

men. Meanwhile our appeal, as ever, must be to the Church, whose wings of love ever outstrip the lagging feet of human policy in the Divine work of delivering those that are drawn to death.

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ART. V.—THE ART OF PUBLIC SPEAKING.

HINTS FOR THE PULPIT, BAR AND PLATFORM.

PART I.—BREATHING.

IN the exquisite perfection of the human voice, we see the conception not of a finite mind, but that of the Divine Artificer! For how complex, yet perfect, its organism! How numerous and delicate its constituent parts, and yet how sublime the harmony in which those parts are made to interact! In design it is incomparably more beautiful than anything the human mind ever projected!

Yet what organ is there more abused than the voice? And, because abused, the pulpit and platform alike witness to repeated failures in the art of public speaking, because it is falsely assumed that the voice may, by some intuitive power, be played upon with varying degrees of skill by the most uninstructed tyro without any instruction or training.

Such a notion is contrary to the opinions and practice of ancient and modern orators.

In the Republics of Greece and Rome, men were orators not by nature or accident, but became such by a rigid and systematic training.

The first failures of Demosthenes in public speaking are attributed by Plutarch to his inattention to the art of delivery. On hearing the actor Satyrus deliver some lines from Euripides or Sophocles, he was powerfully convinced of how much is lost if speech have nothing of the ornaments or graces of delivery. He therefore built for himself a subterranean study, into which he daily descended for practice. It were needless to show with what success his labours were eventually crowned. Cicero, too, failed at first through an excessive vehemence of manner, which he conquered through study and discipline. "No one," writes the Bishop of Ripon, "will become a great or effective speaker without training."

John Bright regularly read aloud during the Session of Parliament from one of the standard poets. The inference, therefore, is that if such men of acknowledged oratorical endowment submitted themselves to some training in the art

of speaking, how much more indispensable is it for those of inferior powers and attainments?

And yet ignorance in the merest elements of the art of public speaking is of the commonest occurrence. For instance, how few speakers really know how to breathe aright. Yet, till we know how to breathe, we cannot know how to speak.

To breathe for the purposes of life is one thing; to breathe for those of public speaking is quite another. The "great secret" of breathing is to inhale through the *nose*.

Nature has been sufficiently generous to give to all her children that commonest of gifts—a nose—not for purely ornamental purposes, but chiefly for those of respiration. Within the limits of a short article, it were impossible to enumerate the advantages derived from this mode of breathing.

Quite apart from the purposes of speech, were it only a consideration of health, it is recommended by the highest authorities as of vital import.

The singular immunity of the native races of North and South America from diseases of the respiratory organs has been ascribed to this simple habit, which is rigidly practised by them from earliest infancy. It is a physiological fact that they enjoy the greatest immunity from throat and lung affections who regularly adopt this mode of breathing.

De Quincey, in his "Last Days of Kant," tells us that "the great German metaphysician always went out for a walk after dinner alone, partly that he might breathe exclusively *through his nostrils*, because the air, reaching the lungs in a state of less rawness, and at a temperature somewhat higher, would be less apt to irritate them."

The so-called "clergyman's sore throat," and other similar evils incident to public speakers, have been attributed primarily to the vicious mode of breathing or pumping the air through the open mouth, instead of through the nostrils. A vicious mode of breathing involves a vicious use of the voice, and it is to this wrongful, rather than its excessive, use, that there arise the functional derangement and physical disorder connoted by the term "clergyman's sore throat."

The nose is "Nature's respirator." The air, in passing through the *nostrils*, is both filtered and heated before it reaches the sensitive organs of the throat and chest. It is filtered by the hairs with which nature has lined the nostrils, and its temperature is raised by its having to traverse a longer and more circuitous route to the lungs, whereby we avoid the irritation which often provokes a cough or induces other disorders.

To a speaker, too, breathing through the nostrils is of equally vital importance. It minimizes the amount of vocal exertion

and consequent fatigue. The reason is obvious. If the air be drawn through the mouth it absorbs the moisture in its passage, rendering the palate, throat and tongue dry and clammy. The result is a loss of vocal and physical power which renders inevitable greater exertion and premature exhaustion. More especially does this apply to over-crowded and over-heated rooms, conditions which make the mouth and throat particularly susceptible to dryness and irritation. The air, too, being more or less vitiated, is charged with impurities which, when drawn through the mouth, irritate the sensitive vocal organs, producing some temporary inconvenience, which is often aggravated by huskiness or a cough.

How often, too, after vocal exertion in overheated rooms, severe colds or other disorders supervene which had been avoided by breathing through "Nature's respirator" when coming out into a much-reduced temperature. This method of breathing is one of the best possible aids to long-sustained vocal efforts without incurring any undue sense of fatigue.

Moreover, by its use, we are able to dispense with the conventional glass of water or other meretricious aids, so frequently resorted to by speakers for the purpose of fortifying the exhausted organs, for the need of any such will have been removed.

Now for a just economy of the breath. Care must be taken that every particle of air given out be in the production of sound. Instantly the process of replenishing the lungs has ceased, utterance should begin. The air has to be converted into sound. Any breath, therefore, given out silently before utterance commences, *i.e.*, when the lungs are inflated for vocal action, is obviously wasted, "is something taken from the force, volume, and ease of utterance." Again, be careful that no breath come out with the sound. If breath be given out, as well as sound, we shall not only speedily expend the supply we have, but the voice will lose in purity of tone, and be made harsh, rough, and furry. But how shall we ascertain whether we give anything but sound out of the mouth? This we may know by the tone of the voice. We may also demonstrate it to ourselves by singing with a lighted candle before our mouth. If there be any breath given out with the sound the flame will either flicker or be extinguished. This is well known to be a frequent direction of Signor Garcia. Convert every atom of air into sound. Economize, but never exhaust the lungs. Always keep in store a reserve fund. For the purposes of speaking a greater demand is made upon the breath than that which is necessary for the purposes of mere existence. Oftentimes, when speaking aloud, our speech must needs be vigorous, earnest, and energetic. The greater

the energy and vehemence with which we speak, the larger are the demands made upon us, and the speedier is the waste of breath. Large demands, therefore, need large supplies. "He is the best singer (writes Mr. Lennox Browne), and, it is almost needless for me to add, the best reader and speaker also, who can so control the expiration that the least possible amount of air sufficient to cause vibration, is poured with continuous effect upon the vocal organs. Hence, as one so well knows, the greatest singers appear to have an inexhaustible supply of breath."

#### PART II.—THE MUSIC OF SPEECH.

Now there is a very prevalent opinion, but false as it is prevalent, that the louder we speak the better are we understood.

To be heard is one thing; to be understood is another. Audibility and intelligibility are not convertible terms, for how often is a speaker heard and not understood. For instance, it is not an uncommon thing to hear a man puffing and panting in the misdirected efforts of public speaking, and vociferating with a vehemence that quickly exhausts both himself and his hearers in the vain delusion that what he is saying is perfectly intelligible to the minds of his hearers. No doubt such efforts are an excellent specific for throwing off latent and superfluous energy, but for the purposes of speech absolutely useless; for all that reaches his hearers is mere noise—*vox et præterea nihil*. A man may possess the voice of a Stentor, but it will avail him little if his enunciation be defective. On the other hand, he who speaks barely above a whisper may be heard a considerable distance, and with comparatively little effort, if only his enunciation be clear and distinct.

It is the clear, crisp articulation of words that renders a speaker intelligible, and constitutes that charm of speech which, in its perfection, fascinates us with its spell of irresistible power.

Why is Italian the language of song? Chiefly, no doubt, because of the superabundance of vowels which characterizes it.

Why is the speech of an Italian more euphonious than that of an average-speaking Englishman? Partly for the same reason; and partly, also, because his formation of the *vowels*, the music of speech, is fuller, more perfect, and more sonorous than ours. And it is due no less to this manner of pronunciation than to the nature of his language that it is so characterized by a richness and beauty of sound. He directs the waves of sound to the front of the mouth; we to the back of the throat and against the teeth. Hence the fascinating tones of the one, and the guttural, harsh and unattractive

sounds of the other. The vowels are pre-eminently the *music* of speech as distinguished from mere *noise*, and music will extend over, and be audible and appreciable at far greater distances than mere noise.

This fact is attested by the intuitive utilization of this penetrant power of music in the "nature-prompted" utterances of the street-crier, whose wish is to be heard as far and as effectively as possible. This is attained by the great extent of reach of the peculiar musical cry adopted by the vendors of fish, fruit, etc.

"Take care of the consonants, the vowels will take care of themselves," is an oft-repeated maxim; but in this, as in many other maxims of an antithetic character, the truth is sacrificed to the *forced* embodiment of a pointed antithesis.

Despise the vowels and you will at once divest speech of beauty as of expression. They are the "flesh and blood" of speech, without which consonants are but dry bones—void of beauty as of life.

How important a part they play in oral language is at once apparent when we remember that

- (a) It is through the vowels alone that we can develop the voice in regard to its intensity, purity, or sweetness, equally in speech as in song;
- (b) That we can give expression to emotional feeling or passion;
- (c) That a speaker makes himself audible, and, in part, intelligible;
- (d) As the musical sounds of speech, they form the sole elements admitting of inflexion or modulation of voice.

But we English have contracted a habit which, in its influence, has marred the natural beauty of our language, and shorn it of its own peculiar charm, viz., speaking too much with the teeth compressed.

By this undue contraction of the opening of the mouth we "reduce to a minimum the sonority of the vowels" by an interruption, mechanically, with the free emission of voice, and consequent due play of the waves of sound. We thereby impair the quality of voice, reduce its power and lessen its extent of reach—effects which are the immediate result of our wholly disregarding the utility of the vowels.

If the sounds are to be emitted and sent forth so as to reach the distant auditor in a form at once clear, sonorous, intelligible, and agreeable, how otherwise than by separating the teeth sufficiently for them to have a free, open and unobstructed passage? But if from a too contracted opening of the mouth requisite for the full, perfect utterance of these

sounds, they be impeded in their progress outward, they will be depressed, roughened, and made harsh by the resistance offered by the teeth. The tones will lose in those musical qualities of fulness, richness, sweetness, and clearness so essential to a speaker, and which impart to speech its especial charm, for the sounds produced will not be pure vowel-tone, but an admixture of *nasal* and other sounds equally wanting in euphony.

The voice must find emission either through the mouth or nasal passages. The more purely it does this through the former the more will it approximate to vowel-tone, and in proportion will be its purity, sweetness, and strength.

Our endeavour, therefore, must be to introduce into our speech as much music or vowel-tone as we can. To do this will suggest the expediency of separating the teeth to form perfectly the vowels, and of sustaining the voice upon them as long as is consistent with their just and perfect utterance, as also for the purposes of inflexion. At the same time, we must be careful of a prolongation into a drawling and sing-song expression, depriving speech of its charm, dignity, and grace.

The consonants are the *noises*, as the vowels are the music of speech. They form the bare and bony skeleton of speech; the vowels its "flesh and blood." They form the very nerves and sinews from which are derived the energy, strength, and power of our language.

Proportionate to the prominence or absence of these is our distinctness or indistinctness of utterance. To attain a graceful and withal forcible utterance, we must give individual attention to the vowel *and* consonantal elements whose combination form words.

Of course the recital of mere words, dissociated from the ideas they represent, will have nothing of interest apart from the purpose of exercising the organs of articulation, and may even appear ludicrous; but, as Dr. Hullah justly remarks, "as assuredly no singing-voice ever yet was formed by the exclusive utterance of anything that could be called music, so no speaking-voice will ever yet be formed by the exclusive utterance of anything that can be called literature."

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