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HOW TO TRAIN THE SPEAKING VOICE

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HOW TO TRAIN THE SPEAKING VOICE

BY THE REV.

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PREFACE

SO many excellent works bearing on our subject are already in circulation, that a word of explanation is necessary for the appearance of this manual.

The author is well-known in Australia and New Zealand as a Lecturer on subjects relating to Voice and Elocution. Many years of experience in training men for the public platform, particularly in connection with Melbourne University, have brought home to him the fact that very many aspirants would welcome a work of this kind. For practical purposes, some of the books in circulation contain far too much anatomy and physiology ; some, far

too many lists of words and exercises ; some, too many elocutionary rules and markings ; and, generally, an excess of detail which defeats the end we have in view. Some works, again, are too bulky and elaborate ; while smaller works—often very excellent in many points—fall short of their possible effectiveness in various ways.

It is not the author's desire to undervalue the literature of the subject, but rather, acknowledging to the full its undoubted excellence, to endeavour to supplement it by attempting to meet a demand which has been repeatedly made to him for a work which would be at once brief, comprehensive, and practical—a work which would rigorously omit what might prove burdensome or bewildering to the average reader ; while, at the same time, it should give, in a simple and readable way, practical

guidance in what is absolutely essential for the making of a reader and speaker.

The subject is one that cannot be quite successfully taught by means of books. Still, not a little can be accomplished if the ambitious tyro is wisely guided. All the more so if he is encouraged to do most of the work for himself, instead of having every little detail worked out for him by another.

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INTRODUCTION

THE living voice has a witchery all its own. No matter how rich and flexible the language or how skilled the writer, there will always remain a subtle something which the living voice alone can express. Masters in the art of composition have always felt the limitations of the pen. Tennyson's lines are exceptionally clear and intelligible, and yet any one who was privileged to hear the poet recite them could not help admitting that until then the half had not been told. Such an experience was as the opening of the eyes to the blind. It is no wonder that Ruskin placed the art of reading aloud at the head of the list of modern accomplishments. The verdict of

common experience is entirely in favour of good elocution. Audiences are perpetually bemoaning the rarity of it, while the advent of a speaker who can make the voice a revealer of the soul is hailed with grateful praise.

The comparatively scant attention given to the speaking voice is one of the most surprising defects of modern education. Valuable as it is for all, the cultivation of the speaking voice is a sheer necessity of life for those who are called to the service of the spoken word. The reprehensibly languid interest taken by colleges and Churches in the culture of vocal expression is all the more surprising when we consider the practical tendency of present-day education. From the lowest forms at school, up to graduation at the university, educationists have been busy asking the most practical questions and re-casting the curriculum to

suit the practical demands of life ; and yet here is an art still struggling for the recognition it eminently deserves.

There must be reasons for this neglect. Probably the chief one is a suspicion that the study of this art tends to make one unnatural. It must be admitted that the suspicion is not without foundation. At the same time, it will be well to examine briefly what is really meant by the charge of artificiality.

Our contention is that this charge cannot be laid against the art itself, but only against wrong methods on the part of the teacher, or against imperfect study on the part of the learner. When the critic says he prefers "naturalness" to what he is pleased to term "the tricks of elocution," what does he really mean? Does he mean to lay it down as a general principle that whatever "comes naturally" to one is always to be preferred

to a skill which is the result of training? In this sense of the word, nothing is more natural than bad grammar or inconsequent reasoning. The kleptomaniac finds it very natural to steal, most people find it natural to be lazy, and all find it natural, in many respects, to prefer the wrong to the right. It must, therefore, be evident that this ambiguous term is frequently used in a sense which must be ruled out of court when we are considering whether this or that art deserves to be cultivated.

We confine our attention, then, to the nobler acceptance of the term. Not what we do with the untutored ease of instinct, but what Nature herself directs that we ought to do, will be, in the highest and best sense, "natural." Every department of human activity is governed by certain laws; and all education finds its justification in the discovery of them, and in teaching men

to obey them. Thus, the laws of syntax belong to the nature of universal grammar ; the laws of reasoning to the nature of logic, and the laws of conduct to the nature of ethics. Hence, these laws have been examined, formulated, and enforced, with the view of training men who are by nature untrue to Nature. Even so is elocution justified as an art which can teach men to use the voice according to the direction of Nature.

It is very easy, very common, and thus, in one sense of the term, very "natural," to do wrong things with the voice. All the faults may be grouped under two heads : (1) faults in the use of the voice as a mechanism, and (2) faults of the voice as a revealer of thought and emotion. Under the first head will come such faults as wrong use of breath, harshness of voice, bad articulation, &c. We may call these faults

“natural” if we like, but they are certainly not according to the nature of the wonderful mechanism provided to us by Nature. And nothing can be more reasonable than to study the capabilities of the lungs, the muscles that control breathing, the larynx, the soft palate, the tongue, and the lower jaw, with a view to securing at once our personal comfort in the use of the voice, and also the comfort and pleasure of our audiences in listening to us.

Surely, no more practical ends could be put before the mind of the professional voice-user than these two: his own comfort, and that of his audience. How many public speakers abuse their vocal mechanism, endure needless discomfort in their public work, suffer again and again from a break-down of the voice, and in almost all their public speaking inflict avoidable discomfort upon their audience! These

experiences are convincing enough to prove that Nature's laws are being transgressed, that the untrained speaker is habitually doing unnatural things, and that a wise course of training is nothing short of imperative.

Assuming, then, that the public speaker has sufficiently trained himself to use Nature's mechanism in the way Nature intends it should be used, he ought to be able to address a large audience not only without personal discomfort, but in such a way that every auditor can at least hear every word with perfect ease and accuracy. But his work is not yet done; for his words may, notwithstanding their distinctness, strike the ear with the lifeless monotony of a mere speaking-machine. This brings us, in the second place, to faults of the voice as a revealer of thought and emotion. It is just this power of the voice to reveal

more than the words in themselves express that constitutes the chief distinction between the written and the spoken word. The faults in this case are more in the region of the mind than in that of muscle. Unless the mind is filled with the thought and the heart stirred with the emotion, the utterance will possess no revealing quality, simply because there is nothing to reveal.

Now, it is a curious fact that even the most monotonous speakers will compel attention when talking to a few friends upon any subject that interests and stirs them. In such circumstances monotony vanishes, and a wonderful amount of variety is introduced. The voice rises and falls, glides up and down, pauses, whispers, and so forth, in the most expressive way. Why, then, does all this arrestive and revealing variety disappear whenever the speaker addresses a public audience? Several

reasons may be assigned, such as the attempted imitation of defective models or the unfortunate traditions of platform or pulpit, or some ill-defined idea that the altered situation demands monotony if one is to be distinctly heard. Whatever may be adduced by way of explanation, there can be no doubt that the mind and heart of a monotonous public speaker are not moved on the platform in the same way as they are in private conversation. In the one case thought and emotion have full play, and the voice follows suit; in the other case thought and emotion are either vaguely operative or excessively restrained.

The technique of all good delivery finds its prototype in animated conversation. All the so-called "rules of elocution" are simply the result of analysing Nature's habit in the uses of every-day speech. There is a natural eloquence that plays upon the voice,

and those who would master the mystery of its music must lend an attentive ear to Nature. No doubt, conversation will not always reveal the full power of the voice; but nevertheless all the secrets of good elocution are there. We have only to make a fairly wide induction, gathering together the hints, tendencies, and suggestions of Nature, in order to possess the material upon which Art must be allowed to work so as to intensify and refine every legitimate effect that goes to make up the music of speech.

Of course, there is a very mechanical way of attempting to do this, but it may easily be avoided if we learn at once the main secret of natural eloquence. It is simply this: the voice invariably follows the dictates of the mind and the heart. When one reads from a book, the temptation is to utter the words before he has

seized the thought, whereas in talking with a friend the thoughts come first and then the words. Hence the importance of so teaching the art of elocution that the pupil will never attempt to deliver words the significance of which he has not first thoroughly mastered by intelligent and sympathetic study. The intelligence, the imagination, and the emotion of the speaker must first be captured by the sense and sentiment of his deliverance, if he is to succeed in capturing the mind and heart of his audience. The dignity of noble poetry or prose must not be degraded to the triviality of conversational style; but, at the same time, the formality of art must keep close to the truth of Nature.

MULTUM IN PARVO

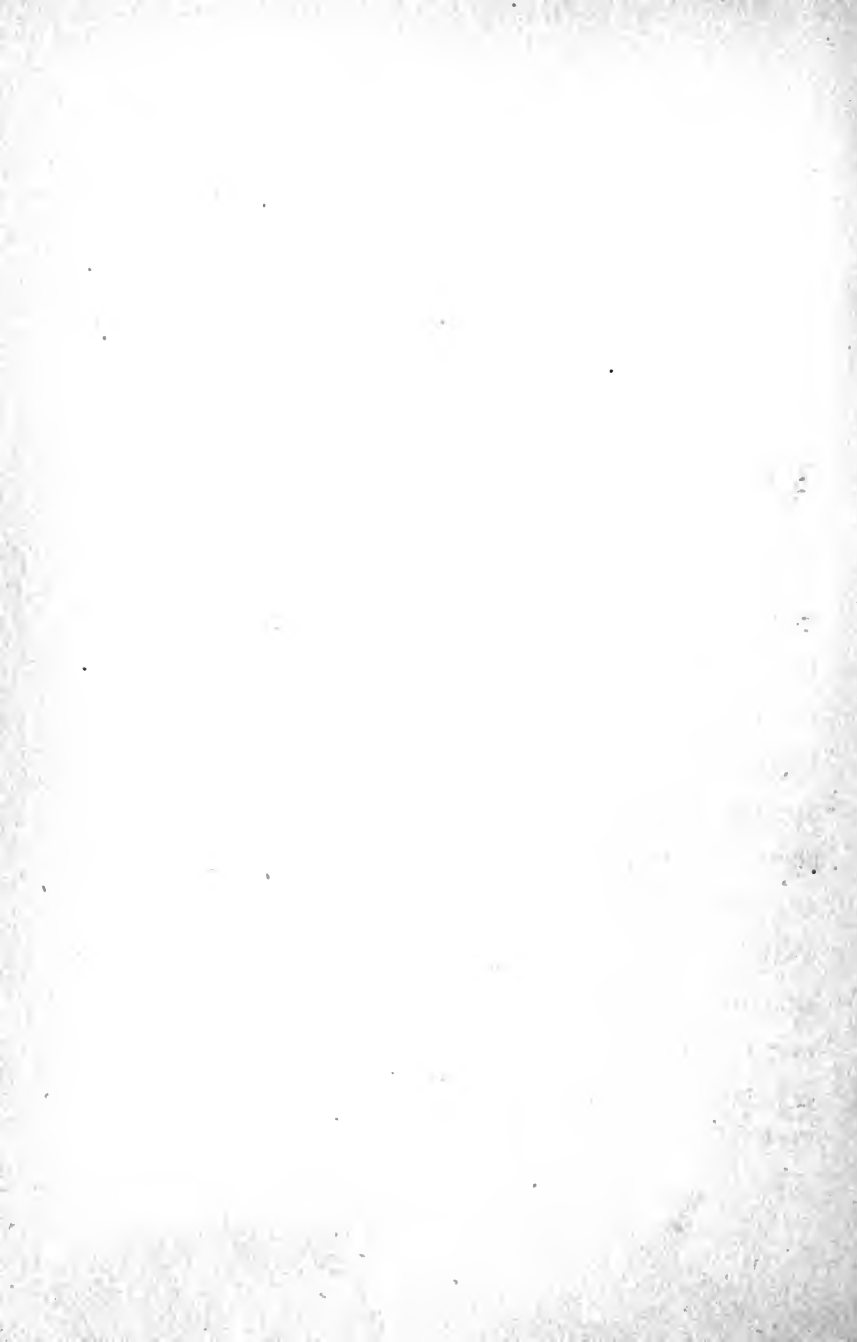
MR. BUCHANAN tells us that a little girl once played a certain part so naturally that some one who had been in the audience afterwards remarked to the actor-manager:

“Ah! any one can see that that child’s acting was nature, not art.”

“My dear fellow,” replied the actor, “I have devoted two hours a day for three months to teach that child how to appear natural for five minutes.”

Quoted by A. C. SUTHERLAND, M.A., in
“Dramatic Elocution and Action,” p. 9.

VOICING THE VOWEL



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

CHAPTER I

VOICING THE VOWEL

WE begin our study by concentrating attention upon the first demand made by an audience upon every reader, reciter, and public speaker, and that is that their words shall be so uttered as to be clearly and distinctly heard. What legibility is to hand-writing audibility is to speech. Fundamental as it is, this virtue seems to be persistently ignored by many of our public speakers. The smudges of sound we so often hear may be partly accounted for by that haste which is also responsible for the difficulty we often experience in deciphering some of our

badly written correspondence. But the real seat of the trouble is found in the poor management of Nature's mechanism for correct and crisp articulation. Our first concern must therefore be with the elements of speech. We must begin with the study of words and syllables.

Every word has one or more syllables ; a syllable may contain one or more consonants ; every syllable must contain a vowel ; sometimes a whole word may be nothing but a vowel or a diphthong, as in the case of the indefinite article and the first personal pronoun. Hence, the first task of elocution is the proper voicing of a vowel. This may appear anything but a task—the mere uttering of a sound. The analysis of human speech, however, reveals the fact that this seemingly simple performance is, indeed, a performance involving considerable discipline and practice.

Consider, for example, a few words. Let us say,—LACK, LAKE, LOOK, LEEK, LOCK, LICK, LUCK. Here, then, are seven words; they all begin with L and end with K. The only distinguishing element is the vowel sound. It is not so easy as it looks for an untrained voice to read out these words so that every listener, in an audience of six or eight hundred, will hear them and distinguish them with ease. A trained observer would probably detect more than one fault in the speaker's effort to voice the vowels. He would notice, perhaps, that the breathing was faulty, the voice-production throaty, and the lower jaw almost motionless. If so, he would have an object-lesson on the three most important factors that constitute the proper voicing of a vowel. The speaker, on his part, would notice something, if he sustained the effort to address a large audience for half an hour.

He would feel the speaking itself to be an effort, and, when he had finished, he would feel a certain hoarseness and irritation at the throat. For his own comfort, as well as for the effectiveness of his delivery, he would be well advised to take lessons in the proper voicing of the vowel. His first task would be to master

THE ART OF BREATHING.

For comfort and effectiveness, this is fundamental; and if the pupil imagines that he has little to learn, we may proceed to convince him of his mistake by means of a very convincing test. Let him simply take a good breath in his accustomed way and attempt to sound the vowel AH, sustaining the sound for as many seconds as he can. It is almost certain that he will notice three things. One is that the tone will soon begin to quiver; another is that the tone

will vary in strength and clearness ; and the third is that his breath will be exhausted within ten or twenty seconds. This simple test not only reveals these interesting facts ; it also points out the end to be aimed at. The pupil may safely conclude that he is not master of his breathing until he can comfortably sustain the voice on a vowel sound, with unvarying strength and clearness, for thirty seconds. This does not, of course, mean that in reading or speaking one has to indulge in long breaths. The very contrary is the proper practice on the platform, but meanwhile it is imperative that the pupil shall acquire the mastery of his instrument. If he will only take time enough to do this, his reward will be that, on the platform, he may leave the breathing to look after itself, and it will never play him false ; he will also experience great personal comfort in the use of his voice,

while his audiences will reap a corresponding benefit.

He has, then, to learn how to store his breath and how to control it in the production of tone. But, before remarking upon this, let us beg the pupil to remember two things. First, as to his position; and second, as to the use of his nose.

1. Position. Do all your exercises standing; and stand comfortably erect. Especially for breathing is this important. Let the weight of the body rest upon one leg, the other being slightly advanced. Bring the shoulders back, and let the arms hang freely by the sides, thumbs in. Throw back the head; then bring the chin down, and in. Finally, see that you are not pushing out the body at the waist.

2. The nose. Always inhale through the nose, and always do this noiselessly.

The reason for breathing through the nose is that the air, in its passage to the larynx (on its way to the lungs), is thus filtered, moistened, and warmed. The practice of breathing through the mouth causes irritation to the mucous membrane, and tends to mar the quality of the tone. Moreover, to keep announcing the fact that you are breathing is, it need hardly be said, extremely inartistic. Therefore, practise, if necessary, until you can breathe noiselessly through the nose with your mouth open.

Now we are ready to consider the important operation of

STORING BREATH.

Many interesting pages have been printed to elucidate the process of breathing. By means of diagrams, anatomical details, and telling analogies writers have laboured

to explain the whole subject. For practical purposes, however, it may be simpler, and quite as effective, if we ask the pupil to experience for himself the three ways in which air may be taken into the lungs.

First, concentrate attention upon the abdomen (the part of the body just below the waist). Inhale with the idea of expanding the abdomen. Of course, you are not inflating the abdomen. It feels like that, however; and your sensations can be made to help you. What you really do is to depress that most elastic muscle, the diaphragm, on which the lungs rest. As the diaphragm is being depressed, the abdomen begins to protrude; and so, from the view-point of one's sensations, this method of breathing is sometimes termed "abdominal," while in reality it is diaphragmatic.

Now try a second method. Concentrate your attention this time upon the breast-bone. Inhale with the idea of pressing out the breast-bone. You will feel the ribs expanding. Hence, this method has been termed "costal" (from *costa*, a rib).

Yet once more, raise the shoulders towards the ears as you inhale. Sometimes you breathe in this way when you feel tired, and you may imagine, therefore, that this is a very natural method. But, think for a moment what you are doing. One thing is very certain: you are raising a fairly heavy weight; and you may prove how fatiguing the effort is if you keep raising and lowering your shoulders for ten or fifteen minutes. But that is not all. Suppose you have a child's balloon in your hand; grasp about two-thirds of it so that no air can be forced in; then inflate the remainder. That will give an idea of

the small amount of air space utilised by this method. Still further, suppose some one else grasps two-thirds of the balloon and you now surround the remaining third with your two hands, after the fashion of a smoker guarding a lighted match, only keeping the hands firmly enough together to resist the pressure from the upper part of the balloon as you proceed to inflate it. All this will bring home to you the discomfort and the disadvantage involved in a method of breathing which must be discarded as decidedly vicious. It is a method which sacrifices much of the available air space in the lungs, which brings pressure to bear upon the most rigid and unyielding part of the chest, and which involves an ungainly and fatiguing action of the shoulders.

In every respect the first method forms a striking contrast to the third, and a

little reasonable exercise will soon make you master of it. In order to inflate the lungs to their full extent, begin by inhaling as much air as you can by the first method, retain the air for a couple of seconds by maintaining the pressure on the diaphragm, then proceed to inhale more air by the second method. If you do this slowly and quietly, you will be surprised at the capacity of your lungs. Then, as the muscles become more agile by exercise, you will become able to inflate the lungs so rapidly that this twofold process becomes practically one complex act.

In your first attempts, however, you will experience a special difficulty ; and that is in your endeavour to retain the air in the lungs, and still more in the effort to economise it while it performs the function of a bellows for the voice. Your second lesson in breathing will therefore be

HOW TO CONTROL THE BREATH.

You remember that, in the preliminary test, when you tried to prolong a vowel-sound, the tone varied in strength and steadiness, and the breath was exhausted in a very few seconds. This was partly due to want of method in storing breath; but also, and mainly, to your inability to economise it in the act of voicing the vowel. It is extremely easy to inhale slowly and exhale quickly; but it requires considerable practice to be able to inhale quickly and exhale slowly. And yet for the work of reading and speaking, the latter is the normal process. We have no time then to stop and take leisurely breaths; and if the air is allowed to rush out too freely, we injure our tender mucous membrane, and diminish the possible beauty and strength of our tones.

Naturally, then, our exercises must

proceed from the easy to the difficult in three distinct stages, thus :—

1. Inhale slowly ; retain the breath ; exhale quickly.

2. Inhale slowly ; retain the breath ; exhale slowly.

3. Inhale quickly ; retain the breath ; exhale slowly.

In carrying out this practice, the pupil is asked to carefully observe the following directions :—

1. Always stand comfortably erect.

2. Always inhale noiselessly through the nose.

3. Remember what you are aiming at ; namely, ability to sustain a vowel-sound with uniform strength and steadiness for thirty seconds ; and, therefore, always voice a vowel when you exhale. You will thus easily tell, by your own hearing, how you are progressing.

4. Always stop whenever the tone begins to quiver.

5. Never retain the breath by means of any pressure at the throat.

6. Retain the breath at first for only two or three seconds. As you gain in control, increase the time gradually to five, seven, and ten seconds.

7. Remember that five minutes, or at most ten minutes, at a time—and this repeated four or five times each day—will be far more effective than an occasional long practice at wide intervals.

8. Do not be in any hurry. No gymnast ever acquired his wonderful agility of muscle in a week, and no more will you without systematic and persevering exercise. Let no day pass without some exercise; and keep up your practice until you are able to inhale deeply and quickly, and then to sustain the tone for thirty

seconds in the way already indicated. By the time you have achieved this your breathing apparatus will be in fairly good working order.

VOICE PRODUCTION.

Now we are prepared to turn our attention from the bellows to the organ, from the breathing to the voice itself. Anatomy, and that ingenious instrument the laryngoscope, have supplied us with many interesting and instructive facts concerning the voice. For our purpose, however, we think it wise to refrain from detailing these here. Suffice it to say that voice has its origin in the larynx, and depends mainly upon the vibration of two tiny ligaments which together form what is known as the 'glottis.'

In the production of sound, the chief

trouble is with the management of breath, and with the muscles that constrict the throat. Wrong voice-production has been accordingly described as "breathomy" in the one case and as "throaty" in the other. Once you have mastered the art of breathing, you will not be likely to err by producing "breathomy" tones. You will have acquired the power to control the breath as it passes into sound. Indeed, you will now see how wise the direction was to practise breathing vocally, instead of in silence; the effort to make the breath hold out for thirty seconds is the very best discipline one could have. You have been aiming at uniform strength and steadiness of tone; but incidentally you have been also doing not a little to secure purity of tone, by endeavouring to prevent any needless escape of breath while voicing a vowel. We therefore turn our attention now to

that other frequent source of mischief in voice production, viz. :—

CONSTRICTION OF THE THROAT.

Constricting the throat is a very common habit, much to the injury of the tender mucous membrane that lines the throat, as well as to the detriment of the tone itself, which is thus rendered hard and metallic.

In order to remedy the defect, I know of no better or simpler means than that originally suggested by Behnke, the well-known trainer of the voice, and, after him, wisely adopted by many other teachers. The exercise consists in practising three vowel sounds in the following order:—
OO—OH—AH.

A little consideration will show the reasonableness of this very simple-looking exercise. Suppose some one is very throaty in his production. Let us ask him to read

aloud the three following sentences, while he listens carefully :—

1. I have a grand large garden—rather large.
2. Jones! Don't moan so morosely!
3. Lucy took two roots.

You will notice that the guttural is very pronounced in the first sentence, less pronounced in the second, and entirely absent in the third. You will also notice that the AH sound prevails in the first, the OH sound in the second, and the OO sound in the third. One is tempted to conclude that OO is labial (formed by the lips), that OH is palatal (formed in the hard palate), and that AH is guttural (formed in the throat). If so, one's first impression is quite a mistake. In clear voice-production the throat has nothing to do with the formation of a vowel. We shall see immediately how vowels are formed; mean-

while we are concerned with keeping the tone free from throatiness.

As it is almost impossible to constrict the throat when sounding OO, the exercise begins with that sound. Thus, without any special effort, you have the throat open and free as it ought to be for any and every vowel. Then you are directed to let the voice slide on to OH, and then to AH, endeavouring to keep the throat equally free and open all through.

If you happen to be troubled with throatiness, it will be well to practise this exercise frequently for a few minutes at a time, much in the same way as we directed you to do for breathing. Then follow this up with another occasional exercise on words containing the AH sound. Take a paragraph in your reading; pick out all the words with AH; go over these by themselves; then read the whole paragraph,

keeping your mind fixed upon your special trouble at the throat. Be on the watch for other vowel sounds which easily tempt you to give the guttural quality by constriction of the throat. The AW sound is one of them ; the diphthongs EI and OI are others (*e.g.*, in words like TIDE and DIE).

Observe, in this connection, that your greatest difficulty will occur when the awkward vowel is immediately preceded by a guttural consonant. For example, it is much easier to give the vowel sound purely in words like BAG, LOCK, TALK, ROCK, FAR, &c., than it is in words like CAR, GANDER, CATTLE, GORGE, &c. The reason is, of course, that in the one case you form the consonant remote from the throat, while in the other case you form it far enough back to be tempted to give a throaty production on the vowel that immediately follows.

HOW THE VOWEL IS MOULDED IN
THE MOUTH.

Many illustrative experiments have been suggested in connection with vowel sounds. We select one of these as specially instructive. Keep the throat unconstricted; let the tongue lie flat in the lower jaw; part the teeth sufficiently to allow the forefinger to pass freely in and out. Without permitting throat, jaw, or tongue, to alter in the least, simply shape the lips for OO, OH, and AH in succession. Strike a tuning-fork, hold it close to the mouth without touching, and form these three vowels rapidly as directed, with the lips alone. You will hear the three vowels distinctly.

Now, preserving precisely the same conditions, supply the sound from the larynx, instead of from the tuning-fork. This

clearly demonstrates that vowels are formed by means of a distinctive mould supplied by the mouth, and mainly by the position of the lower jaw and the shaping of the lips.

It is, however, extremely easy to supply the mould for each vowel in a totally different way, viz., by the action of the tongue alone. Let the pupil make this perfectly clear to himself by trying it. Slightly part the jaws and the lips; and keep both the jaws and the lips rigid in this position, while you endeavour to sound the three vowels solely by the action of the tongue. The tongue is now doing the work of shaping the aperture through which the sound wave passes; and the work is more easily done thus than by the lips. The ease is still further increased if, instead of parting the jaws, you keep the teeth touching. You will observe, however, that the easy, lazy, so-called 'natural' way of

voicing a vowel is always seriously to the detriment of the tone.

It may be said that we have confined our remarks to three special vowels, while there are others (*e.g.*, the vowels in LAKE and LEEK) which cannot be moulded without the action of the tongue. This is true; but, as we shall see with greater clearness presently, it is of the utmost importance to train the tongue to lie flat in the lower jaw and permit it to do as little work as possible, even when, as in the vowels just mentioned, some movement on its part is required.

The full value of a proper mould for each vowel becomes apparent when we consider the final problem in connection with the voicing of a vowel, namely—

HOW TO GAIN RESONANCE.

When a speaker desires people at a

distance to hear his words, what does he usually do? Very likely he pitches his voice in a high key, lets his breath go too freely, puts a severe strain upon his throat, and possibly completes the list of blunders by refusing to permit the lower jaw to work with the freedom of Nature. In a word, he does the very things he ought to avoid. In addition to the guidance already given, this mistaken shouter would learn a valuable lesson by studying some very commonplace illustrations of the way in which sounds, comparatively weak in themselves, acquire a wonderful resonance.

For example, every one has observed how a steam-engine's whistle increases in strength and volume as the railway train approaches a tunnel. The whistle itself is not blown with any increase of pressure. It is the cavity in the rock that does the work. We need not take up the reader's time with

scientific explanations as to the way in which the sound waves are modified by the shape and hollowness of the cavity. It is enough to note that the proximity of a specially shaped cavity to the source of any sound greatly reinforces that sound.

Nature has supplied us with such a cavity extending from the larynx to the lips; and if we desire to secure strength and volume for the tones of our voice, it is imperative that we attend very carefully to the shape and hollowness of the cavity at our disposal.

For singers, the shape of the mouth in the moulding of vowels requires far more attention than in the case of speakers. At the same time, the reader is advised to study carefully for himself the most effective way of moulding all the vowels and diphthongs in turn. In the following words he will find a variety of vowel sounds to

experiment with: HAT, HATE, HEAT, HAWK, HOLE, POOL, HARM, HIT, GET, HOT, HUT, OIL, RISE, HOWL. Keeping in mind what has been said about the throat, tongue, jaw, and lips, let the reader experiment with his own mechanism in moulding these vowels before a mirror, and he will learn lessons as valuable as, and more impressive than, those taught by means of diagrams and laboured explanations.

For the purpose of gaining resonance, the chief thing to strive after is the ability to keep the cavity from larynx to lips as open and hollow as possible. This is achieved involuntarily when one yawns. Bear this in mind, and also that the mouth-cavity may be blocked in three ways, viz., by constricting the throat; by allowing the tongue too much liberty, instead of making it lie as flat as possible in the lower

jaw; and, finally, by refusing to give sufficient movement to the lower jaw itself.

The throat and tongue troubles have already been dwelt upon; and we now conclude with a specific warning to those who have the extremely common habit of uttering words with the teeth almost touching all the time. An open door has a decided advantage over a keyhole if one wants to hear what is going on in another room. It is always an advantage to raise the lid of a concert piano. No actor would perform with the curtain before his face. And yet readers and speakers will persist in refusing to acquire the habit of opening the mouth on their vowels. The defect is largely due to our ability to get along fairly well without this effort in ordinary talk. We have been talking in a slovenly way for years, day after day, with the result that

any attempt to give the jaw more freedom feels extremely awkward and unnatural. It is not to be imagined, therefore, that a habit so inveterate can be altered for good in a few lessons. The pupil must make up his mind to practise assiduously, and to watch his habit even in ordinary conversation. In practice it will be well to exaggerate the jaw's action, until he gets accustomed to it and the feeling of strangeness wears off.

MAKING THE CONSONANT



CHAPTER II

MAKING THE CONSONANT

THE effective utterance of a word depends not only upon the proper voicing of vowels, but also upon the full and decided delivery of consonants. This matter is so important that writers on the subject devote many pages to detailed analysis of the way in which each consonant is formed. It is well to be able to name and describe the organs of articulation, to classify the consonants according to the organs used in their production, and to explain in detail the action of the organs in making each of the consonants in turn. My experience, however, leads me to

believe that the main difficulty is not ignorance or inability with regard to the formation of consonants, but sheer laziness and carelessness. Of course, it does happen that some one here and there may require a specially detailed lesson in the formation of one or two consonants, but cases of this kind are best dealt with individually by means of personal instruction.

Instead of wearying, and perhaps repelling, the reader by going into detailed explanations, let us rather ask him to test himself by uttering a list of words like the following. They contain all the consonants, first at the beginning and then at the end of a syllable.

Pat, bat, fat, vat, thick, this, so, zinc, shut, pleasure, tight, date, chat, jot, cat, gate, met, net, lake, ride, hum, wait, yacht.

Tap, tub, tough, hive, tooth, with, ass, size, rush, rouge, dot, road, latch, ledge, like, log, roam, tin, tail, tear, loch, wing, finger.

In less than five minutes one can thus discover whether he has any serious difficulty to encounter in the making of consonants. The case will probably stand thus: he will be perfectly able to read off these words as a test exercise, but in ordinary conversation and reading he will fail to do the same justice to many of his consonants. That is to say, in ordinary speaking he fails in doing what he is perfectly able to accomplish. His trouble is not inability, but, as we have said, sheer laziness and carelessness.

Without going into detail, let us note that every consonant demands the bringing together and then the parting of the lower and the upper organs of articulation. If the consonant is to be distinctly heard, this twofold action must be correct, decided, and quick. The momentary pressure of the relevant parts must also be decided and firm.

As a reasonable exercise in crisp articulation the reader is advised to practise upon any prose or poetry that interests him, rather than upon lists of specially arranged words. The reasonableness of this advice will be obvious if one reflects how much of the difficulty in articulation is due to the awkward way in which the various sounds of a language come together in actual composition. A conspicuous illustration of this is the case of the repeated consonant. When two words come together, the first ending with the consonant that begins the second, one is all too ready to make one consonant serve for the two. Take, *e.g.*, the sentence, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Three times this difficulty appears: "as scarlet," "like crimson," "as snow." Similarly, it is easier to say, "who

smile," or "whose mile," than "whose smile;" "firs' ten" than "first ten;" "precious tones" than "precious stones;" and so on in the combinations of words that occur again and again in one's reading. It sometimes happens that failure to repeat the consonant has a most ludicrous effect. When reciting "The Glove and the Lions," a pupil gave the line thus: "Till all the pit with sand and mane, was in a thunderous mother!" The word is "smother." In the same way, "Make clean your hearts" is easily given as "Make lean your hearts;" and "His beard descending, swept his aged breast" as "His beer descending!"

I advise the reader, then, to practise articulation with a paragraph or a stanza at a time—any good piece of composition in which he is interested. Five or ten minutes of slow, almost syllabic, reading—and this exercise, repeated at intervals for

some time,—will help the reader towards the end in view. If he were reading to a deaf mute, who could follow the words only by watching the lips, he would make the very effort required for correct articulation. If, therefore, he imagines he is reading to a deaf mute, he will find this a help by the way. It would be well also to think of himself as in the position of one who is learning to speak a foreign language which he already knows sufficiently well to read. I would recommend four consecutive readings of each paragraph used for practice. First, read it syllabically—that is, as if it were made up of monosyllables. Second, read it in the same way a little faster. Third, read it in the ordinary way, only very slowly. Last of all, read it at a fairly quick rate, and as intelligently as possible.

We have already remarked upon one of

the snares that await the unwary reader. Let us note two others before we conclude this chapter. One is consonantal combinations within one word. The word "acts," for example, looks very easy, but it is really a difficult word to articulate. The trouble is with the "t." Not because the consonant itself is difficult, but because it comes immediately after "c"—*i.e.*, after the "k" sound. In passing from "k" to "t," the tongue has to alter its position with extreme rapidity—not an easy task without some practice. Books on the subject frequently contain lists of such words. I think it will be more interesting, and quite as effective, if the reader will watch for himself and make out his own list of words that give him trouble. He will catch himself saying "close" for "clothes," "adaps" for "adapts," "cass" for "casts," "goverment" for "government," and so on.

Another thing to be specially careful about is the final consonant. The omission of the final consonant is one of the commonest of faults; and at times the fault is simply disastrous. Imagine a speaker declaring that it is a great comfort to be in "hell"! He means health, but his slovenly articulation causes him to say things he never intended. I once listened to a clergyman who almost bewildered me with the number and variety of his defectively uttered words. One of his atrocities was, "The dear child was awakened by a tender mother's ki'." He meant to say "kiss," but it reached the ear more like "kick"! Another was, "As a Christian man you have no mercy." He meant to say "known."

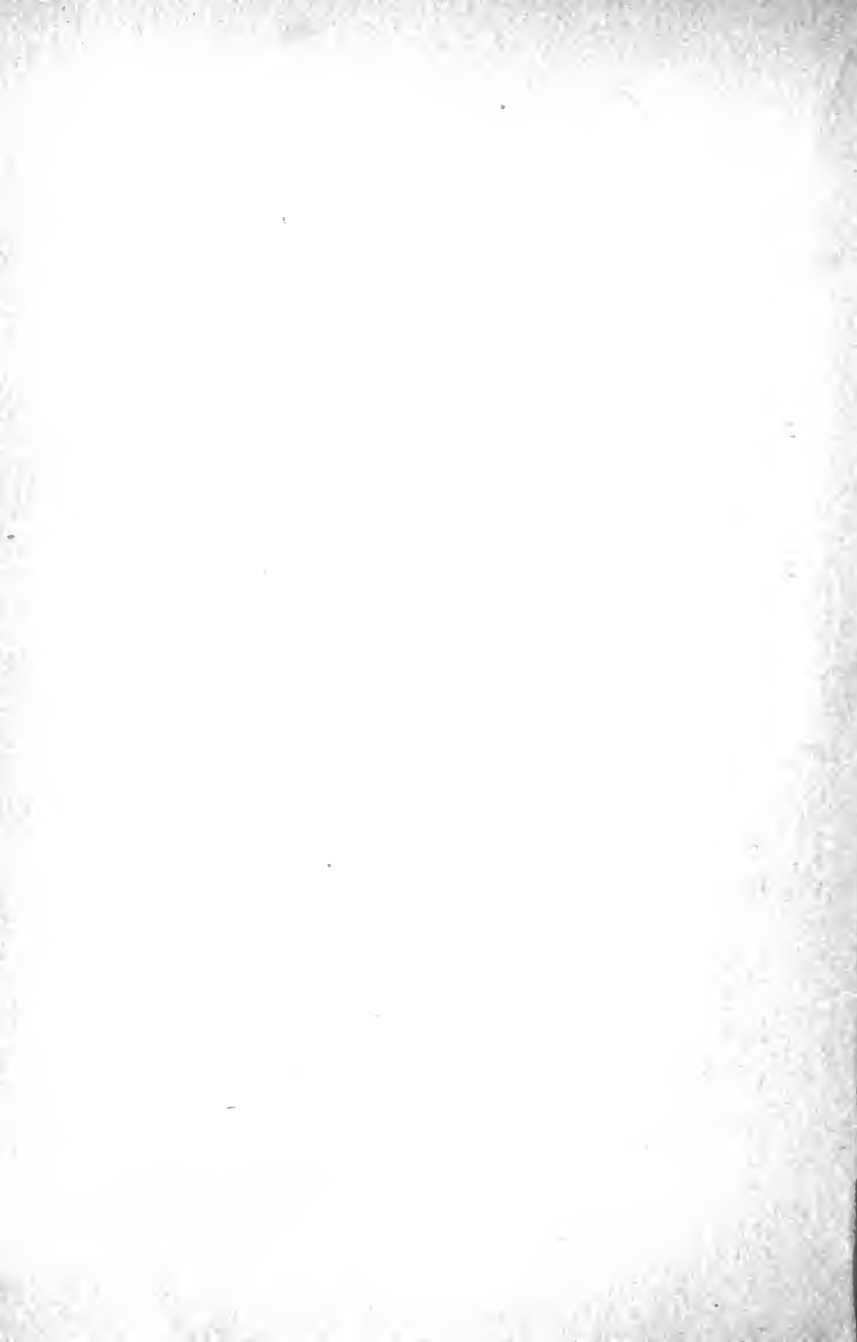
The tendency to clip down words is common in all languages. It seems to testify to the inherent laziness of human

nature. A good example of this is the word "madam." Its original in Latin gives five syllables, *mea domina*. Passing into French, the five become two, *madame*. This gets slightly shorter in the English, "madam." This again is abbreviated into "mam," then into "mum." Finally, it is almost clipped out of existence in the mouth of the serving-maid with her characteristic "yes'm." In similar fashion, "professor" becomes "prof.," "examination," "exam.," "perambulator," "pram.," "bicycle," "bike," and so on. Pick up a novel and glance at one page of popular dialogue. You are almost sure to see the page dotted over with apostrophe-marks indicating the frequency of elisions in sound. "Where 'e goin'," "I c'n see 'm laughin'," "He's got the pen an' ink," &c. We are all so prone to err in this way that it will be well to be on our guard

in ordinary conversation. It is here that the trouble arises and the bad habit is formed, and one should watch it at its source.

No doubt the pupil will feel at first as if accurate articulation were all too pedantic. It may not only feel so, but be so in the transition stage of his practice; but the time will soon come when he will no longer feel like one who is acting a part. As he grows accustomed to correct articulation, he will begin to wonder how he could ever have been guilty of his former atrocities. More than that, he will not fail of encouragement and reward. He will gain the reputation of being "such a clear speaker that even people with defective hearing can catch every word he says."

SPEAKING THE WORD



CHAPTER III

SPEAKING THE WORD

ALTHOUGH we have already said a good deal about vowels and consonants, we have not yet covered all the ground for properly speaking a word. Language is, to begin with, a system of sounds. Once it is reduced to writing, it becomes also a system of visible symbols which are used to chronicle these sounds. In most languages the symbols are letters—vowels and consonants. Now, if English were like Esperanto, in which every letter has one, and only one, fixed sound, one of the great difficulties in speaking English words would not exist. As things are,

English is a most difficult language for a foreigner to acquire, because it is so far from being reasonably phonetic. Take the sound of EE, for example. It has no fewer than ten symbols ; as in the words—sea, see, seize, be, field, eve, quay, clique, people, key. Compare such words as through, tough, thought, length, &c. Is it any wonder that the foreigner is puzzled by the vagaries of our pronunciation? It is to his mind what the gender of German substantives is to us. Even the tolerably educated Englishman finds this lack of uniformity an ever-present snare when he attempts to read aloud.

Hence it is that, in order to speak any word correctly, one must be sure what sounds the letters stand for. He comes across a word like "sonorous." What sounds do the first two vowels represent? Is it OH-OH, or AW-AW, or AW-OH,

OR OH-AW? I was recently judging at an elocutionary competition. One of the test pieces was Longfellow's "Old Clock on the Stairs." The word "horologe" occurs in one of the lines, and the competitors seemed to vie with one another in varying the pronunciation. They gave every possible variation among them. Here is the list phonetically: "hohrohlohg, hohrohlawg, hohrohlodge, hohrawlohg, hohrawlawg, hohrawlodge, hawrohlohg, hawrohlawg, hawrohlodge, hawrawlohg, hawrawlawg, hawrawlodge"!

Here are a few words by means of which the reader may test himself, to begin with: iron, with, doth, purpose, evil, civil, every, figure, pianist, amateur, accomplish, decorous, knowledge. Never fail to consult a good pronouncing dictionary whenever you are in doubt, and keep a list of the words that give you

trouble. The same advice will be found useful with regard to the next difficulty in speaking a word, viz:—

PLACING THE ACCENT

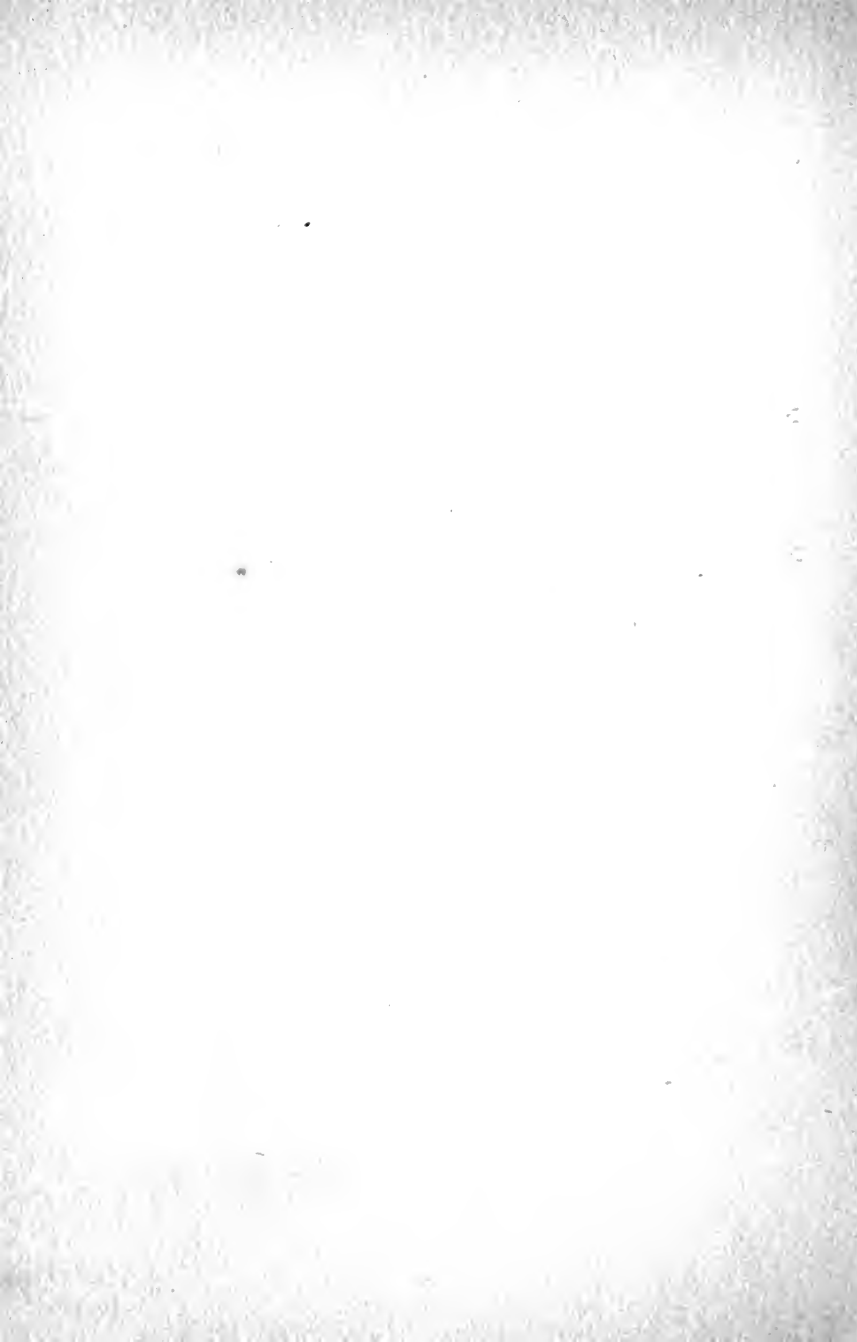
Let us look once more at the word “sonorous.” Where shall we place the accent? If we are guided by derivation and happen to know Latin, our vote will be for the second syllable; and in this case we shall be right. But the reader may be ignorant of Latin, and even if he is familiar with that language, there are other languages from which many of our words are derived. Supposing that he knew all of them, and were expert in tracing words to their origin, he would still find derivation a somewhat uncertain guide. The fact is that several laws operate in fixing the pronunciation of English words. For practical purposes we may take the

“usage of cultivated society” as the supreme dictator. This amounts to saying that, when one is in doubt, he must consult an up-to-date dictionary. As a rule, trouble will arise in a comparatively small proportion of the words in common use. But here as elsewhere it is the frequent repetition of a few mistakes that conveys the general impression that one is an incorrect speaker. Even one fault, in virtue of its recurrence, casts the whole of one’s performance under a cloud. Therefore, once again we counsel the reader to resolve his doubts in every case, and keep a list of words he is prone to accentuate wrongly.

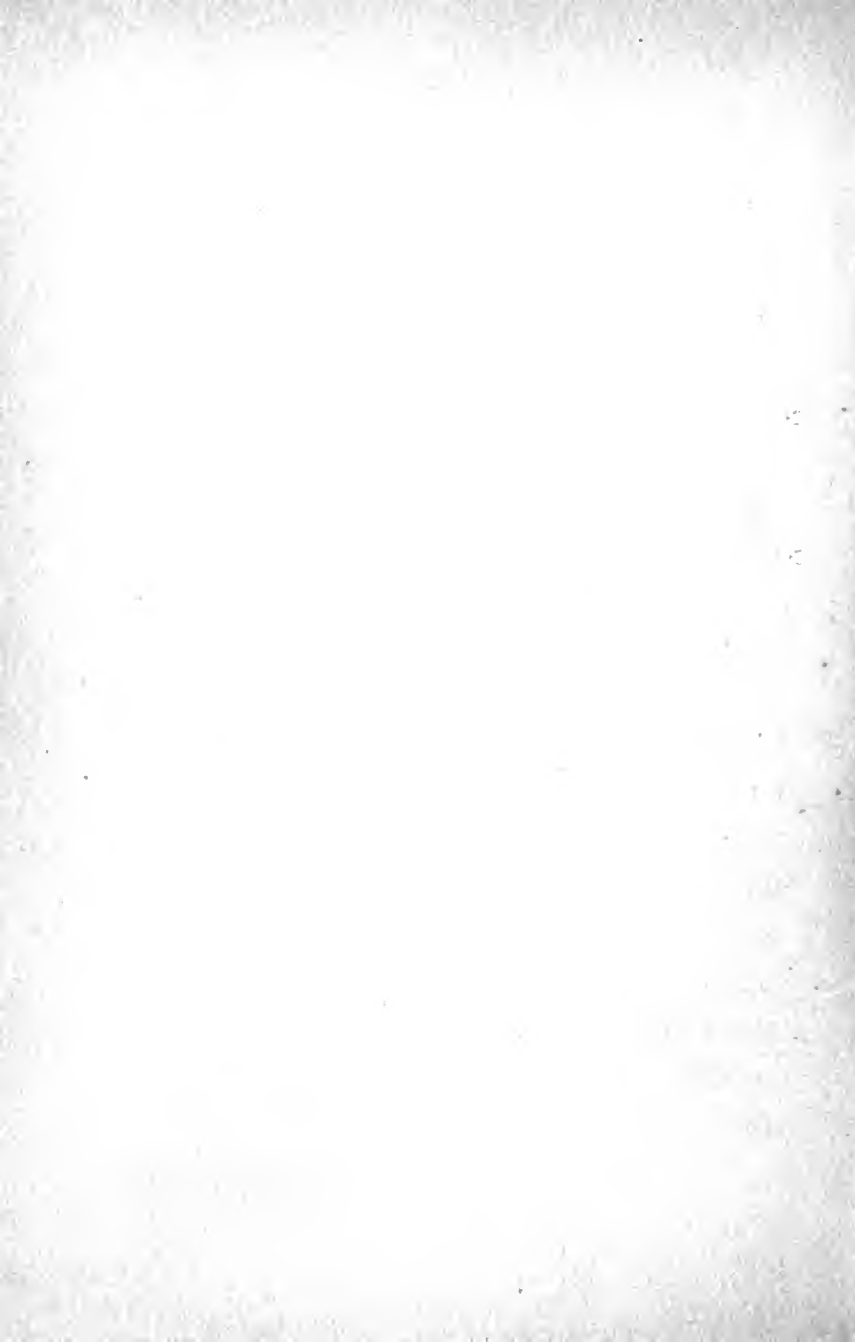
One would think that the list of possible faults is now complete. If we are sure of the sounds indicated by the spelling, if we know where to place the accent, if we are able to utter the consonants crisply,

and if we can give to the vowels full, resonant tones, surely we shall not fail in speaking words as they ought to be spoken. Yes, but there remains one more possible fault to be noted, and that is the staccato delivery of syllables. We have recommended syllabic reading as a convenient stage in practice. That was, however, only a means towards a desirable end. But sometimes a pupil induces a bad habit in this way. In the interest of clear articulation, he makes light syllables heavy, and thus mars the music of speech. Being warned against turning -ness into -niss, -ed into -id, -shun (-tion) into -shin or -shn, he proceeds to give the final syllables with a decided stress. For example, in the word "elocution" the four syllables are respectively heavy, light, heavy, light. Make them all heavy, and you will see what is meant. It is a breach of what

is known as the law of poise—the alternation of light and heavy syllables in the music of speech. There are times when the introduction of the staccato effect is both legitimate and effective, but ordinarily the reader must guard against it.



CONVEYING THE SENSE



CHAPTER IV

CONVEYING THE SENSE

ARE my words clearly and distinctly heard? That is the first question of elocution, and we have seen that uniform success in the matter of audibility demands a considerable amount of preliminary training. All this means, however, little more than the judicious training of muscle. The vocal mechanism being thoroughly under control, every word will be so uttered as to reach the ear of the remotest listener, but it does not follow that the sense of the words is adequately conveyed. The second question of elocution is therefore, this: Is the delivery of my words such

that the audience cannot fail to appreciate the exact meaning they are designed to carry? This is a question which appeals to the intellectual factor in delivery, far more than to the mechanism of voice.

Elocution does not undertake to secure intelligibility by teaching the art of composition. It presupposes that the words to be uttered are capable of conveying the sense intended, and then proceeds to consider how these words are to be spoken so that they will have their full value for the mind of an audience. The situation is that of mind addressing mind, with a view to the adequate conveyance of thought.

The fundamental thing here is **THINKING**. Effective delivery always implies accurate and intense thinking both before and during the utterance of one's words. In conversation we easily succeed

in making ourselves intelligible, mainly because we are thinking all the time. We do not utter words quite mechanically in conversation. Similar conditions prevail in the case of so-called extempore speakers. They are compelled by their method to think out beforehand what they intend to express in the language of the moment; and when the moment arrives, their minds are at the highest tension.

The conditions are altered, however, when the speaker has to read or recite. Now he has the words before him; he can proceed to utter them without any previous study; and even while his voice is busy his mind may be more or less occupied with thoughts quite foreign to the subject. Even if the words happen to be of his own composing, he can still read them off mechanically without thinking of their significance at the time of delivery. It is

so easy to read aloud sentences one does not clearly understand, that we are always being tempted to fall into the snare. A wise teacher of elocutionary art will insist upon the reader first mastering the meaning of his sentences, and then upon delivering them with his mind fully occupied with the thoughts they are intended to convey.

Sometimes a reader is deceived by a certain familiarity he has with the passages he attempts to read aloud. We cannot help thinking that this is often the reason why so much reading of Scripture in the pulpit proves uninteresting. One of the best known passages, and one very often selected, is the parable of the Prodigal Son. The clergyman has read it fifty or a hundred times, but he has missed point after point in the detail of its significance. He no sooner hears the familiar words read by one who has taken the trouble to

study it thoroughly, than he admits the rendering to be little short of a revelation. The accomplished reader is himself absorbed in his work; he feels the force and significance of every phrase, and he compels the delighted attention of his audience.

Readers and reciters should always bear in mind the difference between the written and the spoken word. The speaker who is free to use the language of the moment is able to expand his statements, to repeat the same thoughts in other words, and thus carry the mind of his audience along with him. But it is not so with the written word. In literary composition the style is more condensed, and more time is required to appropriate the sense. It is, therefore, extremely difficult for the average mind to keep pace with the reader unless the delivery is so timed as to lead

him gradually from thought to thought. Sometimes one word is so well chosen as to suggest material for a whole sentence; and it is not to be expected that the hearer can appreciate the significance of a word so packed with meaning, unless the reader gives him all possible assistance by means of a delivery at once deliberate and intelligent.

Another common device in literary composition is the long sentence. In delivering an address, one would naturally utter several sentences to express the variety of thought contained in one long sentence of the literary type. In reading or reciting, however, he must take the sentences as he finds them. It is therefore imperative that the reader shall endeavour first to understand them, and then so to speak them that the hearer may be assisted by the analytic and interpretative method

of the delivery. To make this perfectly plain, let us look at a sentence selected at random from "The Map of Life" by Lecky :—

"No more probable explanation has yet been given of the manner in which human nature has been built up, and of the various instincts and tastes with which we are born, than the doctrine that habits and modes of thought and feeling indulged in and produced by circumstances in former generations have gradually become innate in the race, and exhibit themselves spontaneously and instinctively and quite independently of the circumstances that originally produced them."

If one were clothing his ideas in the language of the moment, he would not likely pack his sentences in this way. He would probably explain himself in some such way as this :—

"We are all born with certain instincts and tastes. These instincts and tastes differ

widely from those that disclosed themselves in former generations. The fact that we are born with them shows that they must be explained by what has gone before. Human nature has been gradually built up into what it now is. Various theories have been propounded to explain how this has been done. The most probable explanation is this. Certain circumstances produced certain modes of thought and feeling. These modes of thought and feeling were indulged in until they gradually became habits. They were passed on as a legacy from generation to generation, and ultimately became innate in the race. The consequence is that they now appear quite independently of the circumstances that originally produced them. They exhibit themselves quite spontaneously and instinctively."

Here, then, are eleven sentences used to express the thoughts contained in only one original sentence. It must be very evident that, unless the original sentence is read with corresponding de-

liberation and intelligence, its meaning will be imperfectly apprehended even by tolerably educated listeners. If we cannot interfere with the integrity of the original, we must find some reasonable substitute for a detailed analysis of sentences like the above. The means at our disposal are mainly three, viz., 'Time, Phrasing, and Emphasis.

Time, as we shall see later on, varies with the sentiment ; but meantime let us remember that, as a general rule, the reader had better err by being too slow than too quick in his rate of utterance. Hurry is the foe of intelligibility. The reader must take time enough to think as he reads ; and he must give his audience time to follow him intelligently. Hasty reading is a very common fault, and the only remedy for it is concentration of mind. The printed words must first convey their meaning to

your own mind, and then the thought must be conveyed straight from your mind to the mind of the audience by means of the words intelligently spoken.

The second aid to intelligibility is what is known as *Phrasing*. Some people read off every sentence, not only too fast but without a pause until the end. The result is, and cannot but be, an extremely vague impression, instead of a clear understanding of the details of thought thus presented. It is as if one were to attempt exploring a certain area of new country by means of a motor-car, rushing along at the rate of twenty or thirty miles an hour. He would require to be an observer of specially keen perception who could gain more than a very blurred impression of things by such a method. If, on the contrary, you are examining, say, a typewriter or a bicycle, you will look at one thing at a time,

proceeding from one point of interest to another by degrees ; you will look at one part of the mechanism and pause before considering the next. In this way you go over the whole in so many parts, and at the end you are master of the mechanism. Even so is it with the intelligent reading of a sentence.

Let us try to divide up the sentence already cited as an example :—

“No more probable explanation—has yet been given—of the manner—in which—human nature—has been built up—and of the various instincts and tastes—with which we are born—than the doctrine—that habits—and modes of thought and feeling—indulged in—and produced by circumstances—in former generations—have gradually become—innate in the race—and exhibit themselves—spontaneously—and instinctively — and quite independently of the circumstances—that originally produced them.”

Some readers would divide the sentence a little differently, perhaps; but, in any case, every good reader would naturally group the words in each sentence in such a way as to give the mind a chance to thread its way easily through the sentence. Rules for phrasing are worse than useless: they are really an encumbrance. One's own intelligence is the best guide. As he ponders over one sentence at a time, he feels compelled to read the sentence bit by bit. He feels instinctively that certain words hang together more closely than they do with what comes before or after. The pauses between groups may be at times barely perceptible, but they are always sufficiently marked to help the intelligence of reader and listener alike.

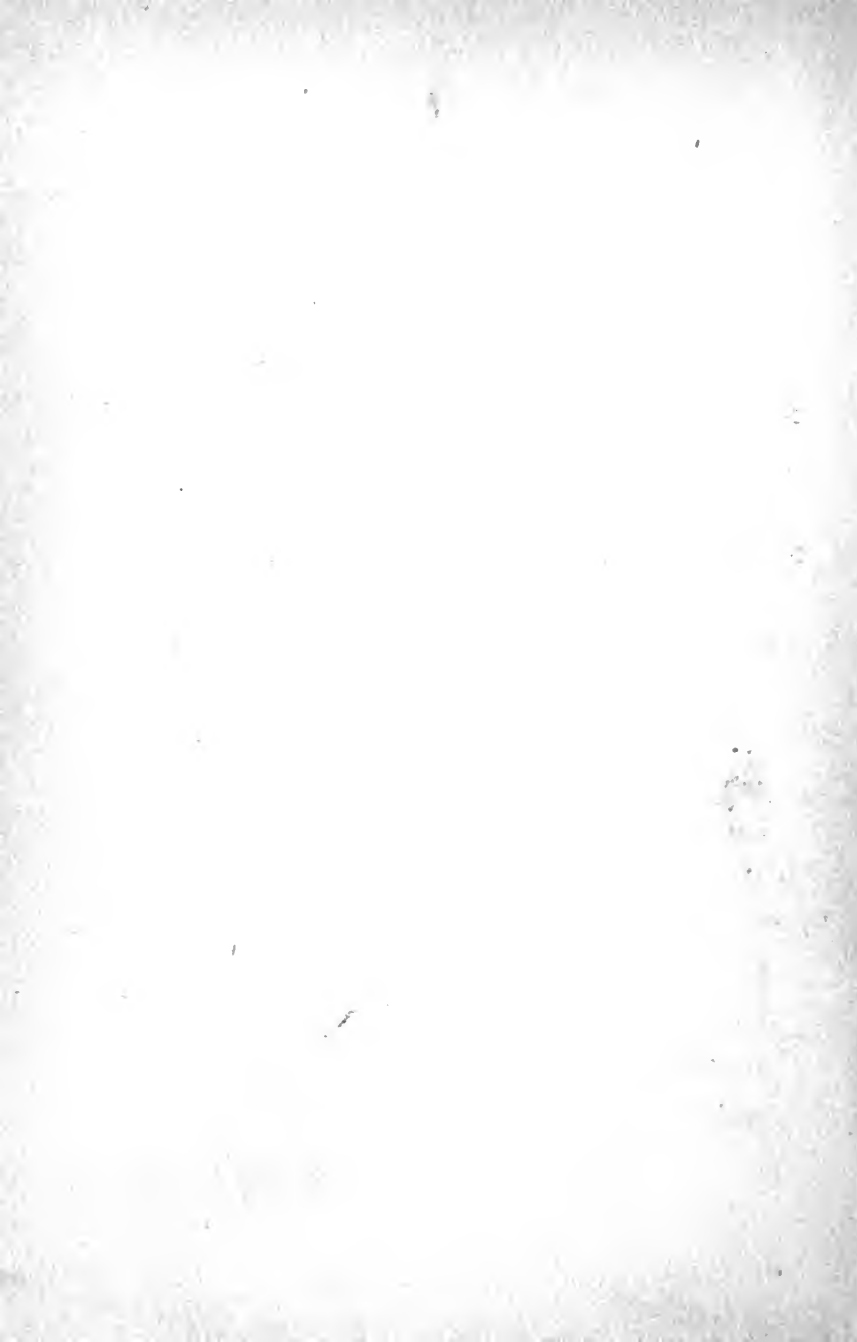
The third aid to intelligibility is *Emphasis*. No sooner has the mind taken in the sense of a sentence than it instinc-

tively guides the voice to give more prominence to some words than to others. Every phrase has some word that carries more meaning than the others. In the above sentence, *e.g.*, take the words "and of the various instincts and tastes—with which we are born." Every intelligent reader feels that the burden of the thought is carried by the words "instincts," "tastes," and "born."

Emphasis must not be counted as a mere stress of the voice. By "emphasis" we mean giving appropriate prominence to specially important words; and this may be done in quite a number of ways. We may cut a word out, so to say, by means of an impressive pause before or after it; or by changing the tone to a higher or a lower key; or by sliding the voice up or down; or by a slow and lingering utterance; or by a marked staccato; or by a telling whisper; or by an explosive delivery, like

the report of a musket ; or simply by a certain stress of the voice. Nearly a dozen ways of giving prominence to words ! And the catalogue is not even complete thus ; for the effect may in many cases be heightened by various combinations. The delivery may be at once loud and strong, or loud and soft, or loud in a high key, or loud in a low key, or soft in either high or low key, and so forth according to the sense as apprehended by the reader. With so many possibilities of variety, we may well be surprised to find that monotony which is unfortunately so familiar to all of us. One reason often is that the voice has not been trained to obey the suggestions of the mind ; and the other, that much of the reading we have to listen to is purely mechanical because the readers fail to bend their whole mind and heart to the task of fully appreciating what they read.

CONVEYING EMOTION



CHAPTER V

CONVEYING EMOTION

WE have seen how essential it is to effective reading to have an intelligent conception of the sense of any piece or passage read. We now come to that which completes the silent study of a piece, presuming, of course, that it is something more than a lifeless statement of hard and dry facts. We refer to the emotions that stirred the soul of the composer as he wrote. No one can adequately convey emotions he fails to realise in his own soul. One must therefore not only understand what he reads, but feel it. There is no *art* in con-

veying emotion when one communicates to another *his own* tale of woe, or revels in the report of some victory *he* has achieved. If one relates the underhand methods of some sneak who has stolen a march upon him, nothing can be more telling than the play of features, the suggestive gesticulation, and the tones and inflections of withering contempt, which all go to win your sympathy for the man who has been wronged. Everything in the elocution of the tale is natural and effective. Why? The man *feels* it. The case is altered, however, when we come to the voicing of another's emotion; for that emotion must first be made our own. No pains must be spared, therefore, to bring ourselves into the atmosphere and attitude of the writer whose words we seek to give at second-hand. The mind must be allowed time enough to linger over the piece, until the imagination is waked into

sympathetic activity, and the soul feels stirred.

Two faults of opposite tendency often show themselves in the delivery of emotional language. One of these is referred to by Shakespeare, in Hamlet's address to the players, when they are warned not to "tear a passion to tatters." It is this excessive display of emotional effects, which, more than anything else, disgusts one in listening to certain reciters. So far from awakening sympathy, such exhibitions of overdone pathos frequently provoke laughter. I can never forget the irresistibly comical effect, unintentionally produced by a professional elocutionist, when, in reciting "The Raven," he came to the words, "Prophet be thou, priest, or devil." He wore very long black hair; and on reaching this line, he ran his fingers through the swarthy locks, bringing a frightful fringe over his knitted brow, as

he shrieked forth the climax and gave the devil his due ! No wonder that the refined taste of some educated people shrinks from the faintest hint of an emotional delivery.

And yet, on the other hand, it is a fault to read an emotional passage as if it were an auctioneer's catalogue. Artistic self-repression—or, rather, self-control, is always to be desired ; but the voice, and the whole manner of the delivery, ought to indicate that the reader is in full sympathy with the sentiment of his piece. The unskilled reader or speaker is apt to make everything he reads, the victim of his habitual tone and cadence. This, of course, makes one's reading very monotonous, and suggests that the reader has no soul. More than that, there are times when reading of this description produces effects in every way as ludicrous as in the case of overdone emotion. A

classical illustration of this is given by Mathews in his "Oratory and Orators":—

"When Sheridan, after passing a night in the House of Commons, was asked what his impression was, he said that he had been chiefly struck with the difference of manner between Fox and Lord Stormont. The latter began by declaring in a slow, solemn, drawling, nasal tone, that 'When he considered the enormity and the unconstitutional tendency of the measures just proposed, he was hurried away in a torrent of passion and a whirlwind of impetuosity,' pausing between every word and syllable; while the first, speaking with the rapidity of lightning, and with breathless anxiety and impatience, said that 'such was the magnitude, such the importance, such the vital interest of this question, that he could not help imploring, he could not help adjuring the House to come to it with the utmost coolness, the utmost deliberation.'"

Such speaking is ludicrous, because it amounts to self-contradiction. The words say one thing, while the style of delivery

declares the opposite. It looks as if the speaker were assuring us that he neither believes nor means what he says. We are told that, on one occasion, Demosthenes discredited a certain man's story, on the ground that his sad tale was told in anything but the tone of one who had been injured. Were all public speaking to be judged in this fashion, it would fare ill with some of us.

Dr. Marcus Dods has remarked that "the pulpit voice assumed by some preachers is not to be commended, nor the lugubrious or preternaturally solemn tones in which you sometimes hear a man begin the service, as if his wife were lying dead in the vestry." This is no exaggeration. I have heard the Hundredth Psalm read from the pulpit as if it were a funeral ode, instead of a jubilant call to praise. I have also heard a lady recite a poem in which she described "days

of death ” and “ the skeleton at the feast,” with a discordant laugh in her tones as well as on her face ! Although a marriage is sometimes, to the “ happy couple,” a function as sad as a funeral, still, our sense of the fitness of things would suffer a shock, if the groomsman appeared wearing black gloves and crape bands.

Yes, there is ample scope for more culture of voice and soul on the part of our public speakers. This culture has not yet found its place in the professional training of many who feel called to the service of the spoken word. And what is the consequence ? Churches and halls comparatively empty, when they ought to be full. There is a moral in the story told of a certain clergyman who had paid little or no attention to this special culture. He preached a good sermon in a wretchedly bad style ; and yet that sermon received an apparent compli-

ment. It was said to have been "soothing," "moving," and to have "made a deep impression." But, it was soothing, because, in the course of its delivery, some of the congregation went to sleep ; it was moving, because, before the finish, others went out ; and it made a very deep impression upon all who remained, because they decided never to come back.

Archbishop Magee classified preachers from the view-point of an audience, thus :—
"There are preachers you can't listen to ; preachers you can listen to ; and preachers you can't help listening to." The truth of this classification will be admitted by the most lenient of critics. But, it is our earnest desire to speed the day when the number of those we can't help listening to, shall be greatly increased. Hundreds of public speakers are so abundantly equipped for their work in other respects, that we can

account for their comparative failure only by the fact, that they have not cultivated the voice and the modes of expressing thought and feeling.

As in the case of conveying thought, so also in seeking to convey emotion, we have at our service the peculiar significance of tone, inflection, time, stress, pause, &c. We should, therefore, examine the emotional, as well as the intellectual use of these vehicles of thought, sentiment, and emotion. Meantime, however, let the reader be impressed with the necessity of cultivating a more thorough appreciation of SOUL, as it is already somewhat imperfectly expressed in our best literature. As he reads the Bible or Shakespeare, let him resist the temptation to hurry on. Let him learn to linger over the finer passages, reading them again and again, until his imagination is aglow and his soul thrilled.

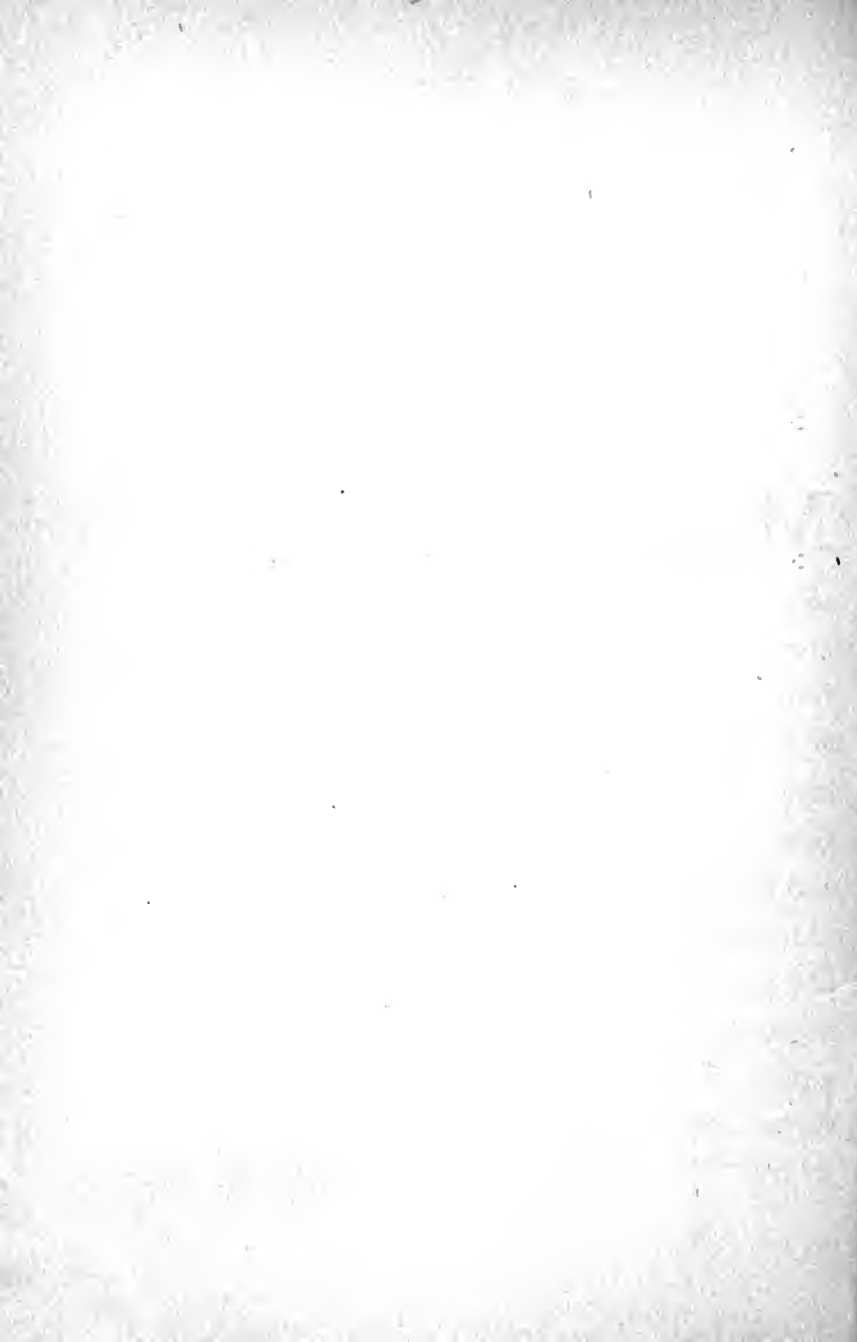
Without this reasonable culture, elocutionary drill can have little effect. As Goethe has said, in words which have been thus translated:—

“ If feeling does not prompt, in vain you strive.

If from the heart the language does not come, in vain you strive.

Toil on for ever at set phrase of elocution ;
but never hope to stir the hearts of
men, by words that come not native
from the heart.”

STUDYING A PASSAGE



CHAPTER VI

STUDYING A PASSAGE

MANY pages have been devoted by other writers to the minute analysis of the various tones, inflections, &c., employed in the expression of thought and feeling. Certain principles have been discovered; and as a result, numerous rules have been laid down for the regulation of correct reading and speaking. Admirable as all this is, I am convinced that it will prove more interesting, and none the less instructive, to come direct to literature and make the analysis for ourselves. Rules, in virtue of their rigidity and multiplicity, are apt to defeat the end for which they

are tabulated. A man who had read up the so-called "Rules of Elocution," once came to a friend of mine for "advanced instruction." He was asked to read the hymn commencing with the words, "Art thou weary? Art thou languid? Art thou sore distressed?" His rendering of these three questions was painfully mechanical. And why? Simply because he had been taught by a rule to use the rising inflection in the case of an interrogative requiring the answer "yes" or "no."

Effective elocution depends, not upon rules, but upon the voice being first trained to do whatever the mind and heart suggest; and, secondly, upon the disciplined intelligence and emotion of the reader. Passing over many facts which, though interesting in themselves, have comparatively little value for practical purposes, we have sought

to give the guidance which is absolutely necessary. We have dealt with the most important operations and effects involved in the voicing of vowels and the exploding of consonants; we have pointed out the other things that require attention in the correct enunciation of a word; and, finally, we have endeavoured to impress the reader with the supreme importance of mastering the sense and emotion embodied in the piece read.

We now invite the reader's attention to a paragraph, selected almost at random, from Macaulay's essay on Milton:—

“Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were for ever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of

her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and glory."

Now, if this paragraph were read aloud by half a dozen individuals, various kinds of monotony would probably appear. One would read it with unvarying speed—either very slowly or as if in a hurry. Another would betray a uniformity of cadence. A third would come down upon the last word of every sentence with a conspicuous stress.

A fourth would arrest our attention by the unmodified loudness of his delivery. A fifth would read so softly that the words would barely reach the ear. And possibly the sixth would punctuate his reading with a series of painfully audible gasps.

And yet, what an armoury of weapons awaits our use for redeeming our style from monotony! Poise, pause, phrasing, slur, stress, pitch, loudness, softness, whisper, staccato, tone colour, inflection, time or rate of utterance!

Now let us make an exercise of this short and simple passage. We shall make our work fairly exhaustive for a start.

1. Read it over with an eye on the vowels. Watch the breath, the throat, the tongue, the lower jaw. Try to voice the vowels with clearness and resonance.

2. Read this time with your attention fixed upon the consonants. Read slowly

and syllabically, exaggerating all through. Be particularly careful with final consonants, and also with those that happen to be peculiarly difficult. Next, do this in silence as if forming the words for the eye of a deaf mute. Then, do it again in a whisper clear enough to make one hear who is listening outside the door. After this read aloud.

3. Note some words you may be apt to give wrongly. In "loathsome" the "th" must be sounded heavy, as in the word "clothe." "Reptile" * sounds the second syllable as "ill." Seven times a word ends in a "y." See that you give it purely, as in the word "fit." Note the final syllables in the following: excluded, protected, rewarded, beautiful, frightful, venture, houses, nature. There are no words here you are likely to *accentuate* wrongly.

* Stormonth, however, says "tile."

4. These preliminaries over, divide each sentence into groups. In this paragraph the task is extremely easy on account of Macaulay's style.

5. Studying the passage more closely for the sake of the sense, you cannot fail to notice that one sentence stands out as specially arrestive. It is the sentence that declares, "Such a spirit is Liberty." One of the first demands upon the intelligent reader is, therefore, so to deliver these words as to make them stand out from all that comes before and after. Now, how is this to be effected? One method is to make a longer pause than usual both before and after the sentence. Another is to utter the words more slowly and deliberately. A third is by reading the words in a different pitch of the voice.

Finally, you can learn to put your whole soul into the significant word "Liberty." If

now you bring out every one of these effects, and do it naturally, this sentence will not fail to receive its due.

The next thing to look for is every word that introduces a new and important idea in the progress of the writer's thought.

Ariosto — fairy — condemned — snake — injured — pitied and protected — happy — victorious—reptile—woe—happy—rewarded.

In addition to the leading word, LIBERTY, these words are so vital to the passage that you could almost fill it in from memory by recollecting them in their order. Prominence must therefore be given to them in reading aloud. Nature suggests stress as the best means of bringing out the leading words in the first sentence; also, the words "reptile" and "rewarded." "Injured" is contrasted with "pitied" and "protected." "Woe" and

“happy” also make a contrast. Such contrasts you are making every day, and how does the voice indicate a contrast? Is it not mainly by means of inflection? The voice slides up on the one word or phrase, and down on the other.

But not only are the leading words of the last two sentences contrasted; the sentences themselves are contrasted as a whole. Our weapons, this time, are time and tone. If you refer to anything sad, gloomy, depressing, the tone of your voice usually takes a low key; it is somewhat restrained; and the rate of utterance becomes slower. The opposite of this happens when you speak of anything that gives you pleasure. The voice then bounds along on the upper keys.

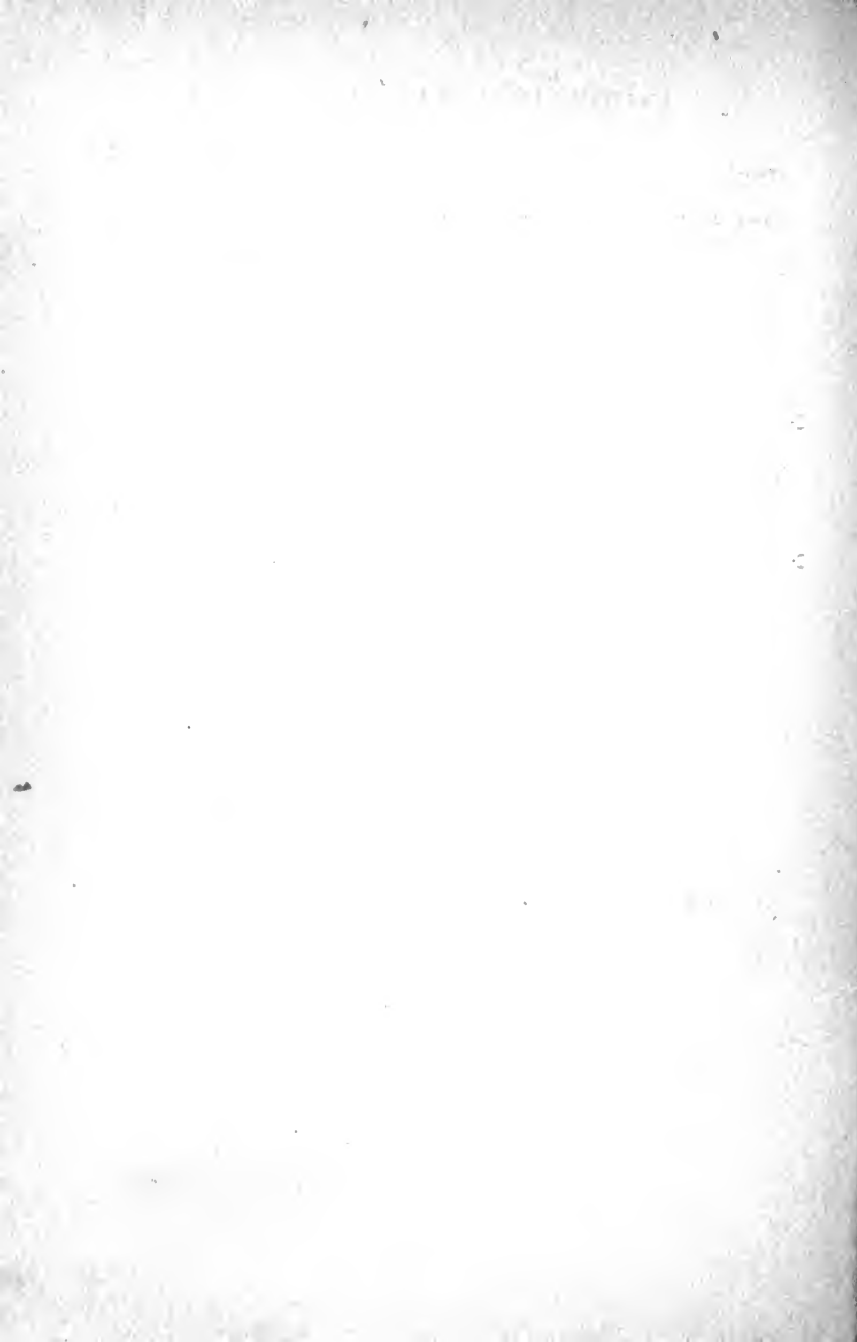
Once more, there are words which not only tell what takes place outside yourself, but in the speaking of them can

be made to reveal the kind of feeling that moves you in contemplating that which the words describe or indicate. Thus, you can make a word cry, or laugh, or sing, or dance, or tremble, &c. This witchery of tone cannot be compassed by mere art. In order to infuse feeling into your words, the feeling must first stir your soul. Can you tell us with your voice how you contemplate being "happy in love" and "victorious in war"? Are you not stirred by the thought of Liberty? Can you speak of "beauty" and "glory" as if they meant nothing more than ribbons and lace? If your heart is in your reading, you will almost instinctively give evidence of it in the tone-colour of words so expressive.

Closely akin to such effects are those produced by one's rendering of imitative words. For example, we have here the

words, "grovels," "hisses," "stings," and "crush." These may all be given in such a way as to embody the several acts in the tones of the voice.

We have not said all that might be noted even in this short paragraph; but enough has been pointed out to show that monotony in the reading of it is without excuse. Some of our readers will probably feel that our brief analysis is little short of a revelation to them. If it has the effect of leading them to give themselves more thoroughly to the minute examination of their work, the better part of our task shall have been accomplished.



MASTERING ONE'S TOOLS



CHAPTER VII

MASTERING ONE'S TOOLS

IN the previous chapter we have seen how a very little study leads us to make use of several tools for the intelligent delivery of an ordinary paragraph in literature. Although even this brief exercise may, as we have said, amount to a revelation to some readers, it must appear after all very simple. But the question naturally arises, why is there so much monotony in the reading of even educated people? We instinctively feel that bright tones and fairly quick time ought to prevail in the expression of any lively mood; and that nothing could be more out of place in

expressing pathos. In fact, nature is our true guide in the use of the tools at the disposal of the voice. In ordinary conversation, we can put a wonderful amount of variety into our speech. Does nature then fail us when we come to read and speak in public? I do not think so. The trouble rather is that nature does not get a chance. The words are too often read before the thought has taken possession of the mind. In conversation, the thought glows in the mind before it is expressed. In reading, the words are presented to us; they contain the thoughts of another; and the temptation is to utter the words before we have really made the thought our own. A lifeless delivery is bound to result.

It is imperative that the reader or speaker shall be himself, that he shall give his own nature scope and freedom in the use of the tools that make effective delivery.

He must aim at being as natural before an audience as he is in animated conversation with a familiar friend. Still, it needs no laboured argument to prove that art must be called in to aid nature. He who aspires to success as a reader or speaker must master the use of his tools. He must train himself to do what nature suggests. All training begins in a deliberate and conscious effort to do the correct thing. By degrees this conscious effort becomes a habit. The writer who can dash off a really good piece of composition, is one who has first submitted to a fair amount of drudgery behind the scenes. He has toiled for long at words, sentences and paragraphs. At length the art has become little short of an instinct. So must it be with the successful reader and speaker.

We have warned the reader against

attempting to read according to rules ; but while rules as prescribed by another are calculated to produce an artificial style, it makes all the difference when one draws his own induction from nature. Our advice is to begin by writing down a series of sentences such as one would use in a variety of situations ; to speak these sentences frequently ; and carefully analyse nature's methods in the use of tone, time, inflection, pause, &c. Then let the reader select from literature a number of passages, each having an equally distinctive quality, and strive to read them according to nature's method.

Let us illustrate. We shall give first of all a few sentences any one might have occasion to use. The more colloquial they are the better.

Do you think I would cringe to a man like that?

Oh no! I'm not such a fool!

Yes, my poor old friend is gone! His pain was simply agony. His poor mother was fearfully cut up. Tears? Man, it would have made a stone weep!

Look here, you fellows! Be off with you! Do you hear? Quit! or I'll have the police at your heels!

Jones was keen on that picnic the other morning. He rose at five, had his bath, packed the baskets, harnessed up and disappeared—before I had drawn the blinds in my room.

True? Of course it's true, I defy you or any man to contradict me.

Do come. You'll never regret it. I would like you to see the performance. You will come, won't you?

What do you think I got for a Christmas box? Jack got Tennyson. Bill got a box of cigars. Edgar, a writing-case, I got—a fifty pound note!

Jones, who always said he would stand by me—sneak and coward that he is!—went and spoiled the whole game.

I was dozing on the grass, dreaming in a kind of fairyland of my own, when the crack of a whip brought me to my senses. Then came a yell and a splash.

The auctioneer shouted "Going, going, going at three pounds ten!" But I whispered to Jack, "Not a penny more!"

The reader will now see what is meant. Even in the above few sentences he will find a wonderful amount of variety of tone, inflection, &c. Let him make more sentences of his own. Let him read them aloud and study nature's methods.

The next exercise will be from literature.

"Once upon a midnight dreary, while I
pondered weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume
of forgotten lore.

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly
there came a tapping,

As of some one gently rapping, rapping at
my chamber door.

‘Tis some visitor,’ I muttered, ‘tapping at
my chamber door’—

Only this and nothing more.”

If this were your own story, you would not make the mistakes some reciters fall into. You would probably speak in some such way as this:—“I had a most extraordinary experience one night. It was in December and at midnight. Nothing would have tempted me outside the house. I was sitting there in my room all alone. The fire was nearly out; the only light in the place was the oil lamp. I was poring over an old-fashioned book; and at times I would nod off into a kind of sleep. Then I would wake up with the moaning of the wind and a gust of sleet at the window. The embers in the grate

would start strange flickerings and shadows. I had a strange, eerie, awesome feeling. All on a sudden, I was nearly started out of my wits. Somebody seemed to be on the other side of the door. I had heard no footfall ; but beyond all doubt some one was tapping at the door as if he were the bearer of some message, secret and confidential. What on earth could it be ? ”

Only realise the situation ; take time to allow mind and imagination to do their work ; then speak the matter in your own way. After this you ought to be able to read it in its literary form, like one who knows and feels what he is describing. You will feel that each group of words is a distinct contribution to the effect of the tale. Monotony will begin to vanish. The inflections, tones, and pauses of nature will find their place and function as you

succeed in making the situation as it were your own.

Turn now to a different kind of situation. Suppose it is that of Tell, roaming his native mountains, and exulting in the thought of his liberty.

“Scaling yonder peak, I saw an eagle wheeling near its brow, o’er the abyss: his broad expanded wings lay calm and motionless upon the air, as if he floated there without their aid, by the sole act of his unlorded will that buoyed him proudly up. Instinctively I bent my bow: yet kept he rounding still his airy circle, as in the delight of measuring the ample range beneath and round about; absorbed, he heeded not the death that threatened him.—I could not shoot—’twas liberty!—I turned my bow aside, and let him soar away!”

Describe that as if you saw it. Realise how Tell would feel. The victim of habit, he is about to shoot the eagle. But some-

thing mightier than habit stirs within him. It is the passionate joy of a freeman. In the eagle he sees the image of himself.

There is no need, however, to pack these pages with specimen pieces. There are many books already containing a great variety of literary selections in poetry and prose. The reader should examine one of these collections of extracts and pick out one after another until he has a suitable set for studying the use of his tools. Each piece ought to be distinctive and thus form a striking contrast to the others. Let one piece be selected for its rollicking mirth ; another for its stately dignity ; a third for its pathos ; a fourth for its humour ; a fifth for its tone of defiance or self-assertion ; a sixth for its expression of doubt and uncertainty ; and so forth. The selections should be few rather than

many, and not more than an average paragraph in length.

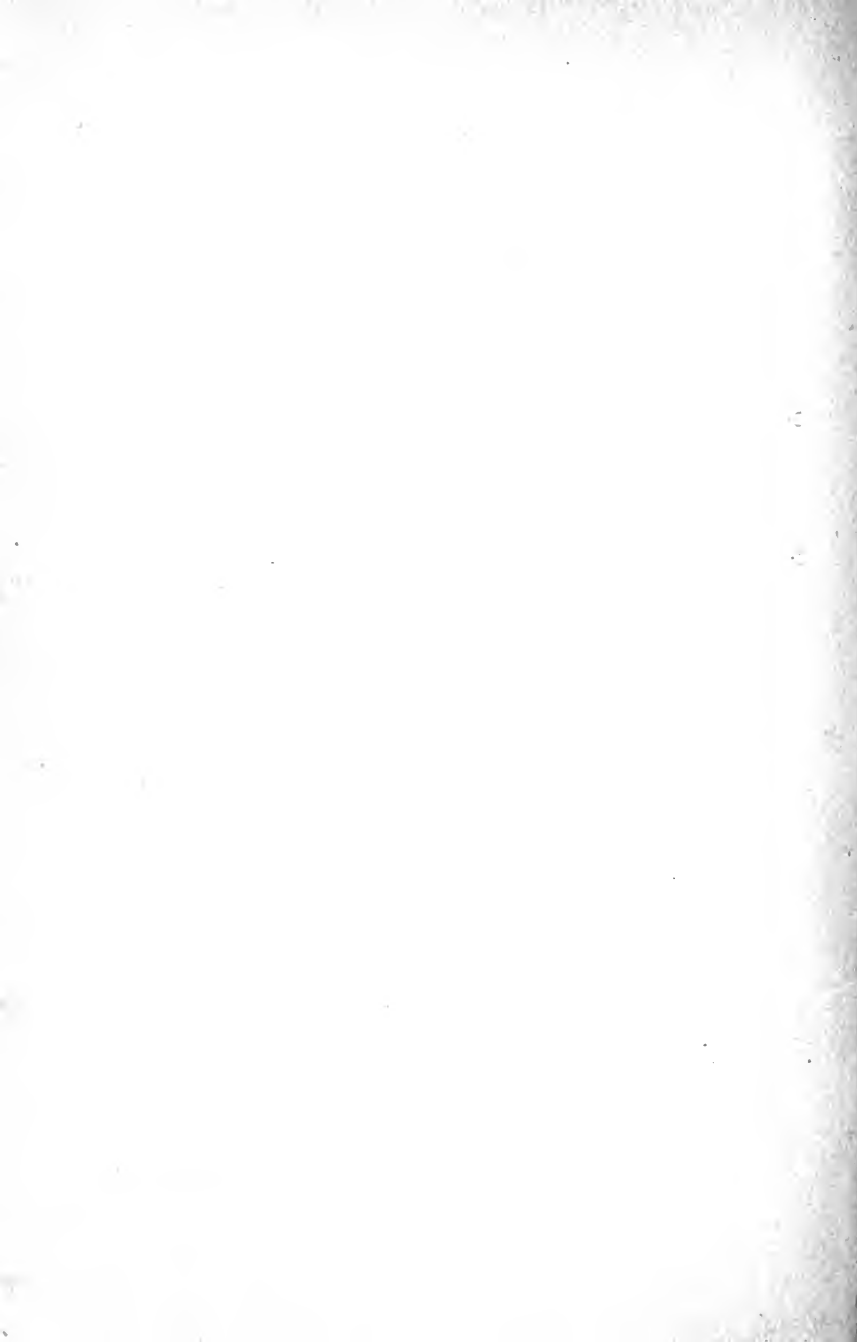
In learning the use of his tools, the pupil will find it a splendid exercise to work in the following way :—

1. Take one piece at a time. Linger over it until you have absorbed the full significance of every word and phrase.

2. Paraphrase it freely. Expand the force of every detail in your own language.

3. Study nature's way of using the voice so as to make others share your appreciation of the sense and sentiment.

4. This task accomplished with each extract in turn, practise reading or reciting the entire series at a time. Do this day after day for a while. These transitions from one type of piece to another, will quicken and sharpen your perception of the elements of beauty and power in language and voice.



DIAGNOSING AND PRESCRIBING



CHAPTER VIII

DIAGNOSING AND PRESCRIBING

EXPERIENCE proves that defective delivery is frequently due to the persistence of a few bad habits. It is very important to notice how even one radical defect pervades all one's work. It may be a peculiar cadence, or the uncertain use of the letter "h," or the habit of accentuating the last word of a sentence. Whatever it happens to be, it looks a small thing itself; but it recurs with fatal frequency and stamps the whole style of delivery. A small defect repeated three or four hundred times in half an hour cannot be disregarded.

Personal criticism and advice are par-

ticularly valuable here. All that we can do is to note a few typical cases.

1. A frequent defect in certain quarters, is that of turning a vowel into a diphthong. "Pale" becomes "pile," "glade" becomes "glide," "go" becomes "gow," "so" becomes "sow"; that is, the simple sounds "eh" and "oh" are changed into "ah-ee" and "ah-oh." The only cure is first to learn how to produce the sounds "eh" and "oh," by themselves; and then to make out a list of words containing each, and practise, giving the pure sound until the old habit is overcome.

2. Some people speak and read with unvarying speed, as if they were dictating to a shorthand writer bent upon training himself for a speed certificate. Practice in reading from a novel with plenty of dialogue, would help one considerably here.

3. Nothing is more common than uni-

formity of pitch, especially in public speaking. The great difficulty is to bring the voice down to a lower key. The speaker seems instinctively to feel that he must speak on a high key in order to be heard. He also feels that any change to a lower key will result in not being heard. Very few speakers succeed in overcoming this difficulty without much practice. A capital piece to work at in this case is "The Bells" by E. A. Poe. Omitting the brazen bells, we have three brief stanzas, each in a tone of its own; and if one prolongs the vowels on the imitative words, the value of the piece as an exercise will be greatly enhanced. It would be also helpful if the reader practised reading the same thing—say, a paragraph out of the newspaper—in three different tones. Change nothing save the tone. Let the inflections, pauses, &c., remain the same all

through ; only read it first in a conversational tone, then in a tone decidedly higher ; and then, finally, in a tone comfortably low, yet always clear and distinct.

Obviously, the proper management of tone demands that we shall have so trained the voice that it will obey the slightest suggestion of the mind ; and that we shall have so made the spirit of a piece our own that we feel instinctively this or that tone is appropriate to express it. The difficulty we have referred to, is however, so peculiarly the experience of even practised speakers that nothing but patient and persevering practice at compelling the voice to descend, will secure to one the necessary feeling of ease and comfort in accomplishing this in public.

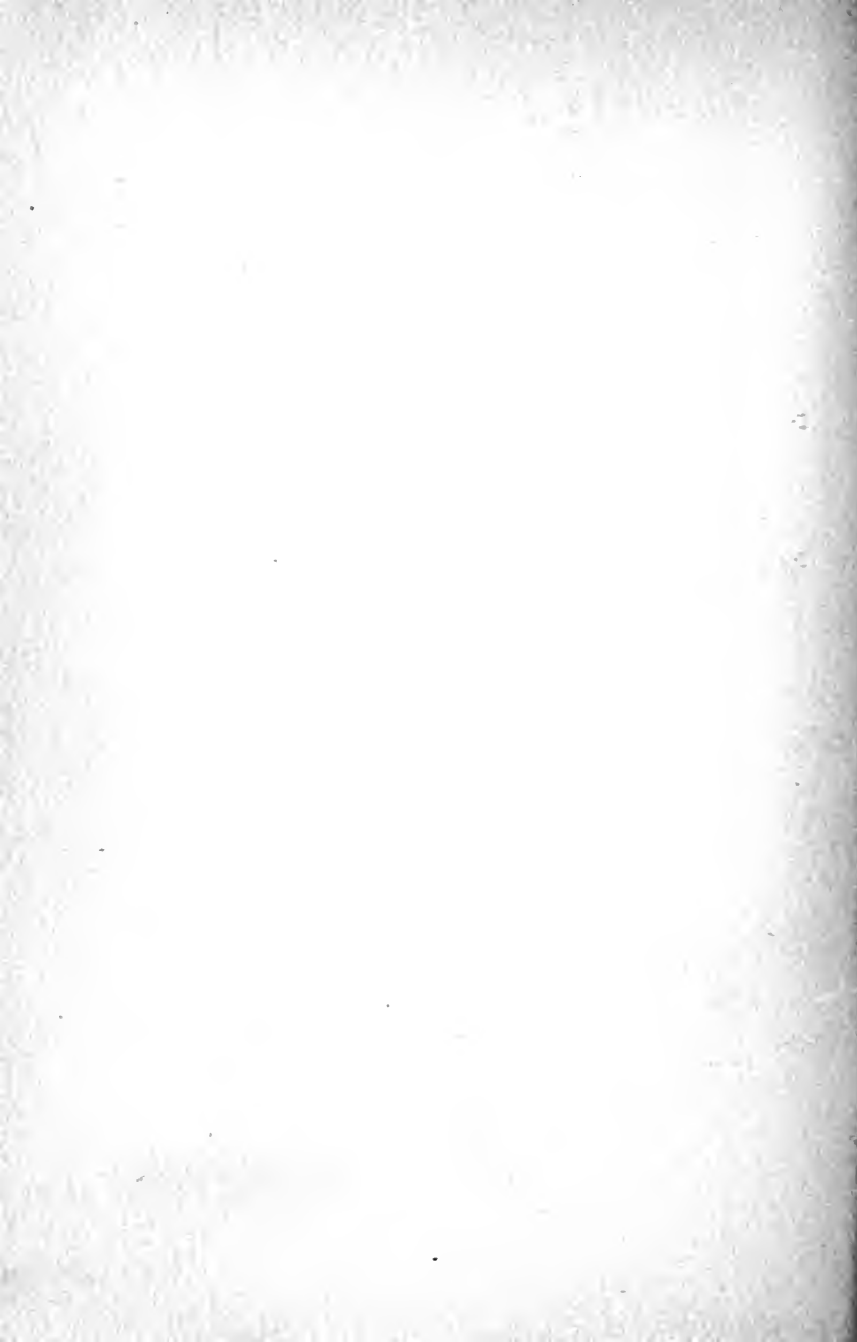
4. Another fairly common fault is what may be termed want of grip. What we

mean has been already instanced in the case of Lord Stormont's languid delivery of sentiments suggestive of a "whirlwind of impetuosity" and a "torrent of passion." Anyone who is thus afflicted cannot do better than select for practice a few pieces like the well-known dialogue between Brutus and Cassius in Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar." Gesture, attitude, and looks, will materially assist him in expressing the stronger feelings with increase of energy. We are all familiar with the effect of gestures, attitudes, and features upon the mind. Suppose one tried to utter the words of a prayer standing in the defiant attitude of a pugilist, he would find it well-nigh impossible. On the other hand, an attitude like this will materially aid one in expressing what is appropriate to the attitude.

5. To mention only one other common

fault, there is the tendency most people experience of becoming the victims of a set cadence. What has been called the "pulpit tone," is often little more than this. The voice has been allowed to acquire a little melody of its own; and, no matter what the thought or sentiment may be, this melody is sung over, again and again, unto weariness, as well as to the destruction of all expression. The cadence is used as a kind of Procrustes' bed into which every type of sentiment and emotion must be forced. Nothing could be more mechanical or wooden; and yet it is painfully frequent. It almost makes one despair of helping the victim. Much study and practice will be required in appreciating the use of inflections, tone, time, &c. Most important of all is the effort to master the peculiar value and force of individual sentences, and even of individual groups within sentences.

Take a paragraph and try to read only one sentence as if it stood alone. Pause and give the mind time to seize the significance of the next sentence, then give that one as if it stood by itself.



PLAYING THE ACCOMPANIMENT

CHAPTER IX

PLAYING THE ACCOMPANIMENT

THE spoken word is more or less accompanied by certain attitudes, gestures, and the play of features. The title of this chapter suggests the analogy of a pianoforte accompaniment to a song. It is not every pianist who can successfully play an accompaniment. Some who attempt it play too loudly, and thus mar the singer's effort instead of heightening the effect. It sounds, too, as if the piano were the jealous rival of the voice, and were struggling for recognition. A tasteful accompaniment will always guard against assuming the place of importance; it will

not lay down the law for the singer, but rather follow his lead and chime in with his mood and interpretation. Even so is it with the attitudes, gestures, and features that accompany the spoken word. They are there to heighten the effect of what is said ; they are not there to call attention to themselves, still less to introduce discord and incongruity, as is all too often the case.

The first lesson to be learned in this connection is the art of simply standing still. The successful conversationalist has learned that there is a time to keep silence ; the expert accompanist knows there are times when the best service he can render to the singer is to keep his fingers off the piano. Speakers, readers, and reciters must also learn that there are times when nothing is more effective than simply standing still. Strange to say, this is nothing short of a

lesson requiring much self-watching and practice to master. It looks extremely easy, but every one who has faced an audience will tell you how hard it is. If you have never essayed the task, then use your eyes at the next public meeting you attend. Watch the speakers. One crosses his legs and lounges on the front rail or on the side of the table. Another gets his hand on the water glass. Another strikes the "coffee-pot" attitude—one arm is the handle, the other arm is the spout. One man folds his arms; another holds them akimbo. One twiddles his watch chain; another thrusts his hands into his pockets. One speaks with his head to one side as if he longed to make a pillow of his shoulder, another tilts his chin up as if to escape the sharp edge of an over-stiff collar. You may complete the catalogue by further observation. Anyhow, you will soon be

impressed with the fact that standing still before an audience is little short of an achievement, and that striking wrong attitudes is as common a malady as catching cold.

With regard to attitude, it should be remembered that your feelings are no sufficient guide. You may feel more comfortable in a lounging or ungainly attitude, but it does not look so to your audience. And yet to see yourself as you appear to them would not of itself mend matters. We are all the victims of habit, and we need to correct our bad habits so that we shall naturally and normally assume those attitudes which are befitting. If, for example, one is in the habit of putting his hands into his pockets, he will feel it extremely awkward to do otherwise on a public platform. The very thought of having to avoid the habit will disconcert

him. Let the reader then watch himself in less exacting circumstances—say, in a drawing-room, or while walking outside, or when reading and reciting in private. Let him drill himself thus into reasonably dignified attitudes, and when he comes to face the public he will experience less and less trouble.

But, there are other things requiring attention; not perhaps in merely reading aloud, but certainly in reciting and public speaking. Gesture may be overdone at times; but it has its place. When properly employed, it becomes a valuable adjunct to the voice. Anything that adds to the expressiveness of a deliverance, deserves study and cultivation, and therefore the silent adjuncts of attitude, gesture, and play of features, are worthy of a little more attention than they seem, as a rule, to receive.

When it is said that these things receive scant attention, it is not meant that they rarely accompany the spoken word. On the contrary, they are very much in evidence. The trouble is that they seldom have the desired effect upon the audience. It may be that the orator is fiery and impulsive; and his temperament leads him to indulge in a superabundance of motion which is neither very significant nor very graceful. Or, in the case of a reciter, the action is so obviously studied that an air of artificiality is given to the whole performance. Such defective displays naturally suggest a word of warning and guidance.

It is surely a reasonable demand that gesture should at least be graceful. Angularity and stiffness must be got rid of. Those who appear before the public should train themselves to a graceful carriage of

the body ; they should practise sweeping curves in the use of the arms. The movements of the wrist may be made wonderfully expressive and graceful. The fingers, too, are capable of not a little training in adding materially to the effectiveness of gesture. It is interesting in this connection to study the details of the figure in statuary ; but the best of lessons will be learned by watching anyone who has so mastered his work, that every movement reveals not only the grace of true art, but also the living significance of nature.

It may be worth while adverting to a few faults that meet our eyes all too often. Some of these are due to one's failure to accommodate his movements to the view of the audience. For example, in dialogue, the reciter sometimes turns round at right angles to his normal position. The result

is, of course, that several in the audience see only the back of his head. A compromise is required. He should turn round only enough to suggest the idea implied in the action. Every one in the audience should be able easily to see part of his face all the time. Again, the eyes are occasionally directed heavenward, in such a way that many lose sight of all that makes the eyes so expressive. A compromise is demanded here also.

Another fault is seen in the case of those who exaggerate the grace of a gesture. They have been taught to do this and that, and when they do it they give one the impression that they are calling attention to their acquired gracefulness. This is often very noticeable in a pronounced twirl of the wrist.

We now proceed to note a few faults of a more serious kind in connection with the

significance of gesture. First, let us observe how nature works in using gesture. Suppose you are asking the way to some place. Your informant will instinctively point out the direction with one or two movements of the arms and hands. If he happens to be for a moment in doubt, he will perhaps bite his under lip, knit his brow, and stroke his chin, before uttering a word. All this is a mute language, and you know that it means hesitation, doubt, and thinking. Then suddenly the right arm is thrust out, and the forefinger pointed in the direction which he proceeds to explain in a few words. The obvious lesson is that gesture must always reveal something going on in the mind. As the most crabbed scrawl of a thinker is of more value than the flourishing caligraphy of a schoolboy's copy-book, so are gestures that reveal thought and assist intelligence, even if they

lack grace, worth more than so many twists and twirls which amount to little more than a display of calisthenics. There is no reason why grace and significance should not be combined, but the significance of gesture must ever come first. In the above instance, the order of nature is—first the thought in the mind, then the appropriate gesture, finally the words that complete the sense to be conveyed. If the reader or speaker puts his soul into his work he will find that almost instinctively his gestures will anticipate his words.

In the next place, observe how definite and decided is the gesture that points out the direction. The gesture tells more than the direction of a place; it declares that the speaker has made up his mind. Here, then, is another lesson for reciters whose gestures are sometimes exceedingly indefinite and

meaningless. If a gesture means anything it ought to leave no doubt as to what it does mean.

The perilous habit of getting up a recitation to order frequently brings the reciter into trouble with his gestures. I recently heard a lady recite a piece in which a monk is described as poring over a book. She began rightly enough with the supposed book in her hand, but suddenly a gesture spoiled everything by suggesting that the monk let the book fall from his hands while he still contrived to keep on reading its pages! She then showed us how a bird came down to the very ground, while her words went on to say that the bird really lighted on the branch of a tree! Faults of this kind are due to defective imagination. In descriptive pieces one should always endeavour to realise each scene in all its details, so

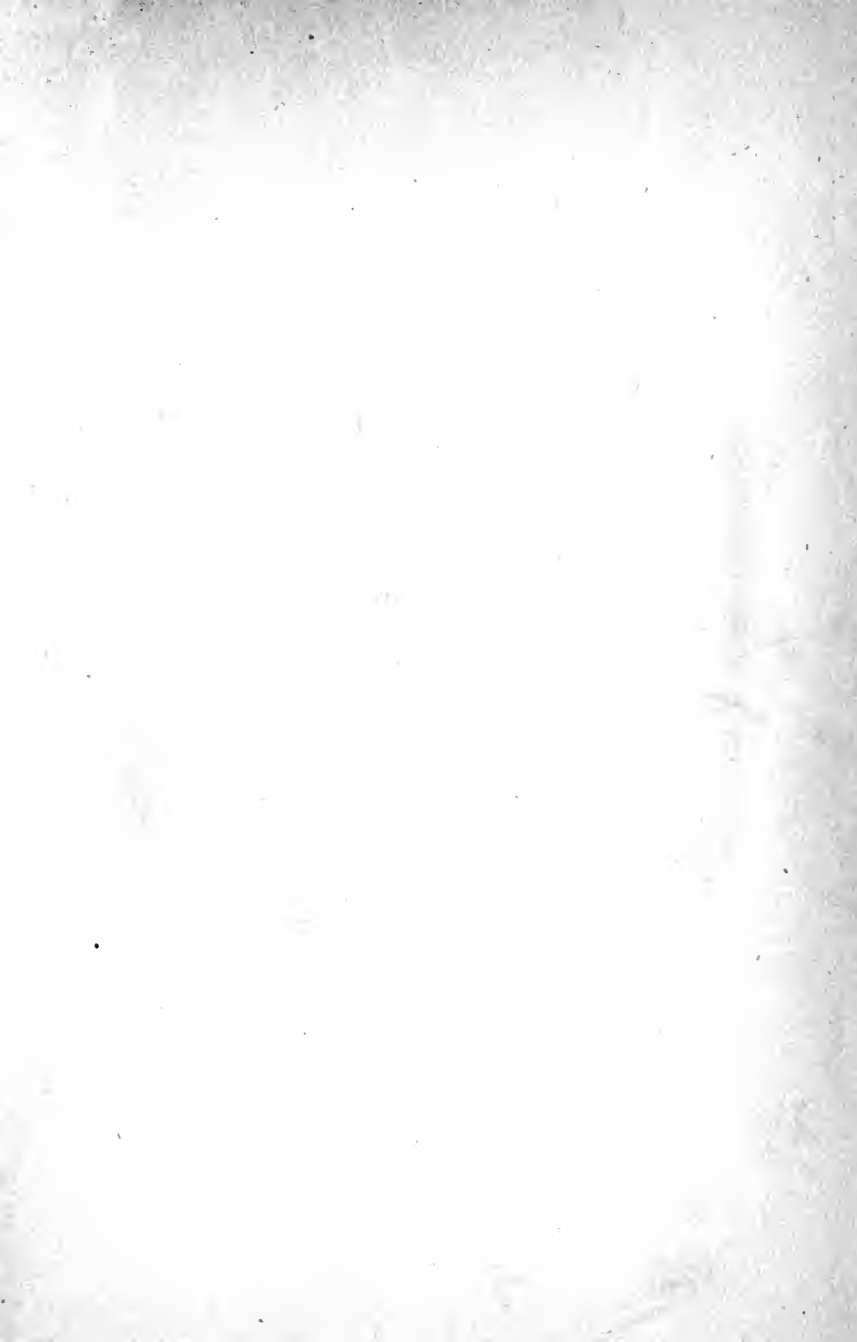
that he can describe it as if from actual experience.

In conclusion, we must point out the importance of seeing that the law of harmony is observed in all we do when speaking, reading, or reciting. Nothing betrays the crudity of a performance more than want of harmony. We have already referred to the ludicrous effect of tone and time when they contradict the sentiment conveyed by the words. It is the same with gesture, &c. How absurd it is to see the hand pointing heavenward while the eyes are directed towards the ground! Or to see the eyes staring to the left while the hand is thrust out to the right! Or to see the head kept stiff and unyielding while the arms swing about in the vain attempt to give the idea of life and animation to the recital! No, we must remember that it is the whole man that speaks; and we must

so master the significance of what we are delivering that head, arms, wrist, hands, eyes, &c., all unite in the work of expression, as well-trained voices blend in a chorus.

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