

and an eagle eye aided him materially in the effects that he produced, but the amount of drudgery that he underwent is, in the case of so great a man, almost more wonderful than his eloquence. I know of no more striking evidence that in the words of the Latin poet: "*Nil sine magno Vita labore dedit mortalibus.*"¹

But to select an orator of a more argumentative class than Lord Chatham, how did Fox acquire his skill as a debater? "Those, indeed, notably err," writes one of his admirers, "who judging only by the desultory social habits and dissipated tastes of Mr. Fox, concluded that his faculties attained their strength without the necessary toil of resolute exertion."

The propensity to labor at excellence, even in his amusements, distinguished him through life; and we learn from his nephew, Lord Holland, that at every little diversion or employment, at chess, cards, or carving at dinner, he would exercise his faculties with wonderful assiduity till he had attained the required degree of perfection. Fox once remarked to a friend that he had literally gained his skill "at the expense of the House," for he had sometimes tasked himself during a whole session to speak on every question that came up, whether he was interested in it or not, as a means of training his ability for debate.

A debater has been aptly described as "one who goes out in all weathers." He must always be prepared for every emergency, and ready to grapple with his antagonist at a moment's notice. Spurred on by ambition, and untiring in his zeal, Fox rose, as Burke declared, "by slow degrees to be the most brilliant and accomplished debater the world ever saw."

Let us take the case of the last quoted orator and philoso-

¹Life gives nothing to mortals without great labor.

pher. Burke says of himself in one of his letters: "I was not swaddled and dandled and rocked into a legislator. *Nitor in adversum*¹ is the motto for a man like me." His studies at the University of Dublin were severe. Leland, the translator of Demosthenes, used to speak of him as "a young man more anxious to acquire knowledge than to display it." Accordingly, when he had left college he had mastered most of the great writers of antiquity. Poets and historians, philosophers and orators — all had been laid under tribute to enrich the intellectual treasury of the future orator. Bacon, Shakespeare, and Milton were the great English triumvirate whom he daily studied, and his memory was a vast storehouse of all wisdom, ancient and modern, sacred and profane. Though often spoken to almost empty benches, Burke's speeches are probably the most eloquent ever delivered by any uninspired man. The very reasons which made them unpleasant to the parliamentary members of his own day are those which have rendered them invaluable to posterity. Burke's oratory was essentially didactic. His speeches were dissertations, or declaimed pamphlets, and while his hearers were absorbed in considering what they deemed the mere question of the hour he rose to grand generalizations until his arguments on particular topics assumed the dignity of universal propositions. To quote once more from Lord Lytton's poem:

"But what the faults that could admirers chill,
And then the benches plain Dundas could fill?
Partly in matter—too intent to teach—
Too filed as essay not to flag as speech;
Too swift a fellowship with those around,
Words too ornate, and reasonings too profound;
All this a Chatham might have brought in vogue—
Yes—but then Chatham did not speak in brogue!"

¹I struggle against opposition.

Fox, in distinction to Burke, at once seized the strong points of a case and avoiding all circuitous processes and subtle exposition, struck at the very heart of a subject, and forced the attention of his audience. Nevertheless, in 1790 Fox stated in the House of Commons that "if he were to put all the political information which he had learned from books, all that he gained from science, and all that any knowledge of the world and its affairs had taught him, into one scale; and if the improvements which he had derived from his right honorable friend's instruction and conversation were placed in the other, he should be at a loss to decide to which to give the preference." "Burke's talk," said Dr. Johnson, "is the ebullition of his mind. He does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full." On another occasion he declared: "Burke is the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you." Again: "No man of sense can meet Mr. Burke by accident under a gateway, to avoid a shower, without being convinced that he is the first man in England."

We may rest assured that Burke did not become her greatest orator, the most instructive conversationalist, and the first man in England (according to Dr. Johnson) without having previously undergone almost superhuman labor. Nay, more, he boasted of his incessant toil, and, disclaiming superior abilities, attributed his success to his superior industry.

We are accustomed to read accounts which seem almost fabulous of the oratorical powers of Curran. He could command at will the laughter and the tears of his audience; and it has been said that while he poured forth his invective like a stream of lava he could inflame the minds of his coun-

trymen almost to madness by a recital of their alleged wrongs. Lord Brougham, who, however, has given us no sketch of his life, calls him "the greatest orator, after Grattan and Plunket, that Ireland has produced, and, in every respect, worthy of being placed on a line with those great masters of speech." We might reasonably imagine that Curran if any one was a born orator; but what do we find stated if we turn to any of his biographies? We learn that his voice was bad, his articulation indistinct, and that he was nicknamed by his school fellows, "Stuttering Jack Curran."

Certainly a curious coincidence between his case and that of Demosthenes, to which I alluded before. Nor were the two men unlike in many other respects, though their style of oratory was wholly different. Curran's manner was awkward, and his general appearance ridiculous. The portrait of him prefixed to his life by Charles Phillips is one that can scarcely be forgotten. It was only by unremitting efforts that he conquered his innumerable faults, both of action and elocution. Keenly alive to his deficiencies he declaimed daily before a mirror (as Demosthenes had done two thousand years ago) and recited *ore rotundo* select passages from standard authors. His repeated failures at the London debating societies procured for him the title of "Orator Mum." But, as Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton has said: "The main difference between the great and the insignificant is energy, invincible determination, a purpose once fixed, and then — death or victory. That quality will do anything that can be done in the world." That quality Curran possessed, and with him the struggle ended not in death, but in victory. "He turned his shrill and stumbling brogue," writes one of his friends, "into a flexible, sustained, and finely modulated voice. His action became free and forcible; and he acquired a perfect

readiness in thinking on his legs. His oratorical training was as severe as any Greek ever underwent."

In a letter which is dated March 10, 1823, and written to Zachary Macaulay, with reference to the oratorical education of his son, Thomas Babington, Lord Brougham has these words: "I composed the peroration of my speech for the Queen in the Lords after reading and repeating Demosthenes for three or four weeks. I composed it twenty times over at least, and it certainly succeeded in a very extraordinary degree, and as far above any merits of its own." This famous peroration is as follows. The climax in the opening sentence has been much admired:—

"Such, my lords, is the case now before you! Such is the evidence in support of this measure—evidence inadequate to prove a debt—impotent to deprive of a civil right—ridiculous to convict of the lowest offence—scandalous if brought forward to support a charge of the highest nature which the law knows—monstrous to ruin the honor, to blast the name of an English Queen! What shall I say, then, if this is the proof by which an act of legislation, a parliamentary sentence, an *ex post facto* law, is sought to be passed against this defenceless woman? My lords, I pray you to pause. I do earnestly beseech you to take heed! You are standing upon the brink of a precipice—then beware! It will go forth your judgment, if sentence shall go forth against the Queen. But it will be the only judgment you ever pronounced which, instead of reaching its object, will return and bound back on those who give it.

"Save the country, my lords, from the horrors of this catastrophe—save yourselves from this peril—rescue that country of which you are the ornaments, but in which you can flourish no longer when severed from the people than the blossom when cut off from the roots and stem of the tree. Save the country that you may continue to adorn it—save the crown, which is in jeopardy—the aristocracy, which is shaken—save the altar, which must stagger with the blow that rends its kindred throne!

"You have said, my lords, you have willed—the church and the King have willed—that the Queen should be deprived of its solemn service. She has, instead of that solemnity, the heartfelt prayers of the people. She wants no prayers of mine. But I do here pour forth my humble supplications at the Throne of Mercy that that mercy may be poured down upon the people in a larger measure than the merits of their rulers may deserve, and that your hearts may be turned to justice."

Undoubtedly this is powerful rhetoric, though by no means beyond the reach of criticism; but the following passage from Lord Brougham's speech in the House of Commons in 1830, on negro slavery, is, I think, more vigorous and impulsive:

"Tell me not of rights—talk not of the property of the planter in his slaves. I deny the right—I acknowledge not the property. The principles, the feelings of our common nature rise in rebellion against it. Be the appeal made to the understanding or the heart, the sentence is the same that rejects it. In vain you tell me of laws that sanction such a claim.

"There is a law above all the enactments of human codes—the same throughout the world, the same in all times—such as it was before the daring genius of Columbus pierced the night of ages, and opened to one world the sources of power, wealth, and knowledge—to another all unutterable woes. It is the law written in the heart of man by the finger of his Maker; and by that law, unchangeable and eternal, while men despise fraud, and loathe rapine, and abhor blood, they will reject the wild and guilty phantasy that man can hold property in man! In vain you appeal to treatises, to covenants between nations, the covenants of the Almighty, whether of the old covenant or the new, denounce such unholy pretensions."

As a contrast to the rushing vehemence of Brougham let me quote a brief passage of calm beauty from Daniel Webster's oration on Adams and Jefferson. To me it seems almost

a perfect specimen of what the subtle grace of simple words can effect when they are combined by the hand of a master:

“Although no sculptured marble should rise to their memory, nor engraved stone bear record to their deeds, yet will their remembrance be as lasting as the land they honored. Marble columns may indeed molder into dust — time may erase all impress from the crumbling stone — but their fame remains, for with American liberty it rose, and with American liberty only can it perish. It was the last peal of yonder choir, ‘Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth evermore.’ I catch the solemn song, I echo that lofty strain of funeral triumph, ‘Their name liveth evermore.’”

The first of ancient critics asserted of the diction of Plato that it resembled a piece of sculpture or fine chasing rather than written composition. In like manner it can be shown, by innumerable quotations from the speeches of John Bright, that severe simplicity of style is in many cases the result of exquisite workmanship. I select two examples from parliamentary speeches delivered during the Russian war, to which, as indeed to all wars, Mr. Bright was strongly opposed.

“I am not, nor did I ever pretend to be a statesman; and that character is so tainted, and so equivocal in our day, that I am not sure that a pure and honorable ambition would aspire to it. I have not enjoyed for thirty years, like these noble lords, the honors and emoluments of office. I have not set my sails to every passing breeze. I am a plain and simple citizen, sent here by one of the foremost constituencies of the Empire, representing feebly, perhaps, but honestly, I dare aver, the opinions of very many and the true of all those who have sent me here. Let it not be said that I am alone in my condemnation of this war, and of this incapable and guilty administration.

“And even if I were alone, if mine were a solitary voice, raised amid the din of arms and the clamor of a venal press,

I should have the consolation I have to-night — and which I trust will be mine to the last moment of my existence — the priceless consolation that no word of mine has tended to promote the squandering of my country’s treasure, or the spilling of one drop of my country’s blood.”

The second sample that I shall quote is equally simple and effective: —

“I cannot but notice that an uneasy feeling exists as to the news which may arrive by the very next mail from the East. I do not suppose that your troops are to be beaten in actual conflict with the foe, or that they will be driven into the sea; but I am certain that many homes in England in which there now exists a fond hope that the distant one may return — many such homes will be rendered desolate when the next mail shall arrive.

“The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you can almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two sideposts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on. He takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and lowly; and it is on behalf of all these classes that I now make this solemn appeal.”

Though Mr. Bright is no classical scholar, he is obviously indebted to Horace for the wording of part of this passage. To prove, moreover, with what care he refines and elaborates his sentences, I may mention that in the first edition of his speeches the passage to which I refer read as follows: “But he calls at the castle of the noble and the mansion of the wealthy, equally as at the cottage of the humble.” The alteration, no doubt, is slight, but the improvement is undeniable.

Equally simple in its diction is the peroration of Mr. Gladstone’s speech in 1866 on Lord Grosvenor’s amendment to the motion for the second reading of the Suffrage Extension Bill. I will read it to you as it is not long: —

"We stand or fall with this bill, as has been declared by my noble friend, Lord Russell. We stand with it now; we may fall with it a short time hence. If we do so fall, we, or others in our places, shall rise with it hereafter. I shall not attempt to measure with precision the forces that are to be arrayed against us in the coming issue. Perhaps the great division of to-night is not to be the last, but only the first of a series of divisions. At some point of the contest you may possibly succeed. You may drive us from our seats. You may slay, you may bury the measure we have introduced. But we will write upon its gravestone for an epitaph this line, with certain confidence in its fulfilment:

*Exoriere aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor.*¹

You cannot fight against the future. Time is on our side. The great social forces which move onward in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of these debates does not for a moment impede or disturb, those great forces are against you; they work with us—they are marshalled in our support. And the banner which we now carry in the fight, though perhaps at some moment of the struggle it may droop over our sinking heads, will yet float again in the eye of heaven, and will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy, but to a certain and to a not distant victory."

purposed when I began this address merely to offer some plain and practical hints on the subject of public speaking—hints drawn partly from a personal study of many of the best English speakers, and partly from wise counsels that I have at times received from competent instructors, but I have dwelt so long upon the patient and indispensable labor by which almost all famous orators have attained their renown, that I have left myself no space for my intended observations. This, however, I cannot regret, as the time has, I

¹ Some avenger shall arise from our ashes.

hope, been not unprofitably employed in dilating upon the necessity of industry, and in reading to you varied, though necessarily brief, specimens of the choicest eloquence.

For several years I enjoyed the honor and privilege of being intimately acquainted with the lamented D'Arcy McGee. The subject of oratory was one about which he delighted to converse, and on which he was well qualified to discourse with authority. Though a ready speaker himself, both from natural genius and from long practice he was like Demosthenes or Pericles of old, by no means an advocate of strictly extemporaneous oratory. He held, with a wise living critic, that the ease with which a half-formed idea, swimming on the mind's surface, is clothed in equivocal words and illustrated with vague images, is the "fatal facility" which produces mediocrity of thought. It was for this reason that never, if he could help it, did he deliver even a ten-minutes' speech in public without careful premeditation and the use of the pen. He deemed it a want of respect, or rather an insult to an intelligent audience, that any ordinary man, relying on mere fluent elocution, should presume to advise or instruct them without having maturely reflected on the topic of discussion, and shaped his thoughts into order and consistency.

Hence, his few remarks on the murder of President Lincoln, and his brief address on the ter-centenary of Shakespeare, are favorable specimens of thoughtful eloquence. It is no secret to many of us that, during the latter years of his life in Montreal, when he so frequently spoke in the evening at the gatherings of national societies, he invariably wrote beforehand a comprehensive abridgment of his intended speech, and sent it to one of the papers for publication next morning. This circumstance will account for the fact that

the reports of the speeches to which I allude will be found, on comparison, to differ considerably in the versions of our two morning journals. The one recorded the substance, and often the very language of what actually was said: and the other printed an elaborate abstract of what the orator had designed to say. Mr. McGee told me more than once that he hoped some day to publish an annotated edition of all the speeches in Milton's "Paradise Lost," as he considered them almost faultless models of the rhetorical art. He regretted also the want of some cheap school book, which should contain select specimens of British oratory, with an introduction, and critical notes accompanying each extract.

But I must leave these recollections and hasten to a close. In his Inaugural Discourse delivered fifty years ago at the University of Glasgow, Lord Brougham seems to have said all that is essential on the subject of public speaking. "I should," says he, "lay it down as a rule admitting of no exception that a man will speak well in proportion as he has written much; and that, with equal talents, he will be the first extempore speaker who has prepared himself the most sedulously when he had an opportunity of delivering a premeditated speech. All the exceptions which I have heard cited to this principle are apparent ones only proving nothing more than that some few men of rare genius have become great speakers without preparation, but in nowise showing that with preparation they would not have reached a much higher pitch of excellence."

Few of us will refuse credit to these convictions of Lord Brougham, for, surely, we have all experienced that the tongue's most powerful auxiliary is the pen. "Nulla res," writes Cicero, "tantum ad disendum proficit quantum scriptio;" and again: "Caput est quod minime facimus:

est enim magni laboris quod fugimus, quam plurimum scribere." Once more: "Stylus optimus et præstantissimus dicendi effector et magister," that is to say, writing is the best and most excellent modeller and teacher of oratory; and to use his own beautiful simile, the habit of writing the higher passages in a speech will communicate force to the extemporaneous portions, as a boat retains her onward way from the impulse previously given, even when the strokes of the oar have ceased.

It is by no means advisable, in any case, that the whole of a speech should be committed to writing, and then committed to memory. Unless a man be an actor like Shiel — "the Kean of orators," as Lord Lytton called him — he will not be able to speak with real freedom, point or vigor, if he adopts the *memoriter* method. The strain upon the memory is apt to be too severe, and a collapse has not infrequently occurred from a speaker's having degraded himself to be the mere slave of his recollection.


Partial preparation is allowable — nay, advisable in the greatest orators. Exordiums and perorations, and the general sketch of the speech may well be arranged and shaped beforehand; but some scope should be left for the impulse of the moment. The greatest thoughts are often those struck out by the mind when at a glow, and in debate they are caught up by other minds in a congenial state. Had Macaulay not composed beforehand, and carefully committed to memory the whole of his speeches, he would probably have been considered the finest orator in the world. As it was, when he was called up suddenly, under circumstances which precluded the possibility of verbatim preparation, he produced more striking effects than usual, and attained that inspiring fervor which comes direct from the heart, and finds

at once a kindred response. Such, at any rate, is the verdict of those who listened most often to his oratory.

Nevertheless, the habit of composition will suggest to the speaker at all times the best word and the best sentence, and, according to universal experience, will be of invaluable assistance when the necessity arises for unpremeditated reply. Familiarity with writing and practice in speaking act and react advantageously upon one another. On this point I cannot resist an apposite quotation from Quintilian (Book x, chap. 7): "Both exercises are reciprocally beneficial since it is found that by writing we speak with great accuracy, and by speaking we write with greater ease."

"Reading," said Bacon, "makes a full man; speaking, a ready man; and writing, a correct man. The perfection of public speaking consists in the union of the three qualities — fulness, readiness, and correctness."

ZEBULON BAIRD VANCE

 ZEBULON BAIRD VANCE, American senator, was born in Buncombe Co., N. C., May 13, 1830, and died at Washington, D. C., April 14, 1894. He was educated at Washington College, Tenn., and at the University of North Carolina. After studying law and being admitted to the Bar in 1853, he settled in Asheville, in his native State, and in 1854 entered the North Carolina legislature. He was elected to Congress in 1858, at which time he was opposed to the secession of his State; nevertheless, after the outbreak of the Civil War, he entered the Confederate army as a captain in 1861. He was elected Governor of North Carolina in 1862 and reelected in 1864. In 1863, he urged President Davis to undertake negotiations with the United States to bring about a cessation of hostilities, and did much to mitigate the discomforts of the Union soldiers imprisoned within his jurisdiction. After the occupation of North Carolina by the Federal troops, he was imprisoned for some weeks at Washington. In 1870, he was elected to the United States Senate, but being refused admission resigned in 1872 and practiced law at Charlotte till his election for the third time in 1876 to the governorship of North Carolina. His political disabilities having now been removed by Congress, he was returned to the United States Senate, of which he continued a member until his death. Senator Vance was chairman of many congressional committees, and was one of the most popular members of the Upper House. He was an eloquent speaker and zealously advocated the cause of free silver and of tariff reform.

THE SLAVERY QUESTION

FROM SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
MARCH 16, 1860

THE scheme of removing and colonizing four million people is so utterly absurd in practice that it needs only to be suggested to exhibit its entire impracticability. Amalgamation is so odious that even the mind of a fanatic recoils in disgust and loathing from the prospect of intermingling the quick and jealous blood of the European with the putrid stream of African barbarism.

What, then, is best and right to be done with our slaves? Plainly and unequivocally, common sense says, keep the slave where he is now — in servitude. The interest of the