MISCELLANY.

[*From Gardiner's "Music of Nature."*]

ORATORY.

Before knowledge was conveyed by the art of writing, or the use of books, men resorted to an elevated mode of speaking when they had any thing to communicate, in which the common interests were concerned; and as circumstances arose, oratory or public speaking must have prevailed with the ancients more than ourselves. The feelings of a speaker in addressing a large assembly are not those of common life. He is excited by the multitude around him and becomes the focal point of every eye, and every ear. In a situation like this, his passions are roused; nature dictates the tone of voice in which he speaks; and what in ordinary conversation would be expressed in many words, he forcibly depicts by a figure. Oratory is the language of the passions and we 'catch fire by what is kindled in another.' In ordinary speech we distinguish more nicely, and our descriptions may come nearer to the truth; but in oratory we yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description. There is a moving tone of voice, as Mr. Burke observes, an impassioned countenance, and agitated gesture, which affects independently of the things about which they are excited; so there are words which touch and move us, under the influence of passion more than any other. It is this moving tone of voice, and these emphatic words, that constitute the powerful efforts of oratory. It is said of Cæsar, when addressing his army, he chose long words for their grandeur. It would have been more correct to say—that he chose sonorous words, those that were full of sound and would fly to the farthest point of his battalion. A powerful voice is one of the first requisites of a good speaker, and he will not fail to use the clearest and best parts of it for the drift of his discourse, reserving the extremes for particular effects.

The pitch should be that of a tenor, or middle voice. Mr. Denman's is rich and sombre, but rather too low. Mr. Burke's was, on the contrary, too high—a sort of lofty cry—soaring too much in alto. Clearness and distinctness is an indispensable quality. An indistinct utterance is not only painful to the ear, but causes a great labor of attention, which ought not to be occupied with the words, but the ideas. From the following description of Lord Chatham, the great Pitt, we may conclude that he was an orator of the first description. "His voice was both full and clear; his lowest whisper was most distinctly heard; his middle tones were sweet, rich, and beautifully varied. When he elevated his voice to its highest pitch, the House was completely filled with the volume of sound; the effect was awful, except when he wished to cheer and animate; and then he had spirit-stirring notes which were perfectly irresistible. He frequently rose on a sudden from a very low to a very high key (note); but it seemed to be without effort. His diction was remarkably simple, but words were never chosen with greater ease. He was often familiar, and even playful; but it was the familiarity and playfulness of condescension—the lion that dangled with the kid. The terrible, however, was his peculiar power.—Then the whole House sunk before him. Still he was dignified and wonderful, as was his eloquence; it was attended with this important effect, that it impressed every hearer with a conviction that there was something in him finer even than his words; that the man was infinitely greater than the orator." It is important that the tone of voice should invite attention; the finest strains of eloquence, delivered in the same level tone, always fail to produce much effect. Musically speaking he is the best orator, who has the greatest number of tones at his command, who unites the upper and lower voices to his natural speaking voice.

Mr. Kean possesses these qualifications in the highest degree. He has at his command the greatest number of effects—having a range of tone from F below the line to F above it—the natural key of his voice being that of B flat, a note lower than Talma's. His hard guttural tone upon G is as piercing as the third string of a violencello; whilst his mezzo and pianissimo expressions are as soft as from the voice of a woman. He has three distinct sets of tones; as if he occasionally played upon a flute, clarionet, and bassoon, which he uses as the passion dictates. In the scene with Lady Ann his notes are of the most touching and persuasive kind, often springing from the harmonies of his natural voice, which he elicits with exquisite delicacy. We shall instance the peculiar softness of the following expressions:—

You mock me, mother. Remember.

But the same voice, which moved with a ruder stroke, gave the yell and choked utterance of a savage.

Shylock. Oh! if I can catch him once upon the hip.

His tones of furious passion are deep seated in the chest, like those of the lion and tiger, and it is mastery over these instinctive tones by which he so powerfully moves his audience. At times he vomits a torrent of words in a breath, yet avails himself of all the advantages of deliberation. His pauses give a grandeur to his performance, and speak more than words themselves.

The French actors know nothing of this music of the voice; their recitation is disagreeably high and chanting. In the year 1822, the writer was present at the play of "Regulus," in Paris, and saw their famous actor Talma, who is certainly a great exception to this remark. The tone of his voice was strikingly clear, sonorous, and beautiful.

In his whisper there was something touching and divine. The character of Regulus, in which he appeared, was evidently intended to represent that of Bonaparte; and at the following expression—

Tremblez, tremblez, Tyrans—

the shouts of applause were, if possible, more loud and uprorious than any thing heard in England.

The voice of Cooke was sharp and powerful, possessing little variety, and none of the softer inflections. In compass and celerity of vocal motion he was superior to any other orator, which peculiarly adapted him for scenes of villany.

Words lengthen or shorten under the passion with which they are uttered; in anger, we hurry over them; in grief, we dwell upon them.

Kemble had a voice of very limited powers, and of a level tone, which, without his talent as an actor, would have interested little. That hollowness so peculiar to him, rather increased than diminished certain effects; as in the character of the Stranger. His haggard look, and deep sepulchral tones, which struck awfully upon the ear—'like the croak of night's funeral bird,'—admirably qualified him to depict the workings of a mind weighed down with sorrow and irretrievable calamity.

So powerfully are we affected by the tones of voice, that it is often of more importance to the just representation of character, than any other qualification we may possess. The delicious sweetness and charming tone of Miss Murray's voice can never be forgotten, and the accents of Miss O'Neil, if possible, were more beautiful than herself.

Macready, though an actor of great eminence, possesses but few of these excellencies. His voice is hard and croaking, and though his figure is well suited, his tones belong not to Hamlet. By aiming too much at distinction he incurs a false pronunciation of the vowels, which proceeds from his drawing back too much the corners of his mouth; so that we have *scarn*, for scorn; *go farth*, for go forth; *harrible! harrible!* for horrible! horrible! His *sotto voce* is more perfect; in the scene where he gives instruction to the players, he is highly natural and pleasing.

A voice adapted to the character is as necessary to the drama, as a particular instrument to the orchestra, to express the idea of the composer.

The great inattentions shown to this often renders the character unnatural and ridiculous; as in common life, we meet sometimes a stout athletic man with the piping voice of a child, and a spare, slender creature with the hollow tone of a giant. Why are we so convulsed with laughter at the incomparable Liston? Perhaps the oddity arises from the junction of his pompous voice with the mean and senseless character he personates. It is like putting the grave and sententious expression of a Lord Chancellor into the mouth an idiot. This swelling of the words in a dignified character has its due effect; for, as Lord Pembroke observed, Johnson's sayings would not have appeared half so extraordinary but for his bow-wow way.

Liston's powers are of the highest order. His *voce dipetto* is perfect, and the range of his voice is more extentsive than any performer upon the stage. These qualifications would have given him the greatest advantages in tragedy; but then the singularity of his performance would have been destroyed. It is this odd union of voice, face, and figure, that renders him so unlike any other actor,—so truly comic, with a humor so unique, that no one has yet dared to imitate him.

At the bar, or in the pulpit, oratory has seldom risen to its highest pitch of excellence. There wants the action and business of the stage to keep alive the passions of the mind. It is true the actor has nothing to do with the invention of the images or sentiments; they are furnished by the poet. He has only to depict them by appropriate voice and gesture.

Mr. Burke's oratory was of a contrary kind,—nothing could exceed the flow of his language, and the powers of his imagination. At the trial of Warren Hastings, his shrill voice rang through the hall, but it was cold and ineffective. There wanted the darker tones, to clothe the sublime images of his fancy. As it regarded the effects of voice, there was more natural eloquence in the prisoner at the bar, when he called upon the lords to save him from the fury of his accusers.

In the pulpit, the want of vocal expression is still more apparent. The preacher is in too great possession of the field. The familiarity of the subject and the want of novelty beget a sameness of tone, that wearies the attention and destroys the interest.

As an exception to this remark, we may mention the performance of the Rev. Mr. Irving, at the Scotch church, which is purely a musical exhibition, not a little aided by dress and gesture. His voice is that of a clear sonorous basso of considerable compass.

In manner he is slow and reverential, never hurrying beyond the time adagio,—carefully using the right tone for the particular passion.

His prayer commencing with the words, "Almighty and most merciful Father, in whom we live, move and have our being," reminded me of that slow and solemn strain of deep holding notes, gradually ascending, which describes the rising of the moon in Haydn's *Creation*.

Although the advantages of a musical voice have been fully shown, yet there are speakers of great eminence but little qualified in this particular. As an instance we may mention the extraordinary powers of the late Rev. Robert Hall, of Leicester, whose voice was naturally so deficient in strength, that in a large auditory he was heard with difficulty: yet the stores of his mind and the brilliancy of his conceptions place him in the first rank of orators. His delivery, though feeble, was peculiarly neat and graceful, and when urged by the fire of his imagination, became so rapid that no short-hand writer was able to take down his words. The scintillations of his fancy and the flow of his eloquence may be compared to that of Burke; and as a writer of the English language, he is not surpassed by any one, ancient or modern.

From the earliest state of society to the present time, the power of oratory has been felt and acknowledged. In savage states, recently discovered, the chiefs and rulers have obtained their power by the influence of this noble and enthusiastic art; and we may conclude that, as language refines, with grace of action and the pomp of words, its influence will keep pace with the polish of society.

HOME AFFAIRS.

CONGRESS.

The following is a copy of the Bill introduced into the Senate by Mr. Clay, on Tuesday, 12th inst.:

A Bill to modify the Act of the 14th July, 1832, and all other Acts imposing duties on imports.

1. Be it enacted, &c. That, from and after the 30th day of September, 1833, in all cases where duties are imposed on foreign imports by the act of the 14th day of July, 1832, entitled "An act to alter and amend the several acts imposing duties on imports," or by any other act, shall exceed twenty per cent. on the value thereof, one tenth part of such excess shall be deducted; from and after the 30th day of September, 1835, another tenth part shall be deducted; from and after the 30th day of September, 1837, another tenth part thereof shall be deducted; from and after the 30th day of September, 1839, another tenth part thereof shall be deducted; and from and after the 30th day of September, 1841, one half of the residue of such excess shall be deducted; and from and after the 30th day of September, 1842, the other half thereof shall be deducted.

2. And be it further enacted, That so much of the second section of the act of the 14th of July aforesaid, as fixes the rate of duty on all milled and fulled cloth, known by the name of plains, kerseys, or kendal cottons, of which wool is the only material, the value whereof does not exceed thirty-five cents a square yard, at five per cent. ad valorem, shall be, and the same is hereby repealed. And the said articles shall be subjected to the same duty of fifty per cent. as is provided by the said second section for other manufactures of wool, which duty