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ARTICLE VI.

THE THREE FUNDAMENTAL METHODS OF PREACHING.— THE WRITING OF SERMONS.

BY EDWARDS A. PARK.

§ 1. Introductory Remarks.

I. Definition of terms. — We speak familiarly, sometimes awkwardly, of "reading sermons," "delivering them from a manuscript," "preaching from notes," "the written method." A man is said to adopt this method when he writes his sermons, and then reads what he has written. He may have penned them with or without a previous study of his theme, plan, and language; he may be a painstaking or an extemporaneous writer. If he commits his sermons to memory, and recites them as thus committed, he adopts the method variously called "preaching memoriter," the "memoriter method." He may first write what he afterwards learns by heart, or he may arrange his thoughts and words in his mind, and in the process of arranging them may impress them on his memory without writing a syllable. The penning of the sermon is no more essential to the preaching of it memoriter, than the antecedent study of it is essential to the writing. When a preacher delivers his discourses without having previously written them or designedly committed them to memory, he adopts what is variously called the "extemporaneous," "extemporary," or "extempore method." As the man who reads his sermons, and the man who recites them memoriter may adopt various modes of preparing them, so the man who preaches extempore may elaborate them in a greater or smaller degree. He may arrange his thoughts precisely as if he were to write them, and then, instead of

writing them or constructing his sentences so that he can commit them to memory, he may deliver them to his congregation in words which do not suggest themselves to his mind until he is ready to utter them. On the other hand, he may rise to speak without having previously arranged his thoughts or formed any plan of discourse, or perhaps without having selected any subject. The extemporaneous method does not necessarily presuppose any degree of meditation before speaking, nor does it necessarily exclude any degree. It does, however, exclude certain *kinds* of previous labor. So far forth as it is extemporaneous it excludes the intellectual formation of sentences which the author designs to repeat as he has formed them, and still more the penning of sentences which he designs to read or recite before his audience.[1] That sermon is not *extemporaneous* which is designedly delivered the second time *verbatim et literatim* as it had been delivered the first time, or even mentally repeated in private. The extemporaneous preacher may go into the pulpit with the same amount of antecedent study which the writer has performed before he constructs his sentences for his paper. The difference between the two may be simply this: the one begins to speak in the same state in which the other begins to write; the one has meditated and begins to use his tongue when the other has meditated and begins to use his pen.

II. The intermingling of the three fundamental methods. —

[1] When the British orator made the remark: "I think the gentleman is indebted to his memory for his wit and to his imagination for his facts," he was supposed to have spoken extempore; but on inspecting his manuscripts the substance of his remark was found written and re-written, altered and re-altered, each revision being more pointed and terse than the preceding, until the idea took the concentrated form which has now become a classical satire. When Mr. Webster uttered his felicitous words on the drum-beat of England, it seemed as if they had just occurred to his mind; but he is said to have elaborated them long before, while he was witnessing the drill of a British regiment. The most splendid paragraph in his reply to Hayne had been treasured up in his memory for several months before he uttered it in the Senate. He declared to a friend that the majority of those sentences which were most admired by the public, and were delivered as if they had suddenly occurred to him, had been in fact carefully studied, written, and committed to memory.

In point of fact there is a fourth method, which consists in a commingling of the three already named. One man who is called a reader of sermons commits to memory some of his more important sentences, introduces extemporaneous remarks, or even paragraphs, and preserves himself in what may be called an extemporizing state of mind, holds himself ready at any time to deviate from his written manuscript. The man who preaches from memory sometimes refers to his manuscript, and, so far forth, adopts the written method; sometimes deviates from what he has written, and preserves in his mind such a readiness to deviate at any time as forms a distinctive element of extemporary discourse. The extemporaneous preacher often writes a part of his sermon, and either reads the part which he has written, or else commits to memory those sentences which are the most important or critical or delicate. Sometimes his memory is so impressible, at once quick and retentive, that after meditating on his discourse he recalls, and means to recall, in the pulpit the identical words which he had selected in his private meditation. Those words were written only on the tablets of his mind, and although termed extemporaneous are in fact remembered just as if they were written with ink. Robert Hall is called an extemporaneous preacher, but Dr. Gregory says, in a passage which will be referred to more than once hereafter:

The grand divisions of thought, the heads of a sermon "he would trace out with the most prominent lines of demarcation; and these for some years supplied all the hints that he needed in the pulpit, except on extraordinary occasions. To these grand divisions he referred, and upon them suspended all the subordinate trains of thought. The latter, again, appear to have been of two classes altogether distinct: outlined trains of thought, and trains into which much of the detail was interwoven. In the outlined train the whole plan was carried out and completed as to the argument; in that of detail, the illustrations, images, and subordinate proofs were selected and classified; and in those instances where the force of an argument, or the probable success of a general application, would mainly depend upon the language, even that was selected and appropriated, sometimes to the precise collocation of the words. Of some sermons, no portions whatever were wrought out thus minutely; the

language employed in preaching being that which spontaneously occurred at the time; of others, this minute attention was paid to the verbal structure of nearly half; of *a few*, the entire train of preparation, almost from the beginning to the end, extended to the very sentences. Yet the marked peculiarity consisted in this, that the process, even when thus directed to minutiae in his more elaborate efforts, did not require the use of the pen, at least at the time to which these remarks principally apply. [Mr. Hall, doubtless, varied his manner of preparation in different periods. For three or four years after his settlement at Leicester he wrote down nearly a third of the sermon, and left all the rest to flow from the outlying plan while he was preaching. But for some years afterward he seldom allowed his notes to exceed two pages, and is thought to have indulged himself more than at any other period of his life in entirely extemporaneous eloquence. At that time his sermons were especially distinguished by simplicity and pathos.] For Mr. Hall had a singular faculty for continuous mental composition, apart from the aid which writing supplies. Words were so disciplined to his use, that the more he thought on any subject the more closely were the topics of thought associated with appropriate terms and phrases; and it was manifest that he had carefully disciplined his mind to this as an independent exercise, probably to avoid the pain and fatigue which always attended the process of writing. Whenever he pleased he could thus pursue the consecution to a great extent, in sentences many of them perfectly formed and elaborately finished, as he went along, and easily called up again by memory as occasion required; not, however, in their separate character, as elements of language, but because of their being fully worked into the substance of thought. It hence happened that the excellence which other persons often attain as to style, from the use of the pen, in written, visible composition (employing the eye upon words, instead of fixing the memory upon substantial mental product and, it may be, diminishing the intellectual power by substituting for one of its faculties a mechanical result), he more successfully and uniformly obtained by a purely meditative process. And I am persuaded that if he could have *instantly* impressed his trains of thought upon paper, with the incorporated words, and with the living spirit in which they were conceived, hundreds, if not thousands, of passages would have been preserved, as chaste and polished in diction, as elastic and energetic in tone, as can be selected from any part of his works."[1]

III. Which of the three fundamental methods is the preferable one?

1. To this question no answer can be given which is *universally* true. There is a small class of preachers who

[1] The Works (Memoir) of the Rev. Robert Hall (Am. ed.), Vol. iii. pp. 39, 40.

will be more useful if they read their sermons. The majority of these men *might have had* the power to speak extempore, but they *have* never gained this power. They might gain it now, but the time and labor spent in acquiring it might be more profitably spent in other modes for which nature has more distinctly qualified them. A few clergymen have the temperament of the Catholic priest, Lamennais, who, while eminent for rapidity of thought and intensity of feeling, was unable to command his voice and control his mental action in an extemporaneous address. Some clergymen have an excitability like that of Rousseau, which does not prevent them from writing extempore in private, but does prevent them from speaking extempore in public. There is a second class of preachers who are signalized by a ready and retentive memory, and seem thus predestined to speak memoriter. If they premeditate what they are to say, they must say it memoriter, or else make an artificial effort not to do so. A third and still larger class should form the habit of preaching extempore. There are some audiences before whom it is advisable to read a sermon; other audiences, before whom it is advisable to speak from memory; others, who demand the extemporaneous method. So there are different occasions and likewise different subjects requiring, one the first, another the second, another the third of the three modes. Robert Hall is not known to have committed, with a formal and deliberate purpose, more than one entire sermon to memory. He preached his "Reflections on War," to a congregation of differing political partisans, and at a critical conjuncture tempting him to make remarks which might give needless offence, and, therefore, he did not allow himself to utter a word which he had not antecedently selected. There are, moreover, different parts of the same sermon, one of which may require to be written and read, another to be spoken as remembered, another to be spoken extempore.

2. But although no universal rule can be given, yet two general rules may be. The first of them is, that the three fundamental methods be intermingled. The change from

one method to another gives to the preacher elasticity and completeness, and relieves his pulpit from a most deadening evil — monotony. Various methods of commingling the three are suggested in Section 2 of this Article. The second of these general rules is, that a majority of a man's sermons be preached extempore. This rule is expressed so that it may not seem to require that every preacher should generally adopt the extemporaneous method, nor that any preacher should adopt it on every occasion or in every part of his discourse, nor that any preacher should spend the greater part of his time in directly preparing extemporaneous sermons. On the contrary this rule admits, although it does not require, that every preacher intermingle the three methods, and that he spend the greater part of his time in directly preparing his written sermons, while he preaches the greater number of his sermons extempore. This rule implies that, in the majority of instances, the main effort of a pulpit orator should be to educate himself for the extemporaneous method. He should practise the other two methods with the hope and the aim to acquire the greater precision and power in preaching extempore. By the various discipline of writing he prepares himself to put the proper words in the proper places when he speaks without writing. By committing to memory some of his more exact, terse, pungent, or impassioned sentences he improves his vocabulary. On the other hand, by speaking extempore he will improve his style of writing, and sometimes he will write the better if he expects to learn by heart what he has written.

The foregoing remarks are designed to make an impression more or less favorable to each of the three fundamental methods of preaching. As the writing of sermons is connected with each of these three methods; remotely implied in the most successful extemporary discourse; more directly and commonly implied in the memoriter discourse, and always in the discourse which is read, it may here be insulated from its connections, and considered apart by itself, as essential, or more or less auxiliary to the reading, reciting, and extemporaneous uttering of the preacher's words.

§ 2. The Writing of Sermons.

I. Different methods of writing. — We will consider three different modes of conducting this exercise of writing. The first is that of writing the entire sermon in the author's most elaborate style; the second is that of writing portions of the sermon in that style; the third is that of easy writing, which may be either unpremeditated or else intermediate between the extemporaneous and the author's most carefully studied composition.

1. The whole sermon may be written in the preacher's most elaborate style. This implies that, first of all, he study the subject of his discourse in its various relations until he obtain, so far as his mental limitations allow, the mastery of it. It is a rule of secular rhetoric that an author should not write *up* to his subject, it being above him; but he should master it so thoroughly that he can write *down* upon it. He can never write *down* on a sacred theme; but he can obtain such a familiarity with it as to give him spirit and confidence in writing upon it. This elaborate plan of writing implies, as the second but most important requisite, that the author meditate on his subject until he become saturated with the moral influences of it. He must often exert himself in order to catch the spirit of his theme, as it differs from the spirit of every other. He cannot write well unless his heart be fully absorbed with what his intellect has clearly apprehended. *Pectus est quod disertum facit.* This plan implies, thirdly, that among the various methods of treating his theme he search for the best; arranging his various topics, like soldiers for the battle, each in the position where it can be most effective.[1] Fourthly, the plan implies that after he has written his discourse he minutely criticise its language, and that among the different modes of constructing his sentences he select those which he judges to be most apposite. This rule does not mean that he labor to introduce

[1] "Haec est velut imperatoria virtus copias suas partientis." — Quinctilian. Inst. ii.

jingling words, sonorous phrases — he should labor to get such terms *out* rather than *in;* — but it does mean that he should labor to introduce such words as will most exactly express his thoughts, and above all most effectively call forth the appropriate feelings. No man was further removed from prudery of style than Dr. Emmons, yet he says: "I have often spent a whole day in selecting the right phrase for a good thought." Another divine who has been called a "prince of pulpit orators," and whose style is rough rather than smooth, spent a fortnight on a single paragraph of one of his published sermons. The time was spent not in balancing his phrases in order that they might sound well, but in so adjusting them that they should unfold his thoughts fully, precisely, effectively. In the fifth place, this plan of writing implies that the preacher work on his sermon until it is "about finished" in distinction from its being ended. Michael Angelo spent twenty months in painting the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, and to the Pope, Julius II, urging him to hasten the frescoes and impatiently asking "when will you finish your work?" the faithful artist replied, "When I I can."

To finish a sermon in this manner requires time. Let the minister take the time. He may as profitably spend it in writing well as in afterward repenting that he has written ill. But what shall he do for his pulpit before his elaborate sermon is finished? Occasionally he may gratify his people by an exchange of pulpits with a clerical neighbor; sometimes he may avail himself of his former preparations; but more commonly he may compose new extemporaneous sermons. His one elaborate composition will suggest not only the subjects, but also the plans of several correlated, but distinct homilies, and will inspirit him to deliver them. It was the rule (varied according to his exigencies) of one pastor to spend the morning study-hours of a week on his written composition, the afternoon and evening study-hours on his extemporary sermons; to preach his written discourse on the next Sabbath, if he had "about finished" it; to preach

his extemporaneous sermons, if he had not "about satisfied" himself with his writing; to pursue the same course during the second week, the third, if need be; and to preach his elaborate sermon (often a double sermon) when it was done, and not before. It was a rule (followed, of course, with varied modifications) of another pastor to spend the first days of the week in writing, or preparing to write, his labored discourse; and, if he foresaw that he could not preach it on the next Sabbath, to suspend his studies on that discourse in season to prepare two extemporaneous sermons for that day; to persevere, during the first days of the succeeding week in the studies pertaining to his elaborate discourse; to preach it on the next Sabbath, if he was "about ready," if not, not; and to labor on it until he deemed it "about fit" to be delivered, or until it had ceased to inspire him with fresh thoughts for new extemporary sermons. Other preachers have adopted still different courses in pursuing the same general plan. The plan itself produces many good effects, and is attended with some evils.

A. Good results of the plan.

a. It gives a useful discipline to the preacher's intellect. He permanently enlarges it by expanding it on one great doctrine of the Bible. John Howe in writing his sermon on "The Vanity of Man as Mortal," Robert Hall in writing his sermon on "Modern Infidelity," invigorated their mental powers by tasking them to the utmost. A preacher is stimulated to fresh enterprises by striving for a few hours every day to make the most of himself as a thinker. He who aims high reaches a higher mark than he who aims low. A man does not know himself unless he labor sometimes to make "full proof" of his faculties.[1] The laziness of a good man consists in making moderate exertion. The great artists of the world have "laid themselves out" on some of their works. Michael Angelo devoted sixteen months to the

[1] In some branches of mechanical work, in which there is need of special accuracy, it is found that the journeymen are the more successful if they are required to perform operations which, while not surpassing their power, tax it to the utmost.

statue of Pope Julius II. Leonardo de Vinci spent four years in painting his Mona Lisa, and was then dissatisfied with it. Ghiberti spent forty years on the two gates of the Baptistery at Florence — the same which Michael Angelo said were worthy to be the gates of Paradise. The artist executed numerous other works while he was engaged on these two gates; but from his labor on these he derived inspiration, and also a standard for his other performances. While a man is striving to do one thing as well as he can, he will do other things better than he would have done but for that striving.

b. This plan of composition gives an admirable discipline to the preacher's heart. There is a superficial piety, which is fostered by cursory glances at a religious truth; there is a profound piety, which is cultivated by a profound search and research into it. The truth is high, broad, deep; its moral power is felt by that man, and that man only, who clambers up these heights, down these depths, and stretches his powers in a degree commensurate with these breadths. This is not the work of a few hours. John Howe must have lingered a long time among the truths filling his sermon on the "Redeemer's Tears," or he would not have expressed such exquisite sensibility in view of them; and Robert Hall, who admired that sermon, must have spent many days in meditating on its truths, or he would never have said: "I could think of the word 'tear,' sir, till I wept." A man who brings his own heart into intense sympathy with one great doctrine prepares himself to preach a score of extemporaneous sermons on different relations of that doctrine. "I light my candle at the sun," was the motto of a great author who kept himself familiar with the Homeric poems while he was preparing his works for the press; and every minister, while preparing his discourses for the pulpit, should light his candle at some bright truth which he is carefully examining in the Bible.

c. This plan of elaborate writing stimulates and disciplines the preacher to obtain large and accurate views of truth,

and aids his congregation in obtaining similar views. The general fact is, that, unless he put his statements upon paper, compare them as thus visible, let his eye assist his mind, he will not make his statements definite nor self-consistent; he will not carefully analyze his subject, designate its various parts in apposite language, recombine them into a whole, present that whole in its appropriate moral aspect. He may be called to state and refute objections, like those of Colenso, to certain passages of the Bible. Some men can, but very few can, and still fewer *will*, accurately state and clearly refute what the objector has urged, unless the statements and the refutations be looked at on paper. Exceptions apart, the preacher's mind will wander, will apprehend the subject indefinitely, will fail in precision of treatment, if he let his thoughts float on his mind without seizing them and fixing them in a permanent form.[1] The very anticipation of writing down one's meditations is a stimulus to definite thinking. More than once a man who has been an objector to a truth has undertaken to write an essay against it, and has been convinced of the truth by his writing. Hence, as it is a rule: *Lege cum calamo*, so it is a rule: *Cogita cum calamo*. Hence, as history proves that the exercise of writing tends to make the preacher systematic and correct, so history proves that the congregations which have listened to a certain proportion of written discourses have been more systematically instructed than those which have heard none but extemporary sermons.

d. This plan of accurate writing tends to promote the literary, as well as religious education of the people. The

[1] Perhaps it is the general, it is certainly a common fact, that when a man is earnestly engaged in thinking, he will be making some peculiar physical movement. Neander, twirling his pen in the lecture-room, is a representative of many a scholar who drums with his hand or foot, or whistles, or shakes or nods his head while he is busy in thought. Now, that physical movement which is appropriate to a thinker is the movement of his hand in writing. If he must be doing something while he thinks, let him write. It is said of Rufus Choate that "he was rarely idle for a moment," "rarely without book and pen in hand," "rarely sitting down with book alone." The very act of holding the ready pen serves to keep the mind ready to furnish new ideas for the pen to note.

style of the pulpit has an influence on the style of popular conversation. If the pulpit sanction improper forms of speech, the hearers will adopt them. A carefully written sermon chastens the language of those who attend to it, helps to regulate their choice of books and of company, and by raising their intellectual and aesthetic tone raises also their moral character. In our land, where so many speak extempore before lyceums and political assemblages, it is preeminently desirable that the pulpit should have an influence in regulating the style of these speakers. The pulpit, however, will not have this regulative power, unless the preacher be careful in arranging and expressing his own thoughts. He will not be as careful as he should be, unless he commit his words to paper, and be mindful that .

> "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
> As those move easiest who have learned to dance."

e. This plan of writing gives authority to the preacher. In the style of the Bible, he is a "ruler" of his church; too often, in the style of the present day, he is an "employé." Once he was called "father," now he is called "brother"; once a "shepherd," now a member of the flock. A single sermon containing sound thought expressed by good words in their right places has an influence on the strong minds of his auditors; and these minds control the weaker. Not only does that sermon inspire him to preach several extemporaneous sermons, which are in their substance connected, and in their spirit homogeneous with it, but it also lends to them an influence which no one of them by itself would obtain. The position of a thing affects its worth. The right hand digit in the numeration line adds tenfold to the value of the digits at the left hand. An eminent jurist, who when a law-student at Litchfield was accustomed to hear Dr. Lyman Beecher's discourses, has remarked that if the larger part of them were criticised, each by itself, they would not secure an uncommon degree of reverence for him as a thinker; but when they were preached they borrowed force from some elaborate sermon which had preceded them;

they were intimately associated with it, and stood by its help. If men venerate their pastor as "apt to teach," as an "able minister of the New Testament," they will derive instruction from identically the same words which falling from the lips of an inferior man would not even invite attention. A single Sabbath sermon which proves that its author has given "attendance to reading" will command respect for the homeliest evening lectures which he may utter in the district school-house. It will lessen the propriety of the definition which Walker in his Dictionary gives to the word "preacher" —"One who is apt to harangue tediously in discourse."[1] On a blank leaf of one of Dr. Griffin's manuscripts it appeared that his discourse had been preached ninety times. It had been reviewed and recomposed, touched and retouched, until, as far as the author's power availed, it became a finished sermon. This one discourse gave him an authority wherever he preached it, and thus gave to his other discourses an influence which they would not have gained if they were isolated from their connection with this.

f. This plan imparts variety to the preacher's ministrations. He will not preach at all on certain subjects unless he write upon them. They are too intricate or too critical; a careless remark upon them will mislead the hearer, perhaps work lasting injury. Hence the writer of sermons has a more copious assortment of themes than extemporaneous preachers have. Some of his hearers will be the more interested in his elaborate sermon, because it breaks up the monotony of his extemporaneous efforts. Others will be the more interested in his extemporary sermon, because it gives them rest from his more labored discussions. By writing carefully on one text he unfolds its peculiar meaning, the distinctive

[1] Walker has been unjustly condemned for this definition. His duty was to state the meanings assigned by usage to this word. This, unfortunately, has been one of the meanings, as is illustrated in Charles Lamb's celebrated criticism on Coleridge's conversation; also in the phrases: "Do not fear that I am going to preach to you"; "prosy as the pulpit." Another and different definition is given in Perry's and Johnson's Dictionaries: "Preacher, one who inculcates with earnestness and vehemence."

shading of a truth or a duty to which it points. By writing with equal care on another text he discloses another peculiar meaning, exhibits another distinctive shading of a truth or duty. His two sermons are unlike each other in their substance, method, and practical bearing. Without a careful elaboration of them he would insensibly have let both of them flow in the same channel. When that channel is worn, sermons flow too easily in it. Multitudes of discourses are in their general drift indistinguishable one from the other, while each of them might have been unique, and each have contributed to the freshness and variety of the pastor's ministrations. The monotony of the pulpit results from the fact that some preachers do not form the habit of detecting the idiosyncrasies of themes, and of varying their methods of treatment according to the particular lights and shadows of the subject treated. They may form this habit by painstaking in their composition. A man will soon become weary of repeating himself with care, when his manuscripts present ocular proof of his having written the same things in the same way over and over.

g. This plan of writing prepares the minister for exigencies. His health or his mental condition on some days disqualifies him for preaching extempore; he may then preach his elaborate sermons; and his more scholarly hearers will be submissive to the providence which interfered with his freer speech. He is called to preach in times of high political excitement; his every word will be watched; his careless phrases may produce a baleful effect; if he write with care he may guard himself against exerting a mischievous influence, may perhaps qualify himself for exerting a benign influence, in what is called a semi-political discourse. During the rebellion of 1861–65 many hurtful, because careless, sermons were preached from the texts, Deut xii. 8; Judges xvii. 6; xxi. 25; and on the other hand many preachers who wrote their discourses with painstaking were able to give visible proof that they did not express the demoralizing sentiments which heated partizans imputed to them. The editor of

Massillon's Lent Sermons, regards it as a prodigy that he finished a discourse in so short a time as ten or twelve days. This eminent preacher sometimes re-wrote a single sermon, fifteen or even twenty times. This finished discourse was designed for some rare occasion, when the words uttered must be "apples of gold in pictures of silver." In order to produce a good effect upon an intelligent community hostile to the evangelical faith, an American divine spent a fortnight on a single paragraph of one sermon, and three months on another sermon which has already accomplished more good than the four thousand discourses which were written by another of our pastors, at the rate of two a week. When a minister has reason to expect that his sermon will be controverted it may be necessary for him to state certain propositions with precision and grace, for they will be quoted and re-quoted until they become household words. In preparing such a sermon a theological preacher spent, in connection with a literary friend, two entire days on as many sentences. That sermon has gained a world-wide usefulness. In his extreme old age many a preacher has commanded the reverential attention of his auditors to discourses which he had elaborated in his youth.[1]

h. This plan of writing qualifies and inspirits a man to preach extempore. The iron in a white heat sends out sparks as bright as itself. While a writer is thoroughly investigating a truth for his more elaborate sermon, he feels a fire in his bones forcing him to utter many related truths in discourses which he is not cool enough to draw out on paper. But for that well-studied sermon he would never have detected certain relations of his theme which now shine out so that he cannot help seeing them. In writing that sermon he has learned the precise words, the accurate statements, the germinal phrases, the balance and proportion of thoughts, their phases and dependences, which will afterward chasten and regulate his extemporaneous discourses. The substance of different parts of that sermon will be

[1] Memoir of Dr. Emmons, pp. 282, 283.

repeated in varied measures throughout his ministry. It has been said of Daniel Webster that he never delivered more than twelve or twenty speeches, each part of one of those speeches being put into different combinations, presented with variations of form, in several less important addresses. One carefully prepared sermon is written on the text: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The sermon compresses exact statements on, 1. the grace of the Father *originating* the atonement; 2. the sufferings and death of the Son *constituting* the atonement; 3. the nature and duty of faith, forming the *condition* on which the atonement finally blesses men; 4. everlasting life, the gracious *reward* for accepting the atonement; 5. eternal pain, the *punishment* for rejecting the atonement. These five topics may be expanded, illustrated, and enforced in five extemporaneous sermons, may be treated in a style so unlike the style of the elaborate discourse that a candid hearer would not recognize, still less criticise, any repetition. Indeed there need be no repetition in the form, proportions, relations of the theme. The exact, condensed, and therefore powerful phraseology of the written discourse corrects and strengthens the style of the extemporaneous sermons which are more diffuse, exciting, popular. "If you hit upon a good subject," says President Wayland,[1] "it will last for several weeks; "for instance, Growth in Grace, the nature of it, exhortations to it, means for accomplishing it, etc., have furnished me with several sermons." These extemporaneous sermons may present the same substance of thought which had been presented in the written discourse; but men who have admired a landscape in the radiance of the morning sun will love to gaze at it when the sun goes down, and in the evening twilight. Reiterations of things are not only useful but needful. It is the repetition of forms which wearies the hearer. *Non nova sed nové* is the old motto of the preacher.

[1] Memoir, Vol. i. p. 156.

i. This plan of writing tends to perpetuate the minister's influence. The merely extemporaneous preacher is in peril of losing his power. He forms careless habits which ultimately incapacitate him for effective ministrations in the pulpit. Political and juridical science as well as general literature would have been far more advanced than they now are, if the great speeches of statesmen and jurists had not vanished with the breath that uttered them. The logical argument and the cogent words of many illustrious senators and lawyers were never repeated, because never written. In hundreds of pulpits there have been bursts of genuine eloquence of which we can now obtain only a faint tradition. Extemporaneous addresses are like time itself, evanescent; but *scripta litera manet.* Thousands of men have been and will be quickened by the sermon of Robert Hall on Modern Infidelity. The history of that sermon illustrates the present topic and also the author's union of the different methods of preaching as stated in § 1, II. above. He had delivered the discourse in the same style twice without having written a sentence of it. He was at length persuaded to let the world enjoy what his hearers had enjoyed. Dr. Gregory, who promised to superintend the work of printing the sermon, says:

"At first I obtained from him eight pages, and took them to the printer; after a few days four pages more; then two or three pages; then a more violent attack of his distressing pain in the back compelled him to write two or three pages while *lying on the floor;* and soon afterward a still more violent paroxysm occasioned a longer suspension of his labor. After an interval of a week, the work was renewed at the joint entreaty of myself and other friends. It was pursued in the same manner, two or three pages being obtained for the printer at one time, a similar portion after a day or two, until, at the end of seven weeks, the task was completed. During the whole time of the composition, thus conducted, Mr. Hall never saw a single page of the printer's work. When I applied for more 'copy' he asked what it was that he had written last, and then proceeded. Very often, after he had given me a small portion, he would inquire if he had written it nearly in the words which he had employed in delivering the sermon orally. After he had written down the striking apostrophe which occurs at about page seventy-six of most of the editions—

'Eternal God! on what are thine enemies intent! what are those enterprizes of guilt and horror that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of heaven must not *penetrate*' — he asked, 'did I say *penetrate*, sir, when I preached it?' 'Yes.' 'Do you think, sir, I may venture to alter it? for no man who considered the force of the English language would use a word of three syllables there, but from absolute necessity.' 'You are, doubtless, at liberty to alter it if you think well.' 'Then be so good, sir, to take your pencil, and for *penetrate* put *pierce; pierce* is the word, sir, and the only word to be used there.' I have now the evidence of this before me, in the entire manuscript, which I carefully preserve among my richest literary treasures. At the end of seven weeks Mr. Hall's labor, thus conducted, being, greatly to his delight, brought to a close, I presented him with a complete copy of his printed sermon, not one word of which he had seen in its progress."[1]

It is true that the stenographic and phonographic arts have superseded in some instances and some degree the task of writing what a man has previously uttered without notes.[2] Still, the sermons that were preached while unwritten demand, as we saw in the preceding quotation, a careful revisal. It is also true that many a pastor cannot expect to retain his apparent influence long after his death. He is not inspired to say: *Pingo in aeternum*. His descendants may read and prize his written sermons; his church may publish some of them a century or two after they were preached;[3] an antiquarian in future ages may print some of them as illustrations of the past; but in the general their influence will be absorbed in the character of the parish whose forefathers heard them. Still his written sermons may perpetuate his power while he lives. He can fall back on them when he is too old or too ill to extemporize. He can refresh his mind with them when he is too weary to re-investigate a difficult theme. The carefully-chosen phrases will be mementos of former trains of thought. He would

[1] Halls Works, Vol. i. p. 22.

[2] Many of the speeches delivered by the orators of Greece and Rome, as well as many of the homilies preached by the church-fathers, were never written out by them, but were reported by the shorthand penmen, whose art is now in great measure unknown to us.

[3] See, for instance, such volumes as "The Worcester Pulpit," "The Dedham Pulpit," and "The Ministry of Taunton."

have forgotten those thoughts had they not been suggested by these critical phrases; such phrases will renew his youth or strength. "How forcible are right words!" They are instinct with a power which we cannot analyze. They may have been long forgotten by the writer, but when re-perused they stir his former energies, awaken fresh sympathies, call up exciting and instructive associations. An old man derives a strange impulse and a peculiar kind of instruction from his early writings. What an apothegmatic volume[1] describes in reference to the ear of the hearer is in some degree true in reference to the mind of the author: "I suppose that even when they are good a man's words seem poor to himself; for the workman is too familiar with the wrong side of all his workmanship. Moreover, much must always lie in the ear of the hearer. We say enough to set alight the hidden trains of thought, which abide in the recesses of men's hearts, unknown to them, and they are startled into thinking for themselves. After all, it is not often so requisite for a writer to make things logically clear to men, as to put them into the mood he wishes to have them in. I suppose the snake-charmer and the horse-whisperer have some such scheme."

B. Evil results of the plan.

a. There is danger that a minister will repress the life, elasticity, energy of his sermons by minute criticism on the words of it. The phrases which occur to him in his extemporaneous discourses are more natural and vivid than those which he works upon in his study with the aid of grammars and lexicons. Dr. Gregory says of Robert Hall:

"He had formed for himself, as a writer, an ideal standard of excellence which could not be reached; his perception of beauty in composition was so delicate and refined, that in regard to his own productions it engendered, perhaps, a fastidious taste; and deep and prevailing as was his humility, he was not insensible to the value of a high reputation, and therefore cautiously guarded against the risk of diminishing his usefulness among certain classes of readers, by consigning any production to the world that had not been thoroughly subjected to the *labor limae*. Hence the extreme slowness with which he composed for the press; writing, improving,

[1] "Companions of my Solitude," pp. 114, 115.

rejecting the improvement, seeking another, rejecting it, recasting whole sentences and pages, often recurring precisely to the original phraseology, and still oftener repenting when it was too late that he had not done so. All this he lamented as a serious defect, declaring that he gave, in his own view, to his written compositions an air of stiffness and formality which deprived him of all complacency in them. And I cannot but think that notwithstanding the exquisite harmony and beauty which characterize everything that he has published, they were even, in point of felicity of diction and the majestic current and force of language, inferior to the 'winged words' that escaped from his lips, when his 'soul was enlarged' in the discharge of ministerial duty."[1]

While we admit the danger of injuring a discourse by excessive elaboration, we should remember that a writer may sometimes improve *himself* while he does not improve the particular work on which he expends his strength. A man may become a good mechanic by laboring on a machine which he spoils. But if a minister adopt, as he may, the habit of extemporizing the majority of his sermons, he will thus foster such principles of taste as will indispose him to carry the labor of correcting beyond the line of improving his written discourse. Still he must be on his guard. He must retain his good sense. He must take especial pains to avoid that morbid appetency for perfection which will polish away all positive excellence, and refine into nothing every natural beauty. We have read of an Italian author who would whet and whet his knife till there was no steel left to make an edge. "Indeed," says Carlyle, "in all things, writing or other, which a man engages in, there is the indispensablest beauty in knowing *how to get done*. A man frets himself to no purpose, he has not the sleight of the trade, he is not a craftsman but an unfortunate borer and bungler, if he know not when to have done. Perfection is unattainable; no carpenter ever made a mathematically accurate right-angle in the world; yet all carpenters know when it is right enough, and do not botch it and lose their wages by making it too right. Too much painstaking speaks disease in one's mind, as well as too little. The adroit, sound-

[1] Hall's Works (American ed.), Vol. iii. p. 40.

minded man will endeavor to spend on each business approximately what of pains it deserves; and with a conscience void of remorse will dismiss it then."[1] It is for this reason that the writer of a sermon is advised to cease from his work when it is "about done" (§ 2. I. 1).

b. There is danger that a minister will debilitate and belittle himself by excessive labor on a single discourse. To this objection, as to the preceding, we reply, the minister must avoid the danger. First, he must labor on the thought more than on the expression of it. Secondly, he must labor on the expression as the correlate of the thought. He must make the words things. He must make his study of the words a study in scientific philology, and this does not emasculate the mind. Scientific philologists and rhetoricians, aiming to illustrate their principles, quote the words of eminent writers; but these words would not have been worthy of citation had they not been elaborated with care. When we read the finished lines of Virgil, we must remember that the poet wrote his Georgics at the rate of one line per day. We find him "dictating a number of verses in the morning, spending the day in revising, correcting, and reducing them, and comparing himself, as Aulus Gellius mentions, to a she-bear licking her misshapen offspring into shape. We see Petrarch returning day after day to his sonnets, to alter some single word, or make some trifling change in the arrangement of a line. The manuscripts of Ariosto, whose style appears the very perfection of ease and an almost spontaneous emanation, still exist at Ferrara, and show that many of the favorite passages in the Orlando were written eight times over. Scarcely less attention was bestowed upon the stanzas of the Gierusaleme of Tasso."[2] The comparison between the first draught and the last draught of Pope's Iliad is a literary curiosity. The writings of Bossuet which were prepared for the press by himself, are as dissimilar in finish of style to those which were prepared by his Benedictine editors, as are the productions of two

[1] Westminster Review, Vol. xxviii. p. 338. [2] Encyclopaedia Britannica.

different men. In writing his Reflections on the French Revolution, Edmund Burke had sometimes more than twelve proofs worked off and destroyed before he could satisfy himself.[1] Rousseau says that his own blots, emendations, and transcriptions, before printing and after it, were numberless.

We have no doubt that John Foster carried his minute criticism on his works to an excess. His criticism, however, was not confined to the rhythmic qualities of his style, but was mainly directed to the connection between words and thoughts. After he had written his celebrated Essay (originally a sermon) on the Evils of Popular Ignorance he thus describes his process of rewriting it for the press.

"I have been confounded to find how much absolutely *must* be altered in almost every page; partly to make the general drift direct and obvious, partly in making the sentences individually clear and intelligible, partly in making the relation and junctures of the thoughts more correct and strict, partly in compressing the language, and I might say, partly many things more. All these matters of process I have found on my hands at once, in paragraph after paragraph, with only here and there, very rarely, a bit of clear ground of the extent of two or three sentences. I have fretted and wondered, but this was of no use; there was nothing for it but to *work*. It would not do to say, It shall even go as it is. I knew the captiousness of readers, and the spite of critics too well for that. And for the thing itself, independently of these considerations, it was desirable not to let anything go defective and wrong, if it were possible to set it right; which I never despair of being able to effect in the long run, though at first I cannot at all see or guess how."[2]

He describes his method of preparing the Essay for the second edition thus: "My principle of proceeding was to treat no page, sentence, or word, with the smallest ceremony; but to hack, split, twist, prune, pull up by the roots, or practise any other severity on whatever I did not like. The consequence has been alterations to the amount very likely of several thousands. — It is a sweet luxury, this book-making; for I dare say I

[1] In a short time after its publication thirty thousand copies of this work were sold, and in answer to it at least thirty-eight pamphlets and books, besides thousands of newspaper essays, were published. Such men as Thomas Paine, Sir James Mackintosh, Dr. Priestley, and Dr. Price, who were the prominent antagonists of Mr. Burke, might have more nearly equalled him in impressing the public mind, if they had more nearly equalled him in the pains-taking of their composition.

[2] Life and Correspondence of John Foster, Vol. ii. p. 33.

could point out scores of sentences *each* one of which has cost me *several hours* of the utmost exertion of my mind to put it in the state in which it now stands, after putting it in several other forms, to each one of which I saw some precise objection, which I could, at the time, have very distinctly assigned. And in truth, there are hundreds of them to which I could make objections as they *now* stand, but I did not know how to hammer them into a better form."[1]

c. There is danger that this plan will encourage ambition and an effort to compose great sermons. From the earliest period of the church men who preached well have been accused of an undue desire of fame; and men who preached ill have been tempted to make the envious accusation. If a man becomes popular by his fervid spirit, by his manifestations of Christian joy or faith, there will be men whose popularity is eclipsed by him, and who will charge him with a love of display. A man may strive after excellence without any undue love of praise. We know the fact that one person is inclined to ambition, another to envy, and a third to envy and indolence united. There is a tendency to regard the desire of distinction as the greater sin, and laziness as the smaller. But what mortal can measure the sins of his fellow mortals? It is an evil thing to aim at the writing of great sermons; and is there no harm in being willing to write small ones? When President Kirkland was asked why he awarded college honors to his pupils, he answered: "I employ the devil of ambition to drive out the devil of laziness." We need not attempt, however, to make Satan cast out Satan. A man who is fit to be a minister will try to avoid both evils. He will aim to write a sermon which is as worthy of the theme as he can well make it, and he will be humbled in detecting the inferiority of his performance to his standard.[2] Pride is a weed that often grows, like other

[1] Life and Correspondence of John Foster, Vol. ii. pp. 13, 14.

[2] "In all the liberal and ingenious arts, in painting, in poetry, in music, in eloquence, in philosophy, the great artist feels always the real imperfection of his own best works, and is more sensible than any man how much they fall short of that ideal perfection of which he has formed some conception, which he imitates as well as he can, but which he despairs of ever equalling. It is the inferior artist only who is ever perfectly satisfied with his own perform-

weeds, in the poorest soil. The most careless preacher may be the proudest. The most painstaking writer has too high an ideal to feel flattered by any of his performances. Sounding brass often attracts more attention than solid gold. Speaking of his sermon on the Discouragements and Supports of the Christian Minister, Robert Hall says: "The reason of the sermon not appearing sooner has been, principally, an almost uninterrupted struggle of painful discouragement arising from its appearing so contemptible under my hand. The truth is, I am tormented with the desire of writing better than I can, and as this is an obstacle not easily overcome, I am afraid it will never be in my power to write much."[1] Mr. Hall did not leave *many* works, but, in the language of the fable, what he did leave were lions. We do not blame the minister who, addressing the ignorant, goes out of his way to find plain and homely language for them. Why should we condemn him, then, for selecting choice language for the learned and refined? Is not the truth noble enough to allow a noble style of treating it, or beautiful enough to warrant a graceful style?

d. There is danger that a man will spend in writing sermons the time which he may more usefully spend in writing different essays for the press. Matthew Henry, Thomas Scott, Albert Barnes, may gain in composing commentaries a better discipline than they could secure in writing sermons. Few preachers, however, come up to the standard of these men. Besides, there is a unique advantage derivable from the composition of sermons. Their style is not abstract, like the style of an academic text-book; and not crisp and curt, like the style of many newspapers. If a preacher do not

ances. Boileau used to say that no great man was ever completely satisfied with his own works. His acquaintance, Santeuil (a writer of Latin verses and who, on account of that schoolboy accomplishment, had the weakness to fancy himself a poet), assured him that he himself was always completely satisfied with *his* own. Boileau replied, with perhaps an arch ambiguity, that he certainly was the only great man that ever was so." — Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, Part vi. Sect. iii.

[1] Works, iii. p. 240.

study the methods of thought and expression peculiar to the pulpit, and if his discipline in writing be limited to philosophical or historical essays, or fictitious tales for the press, he may contract certain faults which will vitiate the style of his sermons. A celebrated clergyman in one of his most impressive volumes, says: "As every man finds that the hardest knots he has to chop through are those which have been waiting in his own wood-shed while easier work was done, so it proved now, that the very hardest jobs of all were in some of the home-stations, in breaking up hard-pan which we had been for generations trampling down." The style of this passage is very proper for the volume which it enlivens, but would be far from sustaining the dignity and sobriety of a sermon on the fact that the rejection of truth and resistance of right motives tend to harden the heart.

e. There is danger that a minister writing on this plan will neglect his extemporary sermons. The plan admits that he should, in the main, be an extemporaneous preacher, and yet requires him to spend so many of his best hours in writing sermons that he will spend too little of his time in preparing those which are unwritten. The plan, however, is not so self-contradictory as it may at first appear. It does not allow that in writing a minister ceases to prepare himself for extemporizing. The labor on the written discourse gives to the writer both the spirit and the strength, suggests to him themes and plans, for extemporary discourses. All his working on that sermon is, in fact, working on sermons which he never writes. A preacher may say of an unwritten sermon, "I have spent a year upon it"; for it may be the result of writing a dozen or a score of other sermons. As that man is most willing to perform new services who has multifarious duties already, so that man may be best fitted to prepare an extemporaneous sermon who is most energetic in elaborating a written one. On *any* plan a minister is commonly disposed to work too little on his unwritten discourses. He will commonly work less if he do not, than if he do keep up the discipline of writing. It is possible, however, that he may labor

too much on his extemporary sermons. Their chief excellence consists in the fact that their words, and many of their illustrations, are suggested in the presence of their hearers, and in the fervor of addressing them. A preacher may devote so much time to what he calls an extemporaneous discourse, that he will impress on his memory not only the thoughts but also the words of it, and will, in fact, preach memoriter, while he pretends to speak extempore.

f. There is danger that the elaborate sermon will fail to make a good impression on the people. A minister should aim not to compose a discourse but to benefit men. The discourse must not be the end to which he looks; that end must be the moral improvement of his hearers. Men who preach memoriter are tempted to think more of their sermon than of their auditors. Men who preach extempore have sometimes more solicitude about the succeeding topic, or the possibilities of their peroration, than about the immortal beings who are affected well or ill by the words uttered. Men who write their sermons are exposed to the same peril: their thoughts may terminate upon the paper before them. But this is one of the reasons for a man's writing elaborately, when he writes at all. He must eradicate the habit of confining his attention to his composition; he must inure himself to the habit of thinking in the ideal presence of his congregation. His labor must be to present his best thoughts in the style best adapted to the sympathies of those who are to hear him.

The style of a writer may be too much that of the books, and too little that of men; too much condensed, too abstract, or too learned. John Edwards says: We read "in the Roman legends that St. Francis preached to beasts and birds, and we are told that he made a great reformation among them; but *we* do not pretend to deal with such creatures, but with those only that are reasonable." "Reason and argument must be made use of, and the more of these the better. The closer this powder is rammed, the greater execution it will do. The sum of this head is this, that a

preacher is to take care that he always speaks good sense and argues closely."[1]

But if a preacher condense his thoughts for a sermon, as he may wisely do for a scientific treatise, he will not make himself intelligible to his hearers, of course not impressive. While admitting the existence of this danger, we may yet see some mitigations of it when we reflect that the process of elaborating a discourse involves a special effort to be perspicuous, and to produce a good moral impression. In point of fact there are more unintelligible trains of thought in extemporaneous than in written sermons. There are apt to be more difficult and obscure words. Mr. Zincke[2] informs us of a preacher whose theme was the "Children of Light," and who intended "to convey the idea that they are the recipients of light. With this in view he said: 'Brethren, to use a philosophic' (he meant a scientific) 'term, you are photogenic.' The word was taken from the walls of a lucifer-match manufactory in Mile End, which is seen from the Great Eastern railway; where, however, whether correctly or not, it means exactly the reverse of what the preacher supposed, being applied there to the production, not the reception, of light." A careful writer of sermons would exclude such obscure and pedantic expressions. "We need all our learning," says Usher, "to make things plain." Another fact must be remembered. If the elaborate sermon fail to exert a good influence on the more ignorant, it may be the very sermon needed for the more controlling minds of the congregation. They, as well as the poor, must have their "word in season." Still further, a discourse often appears to produce no effect when it does produce a great one. There is one influence of "a rushing, mighty wind," and an equal influence of a "still, small voice." The labored sermon clears the field of rocks and stumps, ploughs the ground and harrows it, and thus fits it for the seed which otherwise

[1] Works, Vol. i. pp. 216, 217.

[2] Treatise on Extempore Preaching (American ed.), p. 84.

would have fallen on unfruitful soil.[1] In the fourteenth chapter of Dr. Edward Payson's Memoir, he says: "Once in the course of my ministry I made an analysis of all the sermons which I had preached to my people for six months, and embodied it in one sermon, and preached it to them. They were astonished, and I was astonished, at the amount of truth which had been presented to them, and, to human appearance, with very little effect." In the very same chapter he says: "Since the failure of my health, I preach but three sermons in a week — two on the Sabbath and one on Thursday evening. On that evening and on Sabbath morning, I preach without notes, but generally form a skeleton of my sermon. I should like to write more but my health will not permit; and I find that when any good is done it is my extempore sermons which do it." This is not certain. The discourses uttered extempore may have been the occasion, while those which were elaborated with previous thought and prayer, may have been the cause, of the good done. The extemporary sermon may have been the last blow, but would have been unavailing without the ninety-nine preceding blows upon the rock. One preacher during his lengthened pastorate may have delivered many thoughtful discourses the effects of which were too still to attract the notice of the noisy crowd; but his successor flourishes in comparatively superficial sermons which are attended with an unquestioned good result. This result would not have followed the weaker discourses, if they had not been preceded by the stronger.

2. There is another method of writing, which is a modification of the method just described: Not the whole but portions of a sermon may be written in a preacher's most elaborate style. For some men and some themes this modification may have very peculiar advantages. Certain parts of the sermon may not need to be carefully elaborated.

[1] The most useful of Dr. Wayland's sermons has probably been that on "The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise;" but of this sermon when first preached he remarked (being misled by appearances): "It was a complete failure. It fell perfectly dead." — Wayland's Memoir, Vol. i. p. 165.

They may be more effective, if the language in which they are clothed be suggested by the visible presence of a congregration. A preacher, therefore, often writes carefully the expositions of his text; the propositions of his discourse, and the arguments for them; the objections and the answers to them; those parts of his practical appeal in which he may be exposed to a charge of personalities or of self-contradictions. It has been a favorite method of New England divines to preach on the same Sabbath a double sermon, to read in the morning what they called the "body of the discourse," and to deliver extempore in the afternoon what they called the "improvement." By their interest in the written discussion of the morning they were animated for the unwritten appeal of the afternoon. In many instances these practical remarks were committed to paper after they had been delivered extempore, and were at last, given to the public press.

To the method of intermingling written and extemporaneous remarks in the same discourse the following objection has been often made, and is here stated in the language of Dr. James W. Alexander: "The whole train of operations is different in reading or reciting a discourse and in pronouncing it extempore. If I may borrow a figure from engines, the mind is *geared differently*. No man goes from one track to the other without a painful jog at the 'switch.' And this is, I suppose, the reason why Dr. Chalmers, in a passage which I reserve for you, cautions his students against every attempt to mingle reading with free speaking. It is not unlike trying to speak in two languages, which reminds me of what a learned friend once observed to me in Paris concerning the Cardinal Mezzofanti; that this wonderful linguist, when he left one of his innumerable tongues to speak in another, always made a little pause and wet his lips, as if to make ready for going over all at once. It requires the practice of years to dovetail an extemporaneous paragraph gracefully into a written sermon."[1] What is lost, however, in grace is gained in variety. The transition from written

[1] Thoughts on Preaching, p. 142.

to free speech may startle by its abruptness, but it may startle some from somnolence. Many writers introduce extemporaneous remarks for no other reason than to arouse their hearers from that state of listlessness or reverie, which has been encouraged by the uninterrupted flow of "graceful paragraphs."

3. Another method of preparing a discourse is the method of what is called easy writing; the committing of one's thoughts to paper without any or without much premeditation. The writing may be strictly extemporaneous, or it may be intermediate between the extemporaneous and the elaborate composition. When we speak here of elaborate composition, we include not merely the mental exercise which the author goes through in penning his discourse, but also the hard work which precedes his use of the pen. He may have so carefully arranged his thoughts and selected his words that when he commits them to paper he may work easily and rapidly. When the poet Wordsworth had inwardly digested as many lines as his memory could carry he committed them to paper by the hands of an amanuensis. He cannot be said, therefore, to have written extempore nor easily; rather, he wrote memoriter and after careful thought.[1]

[1] Wherever this poet went he seems to have been preparing himself for his literary labors: "He had taken the Allfoxden House, near Stowey, for one year (during the minority of the heir), and the reason why he was refused a continuance, by the ignorant man who had the letting of it, arose (as Mr. Coleridge informed me) from a whimsical cause, or rather a series of causes. The wiseacres of the village had, it seemed, made Mr. Wordsworth the subject of their serious conversation. One said that 'he had seen him wander about by night, and look rather strangely at the moon! and then he roamed over the hills like a partridge.' Another said: 'He had heard him mutter, as he walked, in some outlandish brogue that nobody could understand.' Another said: 'It's useless to talk, Thomas, I think he is what people call a wise man (a conjurer).' Another said: 'You are every one of you wrong; I know what he is: we have all met him tramping away toward the sea; would any man in his senses take all that trouble to look at a parcel of water? I think he carries on a snug business in the smuggling line, and in these journeys is on the lookout for some *wet* cargo.' Another very significantly said: 'I know that he has got a private still in his cellar, for I once passed his house, at a little better than a hundred yards distance, and I could smell the spirits, as plain as an ashen fagot at Christmas.' Another said: 'However that was, he is surely a desperd French Jacobin for he

But what men technically denominate easy writing is that which excludes the severe preliminary study, and is either extemporaneous writing, or some degree of approximation toward it. On this method we may remark:

A. In the general, the more nearly a writer approaches to the elaborate method, so much the more fully does he gain the advantages and expose himself to the evils of it; and the further he recedes from this method, so much the less of its advantages does he gain and so much the more does he escape from some of its evils.

B. The easier the writing is, so much the less useful and the more hurtful it may be to the writer. The less useful; for if he can write extempore, he can (exceptions aside) learn to speak extempore, and by speaking extempore he can avoid the waste of his time and health in bending over his writing-desk, and can devote himself to such reading as will be more profitable than his easy writing. The more hurtful; for by this extemporary penmanship he encourages that species of mental indolence which consists in combining a semblance of activity with an abstinence from hard work.

C. The easier the writing is, so much the less useful it may be to those who persevere in listening to it. It has damped the ardor of the man who speaks; for he utters words which have lost their first glow, he utters them with a languor, like that in which he penned them; he wrote them when he was thinking of his pen and ink rather than of his parishioners; and as Sheridan profanely said that "easy writing makes hard reading," so it may be emphatically said that easy writing makes hard hearing and facile sleeping. Dr. Wayland remarks: "Men seem to suppose that what is written must, of course, be sound sense. I confess I have not always found it so; and I have been sometimes tempted to ask: would a preacher be willing to look his audience in

is so silent and dark that nobody ever heard him say one word about politics.' And thus these ignoramuses drove from their village a greater ornament than will ever again be found amongst them." — Cottle's Recollections of S. T. Coleridge, Vol. I. pp. 319, 320.

the face and utter such common-place truisms as he delivers from a manuscript, looking on his paper"?[1]

The habit of easy writing is thus characterized by Thomas Carlyle:

"In the way of writing no great thing was ever, or will ever be, done with ease, but with difficulty! Let ready writers with any faculty in them lay this to heart. Is it with ease, or not with ease, that a man shall *do his best* in any shape; above all, in this shape, justly named, of 'soul's travail,' working in the deep places of thought, embodying the true out of the obscure and possible, environed on all sides with the uncreated false? Not so, now or at any time. The experience of all men belies it; the nature of things contradicts it. Virgil and Tacitus, were they ready writers? — Shakespeare, we may fancy, wrote with rapidity, but not till he had thought with intensity. Long and sore had this man thought, as the seeing eye may discern well, and had dwelt and wrestled amid dark pains and throes; though his great soul is silent about all that. It was for him to write rapidly at fit intervals, being ready to do it. And herein truly lies the secret of the matter: such swiftness of mere writing, after due energy of preparation, is doubtless the right method; the hot furnace having long worked and simmered, let the pure gold flow out at one gush. It was Shakespeare's plan — no easy writer he, or he had never been a Shakespeare. Neither was Milton one of the mob of gentlemen that write with ease; he did not attain Shakespeare's faculty, one perceives, of even writing fast *after* long preparation, but struggled while he wrote. Goethe, also, tells us he 'had nothing sent him in his sleep'; no page of his but he knew well how it came there. It is reckoned to be the best prose, accordingly, that has been written by any modern. Schiller, as an unfortunate, unhealthy man, 'könnte nie fertig werden, never could get done.' The noble genius of him struggled not wisely, but too well, and wore his life itself heroically out. Or did Petrarch write easily? Dante sees himself growing grey over his Divine Comedy, in stern, solitary death-wrestle with it, to prevail over it, and do it, if his uttermost faculty may; hence too it is done and prevailed over, and the fiery life of it endures forevermore among men. No; creation, one would think, cannot be easy. Your Jove has severe pains and fire-flames in the head out of which an armed Pallas is struggling! As for manufacture, that is a different matter, and may become easy or not easy, according as it is taken up. Yet of manufacture, too, the general truth is that, given the manufacturer, it will be worthy in direct proportion to the pains bestowed on it, and worthless always, or nearly so, with no pains. Cease, therefore, O ready writer, to brag openly of thy rapidity and facility; to thee (if thou be in the manufacturing line), it is a benefit, an increase of wages; but to me it

[1] The Ministry of the Gospel, v. 12.

is sheer loss, worsening of my pennyworth. Why wilt thou brag of it to me? Write easily, by steam, if thou canst contrive it, and canst sell it; but hide it like virtue."[1]

We do not deny that there are exceptional cases, in which a man may be justified in writing easily what but for some economical reason ought to be spoken extempore. Dean Stanley says of Dr. Arnold's sermons: "However much they may have occupied his previous thoughts, they were written almost invariably between the morning and afternoon service; and, though often under such stress of time that the ink of the last sentence was hardly dry when the chapel-bell ceased to sound, they contain hardly a single erasure, and the manuscript volumes remain as accessible a treasure to their possessors as if they were printed."[2] Powerful as these sermons were when read, they would have been more powerful, if the man who could write them so rapidly had been able to deliver them without his notes; and, useful as they now are, a smaller number of them would probably be more useful, if the labor which was extended over the many had been concentrated on the few. Some aged clergymen have left at their death five or six thousand manuscript sermons, all faithfully written out. If all the care expended on the thousands had been devoted to as many hundreds of sermons, they might now be of some use.

One of the formidable arguments against written sermons has originated from this fatal facility of composition. "A written preparation is a lazy substitute for that severe mental effort which would be necessary for extemporizing." "The habit of constant writing without much of any excitement" tends "to produce tameness of thought."[3] This objection is removed by the plan of elaborate composition as described in § 2. I. 1. An argument for that plan, is that it combines the excitement of extemporaneous with the accuracy of written discourse.

[1] Westminster Review, Vol. xxviii. pp. 338, 339.

[2] Memoir of Arnold, chap. iii.

[3] Quarterly Christian Spectator, Vol. v. p. 535.