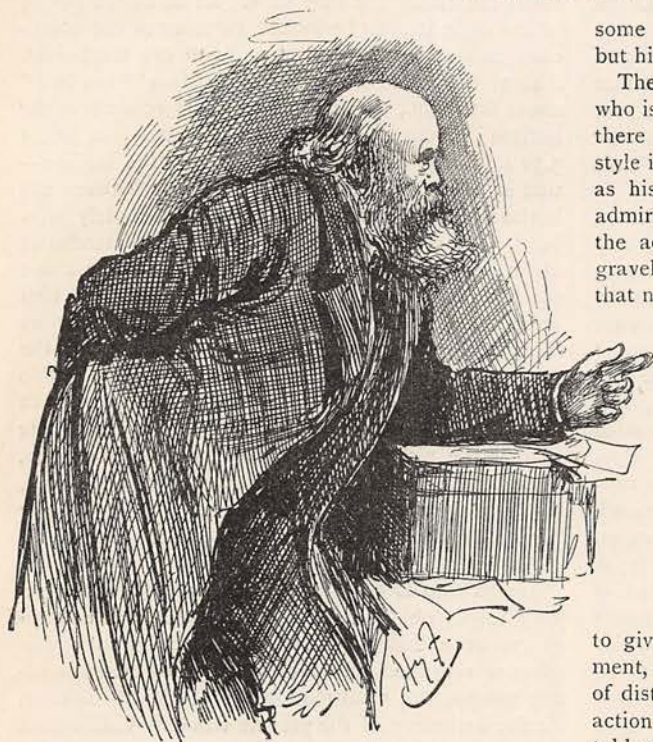


THE WORK OF PUBLIC SPEAKERS.

BY AN OLD REPORTER.



THE PREMIER.

MEMORIES of great speakers of the past crowd in upon the mind, but it is not of the classical orators of the past we wish to speak, it is of speakers of this generation, most of whom are "still with us." John Bright, Mr. Gladstone, the late Lord Iddesleigh, Mr. Goschen, Lord Sherbrooke, Lord Salisbury, Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Lord Randolph Churchill, and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain represent varied types of oratory, and—except pulpit oratory—they may be held to be fairly representative of popular public speakers of today. First of these is the eminent man whose recent loss Europe and America mourned. It did not require much knowledge of Mr. Bright's speeches to observe that they had traces of preparation. But in most it was the "framework" of the speech that was prepared, not the body put together. There had been evident careful study of the subject; there was often reference to some choice poem, as when the orator quoted "Content sits smiling on the lap of Toil," and there was usually a peroration, one of the finest of which was that in a famous Reform speech at Glasgow. I have heard, too, Mr. Bright speak without preparation except such as was the outcome of a few minutes' thought; and one speech on the temperance question, thus delivered, takes high rank. His delivery, sonorous, clear, and slow in comparison to

some speakers, aided the expression of his thought, but his gestures were few.

The Marquis of Salisbury takes rank as an orator who is heard to best effect in the speeches in which there have been opportunities for preparation. His style is robust, his manner at times not quite so good as his matter, but the "literary finish" is usually admirable. When he speaks in the House of Lords, the address is almost shorn of "action," but it is gravely uttered, with occasionally a sub-acid flavour that now and then comes to the surface in taunt. It has not fallen to my lot to report Lord Salisbury at any great public gathering, but there he becomes impressive.

Mr. Bright spoke best to the populace. Mr. Gladstone speaks best to the cultured, the intellectual—to those who can follow up classical allusion and olden lore. He is at his best, in the writer's opinion, in the House of Commons. Springing from his seat, with a sheet of paper in his hand, he commences calmly, looking right across at his opponents.

He refers little to his notes, a glance seems to give him the clue to the continuation of his argument, and a wealth of words pours out. His nicety of distinction is remarkable. He uses "action, action, action"—now he leans over the despatch-box on the table; now he menaces an opponent with an uplifted forefinger, then he sways round upright and looks his followers in the face, as if seeking their assent, and then he beats time with some volume he has just now



LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.

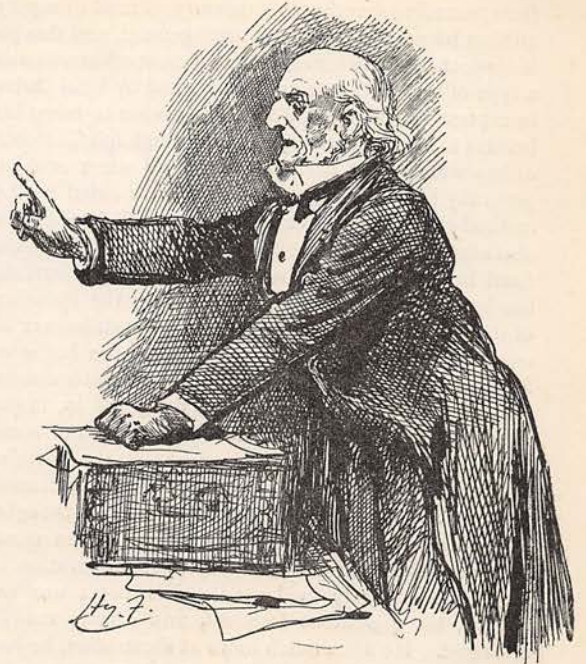
quoted from. His sentences are at times involved, but the proportions are massive, the wording is choice and accurate, and the voice gives tones of singular cadence.

Lord Sherbrooke—who, as Mr. Robert Lowe, took front rank as a political debater—was a picturesque figure in the House of Commons, and some of the speeches he delivered abound in happy allusions. His infirmity of short-sightedness lessened probably his use of notes, but as he stood at the Ministers' table, well-proportioned, upright, but his head a little bent forward, his white hair seeming to make his face ruddier, words fell from him clearly, except when the need for reference to notes for figures rendered his speech more hesitating, and wide reading brought in now a quartet from "Hudibras," then an excerpt from some Italian story, and few speakers had the art of presenting a case more ably or with more pungent criticism of opponents.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer in recent years has almost always been one of the foremost orators, and Mr. Goschen is a brilliant proof of the rule. But it may be that it is not so much in Parliament that his peculiar tact in speaking shows itself—that tact including readiness of reply. His preparation seems limited, his notes are few, but he has the ability to see the weak point in an antagonist's case in an instant, and his analysis of the error is unsparing. Before a vast audience, in which is a sprinkling of opponents, he seems for a time to court interruption, and then replies to the interjected arguments in a manner proving that his speeches have preparation of



MR. CHAMBERLAIN.



MR. GLADSTONE.

subject, but little beyond, and that his immense knowledge of public affairs comes to him as an argumentative aid, a reminder, and a storehouse whence his weapons are drawn.

The Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain occupies constantly a large portion of public attention; and in office or out of office, he does no small share of public work in the education of the electorate. His speeches have the ring of preparation; his notes, however, as far as I have seen on several occasions, are not very long. One speech, when he was President of the Board of Trade, I heard, and the notes occupied some three half-sheets of note-paper, a printed extract, gummed thereon, forming the bulk of the matter on one. He masters his subject, grasps the bearing of objections, is not inclined to answer interruptions much, and having mentally arranged the order of his speech, coolness, long-trained use of language in public life, and the ability to gauge the feelings of his audience, go far to make his speeches clear and cogent. His impromptu speeches are even happier, as far as I have heard them, they are more concise, perhaps a little less dogmatic, and though they do not display so wide a course of reading, they are terse, sometimes epigrammatic, and always able.

Grouping now other public speakers, the late Lord Iddesleigh might be referred to as one more happy in his unprepared speeches than in the set, formal ones duty now and then laid upon him. He had an easy, fluent style, facility in expression, and a kindly feeling pervaded most of his utterances. He could well attack, but he excelled in the efforts made before those who knew him, who valued him, and who regarded both the speech and the speaker. He seemed to derive much of his inspiration from surroundings or

from preceding speeches, his memory seemed to supply all that he needed as aids to arrangement, and though his speeches will never rank among great efforts, he was a type of the south-countryman trained by local duties to express his thoughts, and to endeavour to bring his hearers to his way of thought. Lord Randolph Churchill differs widely; his orations are more often attacks, generally prepared with greater skill, are aided by the method of reception, have more literary polish, and have also a much more stirring effect. The writer never heard Lord Beaconsfield (to whom Lord Randolph Churchill has been often compared), but reading the speeches of the former, for the contrast, one great difference at once strikes those who hear the scion of the house of Marlborough—his words are simpler and better chosen than the sesquipedalian sentences delighted in, in the later speeches of Mr. Disraeli. But there are some resemblances, and there is especially the wonder aroused at the daring of both, and the amazement from time to time at the unexpected turns of thought. Referring now to Sir Wilfrid Lawson, whose name has wide-spread if sectional interest, preparation is found more largely evidenced. His notes are extensive, his quotations frequent, and always readily arranged. He aims much more at illustration, he has a desire to avail himself of “apt alliteration’s artful aid,” and his humorous sallies are well known. He quotes much from the poets of progress, but there

is greater inequality in his platform efforts than there is with most of those whose names are well known.

Other orators’ names rise in the memory: silver-tongued Earl Granville, whose sentences trip pleasantly along, but none the less do they now and then show the sword in a silken sheath; Mr. Joseph Cowen, whose ornate thoughts gave dignity to even a rough Northumbrian burr, and whose Parliamentary speeches were for a few sessions among the literary treats “the House” afforded; Mr. Sexton, with that eloquence which faintly recalls some of Sheil’s; and many another. And from the observation of scores of such speakers, these general deductions may be drawn: that the first duty of the orator is to master the subject of which he is to speak; to arrange loosely the order in which he purposes to speak; and to leave the turn of the sentences more to the inspiration of the moment, to the needs of the audience, and to the suggestions which experience makes even in the midst of a speech when the speaker has learnt the art of “thinking on his legs.”

Possibly our public oratory is not so grand as it was; it is true that, with a few exceptions, public speakers are nearer on one level than they were; but though the average speaker soars less above his audience, he may be more effective in utterance if less eloquent in the expression of his thoughts.

AN ANATOMY OF HANDWRITING.

BY AN EXPERT. IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.



IN any diagnosis of handwriting, a very important consideration is that of the evidence which may be held to be indicative of the character of the physique of the writer. That handwriting can supply a clue thereto, there can be no question, though there must naturally be a variety of opinion on this part of the subject. The following general principles may, however, be accepted as commonly applicable to handwriting, especially that of the male sex:—

1. When the “down” strokes of certain letters—for example, “y” or “g” or “p” or “f”—are strongly or

‘y’ or ‘g’ : or ‘p’ or ‘f’

heavily formed, it indicates the writer to be a large-handed, strong-wristed person, especially the latter. That being so, the physique will usually be strong and powerful. The “up” or “return” strokes need not have the same feature, for here the thumb is largely the regulating motor.

2. A scrawling hand, of one uniform “lightness”

of stroke, invariably indicates the writer to be of enfeebled or aged physique.

Two specimens are produced by way of illustrating these fundamental principles in the anatomy of handwriting. As to the former specimen, the writer of it happens to be a gentleman in the best vigour of manhood, strikingly robust and well built; a noted sportsman, and, generally, a man of great strength of nerve and perfect physical frame. His handwriting decidedly endorses this certificate of his character. In regard to the other, the writer is almost an octogenarian: in fair, but by no means robust, health. He never was a strong man, in the accepted term: never handled a rod or gun in his life, though, from having been a teacher by profession, he had many a time, no doubt, handled the rod! But in each case the different characteristics of physique are markedly pronounced, the nerve and muscular strength of the one man showing in contrast to the nervelessness and general feebleness of the other. Of course there are many exceptions to the principles here set down, and many circumstances may favour or disfavour their *raison d’être*, such as the kind or quality of pen or quill employed, the conditions of writing, the state of health at the time, &c. But in nine instances out of ten, by the application of the foregoing simple test-principles, it is perfectly