

Talks on Talking eBook

Talks on Talking

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PREFACE

Good conversation implies naturalness, spontaneity, and sincerity of utterance. It is not advisable, therefore, to lay down arbitrary rules to govern talking, but it is believed that the suggestions offered here will contribute to the general elevation and improvement of daily speech.

Considering the large number of persons who are obliged to talk in social, business, and public life, the subject of correct speech should receive more serious consideration than is usually given to it. It is earnestly hoped that this volume will be of practical value to those who are desirous of developing and improving their conversational powers.

Appreciative thanks are expressed to the Editors of the *Homiletic Review* for permission to reprint some of the extracts.

Grenville Kleiser.

*New York city,
may, 1916.*

Boys flying kites haul in their white-wing'd birds:
You can't do that way when you're flying words.
"Careful with fire," is good advice we know;
"Careful with words," is ten times doubly so.
Thoughts unexpress'd may sometimes fall back dead,
But God Himself can't kill them once they're said!

—*Will Carleton.*

The first duty of a man is to speak; that is his chief business in this world; and talk, which is the harmonious speech of two or more, is by far the most accessible of pleasures. It costs nothing; it is all profit; it completes our education; it founds and fosters our friendships; and it is by talk alone that we learn our period and ourselves.

—*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

Vociferated logic kills me quite;
A noisy man is always in the right—
I twirl my thumbs, fall back into my chair,
Fix on the wainscot a distressful stare;
And when I hope his blunders all are out,
Reply discreetly, "To be sure—no doubt!"

—*Anon.*



TALKS ON TALKING

THE ART OF TALKING

The charm of conversation chiefly depends upon the adaptability of the participants. It is a great accomplishment to be able to enter gently and agreeably into the moods of others, and to give way to them with grace and readiness.

The spirit of conversation is oftentimes more important than the ideas expressed. What we are rather than what we say has the most permanent influence upon those around us. Hence it is that where a group of persons are met together in conversation, it is the inner life of each which silently though none the less surely imparts tone and character to the occasion.

It requires vigorous self-discipline so to cultivate the feelings of kindness and sympathy that they are always in readiness for use. These qualities are essential to agreeable and profitable intercourse, though comparatively few people possess them.

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Burke considered manners of more importance than laws. Sidney Smith described manners as the shadows of virtues. Dean Swift defined manners as the art of putting at ease the people with whom we converse. Chesterfield said manners should adorn knowledge in order to smooth its way through the world. Emerson spoke of manners as composed of petty sacrifices.

We all recognize that a winning manner is made up of seemingly insignificant courtesies, and of constant little attentions. A person of charming manner is usually free from resentments, inquisitiveness, and moods.

Personality plays a large part in interesting conversation. Precisely the same phraseology expressed by two different persons may make two wholly different impressions, and all because of the difference in the personalities of the speakers.

The daily mental life of a man indelibly impresses itself upon his face, where it can be unmistakably read by others. What a person is, innately and habitually, unconsciously discloses itself in voice, manner, and bearing. The world ultimately appraises a man at his true value.

The best type of talker is slow to express positive opinions, is sparing in criticism, and studiously avoids a tone or word of finality. It has been well said that “A talker who monopolizes the conversation is by common consent insufferable, and a man who regulates his choice of topics by reference to what interests not his hearers but himself has yet to learn the alphabet of the art. Conversation is like lawn-tennis, and requires alacrity in return at least as much as vigor in service. A happy phrase, an unexpected collocation of words, a habitual precision in the choice of terms, are rare and shining ornaments of conversation, but they do not for an instant supply the place of lively and interesting matter, and an excessive care for them is apt to tell unfavorably on the substance of discourse.”

When Lord Beaconsfield was talking his way into social fame, someone said of him, “I might as well attempt to gather up the foam of the sea as to convey an idea of the extraordinary language in which he clothed his description. There were at least five words in every sentence that must have been very much astonished at the use they were put to, and yet no others apparently could so well have expressed his idea. He talked like a racehorse approaching the winning-post—every muscle in action, and the utmost energy of expression flung out into every burst.”

We are told that Matthew Arnold combined all the characteristics of good conversation—politeness, vivacity, sympathy, interestedness, geniality, a happy choice of words, and a never-failing humor. When he was once asked what was his favorite topic for conversation, he instantly answered, “That in which my companion is most interested.”

Courtesy, it will be noted, is the fundamental basis of good conversation. We must show habitual consideration and kindness towards others if we would attract them to us. Bluntness of manner is no longer excused on the ground that the speaker is sincere and outspoken. We expect and demand that our companion in conversation should observe the recognized courtesies of speech.



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There was a time when men and women indulged freely in satire, irony, and repartee. They spoke their thoughts plainly and unequivocally. There were no restraints imposed upon them by society, hence it now appears to us that many things were said which might better have been left unsaid. Self-restraint is nowadays one of the cardinal virtues of good conversation.

The spirit of conversation is greatly changed. We are enjoined to keep the voice low, think before we speak, repress unseasonable allusions, shun whatever may cause a jar or jolt in the minds of others, be seldom prominent in conversation, and avoid all clashing of opinion and collision of feeling.

Macaulay was fond of talking, but made the mistake of always choosing a subject to suit himself and monopolizing the conversation. He lectured rather than talked. His marvelous memory was perhaps his greatest enemy, for though it enabled him to pour forth great masses of facts, people listened to him helplessly rather than admiringly.

Carlyle was a great talker, and talked much in protest of talking. No man broke silence oftener than he to tell the world how great a curse is talking. But he told it eloquently and therein was he justified. There was in him too much vehement sternness, of hard Scotch granite, to make him a pleasant talker in the popular sense. He was the evangelist of golden silence, and though he did not apparently practice it himself, his genius will never diminish.

Gladstone was unable to indulge in small talk. His mind was so constantly occupied with great subjects that he spoke even to one person as if addressing a meeting. It is said that in conversation with Queen Victoria he would invariably choose weighty subjects, and though she tried to make a digression, he would seize the first opportunity to resume his original theme, always reinforced in volume and onrush by the delay.

Lord Morley is attractive though austere in conversation. He never dogmatizes nor obtrudes his own opinions. He is a master of phrase-making. But although he talks well he never talks much.

The story is told that at a recent dinner in London ten leading public men were met together, when one suggested that each gentleman present should write down on paper the name of the man he would specially choose to be his companion on a walking tour. When the ten papers were subsequently read aloud, each bore the name of Lord Morley.

Lord Rosebery is considered one of the most accomplished talkers of the day. Deferential, natural, sympathetic, observant, well-informed, he easily and unconsciously commands the attention of any group of men. His voice is said to recommend what he utters, and a singularly refined accent gives distinction to anything he says. He is a

supreme example of two great qualifications for effective talking: having something worth while to say, and knowing how to say it.

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Among distinguished Canadians, Sir Thomas White is one of the most interesting speakers. His versatile mind, and broad and varied experience, enable him to converse with almost equal facility upon politics, medicine, finance, law, science, art, literature, or business. Dates, details, facts, figures, and illustrations are at his ready command. His manner is natural, courteous, and genial, but in argumentation the whole man is so thoroughly aroused to earnestness and intensity as almost to overwhelm an opponent. His greatest quality in speaking is his manifest sincerity, and it is this particularly which has ingratiated him in the hearts of his countrymen.

The Honorable Joseph H. Choate must certainly be reckoned among the best conversationalists of our time. His manner, both in conversation and in public speaking, is singularly gracious and winning. He is unsurpassed as a story-teller. His fine taste, combined with long experience as a public man, makes him an ideal after-dinner speaker.

Some eminent men try to mask their greatness when engaged in conversation. They do not wear their feelings nor their greatness on their sleeves. Some have an utter distaste for anything like personal display. It is said of the late Henry James that a stranger might talk to him for an entire evening without discovering his identity.

There is an interesting account of an evening's conversation between Emerson and Thoreau. When Thoreau returned home he wrote in his Journal: "Talked, or tried to talk, with R.W.E. Lost my time, nay, almost my identity. He, assuming a false opposition where there was no difference of opinion, talked to the wind." Emerson's version of the conversation was this: "It seemed as if Thoreau's first instinct on hearing a proposition was to controvert it. That habit is chilling to the social affections; it mars conversation."

Conversation offers daily opportunity for intellectual exercise of high order. The reading of great books is desirable and indispensable to education, but real culture comes through the additional training one receives in conversation. The contact of mind with mind tends to stimulate and develop thoughts which otherwise would probably remain dormant.

The culture of conversation is to be recommended not only for its own sake, but also as one of the best means of training in the art of public speaking. Since the best form of platform address today is simply conversation enlarged and elevated, it may almost be assumed that to excel in one is to be proficient in the other.

Good conversation requires, among other things, mental alertness, accuracy of statement, adequate vocabulary, facility of expression, and an agreeable voice, and these qualities are most essential for effective public speaking. Everyone, therefore, who aspires to speaking before an audience of hundreds or thousands, will find his best opportunity for preliminary training in everyday speech.



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TYPES OF TALKERS

There is no greater affliction in modern life than the tiresome talker. He talks incessantly. Presumably he talks in his sleep. Talking is his constant exercise and recreation. He thrives on it. He lives for talking's sake. He would languish if he were deprived of it for a single day. His continuous practice in talking enables him easily to outdistance all ordinary competitors. There is nothing which so completely unnerves him as long periods of silence. He has the talking habit in its most virulent form.

The trifling talker is equally objectionable. He talks much, but says little. He skims over the surface of things, and is timid of anything deep or philosophical. He does not tarry at one subject. He talks of the weather, clothes, plays, and sports. He puts little meaning into what he says, because there is little meaning in what he thinks. He cannot look at anything seriously. Nothing is of great significance to him. He is in the class of featherweights.

The tedious talker is one without terminal facilities. He talks right on with no idea of objective or destination. He rises to go, but he does not go. He knows he ought to go, but he simply cannot. He has something more to say. He keeps you standing half an hour. He talks a while longer. He assures you he really must go. You tell him not to hurry. He takes you at your word and sits down again. He talks some more. He rises again. He does not know even now how to conclude. He has no mental compass. He is a rudderless talker.

Probably the most obnoxious type is the tattling talker. He always has something startlingly personal to impart. It is a sacred secret for your ear. He is a wholesale dealer in gossip. He fairly smacks his lips as he relates the latest scandal. He is an expert embellisher. He adroitly supplies missing details. He has nothing of interest in his own life, since he lives wholly in the lives of others. He is a frightful bore, but you cannot offend him. He is adamant.

There is the tautological talker, or the human self-repeater. He goes over the ground again and again lest you have missed something. He is very fond of himself. He tells the same story not twice, but a dozen times. "You may have heard this before," says he, "but it is so good that it will bear repetition." He tries to disguise his poverty of thought in a masquerade of ornate language. If he must repeat his words, he adds a little emphasis, a flourishing gesture, or a spirit of nonchalance.

Again, there is the tenacious talker, who refuses to release you though you concede his arguments. When all others tacitly drop a subject, he eagerly picks it up. He is reluctant to leave it. He would put you in possession of his special knowledge. You may successfully refute him, but he holds firmly to his own ideas. He is positive he is right. He will prove it, too, if you will only listen. He knows that he knows. You cannot

convince him to the contrary, no indeed. He will talk you so blind that at last you are unable to see any viewpoint clearly.

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A recognized type is the tactless talker. He says the wrong thing in the right way, and the right thing in the wrong way. He is impulsive and unguarded. He reaches hasty conclusions. He confuses his tactlessness with cleverness. He is awkward and blundering. His indifference to the rights and feelings of others is his greatest enemy. He is a stranger to discretion. He speaks first, and thinks afterwards. He may have regrets, but not resolutions. He is often tolerated, but seldom esteemed.

The temperamental talker is one of the greatest of nerve-destroyers. He deals in superlatives. He views everything emotionally. He talks feelingly of trifles, and ecstatically of friends. He gushes. He flatters. To him everything is “wonderful,” “prodigious,” “superb,” “gorgeous,” “heavenly,” “amazing,” “indescribable,” “overwhelming.” Extravagance and exaggeration permeate his most commonplace observations. He is an incurable enthusiast.

The tantalizing talker is one who likes to contradict you. He divides his attention between what you are saying and what he can summon to oppose you. He dissents from your most ordinary observations. His favorite phrases are, “I don’t think so,” “There is where you are wrong,” “I beg to differ,” and “Not only that.” Tell him it will be a fine day, and he will declare that the signs indicate foul weather. Say that the day is unpromising, and he will assure you it does not look that way to him. He cavils at trifles. He disputes even when there is no antagonist.

To listen to the tortuous talker is a supreme test of patience. He slowly winds his way in and out of a subject. He traverses by-paths, allowing nothing to escape his unwearied eye. He goes a long way about, but never tires of his circuitous journey. Ploddingly and perseveringly he zigzags from one point to another. He alters his course as often as the crooked way of his subject changes. He twists, turns, and diverges without the slightest inconvenience to himself. He likes nothing better than to trace out details. His talking disease is discursiveness.

The tranquil talker never hurries. He has all the time there is. If you are very busy he will wait. He is uniformly moderate and polite. He is a rare combination of oil, milk, and rose-water. He would not harm a syllable of the English language. His talking has a soporific effect. It acts as a lullaby. His speech is low and gentle. He never speaks an ill-considered word. He chooses his words with measured caution. He is what is known as a smooth talker.

The torpedo talker is of the rapid fire explosive variety. He bursts into a conversation. He scatters labials, dentals, and gutturals in all directions. He is a war-time talker,—boom, burst, bang, roar, crash, thud! He fills the air with vocal bullets and syllabic shrapnel. He is trumpet-tongued, ear-splitting, deafening. He fires promiscuously at all his hearers. He rends the skies asunder. He is nothing if not vociferous, stentorian, lusty. He demolishes every idea in his way. He is a Napoleon of words.



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The tangled talker never gets anything quite straight. He inevitably spoils the best story. He always begins at the wrong end. Despite your protests of face and manner he talks on. He talks inopportunistly. He becomes inextricably confused. He is weak in statistics. He has no memory for names or places. He lacks not fluency but accuracy. He is a twisted talker.

The triumphant talker lays claim to the star part in any conversation. He likes nothing better than to drive home his point and then look about exultingly. He says gleefully, "I told you so." That he can ever be wrong is inconceivable to him. He knows the facts since he can readily manufacture them himself. He is self-satisfied, for in his own opinion he has never lost an argument. He is a brave and bold talker.

These, then, are some types of talking which we should not emulate. Study the list carefully—the tiresome talker, the trifling talker, the tedious talker, the tattling talker, the tautological talker, the tenacious talker, the tactless talker, the temperamental talker, the tantalizing talker, the tangled talker, the triumphant talker—and guard yourself diligently against the faults which they represent. Talking should always be a pleasure to the speaker and listener, never a bore.

TALKERS AND TALKING

Conversation is not a verbal nor vocal contest, but a mutual meeting of minds. It is not a monologue, but a reciprocal exchange of ideas.

There are cardinal rules which everyone should observe in conversation. The first of these is to be prepared always to give courteous and considerate attention to the ideas of others. There is no better way to cultivate your own conversational powers than to train yourself first to be an interesting and sympathetic listener.

It is in bad taste to interrupt a speaker. This is a common fault which should be resolutely guarded against. Moreover, your own opportunity to speak will shortly come if you have patience, when you may reasonably expect to receive the same uninterrupted attention which you have given to others.

Never allow yourself to monopolize a conversation. This is a form of selfishness practiced by many persons apparently unaware of being ill-mannered. It is inexcusably bad taste to tell unduly long stories or lengthy personal experiences. If you cannot abridge a story to reasonable dimensions, it would be better to omit it entirely. The habitual long-story teller may easily become a bore.

Avoid the habit of eagerly matching the other person's story or experience with one of your own. There is nothing more disconcerting to a speaker than to observe the listener impatiently waiting to plunge headlong into the conversation with some marvellous tale.



Be particularly careful not to outdo another speaker in relating your own experiences. If, for instance, he has just told how he caught fifty fish upon a recent trip, do not succumb to the temptation to tell of the time you caught fifty-one.

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Be careful not to give unsolicited advice. It has been well said that advice which costs nothing is worth what it costs. If people desire your counsel they will probably ask for it, in which case they will be more likely to appreciate what you have to tell them.

Do not voluntarily recommend doctors, dentists, osteopaths, pills, coffee substitutes, health foods, health resorts, or panaceas for the ills of mankind. If you can be of service to others in these particular respects, it will be when you are specifically asked for such information.

It is most imprudent to carry an argument to extremes. If you observe an unwillingness in the other person to be convinced by what you say, you had better turn to another subject. Conversation should never resolve itself into controversial debate.

It is well to avoid discursiveness, over-use of parentheses, and positiveness of statement. Keep your desires and feelings from over-coloring your views. A flexible attitude of mind is more likely to win an opponent to your way of thinking.

Take special pains to enter into the minds and feelings of others. Be interested in what they want to talk about. Let your interest be deep and sincere. Adopt the right tone, temper, and reticence in your conversation.

You should accustom yourself to look at things from the other person's standpoint. It is surprising how this habit enlarges the vision and gives a charitableness to speech which might otherwise be absent. It is well to remember that no person can possibly have a monopoly of knowledge upon any subject.

Good conversation demands restraint, adaptability, and reasonable brevity. There is an appalling waste of words on all sides, hence you should constantly guard yourself against this fault. When there is nothing worth-while to say, the best substitute is silence.

Practice self-discipline in talking. Correct any fault in yourself the instant you recognize it. If, for example, you realize that you are talking at too great length, stop it at once. Should you feel that you are not giving interested attention to the speaker, check your mind-wandering immediately and concentrate upon what is being said.

Do not be always setting other people right. This is a thankless as well as useless task. They probably do not want your assistance, or they would ask for it. Besides most people are sensitive about their shortcomings, and prefer to get help and counsel in private.

There is no more important suggestion than to rule your moods. Ofttimes the feelings run away with the judgment. What you think and say today may be due to your present

mood, rather than to matured judgment. Let your common sense predominate at all times.

It is not well to give too strong expression to your likes and dislikes. These, like all your feelings, should be governed with a firm hand. Opinions advanced with too much emphasis may easily fail to impress other minds. Remember always that your greatest ally is truth. Therefore frankly and faithfully examine your important opinions before giving them expression.

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Resist the desire to be prominent in conversation, or to say clever and surprising things. This is sometimes difficult to do, but it is the only safe course to follow. If you have something brilliant or worth-while to say, it will be best said spontaneously and with due modesty. But if there is no suitable opportunity to say it, put it back in your mind where it may improve with age. Egotism is taboo in polite society.

The suggestion that nothing should be allowed to pass the lips that charity would check is invaluable advice. It is unfortunately all too common to give hasty and harsh expression to personal opinions and criticisms. Reticence is one of the most essential conditions of long friendship.

Judgment and tact are necessary to good conversation. It is not well to ask many questions, and then only those of a general character. Curiosity should be curbed. Quite properly people resent inquisitiveness. The best way to cultivate the rare grace of judgment is to be mindful of your own faults and to correct them with all speed and thoroughness.

The word “talk” is often used in a derogatory sense, and we hear such expressions as “all talk,” “empty talk,” and “idle talk.” But as everyone talks, we should all do our utmost to set a high example to others of the correct use of speech.

It is always better to talk too little than too much. Never talk for mere talking’s sake. Avoid being artificial or pedantic. Don’t antagonize, dogmatize, moralize, attitudinize, nor criticise. Talk in poise,—quietly, deliberately, sincerely, and you will never lack an attentive audience.

PHRASES FOR TALKERS

It is said of Macaulay that he never allowed a sentence to pass muster until it was as good as he could make it. He would write and rewrite, and even construct a paragraph or a whole chapter, in order to secure a more lucid and satisfactory arrangement. He wrote just so much each day, usually an average of six pages, and this manuscript was so erased and corrected that it was finally compressed into two pages of print.

The masters of English prose have been great workers. Stevenson and others like him gave hours and days to the study of words, phrases, and sentences. Through unwearied application to the art of rhetorical composition they ultimately won fame as writers.

The ambitious student of speech culture, whether for use in conversation or in public, will do well to emulate the example of such great writers. One of the best ways to build a large vocabulary is to note useful and striking phrases in one’s general reading. It is advisable to jot down such phrases in a note-book, and to read them aloud from time to

time. Such phrases may be classified according to their particular application,—to business, politics, music, education, literature, or the drama.

It is not recommended that such phrases should be consciously dragged into conversation, but the practice of carefully observing felicitous phrases, and of noting them in writing, cultivates the taste for better words and a sense of discrimination in their use. Many phrases noted and studied in this way will unconsciously find their way into one's expression.



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The list of phrases which follows is offered as merely suggestive. In reading the phrases aloud it is well to think clearly what each one means, and to fit it into a sentence of one's own making. This simple exercise, practiced for a few weeks, will produce surprising results by way of increased facility and flexibility of English style.

It is obviously desirable
I can well imagine
Broadly speaking
An admirable idea
In a literal sense
By sheer force of genius
You can imagine his chagrin
I hazard a guess
It challenges belief
He has an inscrutable face
Very fertile in resource
I am loath to believe
It is essentially undignified
Example is so contagious
I am not in her confidence
Taken in the aggregate
It is a reproof to shallowness
There is a misconception here
I strongly suspect it so
He was covered with confusion
It was a just rebuke
A pleasing instance of this
It lends dignity to life
She has a desultory liking for music
It seems incredible
A kind of detached ideal
It blunts the finer sensibilities
Beyond question or cavil
A well-founded suspicion
It has elicited great praise
They are landmarks in memory
Superhuman vigor and activity
A venerable and interesting figure
It is curious and interesting
Gives the impression of aloofness
Perfectly void of offence
Regard with misgiving
A stroke of professional luck



An unscrupulous adventurer
He spoke with extreme reticence
Robust common sense
Deficient in amiability
Done with characteristic thoroughness
A vein of philanthropic zeal
Definite, tangible, and practical
Too much effusive declamation
A man of keen ambition
It gives infinite zest
Singular qualifications for public life
They are bitterly hostile
The despair of the official wire-puller
Blind and unreasoning opponent
Ignoble strife for power
Surrounded by a cohort of admiring friends
In an imperative voice
Marked by copiousness and vivacity
Touched with sombre dignity
A ridiculous misconception
Habitual austerity of demeanor
Ostentation and lavish expenditure
A person of exquisite tact
Intolerant of bumptiousness
The obvious danger of dallying
This was grossly overstated
A mass of calumny and exaggeration
Inimical to religion
Fraught with peril
I venture to ask
Attributed to mental decrepitude
A strange phenomena
It argues a blind faith
Insatiable whirl of excitement
A substratum of truth

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Under some conceivable circumstances
Bubbling over with infectious joy
Frigid dignity and arrogant reserve
A profound contempt
The fine art of hospitality
Grim morsels of philosophy
A tinge of sorrowness and jealousy
Due to ignorance and barbarism
Grave and monstrous scandal
A splendid instance of self-devotion
Amusingly exemplified in this case
Recognized and powerful element
A symbol of restraint
An utterly fallacious idea
In rapid and striking succession
We learn from stern experience
Pictures of an inspired imagination
An astonishing outbreak
Soothing words of sympathy
A rather bold assertion
The most enthusiastic adherents
Mere tepid conviction
Eminently qualified for the task
Almost supernatural charm
In glowing and exaggerated phrases
Somewhat rich and austere
An inexhaustible theme
Grave and undeniable faults
Perfectly chosen language
All the characteristics of a mob
Given to grandiloquent phrase
Peculiar vein of sarcasm
Froze like ice and cut like steel
A generous tribute to an eminent rival
Cold and stately composure
Fiery and passionate enthusiasm
Extraordinary violence of nature
A brilliant and delightful play
Rare and striking combination
Preeminently qualified for the part



Moderate and cautious conservatism
Daring perversions of justice
Devoid of rhetorical device
As a great thinker has observed
Almost morbid sensitiveness
Discreetly stifled yawn
He was dumb with wonder
Scarcely less familiar
Delightfully characteristic
It was a profound conviction
Greatly conceived and expressed
Blinded by its brightness
I have cudgelled my memory
Exposed to imminent peril
Screening a breach of etiquette
By a natural transition
Splendid anticipations of success
A very laudable attempt
Lapsed into complete oblivion
With most distinguished success
Like embarking on a shoreless sea
A really pretty imitation
Unless I greatly err
Undaunted by repeated failure
Became a term of reproach
An epoch-making achievement
In the guise of verbal nonsense
Received with cordial sympathy
With the most obvious sincerity
Held forth with fluency and zest
Gracious solicitude
Punctiliously civil and polite
An air of sphinx-like mystery
Consumed by zeal
Awaited with lively interest
Sledge-hammer blows against humbug
This recalls a happy retort
Preeminently a case in point
Exquisite precision

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and finish

Incomparably better informed
A keen eye for incongruities
Polite to the point of deference
To the last degree improbable
People with rampant prejudices
A model of chivalrous propriety
By way of digression
A splendid acquisition
Singularly attractive fashion
A kind of unconscious conspiracy
Amid engrossing demands

THE SPEAKING VOICE

There is a widespread need for a more thorough cultivation of the speaking voice. It is astonishing how few persons give specific attention to this important subject. On all sides we are subjected to voices that are disagreeable and strident. It is the exception to hear a voice that is musical and well-modulated.

Most people make too much physical effort in speaking. They tighten the muscles of the throat and mouth, instead of liberating these muscles and allowing the voice to flow naturally and harmoniously. The remedy for this common fault of vocal tension is to relax all the muscles used in speech. This is easily accomplished by means of a little daily practice.

The first thing to keep in mind is that we should speak through the throat and not from it. A musical quality of voice depends chiefly upon directing the tone towards the hard palate, or the bony arch above the upper teeth. From this part of the mouth the voice acquires much of its resonance.

An excellent exercise for throat relaxation is yawning. It is not necessary to wait until a real yawn presents itself, but frequent practice in imitating a yawn may be indulged in with good results. Immediately after practicing the yawn, it is advisable to test the voice, either in speaking or in reading, to observe improvement in freedom of tone.

It is not desirable to use the voice where there is loud noise by way of opposition. Many a good voice has been ruined due to the habit of continuous talking on the street or elsewhere amid clatter and hubbub. Under such circumstances it is better to rest the voice, since in any contest of the kind the voice will almost surely be vanquished.



What we need in our daily conversation is less emphasis, and more quietness and non-resistance. We need less eagerness and more vivacity and variety. We need a settled equanimity of mind that does not deprive us of our animation, but saves us from the petty irritations of everyday life. We need, in short, more poise and self-control in our way of speaking.

It is well to remember that few things we say are of such importance as to require emphasis. The thought should be its own recommendation. But if emphasis be necessary, let it be by the intellectual means of pausing or inflection, rather than with the shoulders or the clenched fist.

A very disagreeable and common fault is nasality, or “talking through the nose.” Many persons are guilty of this who least suspect it. This habit is so easily and unconsciously acquired that everyone should be on strict guard against it. Almost equally disagreeable is the fault of throatiness, caused by holding the muscles of the throat instead of relaxing them.

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The best tones of the speaking voice are the middle and low keys. These should be used exclusively in daily conversation. The use of high pitch is due to habit or temperament, but may be overcome through judicious practice. The objection to a high-keyed voice is not only that it is disagreeable to the listener, but puts the speaker "out of tune" with his audience.

A good speaking voice should possess the qualities of purity, resonance, flexibility, roundness, brilliancy, and adequate power. These qualities can be rapidly developed by daily reading aloud for ten minutes, giving special attention to one quality at a time. A few weeks, assiduous practice will produce most gratifying results. The voice grows through use, and it grows precisely in the way it is habitually used.

Distinct articulation and correct pronunciation are indications of cultivated speech. Pedantry should be avoided, but every aspirant to correct speech should be a student of the dictionary. A writer has given this good counsel:

"Resolve that you will never use an incorrect, an inelegant, or a vulgar phrase or word, in any society whatever. If you are gifted with wit, you will soon find that it is easy to give it far better point and force in pure English than through any other medium, and that brilliant thoughts make the deepest impressions when well worded. However great it may be, the labor is never lost which earns for you the reputation of one who habitually uses the language of a gentleman, or of a lady. It is difficult for those who have not frequent opportunities for conversation with well-educated people, to avoid using expressions which are not current in society, although they may be of common occurrence in books. As they are often learned from novels, it will be well for the reader to remember that even in the best of such works dialogues are seldom sustained in a tone which would not appear affected in ordinary life. This fault in conversation is the most difficult of all to amend, and it is unfortunately the one to which those who strive to express themselves correctly are peculiarly liable. Its effect is bad, for though it is not like slang, vulgar in itself, it betrays an effort to conceal vulgarity. It may generally be remedied by avoiding any word or phrase which you may suspect yourself of using for the purpose of creating an effect. Whenever you imagine that the employment of any mere word or sentence will convey the impression that you are well informed, substitute for it some simple expression. If you are not positively certain as to the pronunciation of a word, never use it. If the temptation be great, resist it; for, rely upon it, if there be in your mind the slightest doubt on the subject, you will certainly make a mistake. Never use a foreign word when its meaning can be given in English, and remember that it is both rude and silly to say anything to any person who possibly may not understand it. But never attempt, under any circumstances whatever, to utter a foreign word, unless you have learned to pronounce correctly the language to which it belongs."



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There is need for the admonition to open the mouth well. Many people speak with half-closed teeth, the result being that the quality of voice and correctness of pronunciation are greatly impaired. Consonants and vowels should be given proper significance. Muffled speech is almost as objectionable as stammering.

It enhances the pleasure and quality of conversation to speak in deliberate style. Rapidity of utterance often leads a speaker into such faults as indistinctness, monotony, and incorrect breathing. Deliberate speaking confers many advantages, not the least of which is increased pleasure to the listener.

Many voices are too thin in quality. They fail to carry conviction even when the thought is of superior character. The remedy here is to give special attention to the development of deep tones. One of the best exercises for this purpose is to practice for a few minutes daily upon the vowel sound "O," endeavoring to make it full, deep, and melodious. For all-round vocal development this practice should be done with varied force and inflection, and on high as well as low keys of the voice.

The best remedy for a weak voice is to practice daily upon explosives, expelling the principal vowel sounds, on various keys, using the abdominal muscles throughout. Another good exercise is to read aloud while walking upstairs or uphill. As these exercises are somewhat extreme, the student is recommended to practice them prudently.

Correct breathing is fundamental to correct and agreeable speaking. The breathing apparatus should be brought under control by daily practice upon exercises prescribed in any standard book on elocution. Pure tone of voice depends upon the ability to convert into tone every particle of breath used. Aspirated voice, in which some of the breath is allowed to escape unvocalized, is injurious to the throat, and unpleasant to the listening ear.

The speaker, whether in conversation or in public, should try always to speak with an adequate supply of breath. Deliberate utterance will give the necessary opportunity to replenish the lungs, so that the speaker will not suffer from unnecessary fatigue. Needless to say, the habit should be formed of breathing through the nose when in repose.

There is a voice of unusual roundness and fulness known as the orotund, which is indispensable to the public speaker. It is simple, pure tone, rounded out into greater fulness. It is produced mainly by an increased resonance of the chest and mouth cavities, and a more vigorous action of the abdominal muscles. It has the character of fulness, but it is not necessarily a loud tone. It is in no sense artificial, but simply an enlargement of the natural conversational voice.

The use of the orotund voice varies according to the intensity of the thought and feeling being expressed. It is used in language of great dignity, power, grandeur, and sublimity. It is appropriate in certain forms of public prayer and Bible reading. It enables the public speaker to vary from his conversational style. It gives vastly increased scope and power, by enabling the speaker to bring into play all the resources of vocal force and intensity.

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Where resonance of voice is lacking, it can be rapidly developed by means of humming the letter *m*, with lips closed, and endeavoring to make the face vibrate. The tone should be kept well forward throughout the exercise, pressing firmly against the lips and hard palate. Later the exercise may begin with the humming *m*, and be developed, while the lips are opened gradually, into the tone of *ah*, still aiming to maintain the original resonance.

The speaking voice is capable of most wonderful development. There is a duty devolving upon everyone to cultivate beauty of vocal utterance and diction. Crudities of speech so commonly in evidence are mainly due to carelessness and neglect. It is a hopeful sign, however, that greater attention is now being given to this important subject than heretofore. Surely there is nothing more important than the development of the principal instrument by which men communicate with one another. As Story says:

“O, how our organ can speak with its many and wonderful voices!—
Play on the soft lute of love, blow the loud trumpet of war,
Sing with the high sesquialter, or, drawing its full diapason,
Shake all the air with the grand storm of its pedals and stops.”

HOW TO TELL A STORY

Someone has wittily said that only those in their anecdotage should tell stories. De Quincey wanted all story-tellers to be submerged in a horse-pond, or treated in the same manner as mad dogs. But story-telling has its legitimate and appropriate use, and if certain rules are observed may give added charm to conversation and public speaking.

It requires a fine discrimination to know when to tell a story, and when not to tell one though it is urging itself to be expressed. Few men have the rare gift of choosing the right story for the particular occasion. Many men have no difficulty in telling stories that are insufferably long, pointless, and uninteresting.

We have all been victims of a certain type of public speaker who begins by saying, “Now I don’t want to bore you with a long story, but this is so good, *etc.*,” or “An incident occurred at the American Consulate in Shanghai, which reminds me of an awfully good story, *etc.*” When a speaker prefaces his remarks with some such sentences as these, we know we are in for an uncomfortable time.

As far as possible a story should be new, clever, short, simple, inoffensive, and appropriate. As such stories are scarce, it is advisable to set them down, when found, in a special note-book for convenient reference. It is said that Chauncey M. Depew, one of the most gifted of after-dinner speakers, was for many years in the habit of keeping a set of scrap-books in which were preserved stories and other interesting data clipped

from newspapers and magazines. These were so classified that he could on short notice refresh his mind with ample material upon almost any general subject.



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Anyone who essays to tell a story should have it clearly in mind. It is fatal for a speaker to hesitate midway in a story, apologize for not knowing it better, avow that it was much more humorous when told to him, and in other ways to announce his shortcomings. If he cannot tell a story fluently and interestingly, he should first practice it on his own family—provided they will tolerate it.

Some stories should be committed to memory, especially where the point of humor depends upon exact phraseology. In such case, it requires some training and experience to disguise the memorized effort. A story like the following, for obvious reasons, should be thoroughly memorized:

The longest sermon on record occupied three hours and a half. But the shortest sermon was that of a preacher who spoke for one minute on the text: "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." He said:

"I shall divide my discourse into three heads: (1) Man's ingress into the world; (2) His progress through the world; (3) His egress out of the world.

"Firstly, His ingress into the world is naked and bare.

"Secondly, His progress through the world is trouble and care.

"Thirdly, His egress out of the world is nobody knows where.

"To conclude:

"If we live well here, we shall live well there.

"I can tell you no more if I preach a whole year.

"The collection will now be taken up."

Dialect stories are usually rather difficult, and should not as a general thing be attempted by beginners. As a matter of fact, few persons know how to speak such dialects as Irish, Scotch, German, Cockney, and negro without undue exaggeration. For most occasions it is well to keep to simple stories couched in plain English.

A story should be told in simple, conversational style. Concentration upon the story, and a sincere desire to give pleasure to the hearers, will keep the speaker free from self-consciousness. Needless to say he should not be the first to laugh at his own story. Sometimes in telling a humorous anecdote to an audience a speaker secures the greatest effect by maintaining an expression of extreme gravity.

No matter how successful one may be in telling stories, he should avoid telling too many. A man who is accounted brilliant and entertaining may become an insufferable



bore by continuing to tell stories when the hearers have become satiated. Of all speakers, the story-teller should keep his eyes on his entire audience and be alert to detect the slightest signs of weariness.

It is superfluous to say that a story should never be told which in any way might give offence. The speaker may raise a laugh, but lose a friend. Hence it is that stories about stammerers, red-headed people, mothers-in-law, and the like, should always be chosen with discrimination.

Generally the most effective story is one in which the point of humor is not disclosed until the very last words, as in the following:



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An old colored man was brought up before a country judge.

“Jethro,” said the judge, “you are accused of stealing General Johnson’s chickens. Have you any witnesses?”

“No, sah,” old Jethro answered, haughtily; “I hab not, sah. I never steal chickens befo’ witnesses.”

This is a similar example, told by Prime Minister Asquith:

An English professor wrote on the blackboard in his laboratory, “Professor Blank informs his students that he has this day been appointed honorary physician to his Majesty, King George.”

During the morning he had some occasion to leave the room, and found on his return that some student wag had added the words,

“God save the King!”

Henry W. Grady was a facile story-teller. One of his best stories was as follows:

“There was an old preacher once who told some boys of the Bible lesson he was going to read in the morning. The boys, finding the place, glued together the connecting pages. The next morning he read on the bottom of one page: ‘When Noah was one hundred and twenty years old he took unto himself a wife, who was’—then turning the page—‘one hundred and forty cubits long, forty cubits wide, built of gopherwood, and covered with pitch inside and out.’ He was naturally puzzled at this. He read it again, verified it, and then said: ‘My friends, this is the first time I ever met this in the Bible, but I accept it as an evidence of the assertion that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.’”

Personalities based upon sarcasm or invective are always attended with danger, but good-humored bantering may be used upon occasion with most happy results. As an instance of this, there is a story of an annual dinner at which Mr. Choate was set down for the toast, “The Navy,” and Mr. Depew was to respond to “The Army.” Mr. Depew began by saying, “It’s well to have a specialist: that’s why Choate is here to speak about the Navy. We met at the wharf once and I did not see him again till we reached Liverpool. When I asked how he felt he said he thought he would have enjoyed the trip over if he had had any ocean air. Yes, you want to hear Choate on the Navy.” When it was Mr. Choate’s turn to speak, he said: “I’ve heard Depew hailed as the greatest after-dinner speaker. If after-dinner speaking, as I have heard it described and as I believe it to be, is the art of saying nothing at all, then Mr. Depew is the most marvelous speaker in the universe.”

The medical profession can be assailed with impunity, since they have long since grown accustomed to it. There is a story of a young laborer who, on his way to his day’s work,



called at the registrar's office to register his father's death. When the official asked the date of the event, the son replied, "He ain't dead yet, but he'll be dead before night, so I thought it would save me another journey if you would put it down now." "Oh, that won't do at all," said the registrar; "perhaps your father will live till tomorrow." "Well, I don't think so, sir; the doctor says as he won't, and he knows what he has given him."

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While stories should be used sparingly, there is probably nothing more effective before a popular audience than the telling of a story in which the joke is on the speaker himself. Thus:

The last time I made a speech, I went next day to the editor of our local newspaper, and said,

“I thought your paper was friendly to me?”

The editor said, “So it is. What’s the matter?”

“Well,” I said, “I made a speech last night, and you didn’t print a single line of it this morning.”

“Well,” said the editor, “what further proof do you want?”

Many of the best and most effective stories are serious in character. One that has been used successfully is this: Some gentlemen from the West were excited and troubled about the commissions or omissions of the administration. President Lincoln heard them patiently, and then replied: “Gentlemen, suppose all the property you were worth was in gold, and you had put it in the hands of Blondin to carry across the Niagara River on a rope; would you shake the cable, or keep shouting out to him—‘Blondin, stand up a little straighter—Blondin, stoop a little more—go a little faster—lean a little more to the north—lean a little more to the south?’ No, you would hold your breath as well as your tongue, and keep your hands off until he was safe over. The Government is carrying an immense weight. Untold treasures are in our hands. We are doing the very best we can. Don’t badger us. Keep silence, and we’ll get you safe across.”

Punning is of course out of fashion. The best pun in the English language is Tom Hood’s:

“He went and told the sexton,
And the sexton tolled the bell.”

Dr. Johnson said that the pun was the lowest order of wit. Newspapers formerly indulged in it freely. One editor would say: “We don’t care a straw what Shakespeare said—a rose by any other name would not smell as wheat.” Then another paper would answer: “Such puns are barley tolerable, they amaze us, they arouse our righteous corn, and they turn the public taste a-rye.”

But punning, when it is unusually clever and spontaneous, may be thoroughly enjoyable, as in the following:



Chief Justice Story attended a public dinner in Boston at which Edward Everett was present. Desiring to pay a delicate compliment to the latter, the learned judge proposed as a volunteer toast:

“Fame follows merit where Everett goes.”

The brilliant scholar arose and responded:

“To whatever heights judicial learning may attain in this country, it will never get above one Story.”

Story-telling may attain the character of a disease, in one who has a retentive memory and a voluble vocabulary. The form of humor known as repartee, however, is one that requires rare discrimination. It should be used sparingly, and not at all if it is likely to give offence.

Beau Brummell was guilty in this respect, when he was once asked by a lady if he would “take a cup of tea.” “Thank you,” said he, “I never *take* anything but physic.” “I beg your pardon,” said the hostess, “you also take liberties.”



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There is a story that Henry Luttrell had sat long in the Irish Parliament, but no one knew his precise age. Lady Holland, without regard to considerations of courtesy, one day said to him point-blank, "Now, we are all dying to know how old you are. Just tell me." Luttrell answered very gravely, "It is an odd question, but as you, Lady Holland, ask it, I don't mind telling you. If I live till next year, I shall be—devilish old!"

The art of story-telling is not taught specifically, hence there are comparatively few people who can tell a story without violating some of the rules which experience recommends. But the right use of story-telling should be encouraged as an ornament of conversation, and a valuable auxiliary to effective public address. Many people might excel as story-tellers if they would devote a little time to suggestions such as are offered here. It is not a difficult art, but like every other subject requires study and application.

The best counsel for public speakers in the matter of story-telling may be summed up as follows: Know your story thoroughly; test your story by telling it to some one in advance; adapt your story to the special circumstances; be concise, omitting non-essentials; have ready more stories than you intend to use, because if you should speak at the end of the list you may find that your best story has been told by a previous speaker; and, finally, always stop when you have made a hit.

TALKING IN SALESMANSHIP

The salesman depends for his success primarily upon his talking ability. Obviously, what he offers for sale must have intrinsic merit, and he should possess a thorough knowledge of his wares. But in order to secure the best results from his efforts, he must know how to talk well.

All the general requirements for good conversation apply equally to the needs of the salesman. He should have a pleasant speaking voice and an agreeable manner, a vocabulary of useful and appropriate words, and the ability to put things clearly and convincingly.

It should be a golden rule of the salesman never to argue with the customer. He may explain and reason, and use all the persuasive phraseology at his command, but he must not permit himself for a single instant to engage in controversy. To argue is fatal to successful salesmanship.

There is nothing that can be substituted for a winning personality in the salesman. What constitutes such a personality? Chiefly a good voice, affability of manner, straightforward speech, manly bearing, the desire to serve and please, proper attire, and cleanliness of person. These qualifications come within the reach of anyone who aspires to success in salesmanship.

Every salesman has unexpected problems to solve. A sensitive or touchy customer may become unreasonably angry or offended. What is the salesman to do? He should here be particularly on his guard not to show the slightest resentment. Though he may be wholly guiltless, he cannot afford to contradict the customer, nor to challenge him to a vocal duel. If he talks at all, he should talk quietly and reasonably, and always with the object of bringing the customer around to a favorable point of view.

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The successful salesman must have tact and discrimination. He must know when and how to check in himself the word or phrase which is trying to force its way out into expression, but which would in the end prove inadvisable. He must train himself to choose quickly the right and best course under difficult circumstances.

The salesman should give his undivided attention to the customer. If the salesman is speaking, he should speak clearly, directly, concisely, and understandingly; if he is listening, he should listen interestedly and thoroughly, with all his powers alive and receptive.

The salesman should know when to speak and when to be silent. Some customers wish to be told much, others prefer to think for themselves. He is a wise salesman who knows when to be mute. Loquacity has often killed what otherwise might have been a good sale.

There is a certain tone of voice which the salesman should aim to acquire. It is neither high nor low in pitch. It is agreeable to the listening ear, and is almost sufficient in itself to win the favorable attention of the prospective buyer. Every salesman should cultivate a musical and well-modulated voice as one of the chief assets in salesmanship.

The salesman should cultivate dignity of speech and manner. People generally dislike familiarity, joking, and horse-play. It is well to assume that the customer is serious-minded, that he means business and nothing else. Needless to say, the telling of long stories, or personal experiences, has no legitimate place in the business of salesmanship.

There is a proper time and place for short story-telling. Like everything else it is all right in its appropriate setting. Lincoln used it to advantage, but once said: "I believe I have the popular reputation of being a story-teller, but I do not deserve the name in its general sense; for it is not the story itself, but its purpose, or effect, that interests me. I often avoid a long and useless discussion by others, or a laborious explanation on my part, by a short story that illustrates my point of view."

The salesman should resolve not to lose his poise and agreeableness under any circumstances. Irritability never attracts business. To say the right thing in the right place is desirable, but it is quite as important, though more difficult, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the moment of temptation.

It is not the legitimate business of the salesman to force upon a customer what is really not wanted, but many times the customer does not know what he wants nor what he might be able to use. Hence the competent salesman should know how to influence the customer towards a favorable decision, using all honorable and approved means to bring about such a result.

The customer's unfavorable answer is not to be accepted always as final. He may not clearly understand the merits or uses of the article offered. He may need the explanations and suggestions of the salesman in order to reach a right conclusion. Here it is that the salesman may fulfill one of his most important duties.



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There is a wide difference between self-reliance and obtrusiveness. Every man should have a full degree of self-confidence. It is needed in every walk in life. But the salesman, more than most men, must have an exceptional degree of faith in himself and in what he has to sell.

This self-confidence, however, is a very different thing from boldness or obtrusiveness. Courtesy and considerateness are cardinal qualities of the well-equipped salesman, but boastfulness, glibness, egotism, loudness, and self-assertion, are as distasteful as they are undesirable.

The eloquence and persuasiveness of silence is nowhere better exemplified than in the art of salesmanship. One man says much, and sells little; another says little, and sells much. The reason for the superior success of one over the other is mainly due to the fact that he knows best how to present the merits of what he offers for sale, knows how to say it concisely and effectively, knows how to ingratiate himself, largely through his personality, into the good graces of the prospective buyer, and knows when to stop talking.

Modern salesmanship is based primarily upon common sense. A man with brains, though possibly lacking in other desirable qualifications, may easily outdistance the more experienced salesman. It is a valuable thing in any man to be able to think accurately, reason deeply, and size up a situation promptly.

The salesman should at all times be on his best talking behavior. It is not advisable for him to have two standards of speech, and to use an inferior one excepting for special occasions. He should cultivate as a regular daily habit discrimination in the use of voice, enunciation, expression, and language. This should be the constant aim not only of the salesman, but of every man ambitious to achieve success and distinction in the world.

MEN AND MANNERISMS

There is a story of a politician who had acquired a mannerism of fingering a button on his coat while talking to an audience. On one occasion some friends surreptitiously cut the particular button off, and the result was that the speaker when he stood up to address the audience lost the thread of his discourse.

Gladstone had a mannerism of striking the palm of his left hand with the clenched fist of his other hand, so that often the emphatic word was lost in the noise of percussion. A common habit of the distinguished statesman was to reach out his right hand at full arm's length, and then to bend it back at the elbow and lightly scratch the top of his head with his thumb-nail.



Balfour, while speaking, used to take hold of the lapels of his coat by both hands as if he were in mortal fear of running away before he had finished.

Goshen, at the beginning of a speech, would sound his chest and sides with his hands, and apparently finding that his ribs were in good order, would proceed to wash his hands with invisible soap.

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The strange thing about mannerisms is that the speakers are usually unconscious of them, and would be the first to condemn them in others. The remedy for such defects lies in thorough and severe self-examination and self-criticism. However eminent a speaker may be with objectionable mannerisms, he would be still greater without them.

Every public speaker has certain characteristics of voice and manner that distinguish him from other men. In so far as this individuality gives increased power and effectiveness to the speaking style, it is desirable and should be encouraged. When, however, it is carried to excess, or in any sense offends good taste, it is merely mannerism, and should be discouraged.

There is an objectionable mannerism of the voice, known as “pulpit tone,” that has come to be associated with some preachers. It takes various forms, such as an unduly elevated key, a drawling monotone, a sudden transition from one extreme of pitch to another, or a tone of condescension. It is also heard in a plaintive minor inflection, imparting a quality of extreme sadness to a speaker’s style. These are all departures from the natural, earnest, sincere, and direct delivery that belongs to the high office of preaching.

Still another undesirable mannerism of the voice is that of giving a rising inflection at the close of successive sentences that are obviously complete. Here the speaker’s thought is left suspended in the air, the hearer feels a sense of disappointment or doubt, and possibly the entire meaning is perverted. Thoughts delivered in such a manner, unless they distinctly require a rising inflection, lack the emphasis and force of persuasive speaking.

Artificiality, affectation, pomposity, mouthing, undue vehemence, monotony, intoning, and everything that detracts from the simplicity and genuine fervor of the speech should be avoided. Too much emphasis may drive a thought beyond the mark, and a conscious determination to make a “great speech” may keep the speaker in a state of anxiety throughout its entire delivery.

A clear and correct enunciation is essential, but it should not be pedantic, nor should it attract attention to itself. “What you are prevents me from hearing what you say,” might also be applied to the manner of the speaker. Exaggerated opening of the mouth, audible smacking of the lips, holding tenaciously to final consonants, prolonged hissing of sibilants, are all to be condemned. Hesitation, stumbling over difficult combinations, obscuring final syllables, coalescing the last sound of one word with the first sound of the following word, are inexcusable in a trained speaker.

When the same modulation of the voice is repeated too often, it becomes a mannerism, a kind of monotony of variety. It reminds one of a street-piano set to but one tune, and is quite as distressing to a sensitive ear. This is not the style that is expected from a public man.

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What should the speaker do with his hands? Do nothing with them unless they are specifically needed for the more complete expression of a thought. Let them drop at the sides in their natural relaxed position, ready for instant use. To press the fist in the hollow of the back in order to “support” the speaker, to clutch the lapels of the coat, to slap the hands audibly together, to place the hands on the hips in the attitude of “vulgar ease,” to put the hands into the pockets, to wring the hands as if “washing them with invisible soap,” or to violently pound the pulpit—these belong to the list of undesirable mannerisms.

At the beginning of a speech it may give the appearance of ease to place the hands behind the back, but this position lacks force and action and should not be long sustained. To cross the arms upon the desk is to put them out of commission for the time being. Leaning or lounging of any kind, bending at the knee, or other evidence of weakness or weariness, may belong to the repose of the easy chair, but are hardly appropriate in a wide-awake speaker seeking to convince men.

Rocking the body to and fro, rising on the toes to emphasize, crouching, stamping the foot, springing from side to side, over-acting and impersonation, and violence and extravagance of every description may well be omitted in public speaking. Beware of extremes. Avoid a statue-like attitude on the one hand and a constant restlessness on the other. Dignity is desirable, but one should not forget the words of the Reverend Sam Jones, “There is nothing more dignified than a corpse!”

Gestures that are too frequent and alike soon lose their significance. If they are attempted at all they should be varied and complete, suggesting freedom and spontaneity. When only half made they are likely to call attention to the discrepancy, and to this extent will obscure rather than help the thought. The continuous use of gesture is displeasing to the eye, and gives the impression of lack of poise.

The young speaker particularly should be warned not to imitate the speaking style of others. What is perfectly natural to one may appear ridiculous in another. Cardinal Newman spoke with extreme deliberateness, enunciating every syllable with care and precision; Phillips Brooks sent forth an avalanche of words at the rate of two hundred a minute; but it would be dangerous for the average speaker to emulate either of these examples.

There is a peculiarity in a certain type of speaking, which, while not strictly a mannerism, is detrimental to the highest effect. It manifests itself in physical weakness. The speaker is uniformly tired, and his speaking has a half-hearted tone. The lifelessness in voice and manner communicates itself to the audience, and prevents all possibility of deep and enduring impression. Joseph Parker said that when Sunday came he felt like a racehorse, and could hardly wait for the time to come for him to go into the pulpit. He longed to speak.



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The well-equipped speaker is one who has a superior culture of voice and body. All the instruments of expression must be made his obedient servants, but as master of them he should see to it that they perform their work naturally and spontaneously. He should be able while speaking to abandon himself wholly to his subject, confident that as a result of conscientious training his delivery may be left largely to take care of itself.

HOW TO SPEAK IN PUBLIC

There are two essential qualifications for making an effective public speech.

First, having something worth-while to say.

Second, knowing how to say it.

The first qualification implies a judicious choice of subject and the most thorough preparation. It means that the speaker has carefully gathered together the best available material, and has so familiarized himself with his subject that he knows more about it than anyone else in his audience.

It is in this requirement of thorough preparation that many public speakers are deficient. They do not realize the need for this painstaking preliminary work, and hence they frequently stand before an audience with little information of value to impart to their hearers. Their poverty of thought can not be long disguised in flamboyant rhetoric and sesquipedalian words, and hence they fail to carry conviction to serious-minded men.

I would remind you that having something worth-while to say involves more than thorough preparation of the particular subject which the speaker is to present to an audience. The speaker should have a well-furnished mind. You have had the experience of listening to a public speaker who commanded your closest attention not only because of what he said, but also because of what he was. He inspired confidence in you because of his personality and reserve power.

It is often what a man has within himself, rather than what he actually expresses, that carries greatest conviction to your mind. As you listen to such a man speak, you feel that he is worthy of your confidence because he draws upon broad experience and knowledge. He speaks out of the fulness of a well-furnished mind.

It is important, therefore, that there should be mental culture in a broad way,—sound judgment, a sense of proportion and perspective, a fund of useful ideas, facts, arguments, and illustrations, and a large stock of common sense.

Every man who essays to speak in public should cultivate a judicial mind, or the habit of weighing and estimating facts and arguments. Such a mind is supposedly free from

prejudice and seeks the truth at any cost. Such a mind does not want this or that to be necessarily true, but wants to recognize as true only that which is true.

In these days of multiplied publications and books of all kinds, when printed matter of every description is soliciting our time and attention, it is particularly desirable that we should cultivate a discriminating taste in our choice of books. The highest purpose of reading is for the acquisition of useful knowledge and personal culture, and we should keep these two aims constantly before us. It is noteworthy that men who have achieved enduring greatness in the world have always had a good book at their ready command.

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If you are ever in doubt about the choice of books, you would do well to enlist the services of a literary friend, or ask the advice of a local librarian. But in any case, be on your guard against books and other publications of commonplace type, which can contribute nothing to the enrichment of your mind and life.

It is desirable that you should own the books you read. The sense of personal possession will give an interest and pleasure to your reading which it would not otherwise have, and moreover you can freely mark such books with your pencil for subsequent reference. It is also well to have a note-book conveniently ready in which to jot down useful ideas as they occur to you.

Here we come to the use of the pen. All the great orators of the world have been prolific writers in the sense of writing out their thoughts. It is the only certain way to clarify your thought, to test it in advance of verbal expression and to examine it critically. The public speaker should write much in order to form a clear and flowing English style. It is surprising how many of our thoughts which appear to us clear and satisfactory, assume a peculiar vagueness when we attempt to set them down definitely in writing.

The use of the pen tends to give clearness and conciseness to the speaker's style. It makes him careful and accurate. It aids, too, in fixing the ideas of his speech in his mind, so that at the moment of addressing an audience they will respond most readily to his needs.

A well-furnished mind is like a well-furnished house. In furnishing a house we do not fill it up with miscellaneous furniture, bric-a-brac and antiques, gathered promiscuously, but we plan everything with a view to harmony, beauty, and utility. We furnish a particular room in a tone that will be restful and pleasing to the occupant. We choose every piece of furniture, rug, picture, and drapery with a distinct purpose in view of what the total effect will be.

So with a well-furnished mind. We must choose the kind of material we intend to keep there. It should be chosen with a view to its beauty, power, and usefulness. We want no rubbish there. We want the best material available. Hence the vital importance of going to the right sources for the furniture of our mind, to the great books of the world, to living authorities, to nature, to music, to art, to the best wherever it may be found.

The second essential of an effective public speech is knowing how to say it. This implies a thorough training in the technique of speech. There should be a well-cultivated voice, of adequate volume, brilliancy, and carrying quality. There should be ample training in articulation, pronunciation, expression, and gesture. These so-called mechanics should be developed until they become an unconscious part of the speaker's style.



Your best opportunity for practice is in your everyday conversation. There you are constantly making speeches on a small scale. Public speaking of the best modern type is simply elevated conversation. I do not mean elevated in pitch, but in the sense of being launched upon a higher level of thought and with greater intensity than is usually called for by ordinary conversation.

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In conversation you have your best opportunity for developing your public speaking style. Indeed, you are there, despite yourself, forming habits which will disclose themselves in your public speaking. As you speak in your daily conversation you will largely speak when you stand before an audience.

You will therefore see the importance of care in your daily speech. There should be a fastidious choice of words, care in pronunciation and articulation, and the mouth well opened so that the words may come out wholly through the mouth and not partly through the nose. Culture of conversation is to be recommended for its own sake, since everyone must speak in private if not in public.

One of the best plans for self-culture in speaking is to read aloud for a few minutes every day from a book of well-selected speeches. There are numerous compilations of the kind admirably suited to this purpose. The important thing here is to read in speaking style, not in what is termed reading style as usually taught in schools. When you practise in this way it would be well to imagine an audience before you and to render the speech as if emanating from your own mind. The student of public speaking will wisely guard himself against acquiring an artificial style or other mannerism.

Another good plan is to make short mental speeches while walking. When possible it is well to choose a country road for this purpose, or a park, or some other place where one's mind is not likely to be often diverted by passers-by. Lord Dufferin, the eminent British orator, was accustomed to prepare most of his speeches while riding on horseback. The habit of forming mental speeches is a great aid to actual speech-making, as it tends to give the mind a power and an adaptability which it would not otherwise have.

The painter, the musician, the sculptor, the architect, and other craftsmen search out models for study and inspiration. The public speaker should do likewise, and history shows that the great orators of the world have followed this practise. You can not do better than take as your model the greatest short speech in all history, the Gettysburg Address.

An authority on English style has critically examined this speech and acknowledges that he cannot suggest a single change in it which would add to its power and perfection.

You recall the circumstances under which it was written. On the morning of November 18, 1863, Abraham Lincoln was travelling from Washington to take part next day in the consecration of the national cemetery at Gettysburg. He wrote his speech on a scrap of wrapping-paper, carefully fitting word to word, changing and correcting it in minutest detail as best he could until it was finished.

The next day after the speech had been delivered, Edward Everett, the trained and polished orator, said that he would have been content to have made in his oration of two hours the impression which Lincoln had made in that many minutes.



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It will repay you to study this speech closely and to wrest from it its innermost secrets of power and effectiveness. The greatest underlying quality of this speech is its rare simplicity—simplicity of thought, simplicity of language, simplicity of purpose, and shining through it all, the simplicity of the great emancipator himself.

This simplicity is one of the great distinguishing qualities of effective public speaking. It is characteristic of all true art. It is subtle and difficult to define, but Fenelon gives a definition that will aid us when he says, “Simplicity is an uprightness of soul that has no reference to self.” It is another word for unselfishness.

In these days of self-exploitation and self-aggrandizement, how refreshing it is to meet a man of true simplicity. We are won by his unaffected manner, his gentleness of argument, his ingratiating tones of voice, his freedom from prejudice and passion. Such a man wins us almost wholly by the power of his simplicity.

This supreme quality is noticeable in men who are said to have come to themselves. They have tasted and tested life, they have learned proportion and perspective, they have appraised things at their real value, and now they carry themselves in poise and power and confidence. They have found themselves in a high and true sense, and they have come to be known as men of simplicity.

Simplicity is not to be confounded with weakness or ignorance. It comes through long education. It does not mean the trite, or the commonplace, or the obvious. It is a strong and sturdy quality, is this simplicity of which I am speaking, and nothing else will atone for lack of it in the public speaker.

Longfellow calls it the supreme excellence, since it is the quality which above all others brings serenity to the soul and makes life really worth living. Every man should earnestly seek to cultivate this great quality as essential to noble character.

This speech is conspicuous for another indispensable quality for effective public speaking,—the quality of sincerity. It grows largely out of simplicity and is the product of integrity of mind and heart. Men recognize it quickly, though they cannot easily tell whence it comes. We find it highly developed in great leaders in business and professional life. There has never been a really great public speaker who was not preeminently a sincere man.

Beecher said, “Let no man who is a sneak try to be an orator.” Such a man can not be. He will shortly be found out. The world’s ultimate estimate of a man is not far wrong.

A politician of much promise was addressing a distinguished audience in Washington. The Opera House was crowded to the doors to hear him and apparently he was making a good impression upon all his hearers. But suddenly, at the very climax of his speech, while upwards of two thousand eyes were rivetted upon him, he was seen to wink at a

personal friend of his sitting in a nearby box, and at that instant his future political prospects were shattered as a vase struck by lightning. In that single instant of insincerity he was appraised by that discriminating audience and his doom was sealed.



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Still another great quality in the Gettysburg speech is its directness. The speaker had a clearly-defined purpose in view. He knew what he wanted to say, and he proceeded to say it—no more, and no less.

There was no straying away into by-paths, no padding of words to make up for shortage of ideas, no superfluous and big-sounding phrases, no empty rhetoric or glittering generalities.

How many speakers there are who aim at nothing and hit it. How many speakers there are who are on their way but do not know whither.

If this directness of quality were applied to talking in business, in committee meetings, in telephone conversations, in public speaking, it would save annually in this country millions of words and incalculable time and energy.

You will note that this speech has the rare quality of conciseness. We have an illustration here of how much a man can say in about 265 words and in the short space of two minutes, if he knows precisely what he wants to say.

It is well to bear in mind that although this speech was scribbled off with seeming ease, Lincoln owed his ability to do it to a long and painstaking study of words and English style.

He was a profound student of the dictionary. He steeped himself in words. He scrutinized words, he studied words, he made himself a master of words.

This is a valuable habit for every man to form,—to study words regularly and earnestly, and to add consciously to his working vocabulary a few words daily—so in the course of a year such a man will acquire a large and varied stock of words which will do his instant bidding.

The conclusion is a vital part of a speech. It is a place of peril to many a public speaker. Countless speeches have been ruined by a bad conclusion.

The most important thing here is that having decided beforehand upon the particular ideas or message with which you intend to conclude your speech, not to let any influence lead you away from this preconceived purpose.

Some speakers are about to conclude effectively but are unwilling to omit anything which they have planned to give in their speech, and so continue in an endeavor to recall every item. At last such a speech has a loose and straggling ending.

The words of the conclusion need not be memorized, but the ideas should be definitely outlined in the mind and fixed in the memory, not as words, but as ideas.



The knowledge that you can turn at will to these definite ideas, and so bring your speech to a close, will confer upon you a degree of self-confidence which will be of immense service to you.

You should ever bear in mind this golden rule for the conclusion of your speech: When you have finished what you have of importance to say, do not be tempted to wander off into by-paths, or to tell an additional story, or to say “and one word more,” but having finished your speech, stop on the instant and sit down.



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PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SPEAKERS

Cultivate as the most desirable thoughts those which are definite, clear, deep, logical, profound, strong, precise, impressive, original, significant, explicit, luminous, positive, suggestive, comprehensive, and practical. Resolutely avoid all thoughts which are uncertain, recondite, obscure, immature, unimportant, shallow, weak, visionary, absurd, vague, extravagant, indefinite, or impractical.

In your choice and use of words give preference to those which are definite, simple, real, significant, forcible, expressive, adequate, musical, varied, and copious. Avoid those which are foreign, slangy, obsolete, unusual, extravagant, technical, long, colloquial, or commonplace.

The most desirable qualities in the use of English are the simple, plain, exact, lucid, concise, trenchant, vigorous, impressive, lively, figurative, polished, graceful, fluent, rhythmical, copious, elevated, flexible, smooth, dignified, terse, epigrammatic, felicitous, euphonious, elegant, and lofty. Undesirable qualities are the diffuse, verbose, redundant, inflated, prolix, ambiguous, feeble, monotonous, loose, slipshod, dry, flowery, pedantic, pompous, rhetorical, grandiloquent, artificial, formal, ornate, halting, ponderous, ungrammatical, vague, and obscure.

The qualities you should develop in your speaking voice are the pure, deep, round, flexible, resonant, musical, clear, sympathetic, smooth, sonorous, powerful, silvery, melodious, full, strong, natural, mellow, magnetic, expressive, carrying, and responsive. Endeavor to keep your voice free from such undesirable qualities as the harsh, breathy, sharp, rough, rigid, throaty, guttural, thin, shrill, nasal, unmusical, discordant, muffled, explosive, strained, inaudible, hollow, strident, sepulchral, and tremulous.

Your articulation should be clear, distinct, and correct. Avoid carelessness, lifelessness, mumbling, weakness, and exaggeration.

Your pronunciation should be clear-cut and accurate. Avoid mouthing, lispings, hesitation, stammering, pedantry, omission of syllables, and suppression of final consonants.

Your delivery in public speaking should be simple, sincere, natural, varied, magnetic, earnest, forceful, attractive, energetic, animated, sympathetic, authoritative, dignified, direct, impressive, vivid, convincing, persuasive, zealous, enthusiastic, and inspiring. Avoid that which is timid, familiar, violent, cold, indifferent, unreal, artificial, dull, singsong, hesitating, feeble, unconvincing, apathetic, monotonous, pompous, formal, arbitrary, flippant, ostentatious, drawling, or languid.

Your gesture should be graceful, appropriate, free, forceful, and natural. Avoid all gesture which is unmeaning, angular, abrupt, constrained, stilted, or amateurish.

Your facial expression should be varied, appropriate, pleasing, and impassioned. Avoid the unpleasant, immobile, and unvaried.



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Let your standing position be manly, erect, easy, forceful, and impressive. Avoid that which is weak, shifting, stiff, inactive, and ungainly.

THE DRAMATIC ELEMENT IN SPEAKING

There is a well-defined prejudice against the importation of anything “theatrical” into the pulpit. The art of the actor is fundamentally different from the work of the preacher. At best the actor but represents, imitates, pretends, acts. The actor seems; the preacher is.

It is to be feared, however, that this prejudice has narrowed many preachers down to a pulpit style almost devoid of warmth and action. In their endeavor to avoid the dramatic and sensational, they have refined and subdued many of their most natural and effective means of expression. The function of preaching is not only to impart, but to persuade; and persuasion demands something more than an easy conversational style, an intellectual statement of facts, or the reading of a written message. The speaker must show in face, in eye, in arm, in the whole animated man, that he, himself, is moved, before he can hope successfully to persuade and inspire others.

The modified movements of ordinary conversation do not fulfil all the requirements of the preacher. These are necessary and adequate for the groundwork of the sermon, but for the supreme heights of passionate appeal, when the soul of the preacher would, as it were, leap from its body in the endeavor to reach men, there must be intensified life and action—dramatic action.

It is difficult to conceive of a greater tribute to a public advocate than that paid to Wendell Phillips by George William Curtis:

“The divine energy of his conviction utterly possess him, and his

'Pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in his cheek, and so distinctly wrought,
That one might almost say his body thought.'”

Poise is power, and reserve and repression are parts of the dignified office of the preacher, but carried too far may degenerate into weak and unproductive effort. Perfection of English style, rhetorical floridness, and profundity of thought will never wholly make up for lack of appropriate action in the work of persuading men.

The power of action alone is vividly illustrated in the touch of the finger to the lips to invoke silence, or the pointing to the door to command one to leave the room. The preacher might often find it profitable to stand before a mirror and deliver his sermon exclusively in pantomime to test its power and efficacy.



The body must be disciplined and cultivated as assiduously as the other instruments of the speaker. There is eloquence of attitude and action no less than eloquence of voice and feeling. A preacher drawing himself up to his full height, with a significant gesture of the head, or with flashing eye pointing the finger of warning at his hearers, may rouse them from indifference when all other means fail.



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Sixty years ago the Reverend William Russell emphasized the importance of visible expression. He said of the preacher:

“His outward manner, in attitude and action, will be as various as his voice: he will evince the inspiration of appropriate feeling in the very posture of his frame; in uttering the language of adoration, the slow-moving, uplifted hand will bespeak the awe and solemnity which pervade his soul; in addressing his fellow men in the spirit of an ambassador of Christ, the gentle yet earnest spirit of persuasive action will be evinced in the pleading hand and aspect; he will know, also, how to pass to the stern and authoritative mien of the reproof of sin; he will, on due occasions, indicate, in his kindling look, the rousing gesture, the mood of him who is empowered and commanded to summon forth all the energies of the human soul; his subdued and chastened address will carry the sympathy of his spirit into the bosom of the mourner; his moistening eye and his gentle action will manifest his tenderness for the suffering: his whole soul will, in a word, become legible in his features, in his attitude, in the expressive eloquence of his hand; his whole style will be felt to be that of heart communing with heart.”

Dramatic action gives picturesqueness to the spoken word. It makes things vivid to slow imaginations, and by contrast invests the speaker's message with new meaning and vitality. It discloses, too, the speaker's sympathy and identification with his subject. His thought and feeling, communicating themselves to voice and face, to hand and arm, to posture and walk, satisfy and impress the hearer by a sense of adequacy and completeness.

Henry Ward Beecher, a conspicuous example of the dramatic style in preaching, was drilled for three years, while at college, in voice-culture, gesture, and action. His daily practise in the woods, during which he exploded all the vowels from the bottom to the top of his voice, gave him not only a wonderfully responsive and flexible instrument, but a freedom of bodily movement that made him one of the most vigorous and virile of American preachers. He was in the highest sense a persuasive pulpit orator.

A sensible preacher will avoid the grotesque and the extremes of mere animal vivacity. Incessant gesture and action, undue emphasizing with hand and head, and all suggestion of self-sufficiency in attitude or manner should be guarded against. All the various instruments of expression should be made ready and responsive for immediate use, but are to be employed with that taste and tact that characterize the well-balanced man. Too much action and long-continued emotional effort lose force, and unless the law of action and reaction is applied to the preaching of the sermon the attention of the congregation may snap and the desired effect be utterly destroyed.

The face as the mirror of the emotions is an important part of expression. The lips will betray determination, grief, sympathy, affection, or other feeling on the part of the speaker. The eyes, the most direct medium of psychic power, will flash in indignation,

glisten in joy, or grow dim in sorrow. The brow will be elevated in surprise, or lowered in determination and perplexity.



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The effectiveness of the whisper in preaching should not be overlooked. If discreetly used it may serve to impress the hearer with the profundity and seriousness of the preacher's message, or to arrest and bring back to the point of contact the wandering minds of a congregation.

To acquire emotional power and dramatic action the preacher should study the great dramatists. He should read them aloud with appropriate voice and movement. He should study children, and men, and nature. He should, perhaps, see the best actors, not to copy them, but in order that they may stimulate his taste and imagination.

CONVERSATION AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

The ideal style of public speaking is, with very little modification, the ideal of good conversation. The practical age in which we live demands a colloquial rather than an oratorical style of public speaking. A man who has something to say in conversation usually has little difficulty in saying it. If he presents the facts he will speak convincingly; if he is deeply in earnest he will speak persuasively; and if he be an educated man his speech will have the unmistakable marks of culture and refinement.

In the conversation of well-bred children we find the most interesting and helpful illustrations of unaffected speech. The exquisite modulation of the voice, the unstudied correctness of emphasis, and the sincerity and depth of feeling might well serve as a model for older speakers.

This study of conversation, both our own and that of others, offers daily opportunity for improvement in accuracy and fluency of speech, of fitting words to the mouth as well as to the thought, and of forming habits that will unconsciously disclose themselves in the larger work of public speaking. Care in conversation will guard the public speaker from inflated and unnatural tones, and restrain him from transgressing the laws of nature even in those parts of his speech demanding lofty and intensified treatment.

Some easily remembered suggestions regarding conversation are these:

1. Pronounce your words distinctly and accurately, like "newly made coins" from the mint, but without pedantry.
2. Upon no occasion allow yourself to indulge in careless or incorrect speech.
3. Open the mouth well in conversation. Much indistinct speech is due to speaking through half-closed teeth.
4. Closely observe your conversation and that of others, to detect faults and to improve your speaking-style.



5. Vary your voice to suit the variety of your thought. A well-modulated voice demands appropriate changes of pitch, force, perspective, and feeling.
6. Avoid loud talking.
7. Take care of the consonants and the vowels will take care of themselves.
8. Cultivate the music of the conversational tones.
9. Favor the low pitches of your voice.



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10. Remember that the purpose of conscious practise and observation in the matter of conversation is to lead ultimately to unconscious performance.

The value of correct conversation as a means to effective public speaking is realized by few men. Beecher said: "How much squandering there is of the voice!" meaning that this golden opportunity for improvement was generally disregarded. It is not too much to say, however, that if the sweet and gentle expression of the mother, the strong and affectionate tones of the father, and the spontaneous musical notes of the children, as heard in daily conversation, could be united in the voice of the minister and brought to the preaching of his sermon, there would be little doubt of its magical and enduring effect upon the hearts of men. The wooing tone of the lover is what the preacher needs in his pulpit style rather than the voice of declamation and denunciation.

The study of conversation serves to guide the public speaker not only in the free and natural use of his voice, enunciation, and expression, but also in his use of language. He will here learn to choose the simple word instead of the complex, the short sentence instead of the involved, the concrete illustration instead of the abstract. He will acquire ease, spontaneity, simplicity, and directness, and when he rises to speak to men he will employ tones and words best known and understood by them.

A preacher may spend too much time in study and solitude. If he does he will soon realize a distinct loss through lack of social intercourse with his fellow men. The faculties most needed in pulpit preaching are those very powers that are so largely exercised in ordinary conversation. The ability to think quickly, to marshal facts and arguments, to introduce a vivid story or illustration, to parry and thrust as is sometimes needed to hold one's own ground, and the general mental activity aroused in conversation, all tend to produce an interesting, vivacious, and forceful style in public speaking.

We should not underestimate the value of meditation and silence to the public speaker. These are necessary for original and profound thinking, for the cultivation of the imagination, and for the accumulation of thought. But conversation offers an immediate outlet for this stored-up knowledge, testing it as a finished product in expression, and projecting it into life and reality by all the resources of voice and feeling. This exercise is as necessary to the mind as physical exercise is to the body. Indeed, a full mind demands this relief in expression, lest the strain become too great.

The daily newspaper and the magazines should not be allowed to usurp the place of conversation. If the art of talking is rapidly dying out, as some assert, we should do our share to revive it. We may not again have the wit and repartee, the brilliant intellectual combats of those other days, but we can at least each have a cultivated speaking-voice, an interesting manner of expressing our ideas in conversation, and a refined pronunciation of our mother tongue.

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A TALK TO PREACHERS

The aim of one who would interpret literature to others, by means of the speaking voice, should be first to assimilate its spirit. There can be no worthy or adequate rendering of a great poem or prose selection without a keen appreciation of its inner meaning and content. This is the principal safeguard against mechanical and meaningless declamation. The extent of this appreciation and grasp of the inherent spirit of thought will largely determine the degree of life, reality, and impressiveness imparted to the spoken word.

The intimate relationship between the voice and the spirit of the speaker suggests that one is necessary to the fullest development of the other. The voice can interpret only what has been awakened and realized within, hence nothing discloses a speaker's grasp of a subject so accurately and readily as his attempt to give it expression in his own language. It is this spiritual power, developed principally through the intuitions and emotions, that gives psychic force to speaking, and which more than logic, rhetoric, or learning itself enables the speaker to influence and persuade men.

The minister as an interpreter of the highest spiritual truth should bring to his work a thoroughly trained emotional nature and a cultivated speaking voice. It is not sufficient that he state the truth with clearness and force; he must proclaim it with such passionate enthusiasm as powerfully to move his hearers. To express adequately the infinite shades of spiritual truth, he must have the ability to play upon his voice as upon a great cathedral organ, from "the soft lute of love" to "the loud trumpet of war."

To assume that the study of the art of speaking will necessarily produce consciousness of its principles while in the act of speaking in public, is as unwarranted as to say that a knowledge of the rules of grammar, rhetoric, or logic lead to artificiality and self-consciousness in the teacher, writer, and thinker. There is a "mechanical expertness preceding all art," as Goethe says, and this applies to the orator no less than to the musician, the artist, the actor, and the litterateur.

Let the minister stand up for even five minutes each day, with chest and abdomen well expanded, and pronounce aloud the long vowel sounds of the English language, in various shades of force and feeling, and shortly he will observe his voice developing in flexibility, resonance, and power. For it should be remembered that the voice grows through use. Let the minister cultivate, too, the habit of breathing exclusively through his nose while in repose, fully and deeply from the abdomen, and he will find himself gaining in health and mental resourcefulness.

For the larger development of the spiritual and emotional powers of the speaker, a wide and varied knowledge of men and life is necessary. The feelings are trained through close contact with human suffering, and in the work of solving vital social problems. The



speaker will do well to explore first his own heart and endeavor to read its secret meanings, preliminary to interpreting the hearts of other men. Personal suffering will do more to open the well-springs of the heart than the reading of many books.



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Care must be had, however, that this cultivating of the feelings be conducted along rational lines, lest it run not to faith but to fanaticism. There is a wide difference between emotion designed for display or for momentary effect, and that which arises from strong inner conviction and sympathetic interest in others. Spurious, unnatural feeling will invariably fail to convince serious-minded men.

“Emotion wrought up with no ulterior object,” says Dr. Kennard, “is both an abuse and an injury to the moral nature. When the attention is thoroughly awakened and steadily held, the hearer is like a well-tuned harp, each cord a distinct emotion, and the skilful speaker may evoke a response from one or more at his will. This lays him under a great and serious responsibility. Let him keep steadily at such a time to his divine purpose, to produce a healthful action, a life in harmony with God and a symphony of service.”

The emotional and spiritual powers of the speaker will be developed by reading aloud each day a vigorous and passionate extract from the Bible, or Shakespeare, or from some great sermon by such men as Bushnell, Newman, Beecher, Maclaren, Brooks, or Spurgeon. The entire gamut of human feeling can be highly cultivated by thus reading aloud from the great masterpieces of literature. The speaker will know that he can make his own words glow and vibrate, after he has first tested and trained himself in some such manner as this. Furthermore, by thus fitting words to his mouth, and assimilating the feelings of others, he will immeasurably gain in facility and vocal responsiveness when he attempts to utter his own thoughts.

Music is a powerful element in awakening emotion in the speaker and bringing to consciousness the mysterious inner voices of the soul. The minister should not only hear good music as often as possible, but he should train his ear to recognize the rhythm and melody in speech.

For the fullest development of this spiritual power in the public speaker there should be frequent periods of stillness and silence. One must listen much in order to accumulate much. Thought and feeling require time in which to grow. In this way the myriad sounds that arise from humanity and from nature can be caught up in the soul of the speaker and subsequently voiced by him to others.

The habit of meditating much, of brooding over thought, whether it be our own or that of others, will tend to disclose new and deeper meanings, and consequently deeper shades and depths of feeling. The speaker will diligently search for unwritten meanings in words; he will study, whenever possible, masterpieces of painting and sculpture; he will closely observe the natural feeling of well-bred children, as shown in their conversation; and in many other ways that will suggest themselves, he will daily develop his emotional and spiritual powers of expression.



The science of preaching is important, but so, too, is the art of preaching. A powerful pulpit is one of the needs of the times. A congregation readily recognizes a preacher of strong convictions, broad sympathies, and consecrated personality. An affectionate nature in a minister, manifesting itself in voice, face, and manner, will attract and influence men, while a harsh, rigid, vehement manner will as easily repel them.



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It is to be feared that many sermons are written with too much regard for “literary deportment on paper,” and too little thought of their value as pulsating messages to men.

The preacher should train himself to take tight hold of his thought, to grip it with mental firmness and fervor, that he may afterward convey it to others with definiteness and vigor. Thoughts vaguely conceived and held tremblingly in the mind will manifest a like character when uttered. Into the writing of the sermon put vitality and intensity, and these qualities will find their natural place in delivery. Thrill of the pen should precede thrill of the voice. The habit of Dickens of acting out the characters he was depicting on paper could be copied to advantage by the preacher, and frequently during the writing of his sermon he might stand and utter his thoughts aloud to test their power and effectiveness upon an imaginary congregation.

There should be the most thorough cultivation of the inner sources of the preacher, whereby the spiritual and emotional forces are so aroused and brought under control as to respond promptly and accurately to all the speaker's requirements. There should be assiduous training of the speaking voice as the instrument of expression and the natural outlet for thought and feeling. In the combined cultivation of these two essentials of expression—spirit and voice—the minister will find the true secret of effective pulpit preaching.

CARE OF THE SPEAKER'S THROAT

The throat as a vital part of the public speaker's work in speaking is worthy of the greatest care and consideration. It is surprising that so little attention is given to vocal hygiene, when it is remembered that a serious weakness or affection of the throat may disqualify a speaker for important work. The delicate and intricate machinery of the vocal apparatus renders it peculiarly susceptible to misuse or exposure. The common defects of nasality, throatiness, and harshness, are due to wrong and careless use of the speaking-instrument.

In the training of the public speaker the first step is to bring the breathing apparatus under proper control. That is to say, the speaker must accustom himself, through careful practise, to use the abdominal method of breathing, and to keep his throat free from the strain to which it is commonly subjected. This form of breathing is not difficult to acquire, since it simply means that during inhalation the abdomen is expanded, and during exhalation it is contracted. It should be no longer necessary to warn the speaker to breathe exclusively through the nose when not actually using the voice. While speaking he must so completely control the breath that not a particle of it can escape without giving up its equivalent in sound.



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“Clergyman’s sore throat” is the result of improper use or overstraining of the voice. Sometimes the earnestness of the preacher causes him to “clutch” each word with the vocal muscles, instead of using the throat as an open channel through which the voice may flow with ease and freedom. Many speakers, in an endeavor to be heard at a great distance, employ too loud a tone, forgetting that the essential thing is a clear and distinct articulation. To speak continuously in high pitch, or through half-closed teeth, almost invariably causes distress of throat. Most throat troubles may be set down to a lack of proper elocutionary training. To keep the voice and throat in order there should be regular daily practise, if only for ten minutes. The example might profitably be followed of certain actors who make a practise of humming occasionally during the day while engaged in other duties, as a means of keeping the voice musical and resonant.

When the throat becomes husky or weak it is a timely warning from nature that it needs rest and relaxation. To continue to engage in public speaking under these circumstances is often attended with great danger, resulting sometimes in total loss of voice. It is economy in the end to discontinue the use of the voice when there is a serious cold or the throat is otherwise affected. Nervousness, anxiety, or unusual mental exertion may cause a vocal breakdown. For this condition rest is recommended, together with gentle massaging of the throat with cold water mixed with a little vinegar or *eau de Cologne*.

A public speaker should not engage in protracted conversation immediately after a speech. The sudden transition from an auditorium to the outer air should remind the speaker to keep his mouth securely closed. The general physical condition of the speaker has much to do with the vigor and clearness of his voice. A daily plunge into cold water, or at least a sponging of the entire surface of the body, besides being a tonic luxury, greatly invigorates the throat and abdominal muscles. After the “tub” a vigorous rubbing with towel and hands should produce a glow.

To the frequent question whether smoking is injurious to the throat, it is safe to say that the weight of authority and experience favors abstinence. Any one who has spoken for half an hour or more in a smoke-clouded room, knows the distressing effect it has had upon the sensitive lining of the throat. It must be obvious, therefore, that the constant inhaling of smoke must even more directly irritate the mucous membrane.

The diet of the public speaker should be reasonably moderate, and the extremes of hot and cold avoided. The use of ice-water is to be discouraged. Many drugs and lozenges are positively injurious to the throat. For habitual dryness of throat a glycerine or honey tablet will usually obviate the trouble. Dr. Morell Mackenzie, the eminent English throat specialist, condemns the use of alcohol as pernicious, and affirms that “even in a comparatively mild form it keeps the delicate tissues in a state of congestion which makes them particularly liable to inflammation from cold or other causes.”

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It must not be assumed that the throat is to be pampered. A reasonable amount of exposure will harden it and to this extent is desirable. To muffle the throat with a scarf, unless demanded by special conditions, may make it unduly sensitive and increase the danger of taking cold when the head is turned from side to side.

A leading physician confirms the opinion that the best gargle for daily use is that of warm water and salt. This should be used every night and morning to cleanse and invigorate the throat. Where there is a tendency to catarrh a solution made of peroxide of hydrogen, witch-hazel, and water, in equal parts, will prove efficacious. Nothing should be snuffed up the nose except under the direction of a physician, lest it cause deafness.

Many speakers and singers have a favorite nostrum for improving the voice. The long and amusing list includes hot milk, tea, coffee, champagne, raw eggs, lemonade, apples, raisins,—and sardines! A good rule is to eat sparingly if the meal is taken just before speaking. It need hardly be said that serious vocal defects, such as enlarged tonsils, elongated uvula, and abnormal growths in the throat and nose are subjects for the specialist.

Whenever possible a speaker should test beforehand the acoustic properties of the auditorium in which he is to speak for the first time. A helpful plan is to have a friend seat himself at the back of the hall or church, and give his opinion of the quality and projecting power of the speaker's voice. It is difficult to judge one's own voice because it is conveyed to him not only from the outside but also through the Eustachian tube and modified by the vibratory parts of the throat and head. A speaker never hears his own voice as it is heard by another.

Nothing, perhaps, is so taxing to the throat as long-continued speaking in one quality of tone. There are two distinct registers which should be judiciously alternated by the speaker. These are the "chest" register, in which the vocal cords vibrate their whole length, and the quality of tone derives most of its character from the chest cavity; and the "head" register, in which the vocal cords vibrate only in part, and the quality of tone is reenforced by the resonators of the face, mouth, and head. The first of these registers is sometimes called the "orotund" voice from its quality of roundness, and is employed principally in language of reverence, sublimity, and grandeur.

The head tone is the voice of ordinary conversation and should form the basis of the public-speaking style.

No one who has to speak in public should be discouraged because of limited vocal resources. Many of the foremost orators began with marked disadvantages in this respect, but made these shortcomings an incentive to higher effort. One well-known speaker makes up for lack of vocal power by extreme distinctness of enunciation, while another offsets an unpleasantly heavy quality of voice by skilful modulation.



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A few easily remembered suggestions are:

1. Rest the voice for an hour or two before speaking in public.
2. Gargle the throat night and morning with salt and water.
3. Never force the voice.
4. Avoid all occasions that strain the voice, such as prolonged conversation, speaking against noise, or in cold and damp air.
5. Practise deep breathing until it becomes an unconscious habit.
6. Favor an outdoor life.
7. Hum or sing a little every day.
8. Discontinue public speaking when there is a severe cold or other affection of the throat.
9. Rest the voice and body immediately after speaking in public.

DON'TS FOR PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Don't rant.
Don't prate.
Don't fidget.
Don't flatter.
Don't declaim.
Don't be glib.
Don't hesitate.
Don't be nasal.
Don't apologize.
Don't dogmatize.
Don't be slangy.
Don't antagonize.
Don't be awkward.
Don't be violent.
Don't be personal.
Don't be "funny."
Don't attitudinize.
Don't be monotonous.
Don't speak rapidly.
Don't sway your body.



Don't be long-winded.
Don't "hem" and "haw."
Don't praise yourself.
Don't overgesticulate.
Don't pace the platform.
Don't clear your throat.
Don't "point with pride."
Don't tell a long story.
Don't rise on your toes.
Don't distort your words.
Don't stand like a statue.
Don't address the ceiling.
Don't speak in a high key.
Don't emphasize everything.
Don't drink while speaking.
Don't fatigue your audience.
Don't exceed your time limit.
Don't talk for talking's sake.
Don't wander from your subject.
Don't fumble with your clothes.
Don't speak through closed teeth.
Don't put your hands on your hips.
Don't fail to stop when you have ended.

DO'S FOR PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Be prepared.
Begin slowly.
Be modest.
Speak distinctly.
Address all your hearers.
Be uniformly courteous.
Prune your sentences.
Cultivate mental alertness.
Conceal your method.
Be scrupulously clear.
Feel sure of yourself.
Look your audience in the eyes.
Be direct.
Favor your deep tones.
Speak deliberately.
Get to your facts.
Be earnest.
Observe your pauses.
Suit the action to the word.
Be yourself at your best.
Speak fluently.

Use your abdominal muscles.
Make yourself interesting.



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Be conversational.
Conciliate your opponent.
Rouse yourself.
Be logical.
Have your wits about you.
Be considerate.
Open your mouth.
Speak authoritatively.
Cultivate sincerity.
Cultivate brevity.
Cultivate tact.
End swiftly.

POINTS FOR SPEAKERS

As far as possible avoid the following hackneyed phrases:

I rise with diffidence
Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking
By a happy stroke of fate
It becomes my painful duty
In the last analysis
I am encouraged to go on
I point with pride
On the other hand (with gesture)
I hold
The vox populi
Be that as it may
I shall not detain you
As the hour is growing late
Believe me
We view with alarm
As I was about to tell you
The happiest day of my life
It falls to my lot
I can say no more
In the fluff and bloom
I can only hint
I can say nothing



I cannot find words
The fact is
To my mind
I cannot sufficiently do justice
I fear
All I can say is
I shall not inflict a speech on you
Far be it from me
Rise phoenix-like from his ashes
But alas!
What more can I say?
At this late period of the evening
It is hardly necessary to say
I cannot allow the opportunity to pass
For, mark you
I have already taken up too much time
I might talk to you for hours
Looking back upon my childhood
We can imagine the scene
I haven't the time nor ability
Ah, no, dear friends
One more word and I have done
I will now conclude
I really must stop
I have done.

THE BIBLE ON SPEECH

How forcible are right words!

To every thing there is a season, a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying.

Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you.



Know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight,
O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

THOUGHTS ON TALKING



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To make a good talker, genius and learning, even wit and eloquence, are insufficient; to these, in all or in part, must be added in some degree the talents of active life. The character has as much to do with colloquial power as has the intellect; the temperament, feelings, and animal spirits, even more, perhaps, than the mental gifts. "Napoleon said things which tell in history like his battles. Luther's Table-Talk glows with the fire that burnt the Pope's bull." Caesar, Cicero, Themistocles, Lord Bacon, Selden, Talleyrand, and, in our own country, Aaron Burr, Jefferson, Webster, and Choate, were all, more or less, men of action. Sir Walter Scott tells us that, at a great dinner party, he thought the lawyers beat the Bishops as talkers, and the Bishops the wits. Nearly all great orators have been fine talkers. Lord Chatham, who could electrify the House of Lords by pronouncing the word "Sugar," but who in private was but commonplace, was an exception; but the conversation of Pitt and Fox was brilliant and fascinating,—that of Burke, rambling, but splendid, rich and instructive, beyond description. The latter was the only man in the famous "Literary Club" who could cope with Johnson. The Doctor confessed that in Burke he had a foeman worthy of his steel. On one occasion, when debilitated by sickness, he said: "That fellow calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now, it would kill me." At another time he said: "Burke, sir, is such a man that, if you met him for the first time in the street, where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside to take shelter but for five minutes, he'd talk to you in such a manner, that when you parted you'd say—'This is an extraordinary man.'" "Can he wind into a subject like a serpent, as Burke does?" asked Goldsmith of a certain talker. Fox said that he had derived more political information from Burke's conversation alone than from books, science, and all his worldly experience put together. Moore finely says of the same conversation, that it must have been like the procession of a Roman triumph, exhibiting power and riches at every step, occasionally mingling the low Fescennine jest with the lofty music of the march, but glittering all over with the spoils of a ransacked world.

—*Mathews.*

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The fault of literary conversation in general is its too great tenaciousness. It fastens upon a subject, and will not let it go. It resembles a battle rather than a skirmish, and makes a toil of a pleasure. Perhaps it does this from necessity, from a consciousness of wanting the more familiar graces, the power to sport and trifle, to touch lightly and adorn agreeably, every view or turn of a question *en passant*, as it arises. Those who have a reputation to lose are too ambitious of shining, to please. "To excel in conversation," said an ingenious man, "one must not be always striving to say good things: to say one good thing, one must say many bad, and more indifferent ones." This desire to shine without the means at hand, often makes men silent:—

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The fear of being silent strikes us dumb.

A writer who has been accustomed to take a connected view of a difficult question and to work it out gradually in all its bearings, may be very deficient in that quickness and ease which men of the world, who are in the habit of hearing a variety of opinions, who pick up an observation on one subject, and another on another, and who care about none any further than the passing away of an idle hour, usually acquire. An author has studied a particular point—he has read, he has inquired, he has thought a great deal upon it: he is not contented to take it up casually in common with others, to throw out a hint, to propose an objection: he will either remain silent, uneasy, and dissatisfied, or he will begin at the beginning, and go through with it to the end. He is for taking the whole responsibility upon himself. He would be thought to understand the subject better than others, or indeed would show that nobody else knows anything about it. There are always three or four points on which the literary novice at his first outset in life fancies he can enlighten every company, and bear down all opposition: but he is cured of this quixotic and pugnacious spirit, as he goes more into the world, where he finds that there are other opinions and other pretensions to be adjusted besides his own. When this asperity wears off, and a certain scholastic precocity is mellowed down, the conversation of men of letters becomes both interesting and instructive. Men of the world have no fixed principles, no groundwork of thought: mere scholars have too much an object, a theory always in view, to which they wrest everything, and not unfrequently, common sense itself. By mixing with society, they rub off their hardness of manner, and impracticable, offensive singularity, while they retain a greater depth and coherence of understanding. There is more to be learnt from them than from their books.

—Hazlitt.

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There are some people whose good manners will not suffer them to interrupt you, but, what is almost as bad, will discover abundance of impatience, and lie upon the watch until you have done, because they have started something in their own thoughts, which they long to be delivered of. Meantime, they are so far from regarding what passes, that their imaginations are wholly turned upon what they have in reserve, for fear it should slip out of their memory; and thus they confine their invention, which might otherwise range over a hundred things full as good, and that might be much more naturally introduced.



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There is a sort of rude familiarity, which some people, by practising among their intimates, have introduced into their general conversation, and would have it pass for innocent freedom or humor; which is a dangerous experiment in our northern climate, where all the little decorum and politeness we have are purely forced by art, and are so ready to lapse into barbarity. This, among the Romans, was the raillery of slaves, of which we have many instances in Plautus. It seems to have been introduced among us by Cromwell, who, by preferring the scum of the people, made it a court entertainment, of which I have heard many particulars; and, considering all things were turned upside down, it was reasonable and judicious; although it was a piece of policy found out to ridicule a point of honor in the other extreme, when the smallest word misplaced among gentlemen ended in a duel.

There are some men excellent at telling a story, and provided with a plentiful stock of them, which they can draw out upon occasion in all companies, and, considering how low conversation runs now among us, it is not altogether a contemptible talent; however, it is subject to two unavoidable defects, frequent repetition, and being soon exhausted; so, that, whoever values this gift in himself, has need of a good memory, and ought frequently to shift his company, that he may not discover the weakness of his fund; for those who are thus endued have seldom any other revenue, but live upon the main stock.

—*Swift.*

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The highest and best of all the moral conditions for conversation is what we call tact. I say a condition, for it is very doubtful whether it can be called a single and separate quality; more probably it is a combination of intellectual quickness with lively sympathy. But so clearly is it an intellectual quality, that of all others it can be greatly improved, if not actually acquired, by long experience in society. Like all social excellences it is almost given as a present to some people, while others with all possible labor never acquire it. As in billiard-playing, shooting, cricket, and all these other facilities which are partly mental and partly physical, many never can pass a certain point of mediocrity; but still even those who have the talent must practise it, and only become really distinguished after hard work. So it is in art. Music and painting are not to be attained by the crowd. Not even the just criticism of these arts is attainable without certain natural gifts; but a great deal of practice in good galleries and at good concerts, and years spent among artists, will do much to make even moderately-endowed people sound judges of excellence.



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Tact, which is the sure and quick judgment of what is suitable and agreeable in society, is likewise one of those delicate and subtle qualities or a combination of qualities which is not very easily defined, and therefore not teachable by fixed precepts. Some people attain it through sympathy; others through natural intelligence; others through a calm temper; others again by observing closely the mistakes of their neighbors. As its name implies, it is a sensitive touch in social matters, which feels small changes of temperature, and so guesses at changes of temper; which sees the passing cloud on the expression of one face, or the eagerness of another that desires to bring out something personal for others to enjoy. This quality of tact is of course applicable far beyond mere actual conversation. In nothing is it more useful than in preparing the right conditions for a pleasant society, in choosing the people who will be in mutual sympathy, in thinking over pleasant subjects of talk and suggesting them, in seeing that all disturbing conditions are kept out, and that the members who are to converse should be all without those small inconveniences which damage society so vastly out of proportion to their intrinsic importance.

—*Mahaffy.*

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In the course of our life we have heard much of what was reputed to be the select conversation of the day, and we have heard many of those who figured at the moment as effective talkers; yet, in mere sincerity, and without a vestige of misanthropic retrospect, we must say that never once has it happened to us to come away from any display of that nature without intense disappointment; and it always appeared to us that this failure (which soon ceased to be a disappointment) was inevitable by a necessity of the case. For here lay the stress of the difficulty: almost all depends in most trials of skill upon the parity of those who are matched against each other. An ignorant person supposes that to an able disputant it must be an advantage to have a feeble opponent; whereas, on the contrary, it is ruin to him; for he can not display his own powers but through something of a corresponding power in the resistance of his antagonist. A brilliant fencer is lost and confounded in playing with a novice; and the same thing takes place in playing at ball, or battledore, or in dancing, where a powerless partner does not enable you to shine the more, but reduces you to mere helplessness, and takes the wind altogether out of your sails. Now, if by some rare good luck the great talker, the protagonist, of the evening has been provided with a commensurate second, it is just possible that something like a brilliant "passage of arms" may be the result,—though much even in that case will depend on the chances of the moment for furnishing a fortunate theme, and even then, amongst the superior part of the company, a feeling of deep vulgarity and of mountebank display is inseparable



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from such an ostentatious duel of wit. On the other hand, supposing your great talker to be received like any other visitor, and turned loose upon the company, then he must do one of two things: either he will talk upon *outré* subjects specially tabooed to his own private use,—in which case the great man has the air of a quack-doctor addressing a mob from a street stage; or else he will talk like ordinary people upon popular topics,—in which case the company, out of natural politeness, that they may not seem to be staring at him as a lion, will hasten to meet him in the same style, the conversation will become general, the great man will seem reasonable and well-bred, but at the same time, we grieve to say it, the great man will have been extinguished by being drawn off from his exclusive ground. The dilemma, in short, is this:—If the great talker attempts the plan of showing off by firing cannon-shot when everybody else is content with musketry, then undoubtedly he produces an impression, but at the expense of insulating himself from the sympathies of the company, and standing aloof as a sort of monster hired to play tricks of funambulism for the night. Yet, again, if he contents himself with a musket like other people, then for us, from whom he modestly hides his talents under a bushel, in what respect is he different from the man who has no such talent?

—*De Quincey.*

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Some, in their discourse, desire rather commendation of wit, in being able to hold all arguments, than of judgment, in discerning what is true; as if it were a praise to know what might be said, and not what should be thought. Some have certain commonplaces and themes wherein they are good, and want variety; which kind of poverty is for the most part tedious, and, when it is once perceived, ridiculous. The honorablest part of talk is to give the occasion; and again to moderate and pass to somewhat else; for then a man leads the dance. It is good in discourse, and speech of conversation, to vary, and intermingle speech of the present occasion with arguments, tales with reasons, asking of questions with telling of opinions, and jest with earnest; for it is a dull thing to tire, and, as we say now, to jade any thing too far. As for jest, there be certain things which ought to be privileged from it, namely, religion, matters of State, great persons, any man's present business of importance, and any case that deserveth pity; yet there be some that think their wits have been asleep, except they dart out somewhat that is piquant, and to the quick. That is a vein which would be bridled; *Parce, puer, stimulis, et fortius utere loris.* And, generally, men ought to find the difference between saltness and bitterness. Certainly, he that hath a satirical vein, as he maketh others afraid of his wit, so he had need be afraid of others' memory. He that questioneth much shall learn much, and content much, but especially



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if he apply his questions to the skill of the persons whom he asketh; for he shall give them occasion to please themselves in speaking, and himself shall continually gather knowledge: but let his questions not be troublesome, for that is fit for a poser; and let him be sure to leave other men their turns to speak: nay, if there be any that would reign and take up all the time, let him find means to take them off, and to bring others on, as musicians use to do with those that dance too long galliards. If you dissemble sometimes your knowledge of that you are thought to know, you shall be thought, another time, to know that you know not. Speech of a man's self ought to be seldom, and well chosen. I knew one was wont to say in scorn, "He must needs be a wise man, he speaks so much of himself;" and there is but one case wherein a man may commend himself with good grace, and that is in commending virtue in another, especially if it be such a virtue whereunto himself pretendeth. Speech of touch towards others should be sparingly used; for discourse ought to be as a field, without coming home to any man. I knew two noblemen, of the west part of England, whereof the one was given to scoff, but kept ever royal cheer in his house; the other would ask of those that had been at the other's table, "Tell truly, was there never a flout or dry blow given?" To which the guest would answer, "Such and such a thing passed." The lord would say, "I thought he would mar a good dinner." Discretion of speech is more than eloquence; and to speak agreeably to him with whom we deal, is more than to speak in good words, or in good order. A good continued speech, without a good speech of interlocution, shows slowness; and a good reply, or second speech, without a good settled speech, showeth shallowness and weakness. As we see in beasts, that those that are weakest in the course, are yet nimblest in the turn; as it is betwixt the greyhound and the hare. To use too many circumstances, ere one come to the matter, is wearisome; to use none at all, is blunt.

—*Bacon.*

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Think as little as possible about any good in yourself; turn your eyes resolutely from any view of your acquirement, your influence, your plan, your success, your following: above all, speak as little as possible about yourself. The inordinateness of our self-love makes speech about ourselves like the putting of the lighted torch to the dried wood which has been laid in order for the burning. Nothing but duty should open our lips upon this dangerous theme, except it be in humble confession of our sinfulness before our God. Again, be specially upon the watch against those little tricks by which the vain man seeks to bring round the conversation to himself, and gain the praise or notice which the thirsty ears drink in so greedily; and even if praise comes unsought, it is well, whilst men are uttering it, to guard yourself by thinking of some secret cause for humbling yourself inwardly to God; thinking into what these pleasant accents would be

changed if all that is known to God, and even to yourself, stood suddenly revealed to man.



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—*Bishop Wilberforce.*

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In speaking of the duty of pleasing others, it will not be necessary to dwell on the ordinary courtesies and lesser kindnesses of our daily living, any further than to observe that none of these things, however trifling, is beneath the notice of a good man, ... but I mention one thing, because I think that we are most of us apt to be rather deficient in it, and that is in the trying to suit ourselves to the tastes and views of persons whose professions or inclinations, or situation in life, differ widely from our own.... As a general rule, no man can fall into conversation with another without being able to learn something valuable from him. But in order to get at this benefit there must be something of an accommodating spirit on both sides; each must be ready to hear candidly and to answer fairly; each must try to please the other. We all suffer from the want of acquaintance with the habits and opinions and feelings of different classes of society.

—*Dr. Arnold.*

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If you would be loved as a companion, avoid unnecessary criticism upon those with whom you live. The number of people who have taken out judges' patents for themselves is very large in any society. Now it would be hard for a man to live with another who was always criticising his actions, even if it were kindly and just criticism. It would be like living between the glasses of a microscope. But these self-elected judges, like their prototypes, are very apt to have the persons they judge brought before them in the guise of culprits.

Let not familiarity swallow up old courtesy. Many of us have a habit of saying to those with whom we live such things as we say about strangers behind their backs. There is no place, however, where real politeness is of more value than where we mostly think it would be superfluous. You may say more truth, or rather speak out more plainly to your associates, but not less courteously than to strangers.

—*Helps.*

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Much of the sorrow of life springs from the accumulation, day by day and year by year, of little trials—a letter written in less than courteous terms, a wrangle at the breakfast table over some arrangement of the day, the rudeness of an acquaintance on the way to the city, an unfriendly act on the part of another firm, a cruel criticism needlessly reported by some meddler, a feline amenity at afternoon tea, the disobedience of one of



your children, a social slight by one of your circle, a controversy too hotly conducted. The trials within this class are innumerable, and consider, not one of them is inevitable, not one of them but might have been spared if we or our brother man had had a grain of kindness. Our social insolences, our irritating manners, our censorious judgment, our venomous letters, our pin pricks in conversation, are all forms of deliberate unkindness, and are all evidences of an ill-conditioned nature.



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—*John Watson.*

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If this be one of our chief duties—promoting the happiness of our neighbors—most certainly there is nothing which so entirely runs counter to it, and makes it impossible, as an undisciplined temper. For of all the things that are to be met with here on earth, there is nothing which can give such continual, such cutting, such useless pain. The touchy and sensitive temper, which takes offence at a word; the irritable temper, which finds offence in everything whether intended or not; the violent temper, which breaks through all bounds of reason when once roused; the jealous or sullen temper, which wears a cloud on the face all day, and never utters a word of complaint; the discontented temper, brooding over its own wrongs; the severe temper, which always looks at the worst side of whatever is done; the wilful temper, which overrides every scruple to gratify a whim,—what an amount of pain have these caused in the hearts of men, if we could but sum up their results! How many a soul have they stirred to evil impulses; how many a prayer have they stifled; how many an emotion of true affection have they turned to bitterness! How hard they sometimes make all duties! How painful they make all daily life! How they kill the sweetest and warmest of domestic charities! The misery caused by other sins is often much deeper and much keener, more disastrous, more terrible to the sight; but the accumulated pain caused by ill-temper must, I verily believe, if added together, outweigh all other pains that men have to bear from one another.

—*Bishop Temple.*

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Wicked is the slander which gossips away a character in an afternoon, and runs lightly over a whole series of acquaintances, leaving a drop of poison on them all, some suspicion, or some ominous silence—“Have you not heard?”—“No one would believe it, but—!” and then silence; while the shake of the head, or the shrug of the shoulders, finishes the sentence with a mute meaning worse than words. Do you ever think of the irrevocable nature of speech? The things you say are often said forever. You may find, years after your light word was spoken, that it has made a whole life unhappy, or ruined the peace of a household. It was well said by St. James, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man’s religion is vain.”

—*Stopford Brooke.*

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There are three kinds of silence. Silence from words is good, because inordinate speaking tends to evil. Silence, or rest from desires and passions, is still better,

because it promotes quietness of spirit. But the best of all is silence from unnecessary and wandering thoughts, because that is essential to internal recollection, and because it lays a foundation for a proper regulation and silence in other respects.



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—*Madame Guyon.*

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The example of our Lord, as He humbly and calmly takes the rebuff, and turns to go to another village, may help us in the ordinary ways of ordinary daily life. The little things that vex us in the manner or the words of those with whom we have to do; the things which seem to us so inconsiderate, or wilful, or annoying, that we think it impossible to get on with the people who are capable of them; the mistakes which no one, we say, has any right to make; the shallowness, or conventionality, or narrowness, or positiveness in talk which makes us wince and tempts us towards the cruelty and wickedness of scorn;—surely in all these things, and in many others like them, of which conscience may be ready enough to speak to most of us, there are really opportunities for thus following the example of our Saviour's great humility and patience. How many friendships we might win or keep, how many chances of serving others we might find, how many lessons we might learn, how much of unsuspected moral beauty might be disclosed around us, if only we were more careful to give people time, to stay judgment, to trust that they will see things more justly, speak of them more wisely, after a while. We are sure to go on closing doors of sympathy, and narrowing in the interests and opportunities of work around us, if we let ourselves imagine that we can quickly measure the capacities and sift the characters of our fellow-men.

—*Bishop Paget.*

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How much squandering there is of the voice! How little is there of the advantage that may come from conversational tones! How seldom does a man dare to acquit himself with pathos and fervor! And the men are themselves mechanical and methodical in the bad way, who are most afraid of the artificial training that is given in the schools, and who so often show by the fruit of their labor that the want of oratory is the want of education.

How remarkable is sweetness of voice in the mother, in the father, in the household! The music of no chorded instruments brought together is, for sweetness, like the music of familiar affection when spoken by brother and sister, or by father and mother.

Conversation itself belongs to oratory. How many men there are who are weighty in argument, who have abundant resources, and who are almost boundless in their power at other times and in other places, but who, when in company among their kind, are exceedingly unapt in their methods. Having none of the secret instruments by which the elements of nature may be touched, having no skill and no power in this direction, they stand as machines before living, sensitive men. A man may be as a master before an instrument; only the instrument is dead; and he has the living hand; and out of that dead

instrument what wondrous harmony springs forth at his touch! And if you can electrify an audience by the power of a living man on dead things, how much more should that audience be electrified when the chords are living and the man is alive, and he knows how to touch them with divine inspiration!



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—Beecher.

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Every one endeavors to make himself as agreeable to society as he can; but it often happens that those who most aim at shining in conversation, overshoot their mark. Tho a man succeeds, he should not (as is frequently the case) engross the whole talk to himself; for that destroys the very essence of conversation, which is talking together. We should try to keep up conversation like a ball bandied to and fro from one to the other, rather than seize it all to ourselves, and drive it before us like a football. We should likewise be cautious to adapt the matter of our discourse to our company, and not talk Greek before ladies, or of the last new furbelow to a meeting of country justices.

But nothing throws a more ridiculous air over our whole conversation than certain peculiarities easily acquired, but very difficultly conquered and discarded. In order to display these absurdities in a truer light, it is my present purpose to enumerate such of them as are most commonly to be met with; and first to take notice of those buffons in society, the Attitudinarians and Face-makers. These accompany every word with a peculiar grimace or gesture; they assent with a shrug, and contradict with a twisting of the neck; are angry by a wry mouth, and pleased in a caper or minuet step. They may be considered as speaking harlequins; and their rules of eloquence are taken from the posture-master. These should be condemned to converse only in dumb show with their own persons in the looking-glass, as well as the Smirkers and Smilers, who so prettily set off their faces, together with their words, by a *je-ne-sais-quoi* between a grin and a dimple. With these we may likewise rank the affected tribe of mimics, who are constantly taking off the peculiar tone of voice or gesture of their acquaintance, tho they are such wretched imitators, that (like bad painters) they are frequently forced to write the name under the picture before we can discover any likeness.

Next to these whose elocution is absorbed in action, and who converse chiefly with their arms and legs, we may consider the Profest Speakers. And first, the Emphatical, who squeeze, and press, and ram down every syllable with excessive vehemence and energy. These orators are remarkable for their distinct elocution and force of expression; they dwell on the important particulars *of* and *the*, and the significant conjunction *and*, which they seem to hawk up, with much difficulty, out of their own throats, and to cram them, with no less pain, into the ears of their auditors. These should be suffered only to syringe (as it were) the ears of a deaf man, through a hearing-trumpet; tho I must confess that I am equally offended with the Whisperers or Low-speakers, who seem to fancy all their acquaintance deaf, and come up so close to you that they may be said to measure noses with you, and frequently overcome you with the full

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exhalations of a foul breath. I would have these oracular gentry obliged to speak at a distance through a speaking-trumpet, or apply their lips to the walls of a whispering-gallery. The Wits who will not condescend to utter anything but a *bon-mot*, and the Whistlers or Tune-hummers, who never articulate at all, may be joined very agreeably together in concert; and to these tinkling cymbals I would also add the sounding brass, the Bawler, who inquires after your health with the bellowing of a town-crier.

The Tattlers, whose pliable pipes are admirably adapted to the “soft parts of conversation,” and sweetly “prattling out of fashion,” make very pretty music from a beautiful face and a female tongue; but from a rough manly voice and coarse features mere nonsense is as harsh and dissonant as a jig from a hurdy-gurdy. The Swearers I have spoken of in a former paper; but the Half-Swearers, who split and mince, and fritter their oaths into “gad’s but,” “ad’s fish,” and “demme,” the Gothic Humbuggers, and those who nickname God’s creatures, and call a man a cabbage, a crab, a queer cub, an odd fish, and an unaccountable skin, should never come into company without an interpreter. But I will not tire my reader’s patience by pointing out all the pests of conversation, nor dwell particularly on the Sensibles, who pronounce dogmatically on the most trivial points, and speak in sentences; the Wonderers, who are always wondering what o’clock it is, or wondering whether it will rain or no, or wondering when the moon changes; the Phraseologists, who explain a thing by all that, or enter into particulars, with this and that and t’other; and lastly, the Silent Men, who seem afraid of opening their mouths lest they should catch cold, and literally observe the precept of the Gospel, by letting their conversation be only yea and nay.

The rational intercourse kept up by conversation is one of our principal distinctions from brutes. We should, therefore, endeavor to turn this peculiar talent to our advantage, and consider the organs of speech as the instruments of understanding; we should be very careful not to use them as the weapons of vice, or tools of folly, and do our utmost to unlearn any trivial or ridiculous habits, which tend to lessen the value of such an inestimable prerogative. It is, indeed, imagined by some philosophers, that even birds and beasts (tho without the power of articulation) perfectly understand one another by the sounds they utter; and that dogs, cats, *etc.*, have each a particular language to themselves, like different nations. Thus it may be supposed that the nightingales of Italy have as fine an ear for their own native woodnotes as any signor or signora for an Italian air; that the boars of Westphalia gruntle as expressively through the nose as the inhabitants in High German; and that the frogs in the dykes of Holland croak as intelligibly as the natives jabber their Low Dutch. However this may be, we may consider those whose tongues hardly



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seem to be under the influence of reason, and do not keep up the proper conversation of human creatures, as imitating the language of different animals. Thus, for instance, the affinity between Chatterers and Monkeys, and Praters and Parrots, is too obvious not to occur at once; Grunters and Growlers may be justly compared to Hogs; Snarlers are Curs that continually show their teeth, but never bite; and the Spitfire passionate are a sort of wild cats that will not bear stroking, but will purr when they are pleased. Complainers are Screech-Owls; and Story-Tellers, always repeating the same dull note, are Cuckoos. Poets that prick up their ears at their own hideous braying are no better than Asses. Critics in general are venomous Serpents that delight in hissing, and some of them who have got by heart a few technical terms without knowing their meaning are no other than Magpies. I, myself, who have crowed to the whole town for near three years past may perhaps put my readers in mind of a Barnyard Cock; but as I must acquaint them that they will hear the last of me on this day fortnight, I hope that they will then consider me as a Swan, who is supposed to sing sweetly at his dying moments.

—*Cowper.*

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It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say that he is one who never inflicts pain. This description is both refined, and, so far as it goes, accurate. He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him, and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself. His benefits may be considered as parallel to what are called the comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature—like an easy chair or a good fire, which do their best in dispelling cold and fatigue, tho nature provides both means of rest and animal heat without them. The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the mind of those with whom he is cast—all clashing of opinion or collision of feeling, all restraint or suspicion or gloom or resentment, his great concern being to make every one at ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company, he is tender toward the bashful, gentle toward the distant, and merciful toward the absurd. He can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions or topics which may irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome. He makes light of favors when he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort; he has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motive to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil which he



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dare not say out. From a long-sighted prudence, he observes the maxim of the ancient sage, that we should ever conduct ourselves toward our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend. He has too much good sense to be affronted at insults. He is too well employed to remember injuries and too indolent to bear malice. He is patient, forbearing, and resigned on philosophical principle; he submits to pain because it is inevitable, to bereavement, because it is irreparable, and to death because it is his destiny. If he engages in controversy of any kind, his disciplined intellect preserves him from the blundering discourtesy of better, perhaps, but less educated minds, who, like blunt weapons, tear and hack instead of cutting clean, who mistake the point in argument, waste their strength on trifles, misconceive their adversary, and leave the question more involved than they find it. He may be right or wrong in his opinion, but he is too clear-headed to be unjust; he is as simple as he is forcible, and as brief as he is decisive. Nowhere shall we find greater candor, consideration, indulgence; he throws himself into the minds of his opponents, he accounts for their mistakes. He knows the weakness of human reason as well as its strength, its province, and its limits. If he can be an unbeliever, he will be too profound and large-minded to ridicule religion or to act against it; he is too wise to be a dogmatist or fanatic in his infidelity. He respects piety and devotion; he even supports institutions as venerable, beautiful or useful, to which he does not assent; he honors the ministers of religion, and it contents him to decline its mysteries without assailing or denouncing them. He is a friend of religious toleration, and that not only because his philosophy has taught him to look on all forms of faith with an impartial eye, but also from the gentleness and effeminacy of feeling which is attendant on civilization.

—*Cardinal Newman.*

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