



BRIMSTONE AND TREACLE

It would greatly trouble me if any of my remarks upon grotesque action should lead even one of you to commence posturing and performing; this would be to fly from bad to worse. We mentioned that Dr Hamilton took lessons from a master, in order to escape from his infirmity, but the result was manifestly not very encouraging, and I gravely fear that more faults are created than cured by professional teachers: perhaps the same result may follow from my own amateur attempt, but I would at least prevent that misfortune as far as possible by earnest warnings. Do not think of how you will gesticulate when you preach, but learn the art of doing the right thing without giving it any thought at all.

Our last rule is one which sums up all the others; *BE NATURAL IN YOUR ACTION*. Shun the very appearance of studied gesture. Art is cold, only nature is warm; let grace keep you clear of all seeming, and in every action, and in every place, be truthful, even if you should be considered rough and uncultivated. Your mannerism must always be your own, it must never be a polished lie, and what is the aping of gentility, the simulation of passion, the feigning of emotion, or the mimicry of another man's mode of delivery but a practical lie.

LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS

Therefore, avaunt all attitude and stare,
And start theatric, practised at the glass!

Our object is to remove the excrescences of uncouth nature, not to produce artificiality and affectation; we would prune the tree and by no means clip it into a set form. We would have our students think of action while they are with us at college, that they may never have need to think of it in after days. The matter is too inconsiderable to be made a part of your weekly study when you get into the actual battle of ministerial life; you must attend to the subject now, and have done with it. You are not sent of God to court smiles but to win souls; your teacher is not the dancing-master, but the Holy Spirit, and your pulpit manner is only worth a moment's thought because it may hinder your success by causing people to make remarks about the preacher when you want all their thoughts for the subject. If the best action had this effect I would urge you to forswear it, and if the worst gestures would prevent such a result I would advise you to practise them. All that I aim at is to advocate quiet, graceful, natural movements, because they are the least likely to be observed.

The whole business of delivery should be one; everything should harmonize; the thought, the spirit, the language, the tone, and the action should be all of a piece, and the whole should be, not for the winning of honour to ourselves, but for the glory of God and the good of men; if it be so there is no fear of your violating the rule as to being natural, for it will not occur to you to be otherwise. Yet have I one fear, and it is this: you may fall into a foolish imitation of some admired minister, and this will to some extent put you off from the right track. Each man's action should suit himself and grow out of his own personality. The style of Dr Goliath, who is six feet high, will not fit the stature and person of our friend Short who is a Zaccheus among preachers; neither will the respectable mannerism of an aged and honoured divine at all befit the youthful Apollos who is barely out of his teens. I have heard that for a season quite a number of young Congregational ministers imitated the pastor of the Weigh House, and so there were little Binneys everywhere copying the great Thomas in everything except his thoughtful preaching. A rumour is current that there are one or two young Spurgeons