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The Elements of Power in Public Speaking.

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ADDRESS,

DELIVERED JAN. 1, 1833, AT HIS INAUGURATION

AS

BARTLET PROFESSOR OF SACRED RHETORIC

IN THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT ANDOVER.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE STUDENTS.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY PEIRCE & PARKER.
1833.

ADDRESS.

The structure and inward workings of the human mind are wonderful; and so are the MEANS by which that mind mainly reveals itself. The Psalmist deemed his *tongue* the glory of his frame.

The *power* of speech, its instrumental efficiency both to evil and good, is also wonderful. "So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell." How fearful an instrument of evil. It is true also, on the other hand, that the chief good which has been done in this world, has been accomplished by means of the tongue of man.

Man has exerted vast power with the pen; but the power of speech excels beyond measure that of mere writing. However deeply we may be impressed by reading an oration, for instance, of Demosthenes, if we but imagine ourselves in the auditory to whom he pronounced it, we at once become sensible, that the effect of its mere perusal is comparatively as nothing. The sermons of Whitefield, as read, have no uncommon efficiency; as spoken by himself, such specimens of persuasive power have scarcely been known among men since the days of inspiration.

The power of speech, however, like all other human endowments, is of different degrees in different persons. One man rises in an assembly and opens his mouth but to infuse lethargy or disgust; another man, on the same subject, and the same

side, speaks in sentences of electricity and flame, and keeps his hearers filled with the intensest emotion.

It is, we know, chiefly by means of human speech, that God maintains and advances his holy kingdom among men. The laws of his empire; the facts, principles, and wide relations and bearings of the Gospel; in short, all the moral truths which he employs in saving men, or glorifying himself on the earth; are by this means, more than every other, unfolded and enforced. It is principally through public speaking by human organs, that God has purposed to deliver his creation from the bondage of corruption, and make all things new in the civil and religious state of man.

The *laws* of speech—the principles by which it is governed in its just and efficient use, are the same in sacred, as in common application. Its success indeed, here, depends on preternatural influence; no unaided tongue of man or angel can win a ruined soul to holiness and God; but divine co-operation is wisely lent, always, to what has a direct tendency in favor of, not adverse to, the good pursued. It is powerful, and not tame and lifeless speaking, that the Holy Spirit ordinarily makes most effectual in reclaiming men from the paths of sin and destruction. The most successful pulpit-speakers are not those whose discourses are uninteresting, desultory, prolix, repetitious; but those who, in their pulpit-performances, observe most carefully the laws, according to which, power in public speaking, universally displays itself.

I undertake, on this occasion, to exhibit, very briefly, THE ELEMENTS OF POWER IN PUBLIC SPEAKING. These are partly inherent in the structure of the discourse itself; and partly extrinsic or accidental to it, relating to those auxiliary circumstances which contribute to ensure a discourse attention and efficiency. I shall not, however, follow this method in specifying them, but mention one thing after another, in the order which the end aimed at in this exercise may seem to require.

The subject of a powerful discourse must be important. An ingenious tongue, exerting itself on a trivial theme, may amuse light-hearted hearers; but no such theme stirs the deep

emotions of that mind which is wielding the lightning and thunder of true eloquence. To discourse of trifles, with whatever wit or labor, is, after all, to make a nugatory and empty discourse.

He who would speak with power, *should take truth, not error, for his subject.* Truth, if it relate to a matter of importance, is itself power. It is the law, the food, the strength, the life, of mind. The mind, therefore, which is much conversant with truth, becomes, itself, refreshed, invigorated, enlarged, and thus better qualified to do truth worthy homage, by attempts to illustrate it. To commune deeply with truth, is to acquire power; to speak of truth after long and deep communion with it, is ordinarily to exert great power upon others. I need not stay long, to show what advantages for speaking powerfully, truth gives to its advocate, over him who has the side of error to defend. How often, amidst a distracting diversity of opinions and arguments, has the mere statement of the truth, from judicious lips, proved at once decisive, and put all debate and all doubt to rest. A day will come, when, in respect to those matters which have more divided mankind than all others, the only matters of importance comparatively—I mean the principles and ways of the divine government—one judgment will be formed by all rational beings; when conviction of the rectitude of that government, shall perfectly pervade the intelligent universe. Now, this conviction will not be the direct effect of force, or physical omnipotence; it will be only the result of a just exhibition and illustration of truth. Let men who would exert much power in discourse, always speak on matters of importance, and in speaking of such matters, always take the side of truth.

The subject of discourse *should be one of personal concern to the hearers.* It is almost impossible for a speaker to be deeply interested himself by what interests no other person; and no man can speak powerfully of what does not excite strong feeling in his own mind. Power in utterance, is the result of power in intellectual conception and emotion. Now the mere impression that what is about to be discoursed of, is

what will of itself awaken grateful feeling in the auditory, tends to stir up the speaker's spirit into intense exertion ; and nothing more assists in the delivery of a discourse, than to see such feeling in the hearers' countenances and behaviour. How hapless, then, that person's self-imposed task, who attempts to speak with power on a subject in which mankind take no interest.

Now, men are interested most, by what most nearly concerns them personally. Minds indeed of a certain class, will be interested by instructive discourse, however remotely related to their individual well-being. To such minds, truth, in its most abstract forms, and in all its kinds, is inestimably precious, as involving, to their enlightened and comprehensive view, relations and results of infinite moment. But even as to them, subjects of direct personal concern are commonly most attractive ; and there are few so in love with philosophical abstractions, but that they would withdraw their ear from any voice that ever gave utterance to such refinements, in order to attend to a ploughman's recital of some recently occurrent household disaster. The generality of men, certainly, give little heed to any thing which has not a connexion more or less close, with their own private state. With the multitude, the welfare of man has scarcely a thought ; that of country may, at certain times especially, be less disregarded ; that of party or neighborhood may excite lively feeling ; but that of family or of self, is the theme of absorbing interest. A lecture on political economy is dull, compared to a debate on some point of party-politics ; but, except in very rare cases, such a debate, on however important a topic, and with whatever eloquence sustained, has feeble influence over one, whom a pending law-suit invites into court.

Now, if this be so, what speakers, it may be thought, should be as powerful in discourse as preachers of the Gospel ? A legitimate inference, it would seem, yet not in accordance with experience. The subjects of preaching, it is certain, concern all mankind alike ; and concern them infinitely more than all things else. Compared to these subjects, riches, life, the affairs of nations, and of the great globe itself through its whole duration,

are less than nothing ; but two causes operate to enfeeble discourse on these themes of amazing interest. One is, that mankind, under the power of sensuality, are dead to their concern in these awful matters ; and the other is, that preachers themselves have, too commonly, almost no feeling or faith, in respect to these tremendous things. When, as at a remarkable effusion of the Spirit of grace, the ministers of the word speak, and the people hear, under some just impressions of the reality of unseen things, then is there demonstration given of the rule, that the power of discourse depends much on the personal concern which the hearers have in its subject.

It greatly heightens power, let me next observe, when the subject is not only of general interest to the hearers, but when it is *adapted particularly, to classes, circumstances, and seasons*. It is this, above all extrinsic things, which gives a discourse pungency, that it be spoken pertinently to present wants and demands. A word which rebukes a man in crime, or which comforts a man in trouble, or which saves a perishing man, is a word of power, though spoken with stammering lips. Let a discourse which a man has been hearing for an hour with unconcern, pass out of a general to a specific application to his own sin or sorrow, and all the feelings of his mind at once are stirred. Many a speech has been deemed, and rightly deemed, of wonderful power, not because it was intrinsically well wrought, or because it was very well pronounced, but because the speaker was wise in suiting his subject to the peculiar state and needs of his hearers. To be particular and pertinent in the adaptation of subjects to persons and occasions, should never be forgotten by him who would be always an efficient speaker.

It is essential, also, *that the speaker understand well the subject of his discourse*. He who speaks of what he does not understand, speaks with no confidence in his own utterances, or with an unwarranted confidence ; and, in either case, his discourse will want the characteristics of true power. For assumed confidence always betrays itself, and to waver or faint in one's own judgment is to beget faintness, or something yet.

worse, in those to whom that judgment is expressed. Distinct apprehensions, enlarged and comprehensive views of the extended and various bearings and connexions of things, and firm convictions of truth, are indispensable to strong feeling and strong modes of expression. Without such inward furniture for speaking, a man, in discourse, can be expected to exhibit nothing in just proportion and symmetry. His statements, if not false, will be defective or extravagant; in different parts of his discourse he will be inconsistent with himself, or at least not make his self-consistency sufficiently apparent; and, in short, almost nothing will be spoken just as it should be. The consequence must inevitably be, that intelligent hearers will be moved with commiseration, or contempt, or grief; and hearers of no class, receive vivid impressions of the exact truth. Knowledge does not always make a man powerful in speech, but ignorance makes him impotent.

A powerful speaker expresses *what is strictly his own and not another's mind on the subject in hand*. Expression is always comparatively feeble, if not theatrical, when it is mere repetition of the thoughts of others. Where thoughts are borrowed and held only in memory, however excellent they may be in themselves, as they are no legitimate part of the mind's own strength and life, they are apt to want something of nature, something of fitness and honesty, in the manner in which the mind gives them forth. A man with a memory vastly capacious, and richly furnished with facts and other men's thoughts, may make a surprising display of knowledge, of some sort; but yet, he who tells the simple convictions and feelings of an intelligent and disciplined mind, without one quotation or learned allusion, is by far the more instructive, interesting, and efficient speaker. Learning of all kinds should be diligently cultivated by the public speaker. No one has more need, or can make a better use of it; but his object in seeking it, should not be to supercede the necessity of judging and forming opinions, and pursuing deep and thorough investigations, of and for himself, but rather to feed and fan his own intellectual fire, and prepare his mind to be more and more vigorous and

enterprising, in self-sustained, independent action. Indeed, the mere accumulation of what others have said and thought, is not true learning, which properly consists in the perfect digestion and incorporation of the ideas of things into one's own intellectual structure; and the difference in expression, between the one and the other of these, is almost as the difference between an automatic and a natural articulation; or the draining of a stagnant pool, by artificial means, and the spontaneous outpouring of a living and redundant fountain.

A man who would speak with power, *should have unity in his discourse*. The parts of his performance, however numerous, should belong to but one subject, and constitute one complete whole; neither wanting nor superabounding in any thing. Digressions and graceful intermissions of earnestness, designed for relief, or as a foil to what should have peculiar prominence and force, are not only admissible, but often a very high excellence; but whatever has a tendency to divide attention, however good in itself, is injudicious, unnatural, and enfeebles the discourse: and the more interesting and excellent this is in itself, the greater on the whole, the injury. Nothing is more inexcusable in a public speech, than want of unity. It shows that the speaker is without an object, or is not in earnest. For who seeks earnestly to accomplish an object by conversation with his fellow, who does not strive to keep his attention fixed on the object as strongly and unremittingly as possible?

This suggests another observation. A man who would speak with efficiency and success, *should always intend to accomplish some definite and specific end, by his discourse*. He should have but one subject, and cleave to that subject throughout, and aim, in all and by all, to accomplish a certain predeterminate object. A man, without a fixed purpose of pursuit, is apt to think, to study, to live, to do every thing, in vain. And he, most probably, will *speak* to no purpose, who has no purpose in view, in speaking. And the *degree* of efficiency in speaking, depends greatly on the *nature* of the purpose; if the end pursued be small, the power will be small, and the power

will probably be great, if the end be great, and be earnestly pursued. How differently does he speak, who earnestly pleads for his country's honor, or for the life of a fellow-creature, or for the salvation of the human soul from everlasting death, from him who has no other object than to please men, or merely to meet a professional call.

And here I may, perhaps, be permitted to ask, whether the exceedingly faint impression commonly made by preaching, be not fairly resolvable into the cause now adverted to? Is it strange that preachers accomplish nothing definitely, who *aim* to accomplish nothing? If speakers at the bar, or in our national councils, should seek to carry no point by their speeches, they probably would carry none; and their speeches might be as feeble as are too many of our sermons. Why should a preacher of the Gospel ever rise to address an assembly, without proposing to himself to gain some certain end; and engaging all his powers of argument and persuasion in the attainment of his object; and resolving that he will not willingly desist until he does attain it? What a different affair, in effect, would preaching become, if it should henceforth assume the character which such a course would give it? I see no sufficient reason why it should not assume it. The designs of preaching are specific, are known, and are incomparably greater than any ever proposed to be accomplished by other kinds of discourse. It is as practicable to give definiteness of purpose to preaching, as to a speech in court. Definiteness may be as requisite for success in the one case, as in the other. It will serve as much in one case as the other, to excite and concentrate mental energy, to produce unity and earnestness, to suggest glowing thoughts and burning expressions, to make discourse, in short, natural and pleasant to the speaker, and powerful and efficient upon the hearers. Surely, it is neither necessary nor expedient, neither philosophical nor scriptural, that preaching should be ever more as general, as commonplace, as perfunctory, as void of object, as it too commonly is, and has been, almost throughout Christendom.

Natural and simple METHOD is greatly tributary to power

in public speaking. Two points should be prominent in the speaker's aim, to say just the things which ought to be said, and to say them *in their proper place*. The best things, spoken out of place, may almost escape attention; and common things, spoken fitly and in place, may be of overpowering interest. A house, built without regard to method, of materials however costly, and at whatever expense of treasure and strength, would, after all, be without utility, without beauty, an object of disagreeable appearance, and, to habitable purposes, no house. Method is no less essential to the excellence and force of a public speech. All things here should be just so collocated and disposed, as nature, fitness, utility, demands. Then will one part add strength to another; progress in speaking will be progress in strength; strength to the last will be cumulative; and proof of this will be afforded by the interest of the hearers being not only sustained, but increasingly deepened, quite to the end of the discourse.

It is therefore impossible for a speaker to be too regardful of method. But by method is not to be understood, a formal, and much less a numerical, division into heads. Judgment and taste will discern whether this be or be not expedient. Sometimes the brief and skilful enumeration of heads, besides assisting memory, is exceedingly lively and pungent; and sometimes the effect of enumeration is the perfection of weariness. In general, as the joints in a good building, or in the human frame, are not left jagged and unfinished, but are gracefully turned, and in some parts concealed, or elegantly polished, so I think there should be much smoothness and finish in the junctures and transitions of a speech intended for the public ear. A method so propounded as to draw attention to itself and for its own sake, defeats the end of method, and is a general detriment to the discourse. Powerful speaking demands method, but demands it only in subserviency to itself; and should make any thing or nothing of it, in display, as may make that subserviency most perfect.

Another matter of high importance is STYLE. Style is not natural, if it do not vary, somewhat, according to

the nature of its subject, and the peculiarities of the speaker's constitutional and acquired character. But with such variety, there are certain attributes of style, always indispensable to power in speaking. To speak with power, for instance, is to speak with *plainness*, and such plainness as will not only express the meaning so that it may be understood, but so that it cannot be misunderstood ; for what power is there in an utterance, the very sense of which is uncertain to the hearer ? To plainness, moreover, must be added *simplicity* ; because a meaning may be obvious, when yet it is so expressed as to have attention seduced from itself, to some vain word or ostentatious image in the sentence. Verbose and florid speeches are seldom of much efficacy ; or if they have strength, they would have had more, had their superfluities of vanity been laid aside. But from plainness and simplicity, *purity* should not be disjoined ; since, in speech, as in every thing else, the truest and best sort of power has no dwelling with coarseness and vulgarity. The end of all legitimate public speaking is the elevation and refinement of man. Of preaching, pre-eminently, this is the end. Its object is to raise man in, all his faculties, tastes, feelings, and pursuits, to a height of purity and refinement absolutely perfect. A grovelling and vulgar style of discourse is unfavorable to this object. If it were duly remembered by preachers, that the essence of the Gospel is purity, dignity, greatness, perfect and unmeasurable, they would see the revolting incongruity of ever associating it with vulgarity in any form ; and that so far as vulgarity has influence in preaching, it is to thwart, not advance, the cause in which they labor.— But the style of a powerful public speaker is *animated*, as well as plain, simple, and pure. There is life and spirit and pathos in his words ; and he deals gracefully and naturally in allusions, analogies and innuendoes. Who has not remarked how it adorns and enlivens and invigorates discourse, to inweave into it tastefully, sprightly similitudes and figures ? The highest order of public speakers, those who keep the attention of auditories enchained, and “on the tip of their persuasive tongue carry all arguments,” are men of rich invention, and fertile fan-

cy, and deep sympathies; and these all appear in the style in which they express themselves.

The power of a speech also depends, in a great degree, *on the manner of its delivery*. This, we know, was anciently held of paramount importance, and very justly. The best speech ever written by man, pronounced without proper feeling and action, might make almost no impression; a speech, on the other hand, of but inferior merit, pronounced as it should be, or as a Whitefield, especially if it were his own, would pronounce it, might have surprising efficiency. The *manner of uttering a thing*, indeed, is often the decisive reason of its being believed or disbelieved; attended to promptly, or utterly disregarded. A man tells you, for example, of some sudden disaster which has just occurred in your family, but he does it so unfeelingly, so unnaturally, that you deem him, perhaps, a trifler or insane; another person has such a manner of giving you the information, that you doubt it no more than if you were an eye-witness; and accordingly hasten away to the scene of the calamity. It is so in respect to public speaking. He who discourses of great affairs, without seriousness of spirit and appearance, may speak weighty things, but his manner of speaking them, shows that they have no just influence on his own mind, and prevents their good effect on the minds of his hearers. If a speaker would inspire joy into his hearers, he must speak to them with gladness of heart and a rejoicing voice; if he would make them weep, he must first weep himself. This is a maxim of ancient wisdom, and it is according to nature. If, before a man speaks, his eye glow with delight, or be suffused by silent grief, he is irresistibly eloquent, even with a mute tongue; but when he does open his lips, it is "to make the weeper smile, the laugher weep." How radical then the mistake, to make but little of *manner* in the business of public speaking. Just articulation, just emphasis and cadence, just modulation of the voice, just gesture and pauses—these things, indeed, however agreeable and graceful, are, apart from those kindlings of the soul of which they should be the result and the expression, comparatively matters of small importance;

but, prompted animated and controlled by those kindlings, they are the chief servitors of eloquence, and among the rarest and most excellent of human attainments.

I add but one thing more to this analysis of our subject. It relates to *the influence of a man's character on his success in public speaking*. That a public speaker should be a man of a good character, is an old observation ; but it deserves to be perpetually and vividly kept in mind. There is in a bad man's commendations of truth, as Solomon strikingly sets forth, a grievous incongruity, felt by every one, like to what a cripple experiences in attempting to walk on his unequal legs. It shocks us instinctively as a most iniquitous and pernicious evil. Besides, as an ill reputation is apt to hinder credit in a man's testimony, so, on a like principle, it tends to impair the power of a speaker's discourse on his hearers. Such is the connexion between truth and virtue, that an enemy to the latter is esteemed no real friend of the former, and, therefore, insincere in its advocacy ; and if he openly despises his own announcements, they will not, at least as coming from him, command much respect from others. Is he a man of great powers of mind ? His practical disbelief is, on that account, a greater disparagement of the truths he enforces with his tongue. Are his arguments strong, and his exhortations vehement ? But they are more than neutralized by the reflection, that if he be truly in earnest, he is but the more loudly declaring his own shame, the more zealously making his own destruction sure. Hence, how well is it, that "unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do, to declare my statutes ? or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth ?" If such a man will speak, let him speak for falsehood, not for truth ; for the father of lies, not for the Holy One. What a tendency, on the other hand, has a good name, to secure a speaker attention, and give effect to what he says ? How does his pure character, his well known love and practice of moral excellence, his bright example, point the sentences of wisdom which so well befit his lips, and fasten them in men's understandings, "as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies." Pre-eminently is this so, when the speaker is a holy

man of God, and the things spoken by him are the everlasting truths of the Gospel. But I need not stay to show, how fitness here, between character and vocation, gives power and efficiency and success to the latter. It is illustrated by examples in the knowledge of every one: it is what we all understand by experience.

But it is not only by having popular confidence and respect, that a speaker finds advantage from moral purity in himself. He is assisted by that purity, *both in furnishing himself for his work, and in the actual discharge of it.* As truth is in order to virtue, so virtue is the best lover and the most exact discernor of truth. None, indeed, but a virtuous mind can well understand truth. Hence, moral evil, in Scripture, is every where called darkness, ignorance, folly, madness; and understanding is identified with holiness. No scribe, therefore, is well instructed unto the kingdom of God, in whom the spirit of holiness, the only true spirit of illumination, does not dwell. It is not the deep-searching and far-reaching processes of natural intellect, but spirituality of purpose, and heavenliness of feeling, which attain to just views of the beauty, and excellency, and greatness of divine things. And the preacher who best understands his appropriate subjects of discourse, is he, who, while he applies all the energies of his being in the meditation of those subjects, keeps himself in the glowing exercise of love to God, and is constantly crying out in spirit, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

But we have seen how important is *manner* in public speaking. Now, a just manner, especially in preaching, is not to be acquired from teachers of elocution, who, by all their rules of art, can only give a cold negative correctness. It is the mighty workings of an inward life, that produce good action, the expression of those deep workings. These are the true parent of natural utterance and gesticulation. The preacher who comes into an assembly, with all the powers of his nature pervaded and filled by the theme on which he is to address them, and with pure and burning affection for their souls, and under a sense of a present God who sustains his mind in holy composition by the influences of the Spirit, and lifts it up above the

fear of man and all selfish aims and respects—he it is, other things being equal, who best exemplifies the principles of a just elocution, and gives the truest specimen of the eloquence of manner. But it is not a knowledge of rhetorical rules; it is heavenliness of mind, and communion with God, and very holy living, in addition to fit discipline and constitutional properties; which thus furnish him for powerful action in the pulpit. Those preachers who have exerted the best sort of power in the pulpit, and in the highest degrees, were among the most virtuous and holy and spiritual of mankind.

These are what appear to me to constitute the chief elements of power in public speaking. They are not all indispensable to considerable degrees of power; nor have they all been exemplified by but very few speakers in any or every age. A speaker, exemplifying them all in a high degree, becomes the wonder of the times, and holds a prominent place in the memory, and regard, and admiration of all men. They were never exemplified perfectly by more than one individual, of whom it is written, that “never man spake like that man.” He stands alone among all public speakers, shining them all out of view, as the sun does the lesser lights of heaven. But though there may be powerful speaking in the absence of some of those things which have been enumerated as essential to the highest degree of power, or where some of them exist very defectively; and though no one may hope for absolute perfection in this great gift, more than in any thing else; yet as we ought to aspire to perfection even here, and should account ourselves bound to make progress until we attain to it; it may be useful to have as clear and vivid impressions as possible of the scale and the standard of perfection in public speaking.

I conclude with three remarks.

The faculty of speaking in public is improvable by culture. I do not suppose that all men are capable of becoming, by any culture, efficient public speakers. Some appear to want the physical elements of a speaker; and improvement is impracticable, where there is nothing to be improved. A distinction has been made, as to the way of their production, between

an orator and a poet ; the one it has been said is formed by art, the other is born ; but the truth is, that both the orator and the poet can attain to high eminence in their respective kinds of excellence, only by the concurrence of birth and art. No man becomes a powerful speaker by mere culture, independently of native advantages ; but where these advantages are not wanting, the influence of culture on public speaking is decisive, and proportionate, ordinarily, to the degree in which it is bestowed.

To what particulars attention should be directed, or how occupied, it were venturous to state without deep reflection, and much care, and specific reference to different cases and circumstances. But let any one consider the things which tend to power in speaking, and he will find that there is not one of those things in which advancement may not be hoped for by the faithful use of appropriate means.

Indeed, not only may advantages be improved, but obstacles may be overcome. One of the most eloquent tongues that ever thrilled the ear of man, was that of a stammerer, who, besides his constitutional impediment, had to encounter the disadvantages of a very neglected and imperfect education. He contended against these great difficulties. His application was unwearied, and how splendid was his success ? By the use of his tongue, he rose to the highest eminence of civil power, became the glory of his country and his age, and is, at this day, the admiration of the civilized world.

The business of a successful public speaker is exceedingly laborious. This clearly follows from the view which has been taken of our subject. Power in speaking, according to that view, is not the result of mere natural animation, or natural genius, however great. A genius for eloquence gives mighty advantages to a speaker, but it does not supercede the necessity of great and continued exertion. The business of choosing, adapting, and analyzing subjects of discourse ; of arranging, composing, cementing, and applying discourse itself ; and of so living, and so disciplining the mind and heart, as to keep one's self in the necessary mood and tone of mind, if I may so speak, for the just enunciation and delivery of discourse—this is work

to be no otherwise done by any man, than by laborious and indefatigable application. And genius will prove hurtful, in proportion to the degree in which it is possessed, if in indolent reliance on itself, it despises application, as needed only by persons of inferior gifts. Let no one suppose that any thing will ever make it idle work to speak well in public. Occasions and circumstances may rouse the mind into mighty action, and the result may be surprising displays of eloquence, without much specific effort at preparation; but life is not made up of occasions of extraordinary excitement. Let all persons who design to be public speakers, and to be efficient and successful ones, bid adieu to sensual indulgence, resist all temptations to mental sloth, and make a covenant with Labor, as their portion and supreme pleasure under the sun.

Finally, it seems quite obvious, from what has been said, that *instruction and discipline*, employed to strengthen and improve the faculty of public speaking, in candidates for the sacred office, *should constitute no unimportant part of their previous education*. Public speaking we justly account the chief business of men, who, by vocation, are *preachers*. There are, indeed, in the ministry, men of high attainments, great force of character, and extensive usefulness, who, in their own persons, do comparatively little, by means of public speaking; but let not the examples of these men, however illustrious, on some accounts, lead us to a mis-judgment, or abate our sense of the paramount excellence, dignity, and influence, of the more appropriate work of the ministers of Jesus Christ. That work, if Scripture has not misled us, is unquestionably public speaking. This, as I have before said, is the grand means appointed by God, for the maintenance and advancement of his glorious cause in this world. And there is wisdom in the appointment. Speech is one of the noblest of human gifts—an engine of greater power than any other which mortals have ever exercised.

Is this gift improvable by culture? The small share of attention which is usually given to it, leaves room, it should seem,

for the raising of this question, but the true answer to it is, *no human faculty is more improvable*. The conclusion is irresistible, that no faculty should be more assiduously and perseveringly cultivated in candidates for the ministry. Time, treasure, ease, all earthly delights, should be counted by them nothing, as the price of their learning to speak in an efficient and successful manner.

I feel, my respected friends, GUARDIANS AND PROFESSORS OF THIS SACRED INSTITUTION, that it becomes me to say these things tremblingly on the present occasion. The department which I have been called to occupy here, I deem, as my remarks imply, of great importance. I am wholly inexperienced in the business of it, and, while I attempt to teach, must myself be a learner. I cannot, of course, boldly commit myself, in this untried sort of labor, without either a measure of self-confidence which would promise unhappy results; or an humble reliance on the gracious presence and assistance of God. With such reliance, if I am not deceived, I have ventured to engage in the important work which has been assigned to me in this place.

I know, my revered friends, that I shall greatly need your indulgence. But you do not forget, either, that I am a frail and sinful man; or what my manner of life, and my engrossing concern in other work, have heretofore been. You will, of course, regard me as a learner; and if you see me willing and industrious to learn, I cannot doubt, but that you will bear with many imperfections, and wait for progress, and encourage endeavor, and for Zion's sake and this Institution's sake, make affectionate mention of me at the throne of heavenly mercy.

MY YOUNGER BRETHREN, whose pursuits in this province of sacred learning I am to endeavor to assist, let me earnestly solicit of you, also, a constant remembrance of me in prayer. I wish you to bear it in mind, that I am entering on an untried sphere of effort, and that if I render you valuable assistance, it must be by means of an application of mind and heart, on my part, not less diligent than will be needful on yours. I am, in respect to

self-indulgence, to have no advantage—I want none—over you. I am rejoiced, not distressed, at the recollection that necessity is laid upon me to make vigorous exertion. Pray for me, dear brethren, that my strength may not fail, and that I may have no confidence in an arm of flesh.

Meanwhile, forget not that prayer and labor are your sole means of success. You have an object in view which deserves exertion, and which also demands it. Whatever facilities you may have for acquiring the ability to speak with power, you cannot reasonably hope to acquire it, without much and continued application. Such application you will not, you cannot withhold, if you keep two things in mind; that the tongue of man is his chief engine of power; and that you are to exercise your tongues for no earthly purposes, but for objects as far above the greatest things of earth, as the soul is more important than the body; the bliss of eternity than that of a moment; or the glory of God than the meanest sensual gratification.

