

The Power of Spoken Thought.

For a long time the only method of writing was by cutting letters in tables of stone, a very slow and exceedingly difficult task. Then later on the writing material was parchment and papyrus, but it was not until during the Middle ages that paper was manufactured; so during all this time the principal method of preserving knowledge and teaching it to the people was by word of mouth. In fact there was one time during the Dark ages when the very use of letters as well as of books was nearly forgotten. Had it not been for the sermons and lectures that were delivered by the learned men of that time much useful knowledge would have been lost and the progress of civilization would have been retarded in like proportion. It is to the power of spoken thoughts to a great extent that we owe our knowledge of the early history of the world.

But it is of the present that I wish to speak, of the present influence of spoken thoughts. In the first place we find that spoken thoughts are more forcible, leave a

more lasting impression, than any other way of expressing thought. One reason for this is that we identify the thoughts with the speaker and the words that he utters are then given a living force; we feel all that he feels, and realize the value of his thoughts just as he does. You will realize the importance of this if you compare the interest taken in a lecture published after it has been delivered with that of one equally well written but which has not been delivered. The one is read almost universally, while the other may pass with but little attention.

May we not say with certainty that all advancement in science is the result of some independent thinker putting his opinions before the public? Since all we know is founded upon opinions, the expression of the opinions of learned men is what convinces us of the truth of, — it may be scientific principles.

If a person sets himself about to reform a community does he do it by written advice alone? No, indeed! He must go among the people and by his presence, — his words and actions, teach them what is right and what is wrong. We have a good example

of the superiority of spoken thoughts in the fact that the laws of God were powerless and forgotten when written upon tables of stone, and the nation fell back into idolatry and worshipped their gods and images and all creatures more than they did the Creator. But when Jesus Christ came upon the earth, and "spoke as never man spake" and went about doing good, healing the sick, teaching the gospel to all the people, and bleeding upon the cross for them, then it was that the will of God became a living power. Ignorance and superstition were no longer the ruling passions among men, but gave place to a religion pure and undefiled.

There is something about the tone of the voice, we hardly know what, that has a wonderful effect upon our feelings. It is said that the singing of the Marseilles Hymn in the streets of Paris urged on the French Revolution. What but the human voice could have thrilled the heart with such a passionate desire for glory, and fired the passions of "Ye sons of France" with such an intense hatred for their oppressors and desire for revenge, as to cause them to bare their bosoms to that

terrible rain of fire that passed across the European continent.

Then think if you will, of the wonderful influence of George Washington whose relation to The United States and its government is so well known; of Patrick Henry and his success as a lawyer as well as a political speaker; and of Daniel Webster whose talent extends to almost every position in which a public speaker can be placed.

There is another thought in this line which I wish to express, - That of the multitude of misunderstandings which come from written thoughts. Different people reading the same sentence may get entirely different impressions, but when the words are spoken the tone of the voice and the expression on the face make the meaning perfectly clear.

In Will Carleton's beautiful poem entitled The "First Settler's Story" we find an excellent example of the influence which a few words uttered thoughtlessly may have upon the life of an individual, and the author well says of speech in general;

"Boys flying kites haul in their white-winged birds;
 You can't do that way when you're flying words.
 'Careful with fire', is good advice, we know;
 'Careful with words', is ten times doubly so.
 Thoughts unexpressed may fall back dead;
 But God himself can't kill them when they're said.
 We little know what pain and sorrow, what misery
 a few idle words uttered thoughtlessly may cause.
 Sometimes a word may cancel years of friendship
 and for want of other words the tie of friend-
 ship remains forever broken.

Kind words have in them the power
 to heal almost any wounded heart; but thoughts
 are not always best expressed by words for the
 tone of the voice often tells more than words
 could ever tell, and then too, "Actions speak louder
 than words." How easy it is to distinguish
 between the cry of anguish and the cry of joy!
 Although in an unknown tongue we can
 recognize the voice of pleasure and the voice
 of anger.

What can stimulate a person more than
 to hear a word of praise uttered in his behalf.
 It makes him happy to think that some
 one appreciates his efforts. This is
 most noticable in a child who will do

almost anything for praise, but "Men are but children of a larger growth" in this as well as in other things. Many times a word of encouragement has saved a person from degradation and a word of discouragement has perhaps as often sent him to destruction.

To sum it all up we find that the power of spoken thoughts is almost unlimited. They have power to add to our happiness or to cause us grief; to stimulate or to weaken our powers of action; to promote intelligence and consequently civilization; to lift us to a higher plane of morality or on the other hand to lower us; in fact "to make us or to mar us."

Mellie McDonald.