

pupil who fails to attend while the alphabet is taught will be unable to go along with his class as they advance to words and sentences. Hence it is well that some preface shall precede the main subject, which will awaken attention and allay prejudice. The hearer should be approximated to the speaker's level of thought and emotion before the main subject is presented. But it is obvious that an *exordium* protracted beyond the attainment of this object would be an excrescence hostile to unity and to the purpose of the body of the discourse.

Our ordinary conversation does not usually introduce itself absolutely without preface; but often that introduction is virtually made for us before we begin to speak, by the remark of our interlocutor, by a question, by an event occurring in our presence, by a gesture, by an act. So if a similar circumstance has removed the supposed apathy or prejudice of your hearers and put them already in relation with your subject, the need of an *exordium* is already met. This may sometimes be done by the occasion itself, or by the devotional services preceding the sermon, or by the annunciation of the text. If any of these put you in possession of the attention of your audience, why may you not direct it at once to your main subject? A formal *exordium* is therefore not to be too much insisted on.

The *exordium*, as to its matter, must be, first, pertinent to the main subject of the sermon. It should be composed of an idea lying next thereto. If that idea is transferable to a different discourse and may introduce the second as well as the first, it is unfit to be the *exordium* of either. That which does not lead us up to

our subject is, in fact, no introduction to it.<sup>1</sup> This member of discourse is the last in which the preacher should indulge in vague commonplaces; for it is now that he is seeking to make a good first impression and to stir the sluggish interest of his hearers. But indulgence in disconnected introductions will incline him to these trite generalities; and the final issue will be, that he will be found commencing every discussion, however different the subjects, with the same stale ideas. Some preachers infringe the rule requiring a connected *exordium*, by affecting to begin with some topic which appears as remote as possible from the text, in order that they may exhibit their ingenuity by establishing an unexpected line of connection between them. While the audience are wondering how in the world he is to get around from his introduction to his text, he astonishes them by a gyration about the little circle of his knowledge, which leads him to the desired point. Every sensible hearer detects vanity as the motive of this display. Let the *exordium* never be far-fetched.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cicero de Orat., L. ii. c. 79, § 325. "Connexum autem ita sit principium consequenti orationi, ut non tanquam citharædi proœmium affectum aliquod, sed cohærens cum omni corpore membrum esse videatur. Nam nonnulli quum illud meditati ediderunt, sic ad reliqua transeunt, ut audientiam sibi fieri nolle videantur. Atque eiusmodi illa prolusio debet esse, non ut Samnitum, qui vibrant hastas ante pugnam, quibus in pugnando nihil utuntur; sed ut ipsius sententiis, quibus proluserunt, vel pugnare possint."

<sup>2</sup> Ep. ad Pisones, Horace, lines 146-150. He says of Homer:

"Nec reditum Diomedis ab interitu Meeleagri,  
Nec gemino bellum Trojamum Orditur ab ove,  
Semper ad eventum festinat, et in medias res,  
Non secus ac notas, auditorem rapit, et quæ  
Desperat tractata nitescere posse, relinquit."

The porch which leads into the house is in contact with it.

But, second, the introduction must not embody a thought which is essential to the main discussion. This is an error of structure to which the inexperienced and impulsive writer is prone. Approaching the work of composition with a mind fired by the subject, he finds those ideas which are cardinal to it prominent in his thoughts, and he can scarcely refrain from pouring out some one of them the moment he begins. The consequence is, that when he proceeds in earnest to deal with his proposition, he will find he has anticipated essential matter. He has now only the choice between a bald repetition of his first idea, or else a leaving of his argument fragmentary. A stone which is absolutely necessary to close his arch has been already laid in the threshold.

Third. An *exordium* should contain only one leading thought. If the first one introduced is related to the text, this leads us to it: why interpose another? If it is not, it should not enter the *exordium* at all: the second distinct thought which follows it does the real work, and the first was nugatory. There is no need of a porch to enter a porch: we desire to step at once from the porch into the house.

Fourth. While the thought of the *exordium* should by no means be trivial or uninteresting, neither should it be ambitious. It should not vie in splendour with all that are to succeed it, lest it should raise too much promise to the expectation of the hearers. The impression which they carry away from a sermon is usually that produced by its concluding parts. If you fail there to