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THE Yale-Harvard intercollegiate debates will seem to many like an attempt to revive a dead interest in a lost art. Half a century ago the debating society was the pathway to fame in the college world. Many, perhaps most, New England towns, had the same organization. To-day both have practically vanished and belong to the golden age. Whatever be the reason, it is certain that the public speaker has lost the remarkable power and influence he formerly possessed. Once he led parties and moulded public opinion. Now he is listened to with amusement and interest as a gentle intellectual stimulant, or tolerated as a mild nuisance. Various reasons are popularly given for this state of things. Sometimes it is said there are no great men; and sometimes that there are no great questions. Perhaps the truer reason lies in the changed intellectual temper of the times. The prevalent sovereignty of science and the business-like habits of mind have both led men to respect facts. No opinion passes current unless it is stamped with the image and the superscription of the patient grubbing investigator. The popular taste is unenthusiastically rational. It demands the shortest road to the goal of every public question. Our popular speakers have become the droning peddlers of dreary statistics. One cannot attend even a political rally without being stifled by cart loads of figures dustily dumped down upon his head. He goes away a sadder but very often no wiser man. There is even a tendency toward an idolatrous reverence for crude facts without much regard to the senti-

ments or ideas based upon them. People threaten to lose their eyesight like moles merely from grubbing in the earth. But all these tendencies are fatal both to the inspiration and the effect of eloquence. It deals with the aspirations, the ideals, and the sentiments of men.

It is also characteristic of this changed temper of the times that men of action, not men of words are demanded. Who cares for the talker? Every American can and does talk prodigiously on the slightest provocation—and nobody listens. The sharp, swift, decisive man of business performs the achievements and wins the tremendous power of modern society, while the orator is idly haranguing the crowd. The speaker has become like an ornamental vase, chiefly useful in the parlor. There is a certain justice in this. It is a great thing—this modern lesson of ours to respect the man who can accomplish things. But there is also a great injustice in it. Society can no more afford to let the orator disappear than it can afford to let music, architecture or painting disappear. Like them, oratory appeals to the higher instincts of men, and the source of all true practical action.

All this may seem a lengthy and perhaps uncalled for introduction to the subject of the second intercollegiate debate. As an attempt to give an adequate and public expression to the intellectual life of the colleges it has a demand on everybody's support. But if these contests are to command the permanent interest of athletic contests they must borrow something of the splendid energy and life of athletics. Spirit and zest should be given by alternative debate. Memorized recitations smell more or less suspiciously of the classroom. Their permanent success would probably be of some value to our colleges. They might help to dispel the vague notion intruding into the average American mind that college life means four years of in- and out-door games accompanied by a grand good time, with nothing particular to do.

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IN the next number of the *YALE LAW JOURNAL* there will be a discussion of the "Methods of Legal Education" by eminent contributors.