

**THE POWER OF  
ILLUSTRATION: AN  
ELEMENT OF SUCCESS IN  
PREACHING AND TEACHING**

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The Power of Illustration: An Element of Success in Preaching and Teaching by John Dowling

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POWER OF ILLUSTRATION

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AN ELEMENT OF SUCCESS

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IN PREACHING AND TEACHING:

By

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"You have no *likes* in your sermons. Christ taught that the kingdom of Heaven was *like* to leaven hid in meal—*like* to a grain of mustard, &c. You tell us what things are, but never what they are *LIKE*."—*Rev. Robert Hall to a brother minister.*

"I have used similitudes."—*Sacred Scriptures.*

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122 NASSAU STREET.

1848.

## PREFACE.

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THE substance of the following brief treatise, was delivered in the form of an address before a literary society, consisting of candidates for the gospel ministry, at the anniversary of the New-Hampton Theological Institution, for the year 1847; and subsequently repeated, with such modifications as the circumstances and occasion required, to the congregation under the pastoral care of the author.

In complying with the numerous requests that have been made to him for its publication, the author has been influenced by the opinion expressed by many, that the subject, though comparatively novel, is one of vast importance, not only to the efficiency and useful-

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ness of the Christian minister, but more especially to the Sabbath School teacher, and the Christian parent, who would succeed in adapting the momentous truths of the Gospel to the understandings of their youthful charge. It is hoped also that the interesting illustrations of truth, which have been selected as examples of the principles laid down, will render the work not devoid of interest to readers, who belong to neither of these classes.

Those who listened to the delivery of the discourse in its original form will find some few additional paragraphs, added, in most instances, for the purpose of adapting the work to the faithful and pious teacher as well as to the minister of the gospel. Such as it is, it is commended to the blessing of God, and to the careful attention of the youthful ministry and the Sabbath School teachers of our land, by their affectionate fellow-laborer and servant, for Christ's sake,

THE AUTHOR.

*New-York, September 20th, 1847.*

## PULPIT ILLUSTRATION.

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TRUE eloquence was defined by one of the Grecian school of oratory,\* as "the power of inventing whatever is persuasive in discourse;" and by another,† as "the power of persuading." Yet both these definitions are defective; and although Cicero seems to copy and indorse the definition of the Grecian orators, when he says, "eloquence is speaking in a manner proper to persuade;" yet this great master of the Latin school of eloquence gives a far more comprehensive and truthful description, when, following the promptings

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\* Isocrates.

† Aristotle.



of his own acute and discriminating intellect, he describes the "perfect orator," as one, "who, in speaking, instructs, delights, and moves the minds of his hearers." — "Optimus est enim orator, qui dicendo animos audientium, et docet, et delectat, et permovet."\* The object of eloquence is not solely to persuade, but also to instruct and to convince. And he who would secure an audience to be instructed, convinced, and persuaded, must, where attendance is voluntary, be possessed, in some good degree, of the power, also, to delight, and, consequently, to attract.

While we approve the good sense of the great Roman orator, in making the power of delighting one of the qualifications of

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\* M. Tullii Ciceronis, De Optimo Genere Oratorum, § 3. Tauchnitz's Edition of Cicero, Vol. II., p. 465.

his "perfect orator," his definition still appears to us to be imperfect. To us it seems manifest that, that orator cannot be a master of the art of eloquence who does not possess, in an eminent degree, the power of convincing by argument, in addition to the power of moving or persuading, by the force of entreaty or appeal. Were we called upon, therefore, to give a popular, and somewhat amplified definition of eloquence, we would say—It is *the art of speaking in such a way, as is best adapted to attract, to instruct, to convince, and to persuade.*—Voice, manner, action, and style, must be cultivated in order to *attract*; the mines of truth must be explored, and their rich treasures must be appropriated, in order to *instruct*; the *rationale* of truth, and the art of reasoning, must be mastered, in order to *convince*; and the wondrous nature of the human mind, the diversified motives of human action, and the hidden springs of

human emotion must be studied, and plied with the force of entreaty and appeal, in order to *persuade*. In briefer phrase, it is the power of pleasing which attracts; it is the *materiel* of truth which instructs; it is the force of argument which convinces; and it is the power of appeal which persuades;—while the faculty of perceiving and applying analogies, or, in other words, the power of illustration, where it is possessed, in a high degree, pervades every department of the orator's art, and contributes attractiveness and beauty, and force, and efficiency to the whole.

There is, perhaps, no single qualification of the orator so well-adapted to attract, to interest, and to instruct an audience, as a happy faculty of illustration; and here, unquestionably, is to be found the reason, why many a man of limited literary attainments, and entirely ignorant of