

LECTURE XVII.

PERSUASION.

3. **T**HE phenomenon of instinctive sympathy is the orator's right arm in the work of persuasion. To sympathize is to be affected with our fellow-man, and because we see him affected. It is, as it were, a spiritual infection by which he impregnates us with his feeling. It is the secondary rainbow more faintly reflecting the glow of the first. The effect is immediate and instinctive: we feel simply because we see our fellow-creature feeling. Now, then, if you would make others feel, you must feel yourself. "*Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum tibi ipsi.*"¹ Let the preacher's own soul be fully penetrated and aroused by sacred emotion. The heavenly flame must be kindled first in

¹ Horace, Ep. ad Pisones, line 102.

Cicero de Orat., L. ii., c. xlv., § 189. "Non mehercule unquam apud iudices aut dolorem, aut misericordiam, aut invidiam, aut odium excitare dicendo volui, quin ipse, in commovendis iudiciis, iis ipsis sensibus ad quos illos adducere vellem, permoverer." C. xlvi., § 191: "Ipsa enim natura orationis ejus quæ suscipitur ad aliorum animos permovendos, oratorem ipsum magis etiam quam quenquam eorum qui audiunt, permovet."

Quintil., L. vi., c. ii., § 26. "Summa enim (quantum ego sentio) circa movendos affectus in hoc posita est, ut moveamur ipsi. Nam et luctus et iræ . . . etiam ridicula fuerit imitatio."

your own bosom, that by this law of sympathy it may radiate thence into the souls of your hearers.

I warn you emphatically, moreover, that this emotion in the speaker's soul must be genuine and not simulated. The mere appearance of ardent feeling, however artfully it may be imitated, will fail of producing the effect. There is an infallible intuition in man's heart by which he detects the reality or falsehood of the appearances of emotion; and those whose feelings are least sophisticated by artificial culture, even children and ignorant persons, have this insight only the more fully, perhaps, for that reason. Sympathy is a species of spiritual contagion. The painted automaton, when seen at a distance, may appear to glitter and to move itself like a living man; but when we touch it, we perceive at once that there is no life. I am so persuaded the rule is universal, that only genuine emotion can propagate a sympathetic effect, I do not doubt it is true even of the mimic eloquence of the stage. The consummate actor moves the spectators only because he has so realized to himself the sentiments and passions natural to the part he is acting, that his own proper personality is, for the time, merged in and superseded by that of the hero whom the poet's imagination has created. He actually feels and lives the history as his own.¹ The great

¹ Some distinguished actors, in mimic combats, fight *ex animo*. One was known, in a suicide scene, actually to stab himself. The charm of Garrick's acting was in his perfect and sincere realization of his character: he was, indeed, for the time, not an *actor*, but a real agent. It is related that a countryman was taken by his London friends to see Garrick in his favourite part of *Hamlet*. The city people were curious to learn the opinion of their unsophisticated friend concerning the entertainment. He was loud in his praise of the minor actors,

PERSUASION.

249

classic authorities with one voice assert both the possibility and necessity of this sincere passion. Cicero quotes Democritus and Plato as declaring that no one can be a good poet without ardour of the spirits and, as it were, a divine afflatus of passion. We have seen his testimony above, that "this kind of oration which is designed to move the spirits of others moves the orator himself even more than them who listen."¹

but greatly surprised them by his silence as to the great star. They asked him at length if he did not admire the representation of *Hamlet*. "What," said he—"of the young man whose father was poisoned? I thought nothing strange of his taking on greatly at such a crime, of course." The plain man had not apprehended that Garrick was acting at all, but supposed that he alone was a real character among the mimics, so complete was the assumption of the natural passions of the part.

See also Cicero de Orat., L. ii., c. xlv., § 193. "Quid potest esse tam fictum quam versus, quam scena, quam fabula? Tamen in hoc genere sæpe ipse vidi quum ex persona mihi ardere oculi hominis histrionis viderentur e sponda illa dicentis:

'Segregare abs te ausus, aut sine illo Salamina ingredi
Neque paternum adspectum es veritus?'

Nunquam illum '*adspectum*' dicebat, quin mihi Telamon iratus furere luctu filii videretur."

M. Bautain (*Art of Extempore Speech*, ch. iv., § 3) expresses an opposite view, not unnatural to one who only knew the intensely shallow and artificial stage of modern Paris. Says he: "The actor, in a word, is obliged to grimace morally as well as physically; and on this account, even when most successful, when most seeming to feel what he impersonates, as he in general feels it not, something of this is perceptible," etc.

This may be true of French actors; but if it is, it proves them poor actors. The true power of the drama is only felt when the scenic passions are real for the time.

¹ See previous note, and De Orat., L. ii., c. xlv., §§ 191, 194. Quintil., L. vi., c. i., §§ 44, 45.