

“ Duties of a Parish Priest ” that it is the clergy alone that are meant by the “ spiritual ” persons of Gal. vi. 1, or when I read in the proper preface for Whit Sunday that the Holy Ghost came down from heaven and lighted on the Apostles, I like to read again the most true promises of the Lord Jesus Christ, that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask ; and the declaration of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, that the prophecy of Joel is fulfilled in the Church of this dispensation : “ Behold I send my spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . . and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” We cannot afford to give up that blessed inheritance to the clergy.

Some time ago some stained-glass windows were put up in the church of which I am incumbent. The artist designed one for “ The Day of Pentecost,” and managed to introduce twelve Apostles, each with his nimbus. I asked him to introduce others, not Apostles ; he declared there was no room for more. I insisted on my point : “ Let some of the Apostles go. No one doubts their being endowed with the Spirit. But a layman I must have ; a woman I must have ; children I must have.” And there they are, in a storied window which proclaims the truth, and the whole truth.



Hints on the Use of the Voice.

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II. ARTICULATION AND READING.

IT is evident that the tongue, the lips, the teeth, and the palate, are the main factors of articulate speech. All of them are under the control of muscles which work almost automatically, but which constantly need training and correction, owing to our tendency to mumble and slur over our consonants,

not only in talking but in public speaking. St. James says that "the tongue can no man tame"; but we must try. Sometimes it seems too big for our mouths and at other times as dry as a bone. This is pure nervousness, which is to be got rid of partly by prayer, partly by confidence and the sense of being filled with our subject, and partly by vocal training. We have to master our organs of speech as we have to master the horse we ride. What is it that makes an Englishman so hesitating? Why does he stumble, and stutter, and ventriloquize, and refuse to open his mouth? I believe that our foggy British atmosphere has something to do with it; also, we are rather shy as a race; and many of our words (*e.g.*, strength) are mainly bundles of consonants. At any rate our business is to conquer, not by loudness, not by shouting, not by mistaking perspiration for inspiration (as Spurgeon used to say), but by clearness and plainness of speech. Give every syllable its due sound; do not pronounce the word "commandment," for example, as if it were a word of one syllable. Do not run one word into another so as to produce such an utterance as "the firstfruits of his screechers," "almighty an neverlasting," "whichart." If a word begins with a vowel, do not introduce it by a slight *m*, *n*, *b*, or by an inarticulate twist of the nasal organ. There is nothing to be ashamed of in a vowel.

Appeal again to your candid friend. Do I do these things? have I got into a bad habit of gabbling? or, in seeking to be deliberate, do I drawl? or do I try to avoid slurring by speaking *ore rotundo* instead of adopting a clear and natural utterance?

Much may be done by exercise of the muscles of the mouth. For this purpose you need not raise your voice, but speak in a whisper. Practise on difficult words, such as "treacherous," "irrefragable," "unequivocal," "inexplicable," first slowly, then rapidly. Make sure of your initial and final consonants. Do not let your auditors think you are speaking of "horses" when you mean "courses," nor create an excitement by giving notice that you are going to preach on "aspects of hell" when you mean "health" (as Mr. Haweis once did). If your friend tells you

that you read and speak too "trippingly," practise reading out of a book backwards; this is a sure cure.

One of the great faults of English reading and speaking is that we drop not only our last letters but our last words; and sometimes these are the most important. Every word should have its due force, and nothing ought to be lost. It does not follow that because *we* know what our last word is going to be, our hearers know it also. Probably they are entirely at sea in the matter. If you want to emphasize it and drive it home, make an almost indiscernible pause before uttering it; but above all, keep your voice up.

All the hints and suggestions which I have been giving are commonplaces to a trained singer, and we may learn much from listening to and watching either such a singer or a first-rate speaker. It is sad to think how much good matter is lost in church and hall through our lack of clearness in delivery.¹ Our voices are too often like muffled drums, and our trumpets give anything but a certain sound, and the laymen round us are inclined to use, in a sadly perverted sense, Cowper's touching apostrophe—"O that those lips had language!"

PITCH.

The human voice has a considerable compass which we use in singing, but rarely in speaking. The muscular distinction between the act of singing and that of speaking is hard to

¹ It is to be feared that there is some truth in the accusation made against some of our University authorities that their articulation is not too clear. The subjoined cutting from an old undergraduates' journal refers to one who is now deceased: "The following is an exact version of the Oxford prayer as was heard by undergraduates in the gallery, possibly owing to the bad acoustic properties of the sacred edifice, on Sunday last: 'Pray—Christ's—Cath—specially—stolic—Majesty—Tamrelim—queen—fend a fay—causes—cas civil preme;—family;—size;—due supplies—useful—Versities—Talbot—dokky pokky—bound to pray—Rory Worcester—Provost, Dean, Fellows, Scholars; flourish and advance—mercies ready;—ashj preservasby—benefac—King Henry VIIth, jum jum—John jum jum:—King Henry VIIIth, jum jum—Card of Wool—jum jum; Bishop jum jum—Queen Elizabeth; Queen Mary—Queen Anne—jum jum, jum jum, jum jum: Rev. jum jum—Mr. jum jum jum jum—Special—factor of the same;—John Smith, King Edward II.—Parted this life faith of fear—grace of sample through,' etc."

explain, but the one gives fixity of pitch to each note, whilst in the other there is greater flexibility and relaxation. Most of us are far more monotonous than we suppose, and people must be wonderfully patient if they condescend to listen to us Sunday after Sunday. We ought never to shout, but should speak as if to the most distant person before us, combining force, clearness, and sympathy in our tones. Each person has his natural pitch for conversation ; but we are capable of speaking in other notes, higher and lower, and it is here that practice comes in. We cannot settle or develop our pitch by whispering, but must train ourselves to at least three pitches with considerable modulations, so that our speaking voice may include something like an octave. The more we exaggerate in exercising the better. Begin with a few words, such as "good-morning" (not leaving out the *r* or the final *g*, as the habit of some is), and having attained three pitches which are neither unnatural nor unmanageable, try an extempore conversation in which three persons are supposed to be engaged, and assign one pitch to each ; then vary your pitches according to the room (though open-air is better) and according to the subject. You will thus break away from your natural monotony and have notes at command for all purposes. Only, when avoiding monotony, do not fall into waves or seesaw tones, which are even more aggravating to the hearer.

READING.

"Clerical reading is specially bad." This is the verdict of the newspapers and of the man in the street, so there must be something in it. English boys and young men as a rule do not take pains to read clearly and intelligently, and the results are specially seen in the clergy, simply because we sit and criticize them every Sunday. Perhaps, if laymen read in public as much as clergymen do, the *dictum* would have to be modified. Certainly, if anyone ought to take pains with his reading it is the man who is entrusted with the public reading of the Scriptures. When we hear a really good reader, we are almost

startled and quite fascinated. The Book becomes new to us. We feel as if we never understood it before. Why should we not all read well? And why not keep trying to improve our reading up to the end of our ministerial life?

The first rule for a reader is that he should understand what he is reading about, and the second is that he should adapt his style of reading to his subject. A man should read to himself aloud before venturing to read in church, and, speaking generally, it is best to practise reading out to one's own family, or to some friends, or to a class, before becoming a public reader. Of course there are varieties of gifts, and we all depend on the formation and condition of throat, nose, palate, teeth, and lips. But training enables us to conquer many of our natural difficulties and to throw force and feeling into the words which are before us. In going through the process called "reading prayers," we have to make distinctions between an exhortation to the people, a prayer to God, and a recitation of an ancient creed. We have to learn to be deliberate without being slow, and to alter our tone and pitch from time to time, as in certain portions of the Litany. Our eye has to travel ahead of our lips, and, if possible, we ought to know the whole service by heart. Also we have to keep our wits about us so as to know what to do in an emergency. Everyone tells us that we ought to read naturally, but then our nature needs constant pruning, training, and chastening. I now turn from the reading of prayers to

THE READING OF SCRIPTURE.

One peculiarity of the Bible is its variety. It abounds in narrative; its poetry is entwined with its prose; its prophetic declamations are interspersed with records of visions; and ordinary home-life is suddenly interrupted by the intrusion of what is extraordinary. There are passages which exhibit fine irony, as in the song of Moses, and in that of Deborah; also in St. Paul's Epistles. Then there are dialogues and soliloquies as in the Prodigal Son and the story of the Prodigal Steward, and

there are strings of short proverbial utterances ; and, lastly, there are argumentative discussions, with question and answer. All these phases of literary style are presented to us as we stand before the open Bible in the face of a congregation ; they are set forth in stately English, but cut up into verses which do not always mark the sense, and without the aid of inverted commas and hyphens. I mention this last point because sometimes Hebrew writers put words into another person's mouth, and we have to be watchful to give the sense correctly, as in the case of Rabshakeh's words (2 Kings xix. 23, 24). Over and above all these phenomena there is the fact that the writers were messengers and recorders in the King's service, and that in the Gospels we are reading the words and deeds of Him who is the manifestation of God, and who spoke as never man spake. We may well say, Who is sufficient for the task of reading this Book ? The answer is, Our sufficiency (or efficiency) is of God, and we must seek all the help that He will give us through thoughtful study and careful training.

HELPS.

Do not begin by practising on the Bible, nor even on any class of sacred literature. Begin, rather, by reading out narratives from the newspaper, bits of dialogue, such as you can find even in the classic pages of *Punch*, or sketches from Mark Twain ; then advance to simple ballads, and at last to Shakespeare. Read always aloud, or if you are afraid of disturbing your neighbours, read in an emphatic whisper, and, when you have a chance, practise out of doors. Let me name a few passages which may be useful for practice and which, if thoroughly mastered, will prove useful on various occasions. Try your hand on Mark Twain's search for his lost sock in the "Tramp Abroad," and make a selection for yourself from "Alice in Wonderland ; and—for quick variation of tone, humorous, wrathful, and pathetic—Butler's "Nothing to Wear" ; or "The Owl Critic," by Fields ; or "The Rationalistic

Chicken," by S. J. Stone; or "A Night with a Baby." He who can read this class of literature effectively, can do anything. But you have to throw yourself into it and think of nothing else if you want to catch your audience. Then come ballads—*e.g.*, Clement Scott's "Women of Mumbles Head," or Alice Carey's "Elihu," or "The Fireman's Wedding." With these one can take Macaulay's "Lays" and "The Song of the Sword," by Körner. Then come the more pensive poems, which should not be attempted too early—*e.g.*, Byron's "Dying Gladiator" and "The Three Sons," by Moultrie. At last we come to Shakespeare; but who shall venture to select from him? We instinctively turn to Portia—a masterpiece—and for irony to Mark Anthony's oration in "Julius Cæsar," and for soliloquy to Hamlet, and for dream-narrative to Clarence.¹ For more sonorous compositions turn to Poe's "Raven," or to the grand "Hymn on Creation" by the Russian composer, Derzavin.

These are the classes of literature which form our best training-ground. From them we learn to be flexible, adaptive, bright, and stimulating.

Then we come back to our Bible and read in such a way that our hearers take it in. Do not be afraid of being too theatrical. The English tendency, as exhibited by clerical reading, is not to be theatrical, but to be dull. I have heard the words "I am Joseph" read as if it was the most natural thing in the world that the young Egyptian potentate should prove to be the outcast brother. Thousands of such passages are simply spoilt by being read in a dull monotone without any regard to emphasis or to sense. Let us learn to be effective and to give the honour due to the magnificent pages of our English Bible.

¹ Most of the pieces named above are given in such books as Carpenter's "Popular Elocutionist."

