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ARTICLE VI.

THE THREE FUNDAMENTAL METHODS OF PREACHING.
— THE PUBLIC READING OF SERMONS, AND THE
PREACHING OF THEM MEMORITER.

BY EDWARDS A. PARK.

[Continued from Vol. xxviii. p. 739.]

§ 3. *The Reading of Sermons in the Pulpit.*

THE plan of elaborate writing, as recommended in a preceding Section,¹ implies that the majority of a preacher's discourses should be delivered extempore. Comparatively few of his sermons will be written. The fact that these are written, however, does not necessarily imply that they are to be read. Not all of them should be. In one of his familiar conversations Mr. Choate remarked: "There is an anecdote of Hamilton, illustrating what I have said of the value of writing as a preparative, in respect to full and deep thought. Hamilton made the greatest argument ever uttered in this country. It was on the law of libel, and by it he stamped upon the mind of this country the principle that in an action for libel *the truth*, if uttered without malice, was a justification. Upon the night previous to the argument he *wrote out* every word of it; *then he tore it up*. He was by writing fully prepared; it lay very fully in his mind; and, not to be cramped and fettered by a precise verbal exactness, he tore it to pieces. *Then he spoke and conquered.*"² Several ministers of the gospel have adopted a similar course with their written sermons. They acted on the theory that all their words in the pulpit should be spoken rather than read. Does this theory admit no exceptions?

¹ § 2. 1. All the references in this Article to the preceding Articles of this Series are to the Divisions, not the pages.

² Parker's Reminiscences, pp. 252, 253.

I. The reading of an entire sermon, or of parts of a sermon, in the pulpit should not be indiscriminately condemned.

1. The prospect of preaching an entire discourse from manuscript is an incentive to the careful writing of it. The plan of repeating it memoriter, or of giving it to the press, may be an equal incentive, but in our country, at least, is not so common. On this topic we will assume, for the sake of convenience, that the minister intends to make the most of himself in every sermon which he writes—to task upon it his intellectual and moral powers.¹ His strength comes from his effort to do justice to a great truth. This effort is expended in selecting the best thoughts, arranging them in the best method, and expressing them in the best words. If he expect to utter these words and thoughts as they are adjusted in his study, he will labor to have them just what they should be. If he expect to utter only the substance, and not the words of what he writes, he will defer the perfecting of it until he feels the inspiration of the pulpit. He will not do to-day what he hopes to do better to-morrow. Therefore he jots down rough hints of his ideas, arranges them in an inapposite order, and clothes them in a slovenly attire. He loses, or never gains, the habit of careful writing. It may be that his discourse will have some grand features; but it will be like the statues of Michael Angelo left unfinished. We read of a sculptor elaborating the top and back of the head of a statue which was to adorn the summit of a temple, and when asked why he was so punctilious in finishing the parts which no man would ever see, he replied: “The gods will see them.” Some ministers may be thus conscientious in perfecting what they compose for the sake of the perfection itself; but others need the stimulus of popular criticism to make them careful. They will write loosely, unless they measure their thoughts and words by the standard which they will be expected to reach. Indolence and procrastination must be resisted by various kinds of motive. Nature must become an aid to grace. A good man may be en-

¹ See § 2. 1 above.

couraged to do his duty by the foresight that he will be known to have done it. Even a martyr when in solitude dies with less dignity than when the crowd is around him.

2. The occasional reading of a discourse, or of certain parts of it, gives a needed variety to the services of the pulpit. It is as useful to vary the methods of preaching as to vary the succession of crops in a field. Having delivered several sermons without notes, the minister may well say, with a meaning more literal than that of the apostle: "I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice." Reading from his manuscript the more critical parts of a discourse, he may deliver the less critical parts in free speech. The change *from* the reading will be grateful to some of his hearers; the change from the free speech *to* the reading will be grateful to others; and perhaps both the changes will be grateful to the majority. "Jucundum nihil est, nisi quod reficit varietas." Always it is well to change from good to better; it is not always ill to change from better to good. Jeremy Taylor says: "He that feasts every day feasts no day. Even a perpetual fulness will make you glad to beg pleasure from emptiness, and variety from poverty or a humble table."

3. The occasional reading of a discourse, in whole or in part, adds emphasis to a preacher's words. It is like an impressive intonation or gesture. The mere act of fixing the eye on the manuscript may, in certain exceptional cases, be virtual speech, and synonymous with saying: "On this subject I do not trust myself to extemporaneous thought. I have weighed my words; you likewise ought to ponder them." This advantage, like the preceding, belongs in a peculiar degree to the reading of *certain* paragraphs or sentences and the free delivery of *other* passages in the same discourse. The reading, because exceptional, awakens the special attention of the hearers. It is a style of elocution which is expressive of an important idea. When Mr. Wirt cited the testimony of a witness, he was wont to take up his paper with much formality, and read to the jury the written

words. In this gesture of holding up his manuscript he virtually said: "You may suspect that in some of my statements I have been inexact; but you cannot suspect me here. I am not trusting to my memory; I wrote the words of the witness precisely as he uttered them; I now read them precisely as I wrote them. You will recognize every word as familiar to you." Why do not other professional men read their words? This question is often asked. They have not the same delicate truths to enforce which the preacher has. Besides, they often do read those words which demand the most punctilious exactness. Lawyers read their most critical sentences. Statesmen read parts of their speeches on the tariff and the finances. Physicians do not abhor written prescriptions.

4. The occasional reading of the whole sermon, or parts of it, may be especially appropriate to certain services of the pulpit.

A. It may be particularly appropriate to the subject and style of the sermon. There is sometimes a solid comfort in listening to a clear, calm discourse read by a sound and discreet thinker. The sense of safety is a real pleasure. When a man is stating grave objections to his doctrine, he seems to be more accurate if he reads the objections than if he repeats them from memory. "Here are the words of the objector. I am not making them up. I am not clothing a civilized opponent with the skin of a wild beast. I take him as he is, and proceed to answer him." A catalogue of biblical names or dates, a nice definition or distinction, a statement which is hazardous although fundamental, a description of future punishment, a sermon which may be suspected of containing personalities or exasperating allusions to political¹ or sectarian strifes may be sometimes more fitly, as well as safely, read than spoken. There are some surgical

¹ A preacher was once accused of denouncing a certain political organization when his manuscript proved that he simply applied, not to the politicians distinctively, but to all unfaithful men of all parties or of no party, the words found in Matt. xxiii. 33. For Robert Hall's method of preaching see § 1. II. above.

operations which a prudent surgeon will not perform without a professional brother by his side. The preacher's manuscript is a faithful mentor to him. After a "minister of the people" had given an extemporaneous description of the atonement, he uttered in his closing prayer the just, but ungraceful confession: "Thou knowest that thy servant has marred and mauled this precious doctrine." Pastor Harms of Hermannsburg held his closed Bible in his hand, as he stood before the pulpit and recited verse by verse of the Psalm which was the lesson of the day, and commented richly on each verse as he repeated it from memory. He then opened the Bible, and read closely and consecutively all the verses which he had recited and explained. The reading of the verses attracted more attention than the recitation of them.¹ It was an appropriate token of reverence for the Word of God. Those ministers who are the most expert in extemporaneous speech illustrate the importance of occasional reading, when they make argumentative (not illustrative) quotations from the Bible. They turn over the leaves of the sacred volume, find (sometimes in a manner too demonstrative) the desired proof-texts, recite them with the eye fastened upon them. The passages might have been recited memoriter; but the reading of them is more fitting, more expressive of respect for the inspired word, more apt to dispel the drowsiness of the audience. The testimony of a prophet is to the preacher what the testimony of a court-witness is to a lawyer. When Mr. Webster, in the Senate of the United States, uttered his solemn protest against the "Expunging Resolutions," he held up his manuscript, read it deliberately and with great majesty. His hearers felt that he was performing an act of historical importance, and was uttering words not only for his contemporaries, but also for posterity. The importance of reading sentences or paragraphs is proportioned to their critical or adventurous nature and the exactness with which they have been elaborated.

¹ Whenever the Bible is read in the pulpit, the look and tones of a reader are far more appropriate than those of a declaimer. The pastor need not make gestures when the apostle is speaking.

B. The reading from a manuscript may be sometimes peculiarly appropriate to the relation subsisting between the preacher and his audience. He may be called to address his superiors on an occasion which demands instructive words. The young man preaching a *Concio ad Clerum*, addressing the teachers and students of the university, the state or national legislature, discoursing in a style necessarily didactic, may depart from his usual method of extemporaneous speech, and betake himself, not slavishly, to his manuscript. Thus he exhibits a becoming respect for his auditors. They may be accustomed to hear discourses read, may be prejudiced against the other modes of preaching, and may feel the indignity of being instructed extempore by a comparative novice, who might well sit at their feet. Even so fluent an orator as Rufus Choate was accustomed to exhibit, if not to use, his manuscript when he delivered a lyceum lecture; for he regarded the lecture as designed to inform and instruct men who are already intelligent; and therefore he considered himself as violating the rules of decorum if he should appear to be giving them new ideas out of his own unaided resources.¹ Some lecturers and some doctors of divinity have pretended to be reading when they were extemporizing; and if "hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue," these pretences indicate that there is some virtue in reading

¹ Some recent reformers of the pulpit are contending that the occupant of it, instead of discussing the truths of theology, ought to discuss themes of juridical and political science, the principles of casuistry which are to regulate the business "of a broker, or lawyer, or merchant, or railroad man, or banker, or commission merchant." To understand these principles the preacher must have not only "considerable knowledge of human nature, but a wide practical acquaintance with the political economy and customs of many trades and manufactures and of the money-market, and a fair acquaintance with the practice of the courts and with legal history and legal principles," etc. etc. But it is certain that if a clergyman devote himself to the study of these intricate themes he cannot devote himself to the study of theological truth; and if he attempts to instruct merchants, manufacturers, bankers, lawyers, railroad officials, in the details of their respective employments, he cannot safely trust himself to unwritten remarks. Such remarks will be often inaccurate; and the laymen who are reproved by him for their misdemeanors will convict him of ignorance as well as condemn him for slander, and the church will be converted into a bear-garden.

a discourse. There are, then, different kinds of exception to the half-forgotten verses :

“ In point of sermons, 'tis confess,
Our English clergy make the best ;
And, what seems paradox at first,
They make the best, and preach the worst.”

C. The reading of his sermon may be sometimes peculiarly appropriate to the mental or physical state of the preacher. Those who know his condition may be in a painful tremor for him, if he have no manuscript. His health may be such on the morning of the Sabbath, his avocations may have been such during the preceding week, his intellect and his sensibilities may be so unaccountably disordered, that if he speak extempore his thoughts and words will drag, like Pharaoh's chariot-wheels in the mud. Many an aged divine can address an audience in written words more effectively than in what was once indeed *free* speech but is now forced and hesitating. After a preacher had committed his manuscript sermon to the flames in order to force himself into the extemporaneous method, and after he had proved his success on days when he was at the heights, but his want of success on days when he was at the depths, — for he was a man of moods, and shone sometimes as a merely flickering light — he said : “ If I had kept my sermons they might have illumined my people when my days were dark.” It is sometimes safe, at other times unsafe, to burn the boats when the river is crossed. A few years after the first Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had removed from the pastorate of a church in the country to that of a church in the town, he put into the fire nearly all the sermons which he had written during his country pastorate. They had been composed with great care ; but he said : “ I found that I was making crutches of them.” A crutch is hurtful to a strong man ; but who is certain that he will not in time become lame, and will not find it better to walk leaning than to fall down ?¹

¹ We must confess, however, that Dr. Worcester's sermons, although written

Not only when the preacher is in a state of lassitude, but also when in a state of tumultuous excitement, it may be more fitting for him to read a sermon, than trust himself to his fresh emotions. He may be called to deliver a funeral discourse over the remains of a beloved friend; to speak on some recent casualty, which overpowers both himself and his hearers; to preach when his thoughts are drowned in the tide of his feelings; and when he is in danger of losing his power to articulate, or else of uttering incoherent rhapsodies. A manuscript may then save him from sudden shocks of feeling; it may repress new and unhealthy agitations, and guide him over the danger of extravagant remarks, as a bridge would conduct him over a swollen torrent. It may also preserve his auditors from such harassing fears for him as will incapacitate them for heeding his instructions.

D. The reading of a sermon may be especially appropriate to the constitution and general character of a clergyman. Every plant should bring forth fruit after its kind. We should not complain of the fig-tree for not bearing olive berries, nor of the vine for not bearing figs. Every soul, too, must bring forth its fruits according to its own make. Its peculiar constitution is the peculiar call of God to the soul's peculiar form of duties. His call we must respect. A special facility of speech is an indication that the possessor of it should speak extempore. In some rare cases, however, his facility is fatal. The pages of a written sermon are needed now and then to compress his loquacity, as the banks of a river turn a waste of waters into a fertilizing stream. When he occasionally reads a discourse, his hearers expect an unwonted concentration of thought and pay a special heed to him. Unlike a lawyer the pastor speaks habitually on the same class of topics. Hence he is more exposed than

laboriously, were written with too little research. During the first year and a half of his pastorate he had composed a hundred and thirty-four; and during the first two years and a half, two hundred and twenty-four, some of them double although numbered as single, and thus he reached the average of nearly two sermons every week. See *Life and Labors of Samuel Worcester, D.D.*, Vol. i. pp. 206, 207, 394.

a lawyer to fall into a hackneyed strain of address. The occasional reading of a sermon which was written with a design to variegate and freshen his style checks his tendency to excessive repetition. On the other hand, not many, but a few, men are utterly incapable of acquiring a facility in extemporaneous remark. Reading their sermons, they may do eminent service in the pulpit; attempting free speech they perform the best service when they cease from the attempt. Their thoughts are too weighty for unprovided words; their feelings too resistless for connected utterance. As there are some men who cannot by any amount of labor acquire the needed readiness of extemporaneous preaching, so there are some who can acquire it, but not without an unwise expenditure of labor. These few men can accomplish better results if they will apply their toil to other pursuits. They are affluent spirits, and it is difficult to turn their ingots of gold into small coin. We feel that certain masters of thought are in an unfitting position, and they work under a needless disadvantage when they hesitate for the precise word, recall a phrase after they have pained themselves in the selection of it, are so conscientious in their scholarship that they speak with stammering accent, and so fastidious in their taste that they blush in confusion at the verbal infelicities which they are the only persons to detect. In their private study they see with clearness and write with power; but in the presence of unlettered hearers they are like a blind man grinding in the prison-house of the Philistines. They speak with the greater ease, because their manuscript is a kind of surety for them, and the intelligent hearer has more of a pleasant sympathy *with*, than of a painful sympathy *for* them.

Perhaps Bishop Sanderson was one of these exceptional men. When he was Chaplain in ordinary to Charles the First, the king said of him: "I carry my ears to hear other preachers, but I carry my conscience to hear Mr. Sanderson." This preacher to the conscience had his own sphere of usefulness; he ought not to have abandoned the pulpit, of which

he was a kind of Doric ornament; yet his sermons, as Izaak Walton says, "were the less valued because he read them, which he was forced to do; for though he had an extraordinary memory (even the art of it), yet he was punished with such an innate invincible fear and bashfulness, that his memory was wholly useless as to the repetition of his sermons, so as he had writ them; which gave occasion to say, when some of them were first printed and exposed to censure (which was in the year 1632), that 'the best sermons that were ever read were never preached.'" ¹

It is often said that Dr. Chalmers, also, was one of these exceptional men who could have been better employed than in laboring to break himself into the methods of extemporary speech. If he had struggled with more perseverance in disciplining himself for these methods we conjecture that he would have improved not only his style of writing but also his style of thinking, have mitigated his prolixity of repetition, and abridged his cumbrous and overladen sentences. On the whole, however, the world is perhaps the gainer by his having employed his energies in writing, rather than in extemporizing, his discourses. The record of his extemporary efforts is a suggestive one. In the year 1813 he was visited by Andrew Fuller, who remarked after leaving the Kilmany Manse: "If that man [Chalmers] would but throw away his papers in the pulpit, he might be king of Scotland." The conversation of Fuller produced a great effect on Chalmers, who wrote in his Journal: "Let me henceforth attempt to extemporize from the pulpit; let me decline all engagements; let me redeem time, and give a steady and systematic direction to my efforts." He made the attempt. His biographer says:

"He read, reflected, jotted down the outlines of a discourse, and then went to the pulpit trusting to the suggestion of the moment for the phraseology he should employ; but he found that the ampler his materials

¹ Old English Prose Authors, Vol. vi. p. 252. Walton's account is the more remarkable, as it is said that Bishop Sanderson had committed to memory all the Odes of Horace, the Offices of Cicero, and a considerable portion of Juvenal and Persius.

were, the more difficult was the utterance. His experience in this respect he used to compare to the familiar phenomenon of a bottle with water in it turned suddenly upside down: the nearly empty bottle discharges itself fluently and at once; the nearly full one labors in the effort, and lets out its contents with jerks and large explosions and sudden stops, as if choked by its own fulness. So it was with Mr. Chalmers in his first efforts at extempore preaching. A twofold impediment lay in the way of his success. It was not easy to light at once upon words or phrases which could give anything like adequate conveyance to convictions so intense as his were; and he could not be satisfied, and with no comfort could he proceed, while an interval so wide remained between the truth as it was felt and the truth as his words had represented it. Over and over again was the effort made to find powerful enough and expressive enough phraseology. But even had this difficulty not existed — even though he had been content with the first suggested words, — he never could be satisfied till he had exhausted every possible way of setting forth the truth, so as to force or to win for it an entrance into the minds of his hearers. So very eager was he at this period of his ministry to communicate the impressions which glowed so fervidly within his own heart, that even when he had a written sermon to deliver, he often, as if dissatisfied with all that he had said, would try at the close to put the matter in simpler words, or present it in other lights, or urge it in more direct and affectionate address. But when the restraints of a written composition were thrown away, when not at the close only, but from the very beginning of his address, this powerful impulse operated, he often found that, instead of getting over the ground marked down in his study to be traversed, the whole allotted time was consumed while yet he was laboring away with the first or second preliminary idea.¹

5. It is possible to read a discourse in a manner both more natural and impressive than the prevalent manner of men who preach extempore or memoriter. The advocates of the extemporaneous method are apt to compare a preacher who reads ill with one who extemporizes well, and to infer that the extemporaneous method is always the best. It *can* be the best, but in fact is not uniformly so. The opponents of the extemporaneous method are prone to compare the preacher who extemporizes ill with one who reads well, and to infer that the method of reading is always the preferable one. It is not so always, nor generally. Extemporaneous preachers, however, do so often neglect their gift that even

¹ Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers, Vol. i, pp. 336-339.

a reader *can* enter the kingdom of eloquence before them. What men commonly call the "preacher's tone" characterizes a large class of extemporizers. They, and also memoriter speakers are often so confused, or so much absorbed in thinking of their words rather than of their themes, that they lose their naturalness of voice and gesture. They hesitate, and keep their eyes directed to the ceiling or a post; while the reader need not hesitate, as his eyes are fastened to his manuscript. He *can* be exempt from all fear of losing his train of thought, or of verbal lapses, and *can* be more free in his speech than *are* many timorous extemporizers. A Vandenhoff can read Shakespeare more effectively than most men *do* recite it memoriter.¹ Mr. Emerson can repeat his notes of a lecture more impressively than most men do lecture without notes. "But this," you reply, "is saying very little." True, but it is saying enough to dissuade a religious scholar from refusing to preach on the ground of his inability to extemporize. Such a man as Joseph Butler² may be encouraged to enter the ministry by the fact that it is even *easier* to attain the power of reading a discourse well

¹ When this accomplished elocutionist "was reading from a scene in Byron's 'Cain,' and picturing the frightful remorse of the murderer, the dreadful truth of Abel's death flashed upon his mind, and in an agony of soul he summoned around him, to witness the awful deed, his father, mother, and wife, with the thrilling exclamation — 'Father! mother! Ada! Zillah! come hither! — Death is in the world!' This passage was given with an energy of truth so fearful as to send a thrill of horror to the very soul; and one young man who had been gazing intently and kindling to a pitch of uncontrollable excitement, as the last clause — 'Death is in the world' — was uttered, fell senseless to the floor!" "As to my personal experience," says a celebrated rhetorician, "I shall frankly tell you what I know to be a fact. I have tried both ways; I continued long in the practise of repeating, and was even thought (if people did not very much deceive me) to succeed in it; but I am absolutely certain that I can give more energy, and preserve the attention of the hearers better, to what I read, than ever it was in my power to do to what I repeated."—Dr. Campbell's Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence.

² There must be various gradations of ministers, as there are different hierarchies in heaven. Alluding to Bishop Butler, Mainwaring says: "I cannot but wish, that, as there is so great an abundance of the practical sort, some sermons were written chiefly with a view to *readers*, and those, too, persons of an improved taste and cultivated minds."

than of uttering it well without reading. This is only asserting that it is easier to read a sermon than to compose it while uttering it, or to retain the whole of it in the memory while each part of it is spoken.

II. The reading of sermons in the pulpit may be more or less useful as it is more or less intermingled with extempore and memoriter preaching. — Not what a man can do, but what he will do; not what is abstractedly the best method of preaching, but what is the best method that will probably be adopted — this is the practical question. The truth is, that careful writing may facilitate natural reading, and natural reading may help to turn extemporary singing into speech. Varieties in the methods of elocution improve each other. Throughout a single sermon a reader may keep his mind in a fit state for extemporizing, and may intercalate remarks which suddenly occur to him. Thus he borrows aid from the extemporary method. He may so familiarize himself with his manuscript that a glance at a single word will remind him of an entire sentence, and thus he borrows from the memoriter method. There is a free reading, as well as free speaking; the reading with supplements and omissions; the reading of what is half remembered; and this results most easily from the practice of preaching some sermons with, and some without, notes.

“What a lawyer was spoiled when Davies took the pulpit,” was said of the man so often called “the prince of American preachers.” He was indebted for this title to his habit of intermingling the three fundamental methods of discourse. It is said in his biography:

“He wrote and prepared his sermons with great care.” They “were printed [verbatim] from the very manuscripts which he used in the pulpit.” “But his memory was such, and the frequent use he was permitted to make of the same sermon rendered it so familiar, that he was never trammelled in his delivery. Though this was his common practice, yet he would sometimes extemporize to very happy effect. One of his confidential elders once said to him: ‘Mr. Davies, how is it that you, who are so well-informed on all theological subjects, and can express yourself with

so much ease and readiness upon any subject and in any company, and have language so at your command, should think it necessary to prepare and write your sermons with so much care, and take your notes into the pulpit, and make such constant use of them? Why do you not, like many other preachers, oftener preach extempore?' Mr. Davies's reply was this: 'I always thought it to be a most awful thing to go into the pulpit, and there speak nonsense in the name of God. Besides, when I have an opportunity of preparing, and neglect to do so, I am afraid to look up to God for assistance; for that would be to ask him to countenance my negligence. But when I am evidently called upon to preach, and have had no opportunity to make suitable preparation, if I see it clearly to be my duty, I am not afraid to try to preach extempore, and I can with confidence look up to God for assistance.'"¹

III. The practice of reading sermons in the pulpit cannot be adopted as the general one without lessening the preacher's influence.

1. It requires too much writing — too much for the health of the writer, who, bending too long over his writing-desk, induces the pectoral disorders so detrimental to popular eloquence; too much for his mental and moral progress, which, as we have seen in a previous Section,² requires "*non multa, sed multum*"; too much for his rhetorical improvement, which is accelerated by the thoughtful writing of a few sermons, as it is retarded by the careless writing of many, and which demands a skill in extemporary eloquence as a stimulus to the exact and energetic study of a written discourse. Robert Hall is credited with the saying that 'a genius can write one sermon in a month; a man of talent, one in a fortnight; an ordinary man, one in a week; a fool, two in a week.' That 'one sermon in a month' would not be a finished one, unless the writer were disciplining himself, meanwhile, in extemporary address.

2. If the reading be energetic, it is apt to impair the vision of the preacher; especially when his manuscript, written in haste, is in a corresponding degree illegible, and when his pulpit is darkened by clouds or by covered or painted win-

¹ Dr. Hill's Account, in Barnes's Life and Times of Pres. Davies, pp. 31, 32.

² § 2. 1.

dows ; it is also apt to injure his vocal organs, especially when he adopts the constrained position of a close reader, and his larynx is compressed and tortured by his bent form.

3 The public reading of his sermons disqualifies the minister for the full use of his corporeal powers. These may be pictures of the truth which he exhibits. He may illustrate his thoughts by them, as by diagrams. The old description of a preacher is : " *Vivida in eo omnia fuerunt ; vivida vox, vividi oculi, vividi manus, gestus omnes vividi.*" But the reader must sometimes turn his lively eye upon his papers, must employ his lively hand in holding or turning them, must give his head in part to his chirography, and not wholly to his auditors. He speaks of the stars of heaven while he is watching his interlined phrases. He exclaims : " Behold the morning sun," while he bends over a blotted paragraph. The face is the speech of the body, and the eye is the emphasis of the face ; and when this is habitually concealed from the spectators, they lose the full meaning of what they hear.

4. Hence we remark that the uniform habit of reading sermons degenerates easily into an inapposite, stupid, vicious delivery. We must remember that we are concerned with not only the powers of a man, but also his prevailing tendencies. While we admit that a preacher who never extemporizes *can* read his discourse so easily and naturally that it may appear to be extemporaneous, we must confess that only a few preachers *will* do so, and still fewer will do so uniformly. Unless a preacher's reading be modified by his extemporaneous addresses, it will, in the general, become inflexible and monotonous. So it has been ; so it is now. " Dull as a parson," " stupid as a sermon," are phrases suggested by the close reading of homilies. It is unfair to adduce extreme instances of vicious elocution, as if they were inevitable to a reader ; but it is fair to mention them as illustrating the tendencies of his habit. He must, for example, keep his place in the manuscript, and therefore keep his eye or his finger, or both, on the wrong object.

A few years ago an excellent writer was reading in his pulpit the words: "Let justice be done, though the heavens fall." When he spoke of the heavens he made a sweeping gesture, as if he would brush the skies away, with his left hand; but he kept a sharp lookout for his papers; he kept his right hand fixed upon them, and seemed to feel that what he had written must be held fast, whatever became of the heavens. Since the preceding sentences were penned, a fine scholar was reading in the pulpit an exhortation to instant repentance. But he must turn over the leaves of his manuscript, and, while he was saying: "My heart's desire is to see," he turned over two leaves instead of one, lost his place — what was he desiring to see? — "you instantly," he added; but the critical instant had already fled; and then, finding the right page, he subjoined, "begin a new course of life." Did any man ever change his course under the influence of such a broken sentence? While the president of a New England college, was preaching on the text, "Take heed how ye hear," he read, in a fixed monotone, the following sentence: "If a man should knock at your window in the night, and cry, 'fire, fire; the building is on fire, be quick, no time to be lost,' would you say, 'what a voice that man has, I do not like his tones, he does not make graceful gestures'?" This was the monotonous question. The honest answer must have been: "Yes; if a man should really come to my window at dead of night, and hold the president's paper in his hand, and read the president's identical words, 'fire, fire,' with no other tones and gestures than those which the president employed, we should either repeat the president's criticisms upon the man, or else infer that the man was in sport, if not insane." It is easy to say that each of these faults is an abuse of the reading method, and may be avoided. This is true. It is not so much the actual fault, as the tendency to it, which we now consider.

5. Hence we add that the practice of reading sermons, if it be uniform, is liable to deadening forms of abuse. Is not every other method, if uniform, liable to perversion? Yes;

therefore the intermingling of different methods is the safest. Not only is the habitual reader apt to be somnolent and somnific in his manner, but also inopportune in his matter. He fails to speak the word in season. He fails to gain the power of adapting his paragraphs, written in one mood, to the exigencies of his hearers, who are in a different mood. The children whispering in the gallery above, their fathers sleeping in the pews below, a sudden commotion in the sanctuary, a rumored casualty in the streets, may render some of his written sentences obsolete, and may require some fresh words fitly spoken. Although he may not lapse so far as to express gratitude for the fine weather while it is storming, or joy in the stillness of the Sabbath while it is thundering, yet he often expresses thoughts which he would modify if he could extemporize. His slight infelicities are perhaps unnoticed; but they are felt; and sometimes he falls into extravagances of unfitness. He writes a sermon at the seaside, and years afterward preaches it in the heart of the country, where he endeavors to dissuade his hearers from usages which are unknown to them. He exhorts young men against wasting their time at the confectionary; for his exhortation was written long ago in a village where there really was such a tempting institution. One of the brightest of living scholars stated, while preaching in the year 1853, that the infidelity of the age was a main cause of the revolutions *then* raging in Europe. He forgot that his sermon was written five years before, when his statements were true. A German informs us of a pulpit reader who alluded to the plague which had recently broken out in his parish. Being asked where it had appeared, he was startled, and said: "In my sermon." It need not be replied that there is no danger of such monstrous blunders. In a discourse on a critical theme, a slight error may be enormous. It is not the error, it is the tendency to it, which belongs to the human nature of an habitual reader. His practice exposes him to a hebetude which facilitates some degree of ill-timed allusion; an immobility which prevents him from rectifying

a sentence which he begins to utter before he detects its inaptness. Sometimes he becomes so dependent on his notes that, if some of them be misplaced, or if the light on the pulpit be too dim, or if his chirography be illegible, he must close the service with the apostolic benediction.

IV. The rules for the public reading of sermons are suggested by the fact that it should be modified by the other methods of delivery. — The manuscript should be written in large characters, so as to be easily legible; it should be held in such a position that the reader may without a motion of his head turn his eye from the paper to the congregation; it should be so familiar to him that he may look at his hearers during the larger part of his address; he should so engrave some passages on his memory that in uttering them he may be independent of his paper; he should have such a mastery of it, and of his theme, and of himself, that he may vary his words in conformity with the varying exigencies of his hearers. It is an interesting fact that some of the best rules for reading sermons have been given by Cotton Mather. He says:

“If you must have your notes before you in your preaching, and it be necessary for you, *de scripto dicere*, what even some of the most famous orators, both among the Grecians and among the Romans did (Pliny says: *Orationes et nostri quidam et Graeci lectitaverunt*), yet let there be with you a distinction between the neat using of notes and the dull reading of them. Keep up the air and life of speaking, and put not off your hearers with an heavy reading to them. How can you demand of them to remember much of what you bring to them, when you remember nothing of it yourself? Besides, by reading all you say, you will so cramp and stunt all ability for speaking that you will be unable to make an handsome speech on any occasion. What I, therefore, advise you to, is: Let your notes be little other than a quiver, on which you may cast your eye now and then, to see what arrow is to be next fetched from thence; and then, with your eye as much as may be on them whom you speak to, let it be shot away, with a vivacity becoming one in earnest for to have the truths well entertained with the auditory.”¹

¹ *Manuductio ad Ministerium*. Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry, pp. 105, 106.

As we should not have expected such valuable rules from Cotton Mather, neither should we have imagined that Dean Swift would anticipate, as he has done, the suggestions of modern elocutionists. He says :

“ I knew a clergyman of some distinction, who appeared to deliver his sermon without looking into his notes, which when I complimented him upon, he assured me he could not repeat six lines ; but his method was to write the whole sermon in a large, plain hand, with all the forms of margin, paragraph, marked page, and the like ; then on Sunday morning he took care to run it over five or six times, which he could do in an hour ; and when he delivered it, by pretending to turn his face from one side to the other, he would (in his own expression) pick up the lines, and cheat his people by making them believe he had it all by heart.¹ He farther added, that whenever he happened by neglect to omit any of these circumstances, the vogue of the parish was, ‘ our doctor gave us but an indifferent sermon to-day.’ Now among us, many clergymen act so directly contrary to this method, that from a habit of saving time and paper (which they acquired at the university), they write in so diminutive a manner, with such frequent blots and interlineations, that they are hardly able to go on without perpetual hesitations, or extemporary expletives.”

“ You will observe some clergymen with their heads held down from the beginning to the end, within an inch of the cushion, to read what is hardly legible ; which, beside the untoward manner, hinders them from making the best advantage of their voice : others again have a trick of popping up and down every moment from their paper to the audience, like an idle school-boy on a repetition day. Let me entreat you, therefore, to add one half-crown a year to the article of paper ; to transcribe your sermons in as large and plain a manner as you can ; and either make no interlineations, or change the whole leaf ; for we, your hearers, would rather you should be less correct, than perpetually stammering, which I take to be one of the worst solecisms in rhetoric. And lastly, read your sermon once or twice a day for a few days before you preach it ; to which you will probably answer some years hence ‘ that it was but just finished when the last bell rang to church ;’ and I shall readily believe, but not excuse you.”²

The only rule, however, which can redeem the reading of a sermon from the charge of artificial and perfunctory address is this : Cherish a deep religious interest in your words when you read them in public ; even a profounder interest than

¹ See for a different method of simulation § 3. I. 4. B. above. Mr. Edward Everett when preaching memoriter adopted a still different method.

² British Classics, Vol. viii. pp. 14, 15.

you felt when you wrote them in private. The old remark is: your discourse is the offspring of your mind and heart. It was born with pangs of thought and emotion. It must be delivered in the pulpit with the same, or greater travail of soul. We have been told that every sermon must be born again when preached again. "Perhaps once in three or four months," said President Davies, "I preach in some measure as I could wish; that is, I preach as in the sight of God, and as if I were to step from the pulpit to the supreme tribunal. I *feel* my subject. I melt into tears, or I shudder with horror, when I denounce the terrors of the Lord. I glow; I soar in sacred ecstasies, when the love of Jesus is my theme, and, as Mr. Baxter was wont to express it, in lines more striking to me than all the fine poetry in the world,

"I preach as if I ne'er should preach again;
And as a dying man to dying men."

§ 4. *Preaching Memoriter.*

The practice of committing a sermon to memory, and reading it as thus committed, has high authority in its favor. Some men have adopted the practice without recognizing it. Many preachers who are called revivalists, many agents of charitable societies, have delivered their sermons so often that they could not avoid uttering them memoriter. Whitefield is said to have preached more than eighteen thousand times;¹ but the different sermons which he preached were comparatively few. He did not feel that he had full command of a discourse, until he had preached it the fortieth time. Then, however, it was in some degree committed to memory. A similar remark may be made of certain discourses preached by Dr. J. M. Mason, Dr. E. D. Griffin. In Scotland, and still more Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy, the common practice has been to preach memoriter; not partly or virtually so, as the American practice has often been, but entirely, professedly, and formally so. "In a

¹ See the inscription on Whitefield's Cenotaph, as recorded in Dr. Gillie's *Memoirs of Whitefield*, Hartford edition, 1851, p. 221.

period of general declension in reference to morals and religion, a royal mandate was issued to forbid the practice of reading sermons. The following prohibition of King Charles the Second is said to be on record in the statute-book of the University of Cambridge :

“ ‘ To the Vice-Chancellor and Gentlemen. — Whereas his Majesty is informed that the practice of reading sermons is generally taken up by the preachers before the University, and therefore sometimes continued before himself: his Majesty has commanded me to signify to you his pleasure that the said practice, which took its beginning from the disorders of the late times, be wholly laid aside, and that the said preachers deliver their sermons, both in Latin and English, by memory, without book, as being a way of preaching which his Majesty judges most agreeable to the use of all foreign churches, to the customs of the University heretofore, and to the nature and intention of that holy exercise. And that his Majesty’s commands in these premises may be duly regarded and observed, his further pleasure is, that the names of all such ecclesiastical persons as shall continue the present supine and slothful way of preaching be from time to time signified to me by the Vice-Chancellor for the time, on pain of his Majesty’s displeasure.

(Signed) MONMOUTH.’ ”

When we think that the method of repeating a sermon from memory has been more generally adopted than any other one, we feel the importance of treating it not only with attention, but also with respect.

I. Some men have a call from heaven to preach memoriter. They are endued with such a power of recollection that they can discourse more naturally in this method than in any other. We are familiar with the statements that Cyrus could retain the name of every soldier in his army ; Themistocles, of every citizen of Athens ; Napoleon Bonaparte, of every important place where the various detachments of his soldiers would halt or fight during a protracted campaign.

We are familiar with the marvellous feats of memory performed by Gassendi, Galileo, Michael Angelo, Bolingbroke, Porson, and other eminent scholars; with the exploits of unlettered men, as of the young Corsican who listened only once to the recital of hundreds¹ of names, then repeated all of them in the same order in which he heard them, and afterward repeated them backward; of a plain man in Edinburgh, another in London, another in New York, who could on any day commit to memory all the paragraphs, and even advertisements, of the morning's newspaper. There is said to be still living an ignorant *cicerone*, who points out to strangers the wonders of a German cathedral, and is fluent in his English, Russian, Italian, Spanish, and French descriptions of its pillars, capitals, architraves, entablatures, arches, pictures, statues, relics, and yet does not understand a word of the five languages in which he entertains the visitors, but has merely learned and repeats his descriptions by the unintelligent effort of memory. Many clergymen, as Hales, Bates, Warburton, have been endued with a power equally marvellous. Dr. Parkhurst gave to Bishop Jewell some of the most difficult words which he could find; Bishop Hooper gave him forty Welsh, Irish, and foreign words, and Jewell, after reading them once or twice, repeated them forward and backward with perfect accuracy. Whatever he had once written, he could recite at any subsequent period. By one perusal of a sermon he could so impress it on his memory as to be able to repeat it without hesitation. There are many living clergymen who need only peruse a sermon *twice* on Sabbath morning and they can repeat it fluently in the pulpit on that day; at any subsequent time, they need only peruse that sermon *once*, and they can recite it *verbatim et literatim* as originally written. There are some living clergymen who need not write the discourse which they desire to remember, but, after having excogitated it, they can retain and preach it one or two years afterward, without any perceptible deviation from their first ideal. David Hume

¹ The report says, "thousands" instead of hundreds.

had an exalted opinion of his contemporary, the Archbishop of Toulouse. He said that he had heard the Archbishop "repeat an elegant oration of an hour and a quarter in length, which he had never written";¹ that he was in the habit of composing and correcting his discourses without writing them. Only a small number of men have this memorable genius. A larger number can make some approximation to it. Such men are elected to speak memoriter; if not always, yet on fit occasions; if not throughout the *whole* discourse, yet through a *part* of it.

II. The majority of preachers, although not specially fitted for speaking memoriter, may wisely cultivate the power of doing so. They may be overburdened by the effort of recalling an entire sermon, but they can easily hold in their recollection the more important paragraphs of it. They have facilities for improving their retentive power, even if it be not strong by nature. They can grasp with great tenacity the expressions which interest their feelings. I once knew an illiterate cobbler who in secular affairs evinced no special power of memory, but was so enamored of the New Testament that he remembered the whole of it. If the number of any verse in any chapter were stated to him, he could repeat the words of it, and if the words were repeated to him, he could state, not only the chapter and verse where they were to be found, but also the words prefixed as a title to the chapter. On the same principle, many a clergyman who has no special readiness or retentiveness in committing to memory the statements of scientists or historians, can easily recollect the emotional addresses in which his hearers will feel a peculiar interest, or such appeals to conscience as arouse his own sensibilities. Preachers who possess, or who can readily acquire this facility of recollection should adopt *some degree* of the memoriter method.

It is often objected, and there is a truth in the objection, that a preacher aiming to remember his discourse for one

¹ Life and Correspondence of David Hume, Vol. ii. p. 497.

Sabbath will forget it on the next day. The memory is a mysterious power, retaining for an occasion what is committed to it for that occasion, and refusing to do service when the time for which it was employed has gone by. It adopts a kind of legerdemain by which it will retain for a year, or for life, what was given to it for so lengthened a period. In learning a sermon by heart, the minister should adopt those principles of association by which the sermon will remain in his heart long after it has been recited. It is an encouraging truth that, sometimes, he will hold in his remembrance the thoughts and arrangements of his sermon when he will have forgotten the time and place, and even the fact of having written it. In the year 1846 a clergyman wrote a discourse for an important anniversary, and in the year 1857 was called to write another discourse for the recurring anniversary of the same institution. On comparing the second sermon with the first, he was surprised to find that the text of both was the same, the proposition and the divisions were identical, the thoughts and more than half the expressions were so nearly alike that a critic would suppose him to have intentionally made his second sermon an improved copy of the first. The substance of the sermon which he wrote eleven years before, he *recollected* but did not *recognize*. He retained not only the thoughts but also the phrases of it, but did not identify them as once familiar to him. Indeed, an author has been known to compose a treatise in defence of a theory, and twenty years afterward to compose a treatise in opposition to that same theory, and to cite and refute in his second treatise the identical arguments which he had advanced in the first, and during all this controversy, to forget that he, himself, was the original author to whom he had become the antagonist. Such facts remind us that a discourse will often linger when the history of it has lost its place in the memory which once held it. It will do good when it has ceased to be acknowledged. So true is it that, in the words of Bishop Hall, even the imperfect memory is "the Great Keeper and Master of the Rolls of the soul."

III. The advantages of the memoriter method to those who can pursue it without undue toil, are the following:

1. A man who has no more than an ordinary power of memory will feel an inducement to make his discourse a rich one if he know that he is to learn it by heart. Dr. Beattie supposes that, commonly, a minister must spend two days in thus learning his discourse. Nothing but an iron law will make a wise man spend a third of his time in committing to memory what he spent only two thirds of it in composing. His wisdom will prompt him to occupy, at least, as many weeks in writing as days in learning his discourse. He will strive to obtain clear thoughts, to arrange them in their natural order, to express them in apt words; for in this manner he will most readily recall them, and will retain them most surely. It is true that some preachers resort to artificial modes of recollecting their discourses, but the most far-seeing men will prefer the philosophical order of thought as the best system of mnemonics.¹ The sermons of Reinhard are marvellous exhibitions of the "lucid order" extending to the structure of paragraphs, sentences, clauses. He would never have arranged them in such a luminous method, had he not been forced by the usage of his church to learn them by heart. His exact arrangement is a great excellence; he purchased it, however, at an exorbitant price. If he had ordinarily extemporized, and occasionally written sermons with the intent of committing them to memory, he would have added more than he has done to the wealth of the pulpit; for he would have spent more time in amassing

¹ "One of the most ancient [schemes of artificial memory] consisted in associating the divisions of a discourse to be delivered with the various apartments of a building, and the leading sentiments with articles of furniture. This is said to have been much practised by the ancient orators, and to have given rise to the phraseology by which we speak of the divisions of a discourse, as the first *place*, the second *place*, etc. I have repeatedly made experiments on this method in remembering the discourses of public speakers, and the effect is certainly astonishing; for though it is many years since the experiments were made, I still find articles of furniture associated in the clearest manner with sentiments delivered by some of the speakers." — Abercrombie's "Intellectual Powers," p. 107.

materials, and less in preparing them for temporary use. He was not one of those preachers whose constitution is a call from heaven to preach memoriter. On the morning of every Monday he began to commit to memory the sermon which he had written during the preceding week. He devoted the first busy hour of every day to this effort, and publicly recited the sermon on the next Sabbath. During the same week he was preparing another sermon which he was to begin to learn by heart on the succeeding Monday.¹ "I applied," he says "every spare moment I could find during the week, particularly dressing time, to gradually committing my sermon to memory, in order that I might be able to deliver it without embarrassment. That under such circumstances, I found this part of my duty the hardest I had to perform, is a confession you will naturally expect. Indeed with the most conscientious diligence and care in this respect, I could not avoid letting many things slip in the delivery, and often entirely destroying a well constructed period, by substituting new and ill-adapted expressions instead of the ones which had originally been selected; nor have I been able by constant exercise, to remedy this natural defect of my memory; for it costs me now as much trouble as it did at first to take up everything when I preach exactly in the order in which it was conceived and written."²

2. A minister may enrich himself by permanently lodging in his mind the sound thoughts, apposite phrases, combined in the logical order and glowing with the pious sentiment, of a well-studied sermon. Even if they escape his *local* and *technical* memory they will leave an impress on his mind, as oriental spices leave their aroma in the vase which held them. They will breathe a new spirit into his extemporaneous sermons. The precise terms expressing definite thoughts, the living words denoting fervid emotion, will form a standard by which his unwritten discourses will be regulated. One thoroughly written and thoroughly committed sermon will preach itself over again and again, but in such a way as

¹ Memoirs and Confessions of Reinhard, pp. 153 sq.

² Ibid. Letter viii.

to avoid the semblance of repetition. In some respects it is better for a clergyman to collect in his memory the gems of other men ;¹ but there is danger that he may incur the charge of displaying borrowed treasures. In some respects it is better for him to engrave on his memory his own thoughts in his own adjustments of them. The gold which he has coined in his private mint he can circulate without fear. Sherlock might well have learned by heart his paragraph : " Go to your natural religion," etc. South would not have wasted his time if he had committed to memory his page beginning with, " Next, for the lightsome passion of joy." Jeremy Taylor might have repeated, not unwisely, what so many men and school-boys have since recited : " For so have I seen a lark rising," etc. Bishop Butler would have improved his style in general if he had kept himself familiar with his own words : " You have changed sides, then. Keep to this : Be consistent with yourselves," etc. What a man originates in his higher state has a normal influence over him in his lower. The paragraph of Massillon : " I figure to myself that our last hour is come ;" or that of Robert Hall : " Eternity, it is surely not necessary to remind you," etc., must have raised each of those preachers to a high vantage ground, whenever he repeated it.

3. By occasionally preaching memoriter a man may avoid the evil habits which he would acquire if he uniformly read, or uniformly extemporized, his sermons. He learns to avoid the stiffness of a close reader. In his remembered speech he enjoys some of the advantages resulting from free speech. He has command of his eye and his arms, he can walk to and fro on the platform ; he may stand erect and escape .

¹ Nearly all the great orators of the world have disciplined themselves in committing to memory choice passages by which their style of thinking or of writing has been improved. At the early age of fourteen Lord Mansfield " knew a large part of Sallust and Horace by heart." Lord Erskine not only committed to memory a large part of Milton, but was so familiar with Shakespeare that " he would almost, like Porson, have held conversation on all subjects for days together in the phrases of the great English dramatist." — Select British Eloquence, pp. 143, 630.

those injuries to the larynx and the bronchia which are sometimes incurred by the speaker inclining his head over his notes. He also learns to avoid the faults of the man who merely extemporizes. He learns the importance of shunning all loose diction, rant, and verbiage. The very fact that he carefully writes a sermon and carefully enstamps it on his memory tends to form a habit of concise and pertinent expression. The greater his number of useless words, so much the harder must be his work in recollecting them. The more precise his phrases are, the more easily are they recalled. His interests require him to have thoughts which his people can remember; for so he best remembers them himself. His interests require him also to associate his thoughts with words and tones adapted to their end; for, this fitness of his speech to produce the impression which he designs is a kind of mnemonic art, helping him to retain the proper words in their proper places. Some hearers have imagined a pulpit orator to be freely reading a discourse; others have imagined the same orator to be extemporizing the same discourse; and still others have seen that he was expert in recalling what he had written, and was combining the excellences of the reader with those of the free speaker, and shunning the faults of both.

4. In committing a discourse to memory the preacher acquires a useful discipline of mind. A soldier is trained to various kinds of gymnastic exercise, and finds them all advantageous, although some of them are seldom resorted to in the hour of battle. He leaps over trenches and lofty bars, and thus prepares himself for the special emergencies of war. The elocutionist stands on one foot, or speaks with pebbles in his mouth, and so he learns to stand and to speak with the greater ease on the rostrum. If a man do not intend to preach memoriter often, he may acquire a valuable gymnastic discipline by so preaching occasionally. In this discipline he strengthens his memory; it need not be the memory for mere words, it may also be the memory for their philosophical arrangements. The power of retaining words, however, is

by no means useless, for they are the instruments of his effectiveness. "The culture of expression," says Mr. Choate, "should be a *specific study*, quite distinct from the invention of thought. Language and its elements, words, are to be mastered by direct, earnest labor. A speaker ought *daily* to exercise and *air* his vocabulary, and also to add to and enrich it. *Translation* should be pursued with these *two objects*, to bring up to the mind and employ all the words you already *own*, and to tax and *torment* invention and discovery and the very deepest memory, for additional, rich, and admirably expressive words."¹ The power of retaining these words is augmented, for it is required by the discipline of recollecting a lengthened discourse without the help of a manuscript. "In regard to memory," says Dr. Abercrombie "it is remarkable how much its power is increased in many instances by that kind of exercise by which it is alone trusted to, without any aid from writing. I have known medical men, for example, who had to recollect numerous appointments, do so with perfect accuracy by trusting to memory, to which they had habituated themselves, but blunder continually when they kept a written memorandum. The mental power which is in some cases acquired by constant and intense exercise is indeed astonishing. Bloomfield, the poet, relates of himself, that nearly one-half of his poem, the *Farmer's Boy*, was composed, revised, and corrected, without writing a word of it, while he was at work with other shoemakers in a garret."² The utility of Bloomfield's power to what is called an "extemporaneous" preacher, cannot be overestimated.

Not only is the facility of recalling words improved by the use of it in preaching without a manuscript, but also the power of self-control. A man must exercise, and thus increase, his power of abstraction, of governing his thoughts and feelings, when he concentrates his mind upon his sermon so as to recollect its well-ordered phrases in the presence of a miscellaneous assemblage. During the ringing of the bell

¹ Parker's Reminiscences, pp. 248, 249.

² Intellectual Powers, p. 115.

for public worship Bishop Jewell could so imprint the chief topics of his sermon on his memory that he said: "If ten thousand people were fighting and quarrelling all the while I was preaching, they could not confuse me." Many preachers have so little control over themselves that they cannot repeat the Lord's Prayer correctly before their people. Some cannot even remember the biblical form of the benediction. One main advantage of memoriter preaching consists in its training the preacher to a command over the phraseology of the Bible. Some of his sermons are biblical in their style. Engraving them upon his memory, he impresses many precious texts upon it. If he can learn by heart a sermon, he can learn an Epistle of the New Testament. Wise men have disciplined themselves in acquiring a familiarity with the language of the Bible, not only for the sake of improving the diction of their written, as well as extemporary, sermons, but also for the sake of their spiritual growth. On his death-bed James Brainerd Taylor found an inexpressible relief in the choice texts which he had laid up in the storehouse of his mind. He had made it a rule to treasure up in his memory some portion of the scriptures every night before retiring to rest. When he was examined for liberty to preach the gospel, one who was present said of him: "I never heard any man quote the sacred scriptures with such fluency for the confirmation of his doctrinal views, as the questions were successively proposed to him." Dr. Chalmers, at the age of thirty-one, writes: "I finished my perusal of the New Testament a few days ago, and began it again, at the rate of a chapter every week-day, with the particular view of committing the most remarkable passages to memory."¹

IV. In proportion to the weakness of the preacher's memory should be his caution in attempting to speak memoriter. Bishop Hall says that "the same thoughts do commonly meet us in the same places, as if we had left them there till our return." Sometimes, however, they are truant.

¹ *Memoirs of Chalmers*, Vol. i. p. 218.

Atterbury writes to Pope : " If you have not read the verses lately, I am sure you remember them, because you forget nothing." When a man who forgets nothing recites a sermon, his facile words are impressive ; but when he is laboring to recall his discourse, he draws, hesitates, stammers, repeats his words, as a boy runs back in order to make a fresh leap. True, he has the use of his arms ; but they swing convulsively and without meaning. His eye is in full view ; but, although it is called the open window of the soul, it has now a gauze curtain hanging before it. Introspective, retrospective, it betrays no sympathy with the audience ; it does not glisten with love or hope, but is darkened with fear. In his naïve way, Izaak Walton says of the judicious Hooker : " His sermons were neither long nor earnest, but uttered with a grave zeal and a humble voice, his eyes always fixed in one place to prevent his imagination from wandering ; insomuch that he seemed to study as he spake."¹ When the preacher is studying as he speaks, his hearers will be looking out of the window. The Mohammedans in the mosque are attentive to everything rather than their Iman, who stands uttering words which he is struggling to remember ; his body being visible, but his mind buried in the absent Koran.

If the preacher's retentive power be too frail to be trusted with the whole discourse, he may still deliver a part of it memoriter ; for he may hold securely a few select paragraphs, although he would break down under the weight of many. An accurate elocution requires him, employing the figure of " vision," to extend the arm, elevate the head, direct his eye into the distance ; then he needs to be entirely independent of his papers. As he addresses the Supreme Being, he will appear irreverent unless he look upward and concentrate his mind upon the heavens, rather than divide it between the heavens and his ink-sketches. In pronouncing such addresses, Theremin deemed the memoriter form of " eloquence a virtue."

¹ Life of Richard Hooker, p. 90.

Sometimes a preacher is able in his study to recollect the entire sermon, and still in the pulpit delivers it from manuscript ; as a musician, although quite familiar with the notes of a symphony, yet, while he is rendering them in public, feels the safer if he has them before his eye. This diffident man can read *and* remember more successfully than he can either read *or* remember alone. He is less effective than an accomplished extemporaneous speaker, but more effective than an ill-trained one. He does not attain the height which is easily reached by some who preach memoriter ; but he rises higher than one who reads slavishly or remembers hesitatingly. He does not soar like the eagle ; he does not creep like the snail ; but like the ostrich he runs the faster because he has wings to assist his feet. There are some preachers who with all their effort can never do more than, as Macaulay says of Dryden, “attain the first place in the second rank” of their profession.¹

V. Rules for the memoriter preacher. These may be arranged under the following classes :

1. In learning a sermon by heart take opportunities to improve it. Sometimes, perhaps, you have written what you yourself do not fully understand, and therefore cannot easily remember. Make it plain to your own mind and you will be able to recite it so as to make it plain to your hearers. Sometimes, perhaps, you do not perceive the reasons for the arrangement of your thoughts ; perhaps you have no reasons for it ; perhaps you have no philosophical arrangement. Then change the order of your ideas ; make it easy to be recalled ; so it will be more impressive upon your hearers as well as upon yourself. Many a sentence may be made the more emphatic, by so adjusting its clauses that one will sug-

¹ Macaulay's Miscellanies, Vol. i. p. 169. “The first rank in poetry was beyond his [Dryden's] reach, but he challenged and secured the most honorable place in the second. His imagination resembled the wings of the ostrich. It enabled him to run, though not to soar. When he attempted the highest flights, he became ridiculous ; but while he remained in a lower region, he outstripped all competitors.”

gest the other. The elder Pitt committed to memory some of Dr. Barrow's sermons. If Barrow, himself, had undertaken to commit them, he would have given them more of that excellence which in the present age is regarded as the chief one — brevity.

2. In learning your discourse by heart keep yourself in sympathy with its doctrine and sentiment. Make your exercise a discipline not in mere words, but in thought and feeling. Cultivate an argumentative spirit, when you are storing away the argument in your mind. Cherish the appropriate emotions when you are learning to repeat an appeal to the sensibilities. Bring your hearers before you in ideal presence, and then put forth the same affections which you will have when they are in your real presence. This will require a lively imagination, but without this imagination a man will never be an effective preacher to the people.

3. Diversify your methods of committing your discourse to memory. First of all, enter into a sympathy with its spirit, but sometimes repeat it rapidly with prominent attention to the sequence of words. Now recite it without audible speech; then recite it aloud. Associate its thought and sentiment with the fitting tones and gestures. Let the delivery of it in the pulpit be no *strange* performance. Let the thoughts suggest each other. Let the words as *seen* suggest the thoughts; let the intonations as *heard* suggest the words: let the gestures as *felt* deepen the impression of the whole upon your mind. A fourfold cord is not quickly broken. The question is often asked, At what time shall a discourse be committed to memory? The answers which are given are these: Repeat the sermon soon after waking from sleep, when the mind is peculiarly receptive, a *tabula rasa*; repeat the sermon immediately before retiring to sleep, and let it sink into the mind during the still hours of night, — sometimes a dream will hold it fast; repeat the sermon when the mind is most vigorous and will grasp it with tenacity; repeat the sermon when the thoughts are exposed to frequent interruption, and thus habituate yourself to the chance as-

sociations of the pulpit; repeat the sermon in your study-chamber and in the market-place, and thus be prepared for any and every emergency. While it is true that no one rule is applicable to all persons, it is also true that all of these rules are often useful for one and the same person. The fact that some preachers entirely forget a discourse on the day after they have recited it memoriter, often results from the fact that they commit it to memory in only one state of mind and never can recall it in any other state. A man who can remember a collection of words when he is sitting solitary amid his books, may be unable to remember it when he is called to associate ideas and emotions with it before an audience. We have read the tale (ideally true) of a young Scotch candidate, who was called to deliver his first sermon when his aged mother was present. He recited his text, opened his mouth, and held it open, but not a word came out of it, and speechless he retired from the pulpit. The contrast between his position in the sanctuary and his position in the study struck him dumb for a short time. Dr. Abercrombie narrates the following incident: "A distinguished theatrical performer, in consequence of the sudden illness of another actor, had occasion to prepare himself, on very short notice, for a part which was entirely new to him; and the part was long and rather difficult. He acquired it in a very short time, and went through it with perfect accuracy, but immediately after the performance forgot every word of it. Characters which he had acquired in a more deliberate manner he never forgets, but can perform them at any time without a moment's preparation; but in regard to the character now mentioned, there was the farther and very singular fact, that though he has repeatedly performed it since that time, he has been obliged each time to prepare it anew, and has never acquired in regard to it that facility which is familiar to him in other instances. When questioned respecting the mental process which he employed the first time he performed this part, he says, that he lost sight entirely of the audience, and seemed to have nothing before him but

the pages of the book from which he had learned it ; and that if anything had occurred to interrupt this illusion, he should have stopped instantly."¹

4. Adopt stringent measures for riveting your attention upon your sermon. Some men before attempting to store a sermon in the memory, discipline themselves upon a mathematical demonstration. Others, after having once recited a discourse in private, utter it in conversational tones to a friend. There are clergymen who have what Roger Ascham calls a "good memory,"² and need nothing more in learning a sermon by heart than to rewrite it with care. In the simple process of transcribing it they so fasten their attention upon it, that they engrave it deeply on their minds, and can immediately preach it without, as easily as with, their manuscript. Seneca records of Portius Latro that he remembered everything which he had once written down ; other men, thinking that what they have written is secure, pay no further attention to it, and forget it. There are clergymen who have no special gift of recollection, yet have such a love for the truths which they have arranged in a sermon, that they can attend to it with constant delight, and thus hold it with a quick and strong grasp in their memory. Here, as elsewhere, a pious heart is the source of true eloquence.

5. Cherish a hearty interest in the truth as the truth of God, and a trust in his Spirit, who will accompany his word with his blessing. Love to the truth facilitates the recollection of it. There is more reason for saying that a man will remember what he loves to remember, than for saying that he will believe what he loves to believe. Trust in God gives confidence in speaking of him, and this confidence frees the memory from confusion. Remembering himself, a man forgets his sermon. Concerned about his personal success, he learns slowly, and can no more retain what he has

¹ Intellectual Powers (Harpers' edition), p. 92.

² "A good memory is well-known by three properties : that is, if it be quick in receiving, sure in keeping, and redie in delivering furthe again" — Scholmaster.

learned than if he had eaten the lotus. A blunder in the pulpit perturbs him. If he care more for his subject than for his own fame, he will be serene amid all the mortifying mistakes which he may have made; he will not go back and correct an error for the mere purpose of saving his own reputation. A performer in the orchestra, if he mistake a note, need not go back and correct his error, protracting the jar. A racer who stumbles need not retrace his steps and show that he can run with a sure foot; for so he merely delays reaching the goal. If a minister's aim is to do good, rather than to speak well, he will not rectify his mistake, unless he have uttered either heresy or nonsense.

6. While committing your discourse to memory, aim to commit it for a lengthened period. This secret intention will have a secret though wonderful influence on the methods of associating your ideas. It connects them with great principles which will never be forgotten. It is like a sleight of hand, which works when it is not understood.

7. Commit your discourse to memory by short sections, rather than by attempting to learn the whole at once. The simpler the arrangement of the entire discourse, so much the more readily will it be remembered. One section, being devoted to a single train of thought, may be easily impressed on the mind, and will suggest the other sections with which it is indissolubly connected. The various sections, like the stones of an arch, may keep each other in place. Such men as Dräseke, having habituated themselves to the exercise, are enabled to repeat their sermons by reading them only once immediately before entering the pulpit. A clergyman "has often told me," says Dr. Beattie, "that when he commenced preaching, it was the labor of many days to get his sermon by heart, but that by long practice he has now improved his memory to such a pitch that he can by two hours' application fix one in his mind so effectually as to be able to recite it in public, without the change, omission, or transposition of the smallest word."¹ But whatever may be said

¹ Works, Vol. i. p. 74.

of experts in the art, the general truth is that the memory is weakened, rather than strengthened, by the attempt to gain in one effort the command of an entire sermon. Even Mr. Edward Everett, when he entered the clerical office, learned by heart only one page of his sermon at a time; when he left that profession he could learn the entire sermon by reading it over twice.

8. Although your main care should be to associate your ideas on philosophical principles, yet you need not altogether refuse the aid of a local or artificial memory. In every age men have made some use of some mnemonic system. They have often carried their artifices to a ridiculous and even injurious excess; but a wise man can derive some benefit from principles which have been sanctioned by Cicero and Quintilian.¹ After justly disparaging the formal schemes of mnemonics, Schott insists on one method of bringing the eye into the service of the memory. He urges the importance of the preacher's writing his sermon on as little paper as is consistent with a clear, legible chirography, on his introducing no interlineations, marginal corrections, or erasures; marking

¹ The earliest known system of artificial memory (*Ars Memoriae*) was invented, according to some, by Simonides of Ceos; according to others by Hippias of Elis. After its invention it was improved by Hippias, Metrodorus, and Theodectes. Aristotle wrote a work (now lost) upon the Mnemonic art. The Roman rhetoricians had their own *Ars Mnemonica*, associating the main topics of a discourse with the rooms (*loci*) of a house, and the subordinate topics with the articles (*imagines*) in each room. Jerome and Augustine allude to this device, although it does not appear that the Church Fathers practised it in their homilies. Thomas Aquinas also makes mention of it. Raymund Lulle, in the fourteenth century, prepared a new and scientific system of Mnemonics; Schenkel and Sommer in the sixteenth century introduced a modification of the Greek and Roman systems. Dieterich published at Hamburgh in 1626 a *Mnemonic Art*, especially adapted to preachers. About the beginning of the present century Gräffe wrote an *Essay on the psychological principles of the art*, as applicable to the pulpit; Arctin wrote his *Treatise on "The true Idea and Use of Mnemonics"* in 1804; on the theory of Mnemonics, in 1806; a similar work in 1810; Kästner published the second edition of his system of Mnemonics in 1805, and in 1826 was published his "Guide to the practice of committing sermons to memory quickly and surely." During the last fifty years the systems of Mnemonics have been multiplied in Germany, France, and England. See Schott's *Theorie der Beredsamkeit*, III. ss. 358-363.

the more important transitions by visible signs ; underscoring the more suggestive words, and designating the most important phrases by double lines or lines of red ink ; dividing the sermon into conspicuous paragraphs ; and thus making the entire manuscript a picture of the entire train of thought, using the *places* and *images* of the chirography as the ancients used the rooms and furniture of the house.¹

9. Take your manuscript with you into the pulpit. You may need it for security, even if you do not need it for safety. It may serve the same purpose as a rope to an expert climber on the Matterhorn, or a life-preserver to an athletic swimmer in the sea. Even a Garrick, who is called to repeat only a few passages, and those perhaps for the hundredth time, has an assistant who may prompt him if he err. In the general, an American divine will not pronounce an entire discourse from memory, except on some rare occasion. For the sake of memorizing a scene, he may commit to memory his sermon. Being unaccustomed to the effort, the knowledge that his manuscript is near him may prevent his own perturbation of mind, and may relieve his hearers from suspense. Mr. Albert Barnes, when called to address a distinguished assembly at a signal time, laid his notes upon the open Bible, and then recited his sermon memoriter. He thus manifested a respect for his hearers, and kept them, as well as himself, at ease. Hortensius, who at evening recollected all the articles purchased during an entire day, all the prices paid for them, and the names of all the purchasers at a public sale which he attended, might speak hour after hour without the danger of needing a parchment ; but he is not a standard for other men.

10. In applying any rule for preaching memoriter, consult your own idiosyncrasies. If you do not *follow* them, you ought to *notice* them, and adapt the rule in a greater or less degree

¹ Theorie der Beredsamkeit, Band III. ss. 364, 365. Dr. Beattie in his Treatise on Memory devotes three pages to the mode of penmanship "most expedient for those who write with a view to ascertain their knowledge and improve their minds"—Works, Vol. i. pp. 37-40, 70.

to them. Some rhetoricians prescribe that a man who is to preach memoriter should familiarize himself with his discourse immediately before he enters the pulpit; but there are clergymen who would so overburden their memory by this labor that they would hesitate and falter in their pulpit effort. Other rhetoricians prescribe that he should not oppress his retentive power by mentally reciting his discourse on the day of his public repetition of it; but there are men who could not recollect their sermon unless they had disciplined themselves by mentally rehearsing it immediately before preaching it. Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind. The general rule is that a man should preach with his eyes open; but there is an impressive pulpit orator in Germany who cannot preserve the mastery over his thoughts unless his eyes be closed. Charles Butler says: "It is remarkable that Bourdaloue, who had no action, and spoke, though distinctly, very rapidly, with his eyes almost closed and with little inflection of voice, was a decided advocate for the sermon's being prepared with great attention, learned by heart, and exactly spoken as it was committed to paper; while Massillon, whose action was both elegant and vehement, and Father de la Rue, more celebrated for action than any other preacher in France, maintained the contrary opinion. Father Segaud (himself a preacher of eminence), thought Fenelon's sermons were evidently the worse for their want of preparation. He admitted that they contained splendid and beautiful passages, but thought the effect of them was destroyed by the weakness of other passages. Father Segaud, however, listened to Fenelon with the cool attention of a critic. The flock of Fenelon heard him with other ears. To them he was the good shepherd, who knew his flock, whom his flock knew, and whose voice they loved."¹

¹ Life of Fenelon, pp. 203, 204.