

much warmth and earnestness, keeps clear of turgid declamation. The peroration turns on two points; the indignation which the character and conduct of Sassia ought to excite, and the compassion due to a son, persecuted through his whole life by such a mother. He recapitulates the crimes of Sassia; her lewdness, her violation of every decorum, her incestuous marriages, her violence and cruelty. He places, in the most odious light, the eagerness and fury which she had shown in the suit, as was carrying on against her son; describes her journey from Larinum to Rome, with a train of attendants, and a great store of money, that she might employ every method for circumventing and oppressing him in this trial; while in the whole course of her journey, she was so detested, as to make a solitude wherever she lodged; she was shunned and avoided by all; her company, and her very looks, were reckoned contagious; the house was deemed polluted, which was entered into by so abandoned a woman.* To this he opposes the character of Cluentius, fair, unspotted, and respectable. He produces the testimonies of the magistrates of Larinum in his favour, given in the most ample and honourable manner by a public decree, and supported by a great concourse of the most noted inhabitants, who were now present, to second every thing that Cicero could say in favour of Cluentius.

"Wherefore, judges," he concludes, "if you abominate crimes, stop the triumph of this impious woman, prevent the most unnatural mother from rejoicing in her son's blood. If you love virtue and worth, relieve this unfortunate man, who for so many years has been exposed to most unjust reproach through the calumnies raised against him by Sassia. Oppianicus, and all their adherents. Better far had it been for him, had he ended his days at once by the poison which Oppianicus had prepared for him, than to have escaped those snares, in which he must still be oppressed by an odium which I have shown to be

* "Cum appropinquare hujus judicium ei nuntiatur, confestim hinc lavit, ne aut accusatoribus diligentia, aut pecunia testibus deesset; aut ne mater hoc sibi optatissimum spectaculum hujus rogam atque luctus et indignationis amitteret. Jam vero quod iter Romam hujus mulieris fuisse existimatis? Quid ego, propter vicinitatem Aquinatum et Venafranorum, eximio comperi: quos concursus in his oppidis? Quantos et virorum et mulierum feminus esse factos? Mulierem quandam Larino, atque illam usque a mari per Romanam proficisci, cum magno comitatu et pecunia, quo facilius circumveniret judicio capitis, atque opprimere filium possit. Nemo erat illorum, pater filium, quoniam expleandum illum locum esse arbitraretur quacunque illa, iter fecisset, nemo, quin terram ipsam violaret, quæ mater est omnium, vestigiis consecratæ maris putaret. Itaque nullo in oppido consistendi ei potestas fuit; nec tot hospitibus inventus est, qui non contagionem adspectus fingeret."—C. 67. 8.

so unjust. But in you he trusts, in your clemency and your equity, that now on a full and fair hearing of this cause, you will restore him to his honour; you will restore him to his friends and fellow-citizens, of whose zeal and high estimation of him you have seen such strong proofs; and will show, by your decision, that though faction and calumny may reign for a while in popular meetings and harangues, in trial and judgment regard is paid to the truth only."

I have given only a skeleton of this oration of Cicero. What I have principally aimed at, was to show his disposition and method; his arrangement of facts, and the conduct and force of some of his main arguments. But, in order to have a full view of the subject, and of the art with which the orator manages it, recourse must be had to the original. Few of Cicero's orations contain a greater variety of facts and arguments, which renders it difficult to analyze it fully. But for this reason I choose it, as an excellent example of managing at the bar a complex and intricate cause, with order, elegance, and force.

LECTURE XXIX.

ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

BEFORE treating of the structure and component parts of a regular oration, I purposed making some observations on the peculiar strain, the distinguishing characters, of each of the three great kinds of public speaking. I have already treated of the eloquence of popular assemblies, and of the eloquence of the bar. The subject which remains for this lecture is, the strain and spirit of that eloquence which is suited to the pulpit.

Let us begin with considering the advantages and disadvantages, which belong to this field of public speaking. The pulpit has plainly several advantages peculiar to itself. The dignity, and importance of its subjects must be acknowledged superior to any other. They are such as ought to interest every one, and can be brought home to every man's heart; and such as admit, at the same time, both the highest embellishment in describing, and the greatest vehemence and warmth in enforcing them. The preacher has also great advantages in treating his subjects. He speaks not to one or a few judges, but to a large assembly. He is secure from all interruption. He is obliged to no replies, or extemporaneous efforts. He chooses his theme at leisure;

and comes to the public with all the assistance which the most accurate premeditation can give him.

But, together with these advantages, there are also peculiar difficulties that attend the eloquence of the pulpit. The preacher, it is true, has no trouble in contending with an adversary; but then, debate and contention enliven genius, and procure attention. The pulpit orator is, perhaps, in too quiet possession of his field. His subjects of discourse are, in themselves, noble and important; but they are subjects trite and familiar. They have for ages employed so many speakers, and so many pens, the public ear is so much accustomed to them, that it requires more than an ordinary power of genius to fix attention. Nothing within the reach of art is more difficult, than to bestow on what is common, the grace of novelty. No sort of composition whatever is such a trial of skill, as where the merit of it lies wholly in the execution; not in giving any information that is new, not in convincing men of what they did not believe; but in dressing truths which they knew, and of which they were before convinced, in such colours as may most forcibly affect their imagination and heart.* It is to be considered, too, that the subject of the preacher generally confines him to abstract qualities, to virtues and vices; whereas, that of other popular speakers leads them to treat of persons; which is a subject that commonly interests the hearers more, and takes faster hold of the imagination. The preacher's business is solely to make you detest the crime. The pleader's, to make you detest the criminal. He describes a living person; and with more facility rouses your indignation. From these causes, it comes to pass, that

* What I have said on this subject, coincides very much with the observations made by the famous M. Bruyère, in his *Mœurs de Siècle*, when he is comparing the eloquence of the pulpit to that of the bar. "L'éloquence de la chaire, et celle qui y entre d'humain, et du talent de l'orateur, est cachée, comme de part et d'autre, et d'une difficile exécution. Il faut marcher par des chemins battus, d'une ce qui a été dit, et ce que l'on prétend que vous ayez dit: les matières sont grandes, mais usées et triviales; les principes sûrs, mais dont les auditeurs pénétrèrent les conclusions d'une seule vue: il y entre des sujets qui sont sublimés, mais qui peut traiter le sublime?—Le prédicateur n'est point soutenu comme l'avocat par des faits toujours nouveaux, par de différents événements, par des aventures inouïes; il ne s'exerce point sur les questions douteuses; il ne fait point valoir les violentes conjectures, et les présomptions; toutes choses, néanmoins, qui élèvent le génie, lui donnent de la force et de l'étendue, et qui contraignent bien moins l'éloquence, qu'elles ne la fixent, et le dirigent. Il doit, au contraire, tirer son discours d'une source commune et où tout le monde puisse; et s'il s'écarte de ces lieux communs, il n'est plus populaire; il est abstrait ou déclamatoire."—The inference which he draws from these reflections is very just—"Il est plus aisé de prêcher que de plaider; mais plus difficile de bien prêcher que de bien plaider." Les Caractères, ou Mœurs de ce Siècle, p. 601.

ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT.

379

though we have a great number of moderately good preachers, we have, however, so few that are singularly eminent. We are still far from perfection in the art of preaching; and perhaps there are few things in which it is more difficult to excel.* The object, however, is noble, and worthy, upon many accounts, of being pursued with zeal.

It may perhaps occur to some, that preaching is no proper subject of the art of eloquence. This, it may be said, belongs only to human studies and inventions: but the truths of religion, with the greater simplicity, and the less mixture of art they are set forth, are likely to prove the more successful. This objection would have weight, if eloquence were, as the persons who make such an objection commonly take it to be, an ostentatious and deceitful art, the study of words and of plausibility only, calculated to please, and to tickle the ear. But against this idea of eloquence, I have all along guarded. True eloquence is the art of placing truth in the most advantageous light for conviction and persuasion. This is what every good man who preaches the gospel not only may, but ought to have at heart. It is most intimately connected with the success of his ministry; and were it needful, as assuredly it is not, to reason any further on this head, we might refer to the discourses of the prophets and apostles, as models of the most sublime and persuasive eloquence, adapted both to the imagination and the passions of men.

An essential requisite in order to preach well, is to have a just, and, at the same time, a fixed and habitual view of the end of preaching. For in no art can any man execute well, who has not a just idea of the end and object of that art. The end of all preaching is, to persuade men to become good. Every sermon, therefore, should be a persuasive oration. Not but that the preacher is to instruct and to teach, to reason and argue. All

* What I say here, and in other passages, of our being far from perfection in the art of preaching, and of there being few who are singularly eminent in it, is to be always understood as referring to an ideal view of the perfection of this art, which none perhaps, since the days of the apostles, ever did, or ever will reach. But in that degree of the eloquence of the pulpit, which promotes, in a considerable measure, the great end of edification, and gives a just title to high reputation and esteem, there are many who hold a very honourable rank. I agree entirely in opinion with a candid judge (Dr. Campbell on Rhetoric, book i. ch. 10.) who observes, that considering how rare the talent of eloquence is among men, and considering all the disadvantages under which preachers labour, particularly from the frequency of this exercise, joined with the other duties of their office, to which fixed pastors are obliged, there is more reason to wonder that we hear so many instructive, and even eloquent sermons, than that we hear so few.

persuasion, as I showed formerly, is to be founded on conviction. The understanding must always be applied to in the first place, in order to make a lasting impression on the heart; and he who would work on men's passions, or influence their practice, without first giving them just principles, and enlightening their minds, is no better than a mere declaimer. He may raise transient emotions, or kindle a passing ardour; but can produce no solid or lasting effect. At the same time, it must be remembered, that all the preacher's instructions are to be of the practical kind; and that persuasion must ever be his ultimate object. It is not to discuss some abstruse point, that he ascends the pulpit. It is not to illustrate some metaphysical truth, or to inform men of something which they never heard before; but it is to make them better men; it is to give them, at once, clear views, and persuasive impressions of religious truth. The eloquence of the pulpit, then, must be popular eloquence. One of the first qualities of preaching is to be popular; not in the sense of accommodation to the humours and prejudices of the people (which tends only to make a preacher contemptible,) but, in the true sense of the word, calculated to make impression on the people; to strike and to seize their hearts. I scruple not therefore to assert, that the abstract and philosophical manner of preaching, however it may have sometimes been admired, is formed upon a very faulty idea, and deviates widely from the just plan of pulpit eloquence. Rational, indeed, a preacher ought always to be; he must give his audience clear ideas on every subject, and entertain them with sense, not with sound; but to be an accurate reasoner will be small praise, if he be not a persuasive speaker also.

Now, if this be the proper idea of a sermon, a persuasive oration, one very material consequence follows, that the preacher himself, in order to be successful, must be a good man. In a preceding lecture, I endeavoured to show, that on no subject can any man be truly eloquent, who does not utter the "veræ voces ab imo pectore," who does not speak the language of his own conviction, and his own feelings. If this holds, as in my opinion it does, in other kinds of public speaking, it certainly holds in the highest degree in preaching. There, it is of the utmost consequence that the speaker firmly believe both the truth and the importance of those principles which he inculcates on others; and, not only that he believe them speculatively, but have a lively and serious feeling of them. This will always give an earnestness and strength, a fervour of

piety to his exhortations, superior in its effects to all the arts of studied eloquence; and, without it, the assistance of art will seldom be able to conceal the mere declaimer. A spirit of true piety would prove the most effectual guard against those errors which preachers are apt to commit. It would make their discourses solid, cogent, and useful; it would prevent those frivolous and ostentatious harangues which have no other aim than merely to make a parade of speech, or amuse an audience; and perhaps the difficulty of attaining that pitch of habitual piety and goodness, which the perfection of pulpit eloquence would require, and of uniting it with that thorough knowledge of the world, and those other talents which are requisite for excelling in the pulpit, is one of the great causes why so few arrive at very high eminence in this sphere.

The chief characteristics of the eloquence suited to the pulpit, as distinguished from the other kinds of public speaking, appear to me to be these two, gravity and warmth. The serious nature of the subjects belonging to the pulpit, requires gravity; their importance to mankind, requires warmth. It is far from being either easy or common to unite these characters of eloquence. The grave, when it is predominant, is apt to run into a dull uniform solemnity. The warm, when it wants gravity, borders on the theatrical and light. The union of the two must be studied by all preachers as of the utmost consequence, both in the composition of their discourses, and in their manner of delivery. Gravity and warmth united, form that character of preaching which the French call *onction*; the affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the preacher to the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make full impression on the hearts of his hearers.

Next to a just idea of the nature and object of pulpit eloquence, the point of greatest importance to a preacher, is a proper choice of the subjects on which he preaches. To give rules for the choice of subjects for sermons, belongs to the theological more than to the rhetorical chair; only, in general, they should be such as appear to the preacher to be the most useful, and the best accommodated to the circumstances of his audience. No man can be called eloquent, who speaks to an assembly on subjects, or in a strain, which none or few of them comprehend. The unmeaning applause which the ignorant give to what is above their capacity, common sense, and common probity, must teach every man to despise. Usefulness and true

eloquence always go together ; and no man can long be reputed a good preacher who is not acknowledged to be a useful one.

The rules which relate to the conduct of the different parts of a sermon, the introduction, division, argumentative, and pathetic parts, I reserve till I come to treat of the conduct of a discourse in general ; but some rules and observations, which respect a sermon as a particular species of composition, I shall now give, and I hope they may be of some use.

The first which I shall mention is, to attend to the unity of a sermon. Unity indeed is of great consequence in every composition ; but in other discourses, where the choice and direction of the subject are not left to the speaker, it may be less in his power to preserve it. In a sermon, it must be always the preacher's own fault if he transgress it. What I mean by unity is, that there should be some one main point to which the whole strain of the sermon should refer. It must not be a bundle of different subjects strung together, but one object must predominate throughout. This rule is founded on what we all experience, that the mind can fully attend only to one capital object at a time. By dividing, you always weaken the impression. Now this unity, without which no sermon can either have much beauty, or much force, does not require that there should be no divisions or separate heads in the discourse, or that one single thought should be, again and again, turned up to the hearers in different lights. It is not to be understood in so narrow a sense, it admits of some variety ; it admits of underparts and appendages, provided always that so much union and connexion be preserved, as to make the whole concur in some one impression upon the mind. I may employ, for instance, several different arguments to enforce the love of God ; I may also inquire, perhaps, into the causes of the decay of this virtue ; still one great object is presented to the mind ; but if, because my text says " He that loveth God, must love his brother also," I should therefore, mingle in one discourse arguments for the love of God and for the love of our neighbour, I should offend undeniably against unity, and leave a very loose and confused impression on the hearers' minds.

In the second place, sermons are always the more striking, and commonly the more useful, the more precise and particular the subject of them is. This follows, in a great measure, from what I was just now illustrating. Though a general subjects capable of being conducted with a considerable degree of unity, yet that unity can never be so complete as in a particular one.

The impression made must always be more undeterminate ; and the instruction conveyed will, commonly too, be less direct and convincing. General subjects, indeed, such as the excellency of the pleasures of religion, are often chosen by young preachers, as the most showy, and the easiest to be handled ; and doubtless, general views of religion are not to be neglected, as on several occasions they have great propriety. But these are not the subjects most favourable for producing the high effects of preaching. They fall in almost unavoidably with the beaten track of common-place thought. Attention is much more commanded by seizing some particular view of a great subject, some single interesting topic, and directing to that point the whole force of argument and eloquence. To recommend some one grace or virtue, or to inveigh against a particular vice, furnishes a subject not deficient in unity or precision ; but if we confine ourselves to that virtue or vice as assuming a particular aspect, and consider it as it appears in certain characters, or affects certain situations in life, the subject becomes still more interesting. The execution is, I admit, more difficult, but the merit and the effect are higher.

In the third place, never study to say all that can be said upon a subject ; no error is greater than this. Select the most useful, the most striking and persuasive topics which the text suggests, and rest the discourse upon these. If the doctrines which ministers of the Gospel preach were altogether new to their hearers, it might be requisite for them to be exceedingly full on every particular, lest there should be any hazard of their not affording complete information. But it is much less for the sake of information than of persuasion, that discourses are delivered from the pulpit : and nothing is more opposite to persuasion, than an unnecessary and tedious fulness. There are always some things which the preacher may suppose to be known, and some things which he may only slightly touch. If he seek to omit nothing which his subject suggests, it will unavoidably happen that he will encumber it, and weaken its force.

In studying a sermon, he ought to place himself in the situation of a serious hearer. Let him suppose the subject addressed to himself : let him consider what views of it would strike him most ; what arguments would be most likely to persuade him ; what parts of it would dwell most upon his mind. Let these be employed as his principal materials ; and in these it is most likely his genius will exert itself with the greatest vigour. The spinning and wire-drawing mode, which

is not uncommon among preachers, enervates the noblest truths. It may indeed be a consequence of observing the rule which I am now giving, that fewer sermons will be preached upon one text than is sometimes done; but this will, in my opinion, be attended with no disadvantage. I know no benefit that arises from introducing a whole system of religious truth under every text. The simplest and most natural method, by far, is to choose that view of a subject to which the text principally leads, and to dwell no longer on the text, than is sufficient for discussing the subject in that view, which can commonly be done with sufficient profoundness and distinctness, in one or a few discourses: for it is a very false notion to imagine, that they always preach the most profoundly, or go the deepest into a subject, who dwell on it the longest. On the contrary, that tedious circuit which some are ready to take in all their illustrations, is very frequently owing, either to their want of discernment for perceiving what is most important in the subject, or to their want of ability for placing it in the most proper point of view.

In the fourth place, study above all things to render your instructions interesting to the hearers. This is the great trial and mark of true genius for the eloquence of the pulpit: for nothing is so fatal to success in preaching, as a dry manner. A dry sermon can never be a good one. In order to preach in an interesting manner, much will depend upon the delivery of the discourse; for the manner in which a man speaks, is of the utmost consequence for affecting his audience; but much will also depend on the composition of the discourse. Correct language, and elegant description, are but the secondary instruments of preaching in an interesting manner. The great secret lies in bringing home all that is spoken to the hearts of the hearers, so as to make every man think that the preacher is addressing him in particular. For this end, let him avoid all intricate reasonings; avoid expressing himself in general speculative propositions, or laying down practical truths in an abstract metaphysical manner. As much as possible, the discourse ought to be carried on in the strain of direct address to the audience; not in the strain of one writing an essay, but of one speaking to a multitude, and studying to mix what is called application, or what has an immediate reference to practice, with the doctrinal and didactic parts of the sermon.

It will be of much advantage to keep always in view the different ages, characters, and conditions of men, and to accommo-

date directions and exhortations to these different classes of hearers. Whenever you bring forth what a man feels to touch his own character, or to suit his own circumstances, you are sure of interesting him. No study is more necessary for this purpose, than the study of human life, and the human heart. To be able to unfold the heart, and to discover a man to himself, in a light in which he never saw his own character before, produces a wonderful effect. As long as the preacher hovers in a cloud of general observations, and descends not to trace the particular lines and features of manners, the audience are apt to think themselves unconcerned in the description. It is the striking accuracy of moral characters that gives the chief power and effect to a preacher's discourse. Hence, examples founded on historical facts, and drawn from real life, of which kind the Scriptures afford many, always, when they are well chosen, command high attention. No favourable opportunity of introducing these should be omitted. They correct, in some degree, that disadvantage to which I before observed preaching is subject, of being confined to treat of qualities in the abstract, not of persons, and place the weight and reality of religious truths in the most convincing light. Perhaps the most beautiful, and among the most useful sermons of any, though, indeed, the most difficult in composition, are such as are wholly characteristic, or founded on the illustration of some peculiar character, or remarkable piece of history, in the sacred writings; by pursuing which one can trace, and lay open, some of the most secret windings of man's heart. Other topics of preaching have been much beaten; but this is a field, which, wide in itself, has hitherto been little explored by the composers of sermons, and possesses all the advantages of being curious, new, and highly useful. Bishop Butler's sermon on the *character of Balaam*, will give an idea of that sort of preaching which I have in my eye.

In the fifth and last place, let me add caution against taking the model of preaching from particular fashions that chance to have the vogue. These are torrents that swell to-day, and will have spent themselves by to-morrow. Sometimes it is the taste of poetical preaching, sometimes of philosophical, that has the fashion on its side; at one time it must be all pathetic, another time all argumentative, according as some celebrated preacher has set the example. Each of these modes, in the extreme, is very faulty; and he who conforms himself to any of them, will both cramp genius, and corrupt it. It is the universal taste of mankind, which is subject to no such changing

modes, that alone is entitled to possess any authority; and this will never give its sanction to any strain of preaching; but what is founded on human nature connected with usefulness, adapted to the proper idea of a sermon, as a serious persuasive oration, delivered to a multitude in order to make them better men. Let a preacher form himself upon this standard, and keep it close in his eye, and he will be in a much surer road to reputation, and success at last, than by a servile compliance with any popular taste, or transient humour of his hearers. Truth and good sense are firm, and will establish themselves; mode and humour are feeble and fluctuating. Let him never follow implicitly, any one example; or become a servile imitator of any preacher, however much admired. From various examples, he may pick up much for his improvement; some he may prefer to the rest; but the servility of imitation distinguishes all genius, or rather is a proof of the entire want of genius.

With respect to style, that which the pulpit requires, must certainly, in the first place, be very perspicuous. As discourses spoken there, are calculated for the instruction of all sorts of hearers, plainness and simplicity should reign in them. All unusual, swollen, or high-sounding words, should be avoided; especially all words that are merely poetical, or merely philosophical. Young preachers are apt to be caught with the glare of these; and in young composers the error may be excusable; but they may be assured that it is an error, and proceeds from their not having yet acquired a correct taste. Dignity of expression, indeed, the pulpit requires in a high degree; nothing that is mean or grovelling, no low or vulgar phrases, ought on any account to be admitted. But this dignity is perfectly consistent with simplicity. The words employed may be all plain words, easily understood, and in common use; and yet the style may be abundantly dignified, and, at the same time, very lively and animated. For a lively and animated style is extremely suited to the pulpit. The earnestness which a preacher ought to feel, and the grandeur and importance of his subjects, justify and often require warm and glowing expressions. He not only may employ metaphors and comparisons, but, on proper occasions, may apostrophise the saint or the sinner; may personify inanimate objects, break out into bold exclamations, and in general, has the command of the most passionate figures of speech. Put on this subject, of the proper use and management of figures, I have insisted so fully in former lectures, that I have no occasion

now to give particular directions; unless it be only to recal to mind, that most capital rule, never to employ strong figures, or a pathetic style, except in cases where the subject leads to native unaffected warmth.

The language of sacred Scripture, properly employed, is a great ornament to sermons. It may be employed, either in the way of quotation, or allusion. Direct quotations, brought from Scripture, in order to support what the preacher inculcates, both give authority to his doctrine, and render his discourse more solemn and venerable. Allusions to remarkable passages, or expressions of Scripture, when introduced with propriety, have generally a pleasing effect. They afford the preacher a fund of metaphorical expression which no other composition enjoys; and by means of which he can vary and enliven his style. But he must take care that all such allusions be natural and easy; for if they seem forced, they approach to the nature of conceits.*

In a sermon, no points or conceits should appear, no affected smartness and quaintness of expression. These derogate much from the dignity of the pulpit; and give to a preacher the air of coquetry, which he ought, above all things to shun. It is studied. But we must beware of imagining that we render style strong or expressive, by a constant and multiplied use of epithets. This is a great error. Epithets have often great beauty and force. But if we introduce them into every sentence, and string many of them together to one object, in place of strengthening, we clog and enfeeble style; in place of illustrating the image, we render it confused and indistinct. He that tells me "of this

* Bishop Sherlock, when showing, that the views of reason have been enlarged, and the principles of natural religion illustrated, by the discoveries of Christianity, attacks unbelievers for the abuse they make of these advantages, in the following manner: "What a return do we make for those blessings we have received! How disrespectfully do we treat the Gospel of Christ, to which we owe not only the clear light both of reason and nature which we now enjoy, when we endeavour to set up reason and nature in opposition to it! Ought the withered hand, which Christ has restored and made whole, to be lifted up against him?" Vol. i. of *Serm.* Dr. Seed is remarkably fond of allusions to Scripture style; but he sometimes employs such as are too fanciful and strained. As when he says (*Serm.* iv.) "No one great virtue will come single; the virtues that be her fellows will bear her company with joy and gladness;" alluding to a passage in the *Book of Psalm*, which relates to the virgin, the companions of the king's daughter, and (*Serm.* xiii.) having said, that the universities have justly been called the eyes of the nation, he adds, "and if the eyes of the nation be evil, the whole body of it must be full of darkness."

perishing, mutable, and transitory world;" by all these three epithets, does not give me so strong an idea of what he would convey, as if he had used one of them with propriety. I conclude this head with an advice, never to have what may be called a favourite expression; for it shows affectation, and becomes disgusting. Let not any expression, which is remarkable for its lustre or beauty, occur twice in the same discourse. The repetition of it betrays a fondness to shine, and at the same time, carries the appearance of a barren invention.

As to the question, whether it be most proper to write sermons fully, and commit them accurately to memory, or to study only the matter and thoughts, and trust the expression, in part at least, to the delivery? I am of opinion, that no universal rule can here be given. The choice of either of these methods must be left to preachers, according to their different genius. The expressions which come warm and glowing from the mind, during the fervour of pronunciation, will often have a superior grace and energy to those which are studied in the retirement of the closet. But then, this fluency and power of expression cannot, at all times, be depended upon, even by those of the readiest genius; and by many can at no time be commanded, when overawed by the presence of an audience. It is proper therefore to begin, at least, the practice of preaching, with writing as accurately as possible. This is absolutely necessary in the beginning in order to acquire the power and habit of correct speaking, nay, also of correct thinking, upon religious subjects. I am inclined to go further, and to say, that it is proper not only to begin thus, but also to continue, as long as the habits of industry last, in the practice both of writing and committing to memory. Relaxation in this particular is so common, and so ready to grow upon most speakers, in the pulpit, that there is little occasion for giving any cautions against the extreme of overdoing in accuracy.

Of pronunciation or delivery, I am hereafter to treat apart. All that I shall now say upon this head is, that the practice of reading sermons, is one of the greatest obstacles to the efficacy of the pulpit in Great Britain, where alone this practice prevails. No discourse, which is designed to be persuasive can have the same force when read, as when spoken. The common people all feel this, and their prejudice against this practice is not without foundation in nature. What is gained hereby in point of correctness, is not equal, I apprehend, to what is lost in point of persuasion and force. They, whose

memories are not able to retain the whole of a discourse, might aid themselves considerably by short notes lying before them, which would allow them to preserve, in a great measure, the freedom and ease of one who speaks.

The French and English writers of sermons proceed upon very different ideas of the eloquence of the pulpit; and seem indeed to have split it betwixt them. A French sermon is, for the most part, a warm animated exhortation; an English one, is a piece of cool instructive reasoning. The French preachers address themselves chiefly to the imagination and the passions; the English, almost solely to the understanding. It is the union of these two kinds of composition, of the French earnestness and warmth, with the English accuracy and reason, that would form, according to my idea, the model of a perfect sermon. A French sermon would sound in our ears as a florid and, often, as an enthusiastic, harangue. The censure which, in fact, the French critics pass on the English preachers is, that they are philosophers and logicians, but not orators.* The defects of most of the French sermons are these: from a mode that prevails among them of taking their texts from the lesson of the day, the connection of the text with the subject is often unnatural and forced;† their applications of Scripture are fanciful rather than instructive; their method is stiff and cramped, by their practice of dividing their subject always either into three, or two, main points; and their composition is in general too diffuse, and consists rather of a very few thoughts spread out, and highly wrought up, than of a rich variety of sentiments. Admitting, however, all these defects, it cannot be denied, that their sermons are formed upon the idea of a persuasive popular oration; and therefore I am of opinion they may be read with benefit.

Among the French Protestant divines, Saurin is the most distinguished; he is copious, eloquent, and devout, though too ostentatious in his manner. Among the Roman Catholics, the two most eminent are, Bourdaloue and Massillon. It is a subject of dispute among the French critics, to which of these the

* "Les sermons sont, suivant notre méthode, de vrais discours oratoires; et non pas, comme chez les Anglois, des discussions métaphysiques plus convenables à une académie, qu'aux assemblées populaires qui se forment dans nos temples, et qui s'agit d'instruire des devoirs du Christianisme, d'encourager, de consoler, d'édifier."—*Kibitorique Francoise*, par M. Crevier, tom. i. p. 134.

† One of Massillon's best sermons, that on the coolness and languor with which Christians perform the duties of religion, is preached from Luke iv. 38. and he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house: and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever.

preference is due, and each of them has his partisans. To Bourdaloue, they attribute more solidity and close reasoning; to Massillon, a more pleasing and engaging manner. Bourdaloue is indeed a great reasoner, and inculcates his doctrines with much zeal, piety, and earnestness; but his style is verbose, he is disagreeably full of quotations from the fathers, and he wants imagination. Massillon has more grace, more sentiment, and, in my opinion, every way more genius. He discovers much knowledge both of the world and of the human heart; he is pathetic and persuasive; and, upon the whole, is perhaps the most eloquent writer of sermons which modern times have produced.*

* In order to give an idea of that kind of eloquence which is employed by the French preachers, I shall insert a passage from Massillon, which, in the *Encyclopédie*, (article *Eloquence*,) is extolled by Voltaire, who was the author of that article, as the chef-d'œuvre, equal to any thing of which either ancient or modern times can boast. The subject of the sermon is, the small number of those who shall be saved. The strain of the whole discourse is extremely serious and animated; but when the orator came to the passage which follows, Voltaire informs us, that the whole assembly were moved; that by a sort of involuntary motion, they started up from their seats, and that such murmuring of surprise and acclamations arose, as disconcerted the speaker, though they increased the effect of his discourse.

"Je m'arrête à vous, mes frères, qui êtes ici assemblés. Je ne parle plus du reste des hommes; je vous regarde comme si vous étiez seuls sur la terre; voici la pensée qui m'occupe et qui m'épouvante. Je suppose que c'est ici votre dernière heure, et la fin de l'univers; que les cieus vont s'ouvrir sur vos têtes, Jésus-Christ paraître dans sa gloire au milieu de ce temple, et que vous n'y êtes assemblés que pour l'attendre, comme des criminels tremblans, à qui l'on va prononcer, ou une sentence de grâce, ou un arrêt de mort éternelle. Car vous avez beau vous flatter; vous mourrez tels que vous êtes aujourd'hui. Tous ces desirs de changement qui vous amusent, vous amuseront jusqu'au lit de la mort; c'est l'expérience de tous les siècles. Tout ce que vous trouverez alors en vous de nouveau, sera peut-être un compte plus grand que celui que vous auriez aujourd'hui à rendre; et sur ce que vous seriez, si l'on venoit vous juger dans ce moment, vous pouvez presque décider ce qui vous arrivera au sortir de la vie.

"Or, je vous le demande, et je vous le demande frappé de terreur, ne séparant pas en ce point mon sort du vôtre, et me mettant dans la même disposition où je souhaite que vous entriez; je vous demande, donc, si Jésus-Christ paroît soit dans ce temple, au milieu de cette assemblée, la plus auguste de l'univers, pour nous juger, pour faire la terrible dissection des bontés et des brèches, croyez-vous que le plus grand nombre de tout ce que nous sommes ici, fût placé à la droite? Croyez-vous que les choses du moins fussent égales? croyez-vous qu'il s'y trouvât seulement dix justes, que le Seigneur ne peut trouver ailleurs en cinq villes toutes entières? Je vous le demande; vous l'ignorez, et je l'ignore moi-même. Vous seul, O mon Dieu! connaissez, qui vous appartenez. Mes frères, notre part est presque assurée, et nous n'y pouvons pas. Quand même dans cette terrible séparation qui se fera un jour, il ne devroit y avoir qu'un seul pécheur de cette assemblée du côté des réprouvés, et qu'une voix du ciel viendrait nous en assurer dans ce temple, sans le désigner, qui de nous ne craindrait d'être des malheureux? qui de nous ne retomberoit d'abord sur sa conscience, pour examiner si ses crimes n'ont pas mérité ce châtiment? qui de nous, saisi de frayeur, ne demanderoit pas à Jésus-Christ, comme autrefois les apôtres: Seigneur, ne sépare ce pas moi? Sommes-nous séparés?

During the period that preceded the restoration of King Charles II., the sermons of the English divines abounded with scholastic casuistical theology. They were full of minute divisions and subdivisions, and scraps of learning in the didactic part; but to these were joined very warm pathetic addresses to the consciences of the hearers, in the applicatory part of the sermon. Upon the restoration, preaching assumed a more correct and polished form. It became disencumbered from the pedantry and scholastic divisions of the sectaries; but it threw out also their warm and pathetic addresses, and established itself wholly upon the model of cool reasoning, and rational instruction. As the dissenters from the church continued to preserve somewhat of the old strain of preaching, this led the established clergy to depart the farther from it. Whatever was earnest and passionate, either in the composition or delivery of sermons, was reckoned enthusiastic and fanatical; and hence that argumentative manner, bordering on the dry and unpersuasive, which is too generally the character of English sermons. Nothing can be more correct upon that model than many of them are; but the model itself on which they are formed, is a confined and imperfect one. Dr. Clark, for instance, every where abounds in good sense, and the most clear and accurate reasoning; his applications of Scripture are pertinent; his style is always perspicuous, and often elegant; he instructs and he convinces; in what then is he deficient? In nothing, except in the power of interesting and seizing the heart. He shows you what you ought to do; but he excites not the desire of doing it: he treats man as if he were a being of pure intellect, without imagination or passions. Archbishop

mes chers auditeurs? Peut-être que parmi tous ceux qui m'entendent, il ne se trouvera pas dix justes; peut-être s'en trouvera-t-il encore moins. Que sais-je, O mon Dieu! je n'ose regarder d'un œil fixe les abîmes de vos jugemens et de votre justice; peut-être ne s'en trouvera-t-il qu'un seul; et ce danger ne vous grand nombre qui périra? vous qui croyez être ce sentiment dans le cœur; vous sur qui seul la sentence de mort devoit tomber. Grand Dieu! que l'on compte peu dans le monde les terreurs de votre loi! &c.—After this awakening and alarming exhortation, the orator comes with propriety to this practical improvement: "Mais que conclure de ces grandes vérités? Qu'il ne faut pas se laisser aller à la débauche, à la dissipation, à la dissipation de son salut? A Dieu ne plaise; il n'y a que l'impie, qui pour se calmer sur ses désordres, tâche ici de conclure en secret que tous les hommes défont de cette erreur si universelle, qu'on peut faire ce que tous les autres font; et que l'usage est une voie sûre; mais de vous convaincre que pour se sauver, il faut se distinguer des autres; être singulier, vivre à part au milieu du monde, et ne pas ressembler à la foule."—Sermons de Massillon, vol. iv.

Tillotson's manner is more free and warm, and he approaches nearer than most of the English divines to the character of popular speaking. Hence he is, to this day, one of the best models we have for preaching. We must not indeed consider him in the light of a perfect orator: his composition is too loose and remiss; his style too feeble, and frequently too flat, to deserve that high character; but there is in some of his sermons so much warmth and earnestness, and through them all there runs so much ease and perspicuity, such a vein of good sense and sincere piety, as justly entitle him to be held as eminent a preacher as England has produced.

In Dr. Barrow, one admires more the prodigious fecundity of his invention, and the uncommon strength and force of his conceptions, than the felicity of his execution, or his talent in composition. We see a genius far surpassing the common, peculiar indeed almost to himself; but that genius often shooting wild and unchastised by any discipline or study of eloquence.

I cannot attempt to give particular characters of that great number of writers of sermons which this and the former age have produced, among whom we meet with a variety of the most respectable names. We find in their composition much that deserves praise; a great display of abilities of different kinds, much good sense and piety, strong reasoning, sound divinity, and useful instruction; though, in general, the degree of eloquence bears not, perhaps, equal proportion to the goodness of the matter. Bishop Atterbury deserves to be particularly mentioned as a model of correct and beautiful style, besides having the merit of a warmer and more eloquent strain of writing in some of his sermons, than is commonly met with. Had Bishop Butler, in place of abstract philosophical essays, given us more sermons in the strain of those two excellent ones which he has composed upon Self-deceit, and upon the character of Balaam, we should then have pointed him out as distinguished for that species of characteristic sermons which I before recommended.

Though the writings of the English divines are very proper to be read by such as are designed for the church, I must caution them against making too much use of them, or transcribing large passages of them into the sermons they compose. Such as once indulge themselves in this practice, will never have any fund of their own. Infinitely better it is, to venture into the pulpit with thoughts and expressions which have occurred to

themselves, though of inferior beauty, than to disfigure their compositions by borrowed and ill-sorted ornaments, which, to a judicious eye, will be always in hazard of discovering their own poverty. When a preacher sits down to write on any subject, never let him begin with seeking to consult all who have written on the same text or subject. This, if he consult many, will throw perplexity and confusion into his ideas; and, if he consults only one, will often warp him insensibly into his method, whether it be right or not. But let him begin with pondering the subject in his own thoughts; let him endeavour to fetch materials from within; to collect and arrange his ideas, and form some sort of a plan to himself, which it is always proper to put down in writing. Then, and not till then, he may inquire how others have treated the same subject. By this means, the method, and the leading thoughts in the sermon, are likely to be his own. These thoughts he may improve by comparing them with the track of sentiments which others have pursued; some of their sense he may, without blame, incorporate into his composition; retaining always his own words and style. This is fair assistance: all beyond is plagiarism.

On the whole, never let the capital principle, with which we set out at first, be forgotten,—to keep close in view the great end for which a preacher mounts the pulpit; even to infuse good dispositions into his hearers, to persuade them to serve God, and to become better men. Let this always dwell on his mind when he is composing, and it will diffuse through his compositions that spirit which will render them at once esteemed and useful. The most useful preacher is always the best, and will not fail of being esteemed so. Embellish truth only, with a view to gain it the more full and free admission into your hearers' minds, and your ornaments will, in that case, be simple, masculine, natural. The best applause, by far, which a preacher can receive, arises from the serious and deep impressions which his discourse leaves on those who hear it. The finest encomium, perhaps, ever bestowed on a preacher, was given by Louis XIV. to the eloquent Bishop of Clermont, Father Massillon, whom I before mentioned with so much praise. After hearing him preach at Versailles, he said to him, "Father, I have heard many great orators in this chapel; I have been highly pleased with them; but for you, whenever I hear you, I go away displeased with myself; for I see more of my own character."