it not be a better state of affairs to exorcise this fault-finding spirit and in its place put forth a real earnest endeavor to strengthen the pastor in his great work by reaching out the helping hand; saying a kindly word for him; cease to be so very exacting; give him a good vacation once a year, cheerfully putting up with his absence; pay him well and promptly, and in other ways show his services are appreciated? We opine the conscientious verdict must be in the affirmative, and that not until it is reached will the grumbler cease his grumbling, and the minister, however faithful, be properly understood.

In any case let us make the attempt to kill off this no-visitatation cry.

THE PROFESSOR'S "MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE."

Rev. J. A. Macfarlane, M.A.

Certain publishers have issued a series of books by various scholars under the general title, "The Messages of the Bible." In introducing their series the publishers say that they "take pleasure in announcing that they have in course of preparation a series of handbooks which will enable every reader of the Bible to appreciate and obtain a mastery of the essential facts and teachings contained in it." The volumes then are intended not so much for scholars as for "every reader of the Bible."

Volume IV of the series was written by Prof. McFadyen, of Knox College, Toronto. It was published in 1901. I read it at the time, some parts of it very carefully. In view of some articles recently published by Prof. McFadyen elsewhere, I decided to glance through his book again. On page 6 he is speaking of the question of authorship of the first books of the Bible. That I do him no injustice in quotation (and Higher Critics are always very tender on this point) I will quote him somewhat fully to start with.

"If there exists within the compass of the work, still more if there exist side by side two MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE VERSIONS of the same incident, then by the constitution of the human mind, UNITY OF AUTHORSHIP IS EXCLUDED. What then are THE FACTS? It will be instructive to examine one or two chapters on the assumption of their unity and see whether they present a coherent picture or not. Take for example Exodus 32. Here is a really dramatic incident—an apostasy and an intercession. So much is clear; but the detail is not only obscure—it is CONFLICTING. In verse 14 the apostate people are forgiven by their God. In verse 19 and 20 they are punished by Moses. In verses 25 to 29, three thousand of them are slain by the tribe of Levi at the command of Moses in execution of the express command of God, who had pardoned them but a few verses before. Nay, in verse 35 God actually punishes them himself, after having in verse 34 suspended punishment for the second time." So far Prof. McFadyen though the italics are mine to bring out clearly the points for which the professor is arguing.

I asked a minister in an Ontario town what he thought of the Scriptural references in this part of the professor's book. He replied: "I never turned them up, but they must be alright." I could not but contrast with this easy faith in the Higher Critical professor, the calm statement made by Dr. Orr when he was in Canada. "If you want to keep your faith in Higher Critics, do not bring their statements to the bar of the Bible."

"The Bereans were 'more noble' than the Thessalonians, in that they 'searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so,' that the Apostle Paul was affirming. I trust it may not be deemed discourteous or heretical to apply a similar test to the Professor that the Bereans applied to the Apostle.

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We will take up our Bibles then and turn up this 32nd chapter of Exodus. The professor says, "The detail is not only OBSCURE—it is CONFLICTING. In verse 14 the apostate people are forgiven by their God. In verses 19 and 20 they are punished by Moses." Then he tells us that they are even punished by command of God, who had already pardoned them. The argument then rests on this FORGIVENESS. The professor has already asked, "What