THE YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE; VOL. XIV, NO. 8; JULY, 1849; PP. 334-377

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649194254

The Yale literary magazine; Vol. XIV, No. 8; July, 1849; pp. 334-377 by   Various

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

VARIOUS

THE YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE; VOL. XIV, NO. 8; JULY, 1849; PP. 334-377

Trieste

THE

YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XIV. JULY, 1849. No. 8.

TOWNSEND PRIZE ESSAYS.

THE ELOQUENCE OF REVOLUTIONS.

BY CHARLES G. CAME, BUXTON, ME.

HOWEVER difficult it may be to define eloquence, its end is perfectly manifest—it is to sway men; not to please them, not to instruct, not to arouse in them the sentiments of justice and truth—but simply to sway them in accordance with the will of the speaker. This is accomplished by bringing the minds of his audience, as nearly as possible, into the same state with the orator's, leading them to think as he thinks or pretends to think, to feel as he feels or affects to feel, in short, to adopt the conclusions which he himself either honestly or designedly maintains at the time. The facilities to such a result must be sought in three sources—the only sources of true eloquence—" in the man, the subject, and in the occasion." But as we propose to consider the eloquence of a definite era, rather than investigate its nature in general, it is proper that particular attention should be given to the influence of the occasion.

In ordinary periods, while human affairs wore a busy but every-day aspect, we have recognized the usual exercise of eloquence under the two forms of logic and address based on mingled argument and feeling; no third kind, springing from mere passion, has ever appeared worthy of the name. The power of the logician is undoubted. As he forges his solid chain of reasoning with the successive links of luminous statement and rigid induction, severe analysis and ingenious synthesis, all conflicting errors must vanish from the honest mind. It is, certainly, to the credit of civilization, that there is no want of this special eloquence of the intellect at the bar and on the judicial bench, in the senate and the pulpit—and still more to the honor of human nature, that its power, in its appropriate province, is irresistible. But there are, even in the most ordinary times, questions of infinitely higher moment than those strictly pertaining to legal constructions, policy and creeds—questions addressing themselves not to any one faculty alone, but laying hold of the whole man. But so buried and corrupted are the general mass with low cares and lower desires, so intent on their own interests, so circumscribed in their sympathies, that these finer and spiritual claims pass by them " as the idle wind" which they " regard not." Not so with the true orator. He is at once aroused and kindled, and with these sensations, receives the potent injunction to arouse and kindle others. This is his mission, and in its prosecution, he lays under tribute every power of his nature. He invades the mystic realms of the heart, as well as traverses the field of argument. He rolls logic upon passion, description upon sentiment, entreaty upon invective, till the awakened hearer rises to the full magnitude of the theme.

It is from efforts like these that truth is ever spreading its enlightening away among men, that reforms from time to time spring up with revivifying energy, that the grand progress of society executes its gradual and secure advances. Their power, then, in the aggregate, is incalculable, since it is commensurate with the vast object to be attained—the development of humanity.

But a moment's attentive observation only is sufficient to show us that these triumphant results are due, not so much to the compulsive power of the eloquence which advocates them, as to their own obvious adaptation to the interests and requirements of man. They need only to be presented with full distinctness, when the good sense and the good feelings, which happily can never be trampled out of the human bosom, slowly welcome and adopt them. Consider these displays of eloquence, as they appear in ordinary times. Visit the ablest legislative body ;—you recognize a division upon some question vitally affecting the well-being and happiness of community—upon one side, you observe the force of long established law, custom and the general opinion of men—on the other, a band of eloquent advocates who throw around indisputable facts the clearest logic and the noblest sentiments. An unprejudiced observer, you await with eagerness the expected result. The issue is told, and in it are no traces of those eloquent pleadings—two or three, perhaps, have changed their opinions, but the measure is lost. Yet year after year, the public mind is plied at every point, the truth gradually makes its way over prejudice and ignorance, and ultimate success is certain. Thus slowly was the abolition of the slave trade accomplished in Great Britain, though Wilberforce, Pitt and Fox gave their combined energies to the cause. Again, approach another field, the noblest field of eloquence. Listen to the earnest annunciation of those truths which carry man forward into other worlds, exalting every moment into awful significance, making every act the hinge of an eternal destiny. What coldness, what indifference is engraved upon the features of the audience!—some awakened listener is thrown, perhaps, into solemn meditation, but the majority rise only to

Exchange
Yale University
Library
JAN 4 '49

sufficient warmth, to commend, on their homeward way, the eloquence of their preacher!

Now these, surely, are not what we have been taught to call the triumphs of the orator—this is not the resistless power of that divine art which, by universal consent, is ranked the highest manifestation of genius Where are those tones which have entranced listening thousands, and led hostile hearts captive to one imperious will? Where those thunderings that have convulsed the depths of society—those lightnings that have scathed and tumbled the loftiest fabrics of human power? We have not witnessed them—they are not of our time. To great revolutions we insensibly turn for an answer to these questions. To them and to the men who guided them, the inquiring student carries his thoughts with something of that awe with which the Jew reverts to Sinai and the fearless Law-giver.

Since all testimony is unanimous in ascribing preëminent force to the eloquence of revolutions, it may be well to consider the facilities which such crises contribute to a result utterly unapproached in quiet eras. We shall notice their individual operations and the fruits of their combined agencies.

As we have before intimated, the speaker's sway over his audience results from bringing their minds into unison with his own. This common sympathy is the very platform on which alone he can hope to move them. But this mere introductory achievement must, in general, constitute nearly his whole labor. When, from a state of lethargy and indifference, he has gradually raised his audience to this point, he can do but little more—he must trust to their own awakened convictions to work out, by farther inquiry and constant reflections, the particular conclusions to which he has arrived. But far from all this is the occasion in which the revolutionary orator is called to act. Here, in the ceaseless whirl of events, no place is found for stagnant lethargy and indifference. When the barriers of society are broken up and all the elements of agitation and alarm are abroad, then, certainly, no toilsome art of the orator is needed to arouse the feelings. On every hand, there are causes to startle all the faculties of the soul into tense and vigorous life—the past with its galling recollections, the present with its hourly shifting aspect, the future, a world of uncertainty, hope and fear. It is in these emergencies of painful eagerness, while the mass of common intellect is groping this way and that, like a blinded giant—while the memory of accumulated wrongs is dashing its burning tide through the nation's veins, and its great palpitating heart is aching for very utterance—that the orator comes forward to direct, to enlighten, to evoke the passion of the multitude and give it a language. Such were the scenes into which the gigantic genius of Mirabeau threw itself with undoubting confidence. Says an animated writer:—"One hundred thousand citizens filled the Tuilleries, the Place Vendôme, the streets adjacent, and copied bulletins were passed from hand to hand, circulated, thrown among the crowd, containing the occurrences of each moment of the debate." To this, let there be added the consciousness, in the mind of the orator, that all this commotion is not of an ephemeral nature, to pass away in a span and leave no consequences behind, but that its influence reaches through continents and through generations, destined to produce effects when the nation that gave it being shall have become unknown, and nothing in the *occasion* seems wanting to call out the noblest exhibitions of oratory.

But all this chaos of action and feeling would be "without form and void," as far as any definite effects are concerned, were there not some controlling spirits to "move upon the face of the waters" and out of the confusion to bring order, concentration and an aim. As true as it is that Demosthenes was an orator before he heard Callistratus, and Cicero before he listened to the rulers of the Forum, yet events alone can arouse and develop the native powers; in this sense, revolutions *create* orators. Eloquent men, in fact, constitute as much their peculiarity, their invariable concomitants, as excited feelings themselves. But let us look at the necessary structure of one of these minds, that spring, like Aphrodite, in beautiful maturity from the waves of popular strife, maddened by the mutilated members of power dethroned.

He who sets out with the design of dealing with the passions of a nation, of controlling as well as kindling them, must himself be endowed with unusual passion, or he cannot understand his work. The separation between genius and the common mind, has been said to be almost complete; but it cannot exceed that between intellect and passion. No unassisted exertion of the mind can comprehend the most ordinary workings of the heart. It is only, then, by a glowing sympathy with every feeling of the popular breast, that the orator can wield an influence. He must know the word that can inflame the whole man—the allusion that transports—the hint that appalls. He must, in short, embody the excitement of the crisis. But it will at once be seen that this passion must be accompanied by a mastering intellect—else, untimely and excessive fuel only would be added to consuming flames. Every impulse must be subjected to a *powerful* intellect, or it cannot be kept within necessary bounds—to a *practical* intellect, or from leading to barren results, all popular sway is soon lost, for at such times, the people, assuredly, *mean* something and are looking towards a consummation—to an intellect *cool* and *collected*, since the act of a moment in revolutions is often decisive and cannot be recalled or amended. Hence, what often appears to us in the eloquence of revolutions to be mere passions, is, properly, the calmest, surest induction of logic. Thus the bold announcement of Patrick Henry, "*We must fight!*" which fell with the power of inspiration upon the assembly, and aroused the whole land like the tones of a trumpet, was the deliberate conclusion of a cautious mind, based upon years of attentive observation and mature reflection. With this rare combination of intellect and passion, it matters little what other qualifications the orator may have; he may hold a lofty station, provided he forgets it in the greater office of a servant to humanity—he may possess extensive learning, provided the forge and anvil be concealed and the thunderbolt only shown; but without this all others are useless.

But the most intense excitement and the rarest talents would fail to achieve anything truly great or permanent without an adequate *subject*. Whether, indeed, it is supposable that there can be a conjunction of the two former without the presence of the latter, we cannot say,—such, certainly, has never been the fact. Men are too quiet, too contented with their lot, ever to enter into vast and dangerous projects, like that of throwing off an existing government, till driven and goaded on by real and distressing wrongs. If their oppressions are not intolerable, or else rapidly increasing, they choose rather to bear them in silence, than to suffer the inconveniences which the mildest revolutions never fail to bring. But how happens it that the orator is ever wedded to the popular side? Because the power that has hitherto successfully tyrannized, has nothing to advocate but force, which speaks for itself—scorns to use entreaty which wears the appearance of compromising its superiority—and contemptuously refers every argument to the decision of the bayonet. To the orator, then, not only from his own instincts, but from the necessary influences of the occasion, belong the noblest subjects which the mind can discuss or the heart embrace. His is the task of giving utterance to innocence outraged and persecuted—to the claims of manly independence to think and act for itself—to that love of justice which ever bewails the evils of oppression—to indignant patriotism, whose words, says Percival,

"Are few, but deep and solemn; and they break
Fresh from the fount of feeling, and are full
Of all that passion, which, on Carmel, fired
The holy prophet, when his lips were coals."

Liberty and philanthropy, knowledge and Christianity, are all alike interested in his labors and his success—not as these things affect his country and contemporaries alone, but as objects which are ever and everywhere destined to meet the requirements of progressive man, and, ultimately, to enjoy, through human means divinely blessed, an universal triumph.

From these considerations, which are gathered from every revolutionary period of any magnitude, we might easily conclude the quality of its oratory. And those specimens that have come down to us, equal our most favorable conclusions. We do not, let it be confessed, find in them the elaborate arrangement, the finished elegance, the faultless ornaments, that distinguish the best orations of peaceful times;

"For he whom Heaven
Hath called to be the awakener of a land,
Should have his soul's affections all absorbed
In that majestic purpose, and press on
To its fulfillment, as a mountain-born
And mighty stream, with all its vassal-rills,
Sweeps proudly to the ocean, *pausing not*
To dally with the flowers."

On the contrary, we meet with abrupt and broken sentences—trains of thought, apparently but half finished—uncouth comparisons and strained metaphors. Yet, amid all these imperfections, there are words forked with fiery power, words that breathe with deathless meaning, words that go straight to the heart and ever live as the mottos of nations. Nor are there always wanting the choicest gems of composition, which mere labor and art could never attain. For these passions of our fallen nature, which seem but the ministers of ruin, are, when exalted in a glorious cause, the unequalled architects of beauty; even as the

> "—— greatest monuments of fame
> And strength and art are easily out-done
> By spirits reprobate"—

from whose hands a structure fairer than anything earthly

> "Rose like an exhalation"—.

It cannot be denied—since we are incapable of appreciating all the circumstances amid which these efforts were pronounced—that we often find ourselves wondering at the effects which they are said to have produced. They appear simple, often, even common-place. But this examination of itself is inadequate to a decision; the causes we have seen to be of sufficient magnitude to produce the greatest effects—those effects are evident to the world.

As regards the revolutions in which they were put forth, they operated, not only to inflame those energies that were glowing apart in individual bosoms, but to unite, concentrate them, and give them a direction to practical ends. They cheered the sinking hopes of patriotism in the darkest hour—they placed a healthful control upon accustomed liberty.

By virtue of that never-fading interest which the story of revolutions excites in all, the mission of such an orator rises to almost unrivalled grandeur and importance. Over his life and words, thousands in every age, and those too, who are fitted to exercise the greatest influence, pore with unfailing delight. They treasure up his maxims—they catch his spirit—they imitate his example. Unlike the many who strive for fame, he needs not the prestige of success. His cause—though still at stake on the twin battle-fields of Individual Man and Society—*must go on*, and with it his renown. Though he fall early in the contest, before he has heard the first notes of freedom's victory, he goes down with unfaltering hopes—even then, a consolation sustains his spirit as noble as that so sublimely expressed by the dying Epaminondas: "I leave behind me two immortal daughters, Leuctra and Mantinea!"

THE BIBLE.

BY HENRY M. HASKELL, DOVER, N. H.

A book has come down to us, distinguished alike for its antiquity, its literary excellency and its moral teachings. It originated in some remote age in the past, was once almost hid in obscurity, and confined to a narrow sphere, but that sphere has been widening, till in its greatness it begins to be proportionate to its value. That book is the Bible.

It is placed in our hands in childhood, and is the last that is looked upon by declining old age. Considered as a literary work, it surpasses all other writings of antiquity, and stands forth in unrivaled preëminence. But the consideration, that we of the present generation have been witnesses of the sublime spectacle of its becoming a monument of literature upon which the sun never sets, greatly heightens our interest in it. We seem to be living in an age when it is acquiring new glory. If, then, we lay aside all the evidences of its divine origin, the number of its copies and the extent to which it is now read, are enough to fix our attention upon it. And while the greatness of the subject itself would intimidate us, this interest will not suffer us to let it pass without consideration. I shall attempt nothing like a full investigation of what would require volumes, but content myself with a few remarks upon its origin, authors, character, object, and final destiny.

More justly does it deserve to be called a monument of the early ages, than any other work. In its origin it runs far beyond the days of Homer, and presents to us a picture of what was to him the ancient world. It is not the creation of one man, but the accumulated writings of many. Not the product of one generation, but running through many centuries. It dates its beginning almost at the origin of nations, and emanated from nearly the same point which was the centre of the human race.

But who were its authors?

In speaking of them, it is worthy of observation that the variety of their acquirements and the cultivation of their minds are lost sight of behind the greatness and majesty of the truths which they utter. To many they seem only wise teachers, when in truth some of them at least unite the loftiest sublimity of the poet, and the profoundest knowledge of the scholar; are imbued with all the learning of the preceding ages, and gifted with minds to grasp and mould all into one symmetrical whole, and stamp that whole with the marks of their power. They lived not in the ideal, dreamy worlds of blind philosophy, nor yet under the misty darkness of superstition. Truth they set as the sun in their intellectual heavens, and in obedience to its laws, all the old discordant elements assumed their proper sphere and revolved in harmony. They bound together their accumulated fragments of