

When I grouped them, as to their matter, in five classes, I did not intend to be understood as forbidding the employment of a conclusion which might belong to two of these at once. For example, the peroration may be both a summary and an application. Indeed, whatever may be the matter of the epilogue, it should always be a virtual application. I would urge that the conclusion be always the subject of careful preparation. It is no less important that our last impression be a good one than our first. The practical sense which the hearer entertains of the effect and force of the sermon is that which is left upon his soul at its termination. "He is the conqueror who remains master of the battle-field."<sup>1</sup> Nothing can be more faulty than to leave the conclusion to the accidental suggestions of the moment. The speaker is then exhausted; he has expended his store of thoughts; he feels that while he is not willing to sit down he virtually has nothing more to say; he beats the air with empty declamation; he wears away the impression of the truths already unfolded, by their bald repetition; he endeavours to cover his retreat by noise. But the peroration, of all the parts of the discourse, should be the most sharply defined, the most trenchant, the most perspicuous, the most convergent. It would be a far smaller fault to break off, leaving the sermon a fragment, than to mar the impression already made by vague commonplaces or useless repetitions. Let not this critical part of discourse be left to the inspiration of chance.

But while an idle repetition, which gives nothing

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<sup>1</sup> *Vinet, Homiletics.*