READING AND READERS

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ADVANCED STUDY
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"LEARN TO BE GOOD READERS, WHICH IS PERHAPS A MORE DIFFICULT THING THAN YOU IMAGINE."
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TO

THE MEMORY OF

ONE OF THE MOST PERFECT READERS I HAVE KNOWN

MY BROTHER

THE REV. WILLIAM HARRISON

SOMETIME MINOR CANON OF WESTMINSTER

PRIEST OF THE CHAPEL ROYAL, AND

RECTOR OF CLOVELLY

I LOVINGLY DEDICATE

THIS BOOK

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INTRODUCTORY

MY aim in these pages has been to present a brief survey of what I believe to be the chief methods of reading; and to give in plain and untechnical language a few hints from practical experience and observation to readers. I have striven to point the way to study and practice rather than to offer special instruction or to lay down definite rules.

I think it is as well to say at the outset that I hold reading to be a wholly and radically different thing to reciting in any form. This volume has therefore nothing whatever to do with my own work, or with the art of recitation. It treats of reading alone—reading pure and simple, as it is connected with and used in certain, professions and in social life.

This is a subject which is not generally

sufficiently differentiated from the other and more dramatic branches of elocution. It has been my aim to face this difference, and to show wherein it is that reading is a study complete in itself.

READING AND READERS

ELOCUTION AS APPLIED TO READING

PERHAPS no department of the art that labours under the extremely vague name of Elocution is less understood, and less provided for, than Reading. I think Elocution is associated in the minds of most of us with something essentially, if not wholly, dramatic and decorative. It seems to be indissolubly linked with Declamation and Recitation. The quieter, but not less subtle, and certainly more scholarly graces of reading are, we observe, somewhat shy of entering the elocutionary classroom. The teacher of elocution too often has, with a lordly and tragic smile, refused to accept reading save in one of its methods; and the method thus accepted is just the one that is, in its turn, the least acceptable to a very large section of readers—a large section, and certainly the one that

deserves most consideration, including as it does the greater number of scholars, writers, and ecclesiastics. For such readers, and for all readers in the home-circle, Elocution seems to have but little to say, and less to offer. It was, apparently, hopelessly stage-struck in the last generation; and it still appears unable to realise how large a portion of its work lies far removed from the glitter of the footlights, or how important a place in its system of teaching it should accord to Reading pure and simple. By the law of contradictions, which so pleasingly holds its own in most questions (as a balance, no doubt, to the law of correspondences), some of our best actors would know — and I believe do know — how to teach quiet, simple, unaffected Reading better than many professional elocutionists. I remember once hearing a Shakespearean play read in a well-known London drawing-room — each character being assigned to a reader whose name commanded interest in the literary or artistic worlds — and certainly the truest and most perfect reading on that occasion

(reading in no way impinging on declamation or recitation, and yet full of meaning and drama), was that given by the distinguished actors who were present. The elocutionist is, however, as a rule, more theatrical than the actor; and it is therefore not surprising that he has to lament and bewail the prevalence of what he calls bad reading, and the strange and crass indifference of so many readers to his pet rules.

Other branches of elocution have limitations of appeal and use, which give them definiteness and form. Public speaking —poetic and dramatic declamation, the delivery of the Bar, the Houses of Parliament, the stage, or the platform—all have the advantage of distinct demands. But for reading, the outline becomes indistinct and multiform, and the demands given are contradictory. Who will lay down for it one rigorous set of laws? Or perhaps it were wiser to ask how many readers will accept the codes of laws which some teachers are quite ready to lay down? Where, in fact, are the indisputable laws of Reading? Who is to speak *ex cathedrâ* on the subject? The whole

question of Reading, considered as an art, seems at present nebulous. It has not yet evolved into a system. The best readers are, as a rule, self-taught.

One of the chief mistakes, I venture to think, which Elocution has hitherto made, is a too hard-and-fast application of its rules. Many of these rules are in themselves good enough; but they are brought into discredit by over-pressure. The rules should be for the pupil, not the pupil for the rules. For these rules cannot claim the dignity of the laws of some exact science, or of some creative art. The executive arts (which, as I hold, must always take the humble place of exponents of the great creative arts)—such as Reciting, Singing, Instrumental Playing, Speaking, Reading, etc.—though they have many methods of resource, use, and style built on rule and experience, have but few actual laws. For Reading, I think, they may be soon enumerated; (*a*) voice-production; (*b*) breathing; (*c*) pronunciation. After these, surely we come to what are mere rules: and these must be allowed to be modified, if not governed, by personal requirement and personal taste. The

words *right* and *wrong* are almost out of place in matters that deal merely with Modulation, Pause, Emphasis, Accent, Delivery, etc.; still more do they seem too big an order for the personal matters of expression and intelligence. But the elocutionists have been much given to telling us what is *right* and what is *wrong* on these points.

Let me, however, impress on the student at outset, that the rules of Elocution are very well worth the knowing. Tradition and experience give resource and strength on every executive art. It is well to know what others have done and what others have thought on the subject. It is well to know—even if we agree to differ from—the rules which have been evolved from the reading and speaking of great actors and readers. The rules will leave some impress, give some measure of resource, some underlying strength. The artist who consciously and with knowledge puts a rule aside, is always distinguishable from the novice who is ignorant of its existence. The two results, strange to stay, are very far removed from one another, though both be equal departures from the rule in question.

These rules of Elocution for Reading, I shall not attempt to repeat or illustrate. To do so would be in reality but to undertake a task of "scizzors and paste." Volumes, many and excellent, have been written on these rules; and the student can find such volumes without difficulty. Most books on Recitation, and collections of recitations, have introductions dealing with these rules at length. An admirable exposition of them may be found in Canon Fleming's "The Art of Reading and Speaking." It is my wish to differentiate this little volume from the hundred and one books on Elocution by keeping it as untechnical as possible. I do not wish to fill its pages with what, at best, would be but adaptations and repetitions of what has already been often said, and said far better than I could say it. I shall therefore content myself in this matter with a few hints to readers, in the last section of this volume. The all-important points of Breathing and Pronunciation are therein briefly and lightly indicative; but Voice Production is so eminently a technical subject, so entirely a practical matter of personal training and personal application, that I have not at-

tempted to deal with it. It is essentially a thing for actual practice and experiment under a trained teacher. A long verbal description of the physical structure of the throat and of its management and exercise is, I am minded to believe, of scanty and unappreciated value. It is certain that very few people who purchase books of recitation ever read these descriptions. It is equally to be hoped that those who do, understand them. But for my part I think it wiser to leave such a matter to practice, and simply advise those who desire to know about Voice Production and to master its rules, to take lessons of an expert. There can be no reasonable doubt that such training and knowledge is highly desirable for a Reader. In it, also, we have something that comes under the range of known physical laws. We have, nowadays, many singer-masters who can give the student as true and admirable a training for the voice in Speaking and Reading as for Singing. To "place" and use the voice properly, to know how to develop it and to preserve it—these are clearly good and useful things for any reader to know. For one who is going

to do hard work as a reader they may be said to be almost necessary things.

It is only when we come to arbitrary rules about expression, accent, and matters of that kind that we pause. For it is difficult not to think that the elocutionist has been a little over-hopeful of their virtues—a little over-zealous, as it would seem, to recommend these rules as patent nostrums, equally good for all, and warranted to cure all elocutionary ills.

Truer far to my mind, than such hard and fast application of rules, was the one rule which M. Delaunay (the accomplished actor of the Comédie Français) told me he himself observed in his School for Declamation in Paris. I understood him to say that he never told a pupil how anything "ought" to be read or spoken, nor would he himself speak the words in question. He made his pupil read them to him; he endeavoured to find out what were the pupil's ideas about the passage, and what "reading" of it was desired to be given; and then he tried to teach the pupil how best to carry out those ideas, and express that reading. He had no desire, he said, to impress *his* reading on anyone else, or

turn out so many imitations of his own style. Such a theory commends itself to one's best judgment, and it is to be regretted that English writers on elocution do not more liberally accept it, extending their views and rules to its wide and wise reasonableness and adaptability.

The cry often goes up that our schools and universities are shamefully lax in the matter of Reading, and the question is constantly asked in the outside world why Elocution has not long since been made a distinct branch of study for those who are training for the speaking and reading professions. There seems, however, small hint as yet that any systematic movement of the kind will be made. Nor is this surprising to anyone who has carefully considered the subject and watched its working. For myself I believe that Elocution will have to reform many of its theories, and reconstruct much of its practice, before it can claim academic and collegiate honours. At present its scope and vision is all too narrow. Its almost exclusive devotion to the Dramatic Method of Speech and Reading seriously blocks the way for its scholastic advance; since

that is not the method most affected by scholars or by those entering the scholastic professions. Nor indeed does it seem to be the method best adapted to the average student. An Elocution whose formulas, as a rule, are but an expansion—or shall we not rather say, a limitation?—of the rules of theatrical declamation is clearly not sufficiently equipped for a scholastic career. Before a teacher of elocution could expect to gain and retain a position in a great school or university, he must be prepared to work in unison of aim with his scholastic brethren; or to oppose what he considers their conventionalities, not by airy denial and solid prejudice, but by well-defined and convincing argument founded on reason and on knowledge—knowledge of their side of the question as well as his own. It is in this latter point the elocution master so often fails. He regards the "other side of the question"—the scholar's and the literary man's reading and speaking—as absurd and "wrong"—without ever having seriously got "inside" that scholastic and literary point of view.

I think of all the men I have known who have cared to attempt a definite course

of teaching in a university, the best furnished and adapted for the work was Mr A. F. Westmacott. Some years ago, as a pleasant and interesting way of occupying his leisure, he gave lessons in Reading and Declamation at Oxford, and, I believe, received support from his old college and many of the university authorities. His cultivation and life-long experience of public speaking on many lines gave him the understanding and sympathy necessary to teach Reading in its varied phases. I do not know if the work he left is being carried on. Professor Plumptre[1] and the Rev. J. D'Orsay used to give lectures on Elocution at my old school: but the schoolboy's estimate of Declamation and Reading was a matter of scarcely concealed amusement in my school days—an amusement that I irreverently joined in and enjoyed, unabashed by any shadow of Nemesis cast from coming events. Whatever of real training I had I gained at home. One has reluctantly to confess that the man who

[1] Professor of Elocution at King's College, London, for many years. His collection of his "King's College Lectures" still remains one of the best books I know on Elocution.

could justly and consistently fill the position of Professor of Elocution at a University has, as far as I know, yet to appear on the English scene. I do not for a moment mean to infer that we have no one who could by talent and by knowledge occupy such a post. There are many. But by some law of fortune to them, and misfortune to the Art of Elocution, such experts in the art do not seem to have the liberty or the desire to enter on the field.

Such men, it would appear, find work elsewhere which is more congenial or more lucrative—a fact not without its significance. Meanwhile, the often-spoken-of need of elocutionary training for our young scholars remains unsupplied. The question naturally arises whether the need be not more talked about than real—since, as a rule, wherever earnest demand is given, the supply is forthcoming as a necessary result. The need in this matter does not seem to produce the man. It is therefore open to the supposition that the need is not yet sufficiently real and wide.

Nor do I, for my part, think it is. I am free to confess that I am glad that Elocution is still on its trial, and has not yet

been allowed to graduate. I would rather have no training in this matter for our young speakers and readers than throw open the doors to a quasi-theatrical training such as seems only too likely to step in. "Mere elocution," says Canon Fleming, "is but a poor substitute for the living sympathy of the soul." I would go farther—even though I fare worse—and say: Mere elocution is but a poor substitue for unaffected, even if dull, naturalness. When Elocution has served a longer apprenticeship, and enlarged its borders—has realised the many demands of Reading and Readers—has emancipated itself from its too exclusive service to the stage and the platform—and has consented to a reasonable service to Letters—it will be time to establish its classes in our schools and colleges on permanent and accredited grounds. Till then, surely it is best to leave the matter as it is. After all, our churches, for example, get on very well. In fact they seem to get on better and better, to judge by their increasing number and the way the greater number of them are crowded. Our law and our politics give no sign of needing help in this matter.

Our public professions altogether can show many fine and even brilliant examples of good speaking and good reading. And if the average be not a very high one, it is, as a rule, undisfigured by that baleful and frequent characteristic of Elocution—namely, artificiality. One would liefer have a good deal of original sin of natural dulness than an artificial state of grace, permeated with a sense of the Elocution-master somewhere in the background.

Some years ago there was a fashion for what were called "Readings"; and some public artists retain the use of the word. Thus Sir Squire Bancroft announced his rendering of the "Christmas Carol": and I believe this form of announcement is preserved in all the many places into which he carries his most successful and most charitable work. These "Readings" were very popular some thirty years ago. Longfellow has enshrined in a sonnet the "memorable evenings," when he listened to Mrs Fanny Kemble. It would be difficult, I suppose, to hear a more satisfying rendering of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* than she gave in her "Readings." Miss Glyn was another actress who at-

tained celebrity as a reader—notably of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra.* Mr Walter Montgomery, whose early and tragic death all those interested in the higher walks of the drama deeply deplored, gave many "Readings," with a success almost greater than that which he met with on the stage. Mr J. M. Bellew has left a name that still stands foremost as a "Reader"; and lastly, Charles Dickens "read" his own great works with, I am told, a power and genius worthy of their author.

It is idle and foolish to quarrel with the use of a word which has long been accepted. The word "Reading" thus used was doubtless justified by the popular idea of what constitutes good reading. But it was also still further justified by the fact that these great Readers whom I have named always had their book before them. The "Reading" was, however, a form of reciting, and cannot be considered true reading at all. When Mr Brandram began his work, I believe I am right in asserting that he, too, retained the orthodox table and book in front of him. It was, in fact, this table and open book

that not only justified, in some degree, the entertainment being denominated a Reading, but necessitated that that word should be used. When I gave my first Recital, I followed good example, and, taking the name without question, called it a Reading. It struck me, however, even on the very evening in question, that the book and the table were, as a matter of fact, wholly superfluous, and that, as I knew every word I had to speak, there was no need of these accessories. I therefore did away with them, retaining only the book ready to hand, in the place, as it were, of the actor's prompter, in case I "forgot my part." It was then clearly a misnomer to call the affair a Reading, and when the table was rejected the name had to follow suit. I adopted the word which has since become general—"Recital." I found I was thus emancipated from certain conventional trammels, and could employ a greater power and resource both of voice, action, and drama than were compatible with an entertainment which had retained the name of Reading.

The fact that such an entertainment was once called, and is still sometimes

called a Reading, indicates how vague is the popular concept of what reading is. I cannot but consider it is a pity the word should be thus misused—for misused I think it must, on reflection, be owned to be when thus employed. For, although "Readers" often are scrupulous to explain that in certain convenient matters they are "reading," and not "reciting," still it is noticeable that they all make full use, wherever it pleases them, of dramatic effects, which cannot by any argument be allowed to be a part of reading pure and simple. There is, however, little doubt that many persons who attend such an entertainment go away with the conviction that it is a specimen of good Reading. One feels sure that many of the great public "Readers" would be the first to own that such an idea is very misleading, and that if it were practically exemplified in the family circle it might well lead to personal injury for the exemplifier! But the use of the word in this form must be held guilty of encouraging overmuch the notion that reading is analogous to speaking and to the delivery of the actor. In my opinion, therefore, it cannot be too

strongly asserted that reading should never be a mild form of recitation.

In considering reading as a branch of Elocution complete in itself, it is necessary to divide a subject so diverse in aim, in occasion, and in character, into an ordered system. Reading, then, seems to me, in the first place, divisible into three chief methods—each method having its definite use and character. I shall place them in the following order:—(1) the Dramatic Method; (2) the Rhythmic Method; (3) the Method of using Reading as a mode of Public Speaking.

THE DRAMATIC METHOD OF READING

IT is well at starting to say as concisely as possible what the chief characteristics of Dramatic Reading are.

This method is, to begin with, divisible into two branches, two grades of drama differing not only in degree but also in kind.

In the first and higher branch, I hold that the drama of what is being read— be it that of incident, emotion, thought, or description — should be indicated as fully as the limits of reading permit. In the second branch of this method, the drama, so to speak, transposes itself into a lower key. There is also another distinction which marks a point of difference. The imaginative and ideal drama of the words themselves (developed in the higher dramatic reading) is, in this second method, replaced by the present and personal drama of the occasion of the

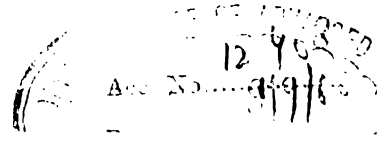
reading, and the mood or object in view of the reader.

Analogy may still further point the difference between these grades of Dramatic reading. We all of us recognise the distinction naturally made by us between our own words, when we speak under some strong emotion, or in some crisis; and our own narration of what was thus spoken to some friend after the event. Now, taking the two planes of Speaking and Reading, this seems to me to mark the relative degrees of difference and point of attack between the two grades of the Dramatic method. Granting the essential distinction between Reading and Speaking, the first grade is to the second what the words of present conviction and spontaneity are to the subsequent narrative of those words. The key is a lower one. The drama is second-hand. It is almost actually replaced by another—Narration in the place of Situation.

In Dramatic reading of the first and higher method, the student must be careful not to allow himself a too generous interpretation in this use of the word

dramatic. Drama, we must remember, may be of the most restrained character, even when it is strong and deep. If the drama be once accentuated, or pourtrayed beyond certain limits, it is an offence to the art of Reading, and trends on that of Reciting or Preaching. The limits at which the suggestion of life, and the liveliness of meaning in the Dramatic methods should stop, are difficult to lay down or define. It seems probable that in every branch of every art there is this vague but all-important line. But this line, so universal, so obvious — nay, so impassable to those who see it, — can never be pointed out, or measured by rule of thumb, and, alas! is indiscernible to those who most need to be warned of its presence and finality. It has to be owned that it is a question of that mysterious quality known as Good Taste. That word tells its own silent story. A line of Good Taste cannot be marked down like a parish boundary It is a thing of the Spirit of Art, not of its Letter.

It is pre-eminently this point which makes Reading in all its branches—one



may also say Elocution in all its branches —so difficult a matter to teach. It is this point which defies those arbitrary rules to which I have already alluded.

It is impossible to say how much drama or force and variety of meaning is permissible in Dramatic reading, because they are quantities that vary with the speaker's power and individuality, and even with the circumstances of the reading. Good taste alone can guide him. Nothing is so terrible in reading as over-intelligence. The most impassive delivery is, to my mind at least, better than an obtrusive vivacity; and in Dramatic reading, if the drama be by a shade too realistic or too emphasised, the alert and ever-watchful spirit of humour will quickly have his revenge. Sad to say, it is this very accentuation of drama, this superabundance of meaning, which is likely to be the effect of the ordinary lessons in elocution — at least, on a pupil who has not a natural gift. The Dramatic method of reading, in both its expressions, has many fields for its exercise— social reading in the private circle, where amusement and a general appeal to the

interest and emotion of the listeners is the aim; the reading aloud in gatherings, such as are often held in parish-work; the reading in classes and literary societies, which meet to read and consider some play, or poem, or work; and the reading of the lessons and portions of the Bible in the Church services. All these occasions seem to be legitimate and marked opportunities for reading in the Dramatic method in one of its forms.

The more the matter is thought about, the more plainly it will be seen how impossible it is in either methods of Dramatic reading to apportion the proper emphasis, accent, and amount of meaning or description of dramatic expression to be used. One man may feel himself justified in expressing the drama, or pointing the meaning of a given passage with considerable force and variety of tone, inflexion, pause, or rapidity. A second reader may find himself perforce obliged to accept a narrower and more modest range of expression and drama, and yet may attain an equal effect on his listeners by the exercise of Will, and the inward realisation of the words he utters. A third may

defy all accepted rules of elocution, and yet, by sheer individuality and force, drive home the meaning of what he reads more fully and startlingly than either of the others. Who shall therefore say his method is wrong, since it fulfils the object of all reading? I have heard notable cases of this kind, and could quote many such. The futility of saying how anything "ought to be read," or marking a passage out with "right" accentuation, etc., is further illustrated by the fact that the same passage may not only be read in different ways—each equally good in its way—by different readers, but may also be read in several different ways—all equally good, for the times and seasons—by one and the same reader. Let us take any chapter in the Bible, as an instance. This chapter may well be read at the Church lectern in one of the Dramatic methods; but if the selfsame chapter has to be read in the privacy of the sick-room, a gentler and more personal cadence and style suggest themselves. And yet, on some occasion of greater public dignity or professional interest, as in some great cathedral, the same chapter might almost

seem to demand the Rhythmic method of reading—a method of which I speak later on—as the one most suitable to the time and place.

The dangers of Dramatic reading are not a few. Through all the degrees of drama a reader may think he is justified in using, he must never forget that he is *reading*. He is not speaking *ex tempore*. No one supposes he is doing so, or that he is using his own words. This is a very disputed point, I am well aware. Canon Fleming, in his book on "Speaking and Reading," seems to argue for the effect of impromptu speech in good reading. He gives the following illustration of his meaning: "There are few of us who, when speaking to a friend in private, do not utter our words naturally and earnestly. . . . And yet, if the words of some simple, earnest conversation spoken by friend to friend were written down and given to the man to read, it would be found that he changed his whole manner. . . . The words read would become dull, flat, and unreal, wholly opposite to the words spoken just before." It is evident by this that the writer would wish

the reading of the words to be identical, as far as possible, with the impromptu speaking of them. But to contend that reading should be at all one and the same thing with speech is surely a confusion of the idea of true art in all its applications. No art is ever a simple reproduction of its natural exemplar. The natural instinct obeyed by the man in the above illustration is worthy of attention and respect, since it is a universal and perennial one, and, therefore, not to be lightly disregarded. If it does not fit in to the present system of elocution, so much the worse for elocution; it had better widen its doors a little to receive and make the best of such an irrepressible factor. To my mind, the instinct of the man illustrated in the supposed case quoted by the eloquent Canon was a perfectly true one — marking the line universally confessed as existing between Art and its correspondence in Nature. The man would neither read his conversation nor talk his reading. And therein I hold he was right. That he made the words "dull, flat, and unreal," showed he read very badly, and had no natural gift for reading; but, in that his

reading was "opposite to the words spoken," he showed a due sense of two essentially different functions of speech. At least, that is my notion of the matter. Any other view seems to me out of harmony with "the *Art* of Reading," and, indeed, with any notion of Art at all as differentiated from Nature. It is true that good Art should always "hold the mirror up to Nature." But I hold that that well-worn phrase is a little misapplied when it is quoted as a rule for Readers, since Shakespeare penned it as Hamlet's advice to the *Actors*, and as a rule for the Stage. But, even if it be thus applied, the fact must not be lost sight of that the reflection in a mirror is never for a moment meant to be mistaken for the thing reflected. Art, in fact, is always Art, even when it conceals its work as skilfully as a mirror conceals its elements of quicksilver and glass. Reading should be always Reading.

The reciter, on the other hand, for the time being, confessedly and intentionally personifies the author whose lines he utters. He appropriates the words he speaks. His art should endeavour to give

the words spoken the present and unpremeditated effect of spontaneity and personal origin. But the reader can claim none of this personification; to do so were to go outside the limits of his art, and overstep that before-named important line. The permissions of the drama, and the range of feeling to be suggested within those limits are wide and ample. But if once the reader *talks* the words he is reading, he is not reading at all, but reciting or preaching; and it is just on this point that some readers who pride themselves on "expression" and "feeling" fail. It is well that the student should remember that such failure is a very serious one in art, and is in its nature a greater offence to art, and therein to good taste, than all the "deadly dull" monotony of the proverbial bad reader.

The usefulness and importance of good dramatic reading are great and unquestionable. Scholars and men of letters have their own peculiar method of reading (as I shall point out later), and are apt to underrate the value of the dramatic method. But this springs, I fear, from a fruitful source of mistake in many matters

besides Reading, and implies the presence of a little factor that has a sad way of asserting itself everywhere — Selfishness, or, at least, Self-Consideration. The scholar and the writer, as a rule, do not need that words when read should have their life and drama developed. For such people the words in themselves are full of life, and the drama they express is clear and sufficient. This is surely the reason why authors seldom care to hear their own works read or recited, and why many modern poets who have written in the dramatic form (Shelley, Byron, Henry Taylor, Browning, Kingsley, Swinburne) have been content with a literary audience, and have not even tried to adapt their plays to stage use. I believe that no speaker or actor could, even at his best, put into the words he speaks all the life and meaning, all the emotion and drama, which the author heard in them as he penned them on his page. What speaker or reader could put into Shelley's "Skylark," or Tennyson's "Revenge," or Browning's "Abt Vogler," all that the poets themselves heard and saw in the wonderful verses? And to the trained

scholar or lover of letters, the very words do all that is needed. Such listeners see the scenes, hear the speakers, realise the emotion, live in the drama, and follow the thought, without any aid from the voice that gives the words. They are therefore, very apt to underrate the value of dramatic speech or reading, and foolishly and selfishly to deprecate, by example or in desire, any marked use of the dramatic method. But we must remember that, in one sense, books are not written for authors and scribes—except, indeed, technical and scholastic books. Great authors are the high priests of Literature, and dedicate themselves to the service. But they must be the first to recognise that the temple and the service are, in a certain way, not for them at all, but for the people. The point to be gained is, how best to make the people realise what they hear. The method that best effects *that* work is clearly the best. It is pretty certain that ninety people out of every hundred who read a book "to themselves" do not see one half of what the author saw when he wrote the pages. If a good reader,

reading aloud, can strike the words into fulness of life and meaning, drive home the message they bring, and realise for the listeners, even as the author realised, all that is concealed in those printed pages, then he is clearly doing a great—and possibly, on occasions, a grand work. For the time being he raises his listeners to the level of the author he is reading. He does for them the part which the vivid imagination of the writer did for him, when it fired and inspired his pen. No wonder people listen with delight to some great reader, and feel their debt to him is large. He gives them a great deal they cannot give themselves. The poet may not need, or wish, such offices of help at the hand of the reader; but he would own that he does wish and need that his words should be widely realised. It is, in great measure, for all those who are themselves dumb that he finds an utterance. He gives them the words, but he cannot give the answering imagination and power of quickening the words. This the reader can often do for him and for them—supplying the responding quality, as it were, where it does not

exist, and aiding and strengthening it where it is already at work. The method of reading, then, that can make the words most fully and vividly carry out their mission to the greatest number of the people who are listening to it, is, beyond question, the highest and first, because the most needed method of reading that can be attained. And there can be little doubt the Dramatic method is the one which best supplies this need and performs this work.

It has to be owned that this method of reading seems to be more a gift than an acquired skill. It is possible that something may be taught; but the dangers open to a pupil who has no natural talent for reading, and who wishes to read dramatically, are of a very bad complexion and nature. To attempt to learn the higher Dramatic method in a course of lessons would be a bold and terrifying experiment. No; it seems to me that the reader who has not "a gift" had best content himself with the quieter form of dramatic reading. This measure of drama seems easily within reach of all; and since its very breath and being

are the individuality of the reader, and the claims and modifications of the time and place of the reading, it is clear that a measure of success in it is within the power of everyone. Its appeal is less wide and less powerful than that of the higher Dramatic reading, but it can be made sufficient for all purposes, and if it pleases some hearers less than the first method, it will please others more, and can offend none. Where the natural gift for Dramatic reading is granted, the gift can be trained, refined, and strengthened by good teaching, and by practice. The best means to the desired end can be taught, or discovered by unremitting observation and self-criticism. It seems probable, however, that the higher Dramatic reading will always be a rare possession. Its rarity must be held to advance its value.

THE RHYTHMIC METHOD OF READING

IN choosing the word *Rhythmic* I am aware that I may give some people the notion that I refer solely to the reading of verse. Let me, therefore, say at the outset that when I speak of the Rhythmic method I include the reading of prose as well as of verse. The word is applied to the cadence of the voice. Rhythm is a quality which is accessible in every form of verbal expression. Well-balanced prose has a true rhythmic character; and a rhythmic lilt may be given by a speaker or reader to almost any and every sentence.

The Rhythmic method of reading places the proper measure and beat of the lines or sentences read first and foremost. Under this all-important condition, a certain play and variety of drama is permissible. But even this drama must partake of the rhythmic nature, and give the cadence and note of the drama rather

than its verbal emphasis or personal realisation. As the drama may rise or fall in intensity, the force of the reader will rise and fall, and possibly even the actual note of his voice will change in a corresponding cadence. But through all, the rhythmic beat of the words is systematically sustained. No code of rules, as I have said before, should be held as binding on all readers alike, in any department of reading, and it is conceivable that a very good reader will play somewhat freely amongst all the methods which lie open to him. Certain it is, also, that there should always be a consciousness of the rhythm of verse in all reading of poetry, even the most dramatic. This is almost a law, and must be observed as such. But in the Dramatic method the scansion of the lines is subordinate to the leading dramatic character of the delivery. In the Rhythmic method, on the contrary, both for prose and for verse, the rhythm is the first consideration, to which all other characteristics are subordinated.

Poems there are, however, wherein the rhythmic pulse is so strong and dominant,

that it is almost difficult to read them in any method without obeying the compelling force of the swinging lines. Is it not, for example, irresistible to be borne along by the lilt and cadence of Macaulay's Lays? In his *Battle of Naseby*, do not such lines as

"The furious German comes, with his clarions and his drums,
With his bravoes of Alsatia, and his pages of Whitehall"

take one captive in a sort of verbal march, —to miss or to mar which would be a sin?

Or again:

"Alas! how easily things go wrong!
A sigh too much, or a kiss too long,
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again."

Can such a verse escape from its own potent music of rhythm? Tennyson's choric song in the *Lotus Eaters* is dramatic in every line, but its rhythmic beauty is almost as strong and valuable as its drama or its thought. Such instances (and hundreds of the loveliest lines of poetry rise to the mind as illustration) are alone sufficient to justify

the claims of the Rhythmic method for verse: whilst for prose the English translation of the Bible at almost any point would serve to show how rhythmic prose can be. Indeed, all very fine prose has this quality in some form or other. Writers, as far apart in style as Ruskin and Carlyle, could alike be quoted as giving many instances of strongly rhythmic prose. De Quincey possesses a flow and sonority of style which asserts itself in certain passages in a remarkable manner. There is a passage from one of Kingsley's sermons about music, so rhythmic in its character (though the words used are of the simplest) that, when spoken or read, I have often known it to be mistaken for verse.

In all such cases it is evident that to ignore the rhythmic cadence entirely would be a great mistake from every point of view—and, indeed, any reader would find some difficulty in doing so. Some people, however, would argue that rhythm should never go beyond such obvious and well-nigh irresistible use. But there is much to be said for the extension of this perception of the rhythmic quality in prose and verse

on to the point of an absolute method of reading.

The subject is a curious and interesting one. It is certain that by a very large if not very cultivated section of society, rhythmic reading is looked on as a thing to be condemned and caricatured. It is laughed at as schoolboyish on the one hand, and as archaically pedantic on the other. The contemptuous nickname of "sing-song" is used to describe it. But if we consider this phrase—"sing-song"—it is in itself a witness to the probable origin and growth of the method, and its appropriateness for the utterance at least of verse. It is nothing less than an abomination to some people; and I have heard even very cultivated folk decry it loudly as very bad reading. It is often pronounced to be a vulgarism of the uncultivated and the ignorant. But if it be true—as one can scarcely deny—that the instinct of the illiterate in their attempts at reading is toward the "sing-song" cadence, it is also true that it is the habit of nearly all men of letters to read more or less in this way. With them, indeed, the swing and construction of the sentences in fine prose

the lilt and scansion of the verses in good poetry, is observed—invariably observed, I think I may say—in preference to the dramatic meaning and argument of the passage. Emotion will often raise the rhythmic cadence employed into higher note and larger utterance, but the rhythmic beat remains, and asserts itself through all the varying feeling of the lines read. Almost all the great writers and distinguished *litterateurs* whom I have heard read or quote prose or verse (and it has been my privilege to hear many) have used the rhythmic method. Amongst others, I may name Lord Tennyson, Lord Houghton, Canon Kingsley, Mr Froude, Sir Henry Taylor, Dean Stanley, Professor Ruskin, Mr Matthew Arnold, Mr Kinglake, Mr Frederick Locker, George Eliot, Dr John Brown, the late Sir Frederick Pollock, Dr Oliver Wendall Holmes, Dr Benson, and Dean Vaughan. I could name many living authors who almost invariably read in this way. I am assured by an American friend that the distinguished group of writers of whom Boston and Concord have such good cause to be proud—Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant, Lowell—

habitually used this intonation in reading or quoting any passage. Walt Whitman, so daringly representative of the new order of thought and of expression, evidently retained this custom of the old order; for he records how fond he was of declaiming grand passages of Shakespeare's verse to the answering roll of waves on the sea-shore, and the roar of traffic in the streets of New York. Browning was, as far as I remember, the only great writer I ever heard say that the dramatic and natural ways of reading were to him preferable to the ryhthmic. But we may take him as the exception which proves the rule, and I always fancied that when he made the above statement to me he was in his always most courteous fashion, making a generous advance toward the point of view he fancied I should be likely to occupy. He was also probably referring to recitation. I never heard him read anything, so I cannot speak of his individual practice; but when he once quoted a line of Shelley's to me, I detected the familiar strain of the rhythmic lilt.

Now such names as those I have mentioned cannot be lightly put aside in a

question that is intimately connected with literature. It is obviously absurd to do so. The voice of men of letters must be listened to with heed and respect on such a point, and I am quite sure that anyone well acquainted with scholastic and literary society will bear me out in saying that the rhythmic method of reading is universal therein. It comes to us, then, with the stamp and seal of literature on it. It is a foolish and a fond thing of elocutionists to deny and discredit the superscription.

In the matter of poetry, this intoning—(for that is what it is, in a certain sense)—is, it would appear, of immemorial age. The Greek chorus, with its forgotten art of mystic movement and utterance, seems to hint at a cadenced declamation of this kind. In the Jewish synagogue the priest and the people still read the Psalms in a monotonous rhythm, which is possibly a lingering echo caught from the far-off service of the Tabernacle. In the East, the thousand temples of Japan and China, of Thibet, of Burma, and of Hindostan hear the voices of priests who take up the melancholy and monotonous rhythmic formulas

to Buddha and to Brahma, age after age. The Gregorian chants that rise and fall in waves of choric sound to-day through cloister, church, and minster, may be another expression of the same ancient use and instinct. The long procession of Greek and Gothic bards give out the rhythmic cadence. The rondels and lays of minstrels and troubadours in the South; the sagas and runes of heroes and Alruna-wives in the North, spread this strange lilt of sing-song words from Iceland to Provence. An ever-reverberating chorus of rhythmic verse comes to us from all lands, and from the most distant past. Nor is it alone in the more stately utterances of verse that this peculiar method of speech seems to strike the ear. The narration of gallant deeds and feats of arms, alike in classic, mediæval, and almost modern times, apparently always took the rhythmic tone. Macaulay's word-picture, at the end of the *Lay of Horatius*, suggests such sonorous telling of

> "How well Horatius kept the bridge
> In the brave days of old."

And Sir Walter Scott tells us in "Waverley"

that the recitation of poems, delivered "in measured and monotonous recitation, recording the feats of heroes, the complaint of lovers, and the wars of contending tribes," formed the chief amusement "of a winter fireside in the Highlands." In both these scenes we get the utterance of the simple and unlearned; whilst, to show how the same instinct reasserts itself with deliberate choice in the cultivated, Tennyson makes his poet, introducing the *Morte D'Arthur*,

> "Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and aes,
> Deep-chested music."

It seems strange that this rhythmic reading, which undoubtedly is the primeval, barbaric, natural way of chanting verse and narrating events, should find its survival in the two opposite classes of illiterateness and extreme culture. But it cannot be denied that the habit of the world—by instinct in the ignorant, and by choice in the learned—is on the side of rhythmic reading.

It is, then, because this use can claim all this authority and antiquity, because it has survived all changes, and still holds its

own in the ranks of those who make our literature, that it must be conceded a place in the art of reading. It is not a tenable position to laugh at and condemn the almost universal custom of scholars and great writers in a matter which touches literature. "We should be careful," says Joubert, "when we differ from the poets about poetry."

Rhythmic reading seems to me peculiarly befitting certain places and occasions, and to be the natural and the most becoming method of reading and of repetition for scholarly or for rhetorical speakers and orators. Stately periods and rhythmic utterance seem inseparably connected with one's idea of an oration. If the Psalms have to be read in the Church service, surely the Rhythmic manner is the most appropriate that can be employed. For the declamation of original or classic verse in Senate and Academy, it takes its place as the natural and proper utterance. In quotations of poetry introduced into speeches, lectures, and addresses, we find the best and most eloquent speakers almost invariably use some expressive and personally-adapted modulation of the

Rhythmic method; and for reading in the friendly or home circle, it is, to my mind, indubitably the truest and best style of delivery. It need by no means be either monotonous or inexpressive. Anyone who has heard good reading of this kind—anyone, to quote a notable instance, who heard Tennyson read one of his own poems—knows perfectly well that Rhythmic reading can be made most moving and varied as well as dignified and scholarly. For my own part, I find any other way of reading verse in private is very irksome to listen to; and, practically, in such reading, I myself should never by choice adopt any other form. What I desire first in listening to a reading of verse is that the "look" of the words on the printed page (so dear and significant to any one who has a taste for letters) should be transmuted, as it were, into sound by the voice of the reader. The appeal of the spoken word to the ear will thus almost exactly correspond with the silent appeal of the printed word to the eye. This is, as I hold, the beginning of all good reading. Other and higher graces and touches of individual impress can and will soon be added.

With a reader of intelligence these are sure to assert themselves. But the delicate and just alchemy of the transmutation I have mentioned can only be effected by a perfect use of the Rhythmic method of reading.

The theoretic prejudice against this method in some minds is deep and difficult to combat. In practice, however, I have been amused to notice that the very people who will have none of my arguments in defence of Rhythmic reading will themselves often unconsciously employ it in reading or in quoting some bit of favourite verse. Those who are fond of recitation and dramatic art are very apt to think and believe that they do, and must, dislike and decry any method of reading that savours of the intonation of sing-song. But the test is (and I have often applied it) to lure such folk on wilily and without controversy, to a reading or quotation of some beloved verse or passage; and then it is amusing to find a rhythmic lilt incontinently asserting itself, and delivering up the adversary into your hands, self-convicted. The prejudice exists, I think, chiefly because

rhythm in utterance and reading so often associates itself with childish effort and illiterate ignorance—and these have been somewhat unmercifully caricatured. The pedantry of the ripe scholar and man of letters who half-intones, or half-declaims, some rarely loved verse—(the very sound of the words almost as much prized as the meaning thereof!)—has also been an easy prey for ridicule. And these things have brought the method into popular contempt. But the fact that it is so beset with possibilities of failure, and is a natural instinct as well as a result of culture, should be no reason for rejecting it. The dangers and difficulties of a high road in art—and other matters!—are confessedly always many and great. Thus the confession that the Rhythmic method of reading is a very difficult one is a point in its praise—not a reason for its condemnation. Sometimes one is minded to think, indeed, that it is in its best form so truly a natural growth and outcome of intrinsic cultivation, and is so little capable of adoption by those who have not the inward knowledge of which it should be the outward expression, that it is undesirable, if not

impossible, to attempt to teach it. I believe, however, that no ridicule or condemnation will in any way destroy it, or hinder its being always and in all ways the chosen method of the most scholarly readers. As such it must take an honoured place in the art of reading. If I give it the second place it is only because its appeal is a narrower and more eclectic one than that of the foregoing method. Its value on its own line is great. If it be true, as I suggested, that good Dramatic reading must always be accounted the more valuable from its rarity, one may truly say that good Rhythmic reading is to be held the more in honour from its unpopularity.

READING AS APPLIED TO PUBLIC SPEAKING

IN this section I wish to speak of two occasions—and both are of familiar and frequent occurrence—in which Reading is the method adopted although Speaking is the idea involved. These occasions are found in the delivery of written matter for a lecture or a sermon. I hold that this method of reading—for reading in one sense it truly is—does not come under the head of reading pure and simple, of legitimate reading, such as we have considered in the foregoing chapters. It is allied to public speaking and oratory. The ideal lecture, the ideal sermon, is not read, but spoken. It is only for his own convenience, the attainment of a more ordered line of thought, and a nicer accuracy of expression than is possible to him in *extempore* speech, that the lecturer or preacher uses his pen. But the idea is one of speaking, and the nearer that form of delivery can be approximated

the better will the work be fulfilled, and the more direct will be its appeal. A lecture certainly philologically suggests written matter, but I think it may be affirmed that in practice a lecture is obviously best fitted to its office when it appears to be spoken. There seems an unconscious and humorous confession of public opinion on this matter in the old phrase—"*I'll read him a lecture.*" Such a "reading" is generally distinctly speech—speech both natural and dramatic!

Reading must be allowed, then, in the case of the lecturer and the preacher to be a disguised and simulated speaking. It is a compromise. No branch of reading, however, is more constantly used or more severely criticised. It must, therefore, claim just consideration.

We at once perceive that this method of quasi-speaking demands a point of view and mode of attack far removed from these of any other method we have considered. Many of the rules which take a foremost place in reading of the Dramatic and Rhythmic styles can claim no place at all in this method. The Dramatic inflexion indeed approaches the desired

effect; but the first and last rule of all true reading—"*Remember that you are reading*"—is now replaced by the dictum, "*Try to forget that you are reading.*" The note and key of true reading is the printed page. The note and key of preaching and lecturing is the spoken word. Therein lies the difference, and to my mind it is fundamental and final. The element of personal and *impromptu* speech which we eliminate from true and artistic reading now assumes the foremost place, and takes it by right.

The old advice to the young preacher—to look up from his written sermon as much as possible—is sound and useful. It points the thought I have enunciated in the phrase, "Forget that you are reading." The direction of the eyes indicates and induces an answering state of mind. It acts and re-acts alike on speaker and listeners. The moment a reader knows his sentence sufficiently well to look off his book, that moment will probably mark a more natural inflexion in his voice. A speaker who looks persistently down at his written words will as surely lose the dramatic

and natural poise and appeal of his voice, as he will forfeit a measure of the attention of his listeners. To "catch the speaker's eye" is as important a matter to an audience as it is sometimes to a member of the House. Anyone who has to use reading as a method of public speaking in pulpit, lecture-theatre, or in speech-making, should train himself to "look up" and "off the words" as much as possible.

The difficulty of laying down hard and fast rules for readers becomes emphasised in this method of reading. I feel that I lay myself open to the charge of vagueness and lack of definite advice in some of these pages. But I would rather do that than fall into the usual fault of the elocutionist, and give a hundred and one little rules and regulations for every phase of feeling and construction of sentence. It is far easier to formulate rules, and summarise a system for the dramatic branches of elocution—for the actor and for the reciter—than it is to give definite advice to the reader-speaker. This is apparent at once when we consider the aims that are in view. As thus:

It is the aim and work of the actor or the reciter to eliminate all personal characteristics, to render his style of delivery as it were a clean sheet on which he can write at will the varying characters and personalities he embodies and the varying methods he has to adopt. Personal characteristics are, in fact, not only undesirable in this work, but absolutely detrimental to it. But the reverse of this is true for any great speaker, or for a reader who treats reading from the speaker's point of view. With him personal characteristics, nay—even a marked individuality of style (if properly educated and employed)—are of the highest use and importance. This, then it is evident marks a wide difference between the two aims in view; and this also marks the difficulty of framing hard laws for the use of the speaker-reader.

It will be granted at once, I think, by everyone who has any knowledge and experience of public speaking, that all the greatest and most moving speakers are strongly individual in their delivery and style. Distinction of manner and an unmistakable speech have a definite and

desirable influence in the work of any public speaker. I can scarcely recall a single great speaker, or preacher, or lecturer, who is not an example of the significance and value of a delivery that is essentially his own ; whilst I have also known several eminent speaker-readers who have possessed a delivery marked by peculiarity and even by eccentricity. To have smoothed away such characteristics, even such peculiarities, and to have replaced them by an even perfect elocution and academically correct delivery, would have been a lamentable piece of work. The very thing we do not want in the actor —a strong and unmistakable personality and speech—is one of the most valuable of possessions for a public speaker. All such characteristics must indeed be used and not abused. The individuality must not be allowed to run riot and become exaggerated. To properly educate and develop to its just proportions the personal style of a preacher or a lecturer, must be held to be true and good elocution. It is this element of individuality which forms the difficulty and the interest of this branch of study in reading.

I remember once hearing an elocution-master say that Dean Stanley would illustrate in any given sermon every elocutionary fault a preacher should guard against and avoid. Yet I remember that even then, when I "cared for none of these things," I found it difficult to wish that the grave and singularly impressive manner, voice, and delivery of the Dean should be exchanged for the florid method and mobile tones of the elocution-master. Of many great preachers and lecturers we now have amongst us I do not know more than two or three who could be safely quoted as exponents of the art of elocution as we know it; and I am bold to add that I cannot for myself regret the limited circle of the exposition. The true elocution of the pulpit and the lecture-rostrum seems to me the perfect development of the natural manner and method of the man, the due management and full employment of his voice, the perfect articulation of his words, and, if possible, the use of appropriate and personally suggested and spontaneous gesture. When elocution absolutely eliminates rather than educates personal characteristics and in-

dividual style, and when it professes to lay down hard laws for pause and inflexion, poise and pace, accent and expression, then, I think, it misses half its work on the one hand, and goes all too far on the other.

I have just named the use of appropriate gesture as being a factor in the work of the student for the style of reading we are considering. This, I think, will be granted at once. No one can doubt the efficacy and desirableness of gesture on such occasions as fall to the preacher and the lecturer. The opinion on oratory which is accredited to Demosthenes, is proverbial: "Action! Action! Action!" This, like all such epitomes of advice, of course intentionally overstates its case, in order to make its cause a telling one. Action is a great and important element in the art of a speaker who desires to arrest and hold the attention, and to arouse and increase the feelings of his auditors. And here again, for the occasions for which reading in any form holds good, a large margin must be allowed for personal characteristics. The difference between all such actions and the action

of the actor and the reciter is as marked as is the difference of their utterances.

In such a case it is easier to point out what should be avoided than to recommend any fixed style or scale of gesture. To some men it is as natural, as inevitable, to emphasise and point their words with certain suggestive gestures as it is to others to retain immobility of feature and of limb. The hand, with nearly all Celtic nations, and with people who have a strong Celtic root, is more or less a feature, and has its work and portion in the expression of feeling and of statement. The hand may be made a vehicle of wonderful power and meaning by all speakers. Indeed, if speech rise to any great vehemence and earnestness the hand is nearly certain to take its part in the expression of the feeling and conviction, even if the man speaking be one to whom gesture of any sort is, as a rule, alien and distasteful. Care should therefore be taken to train the hand for such emergency, and to give the speaker the resource of intelligent and befitting hand-gestures. Everything needs training, even a natural gift. The gift in itself is not always sufficient; and by a

strange law of contrariety, the people who have no natural facility or faculty of hand gesture are often just those who use it most freely and trust most fully to the non-existent gift. Their very earnestness thus often defeats itself. It impels gestures which are subversive of earnestness. If they think gesture is worth using at all they should train themselves for its intelligent employment. If, on the other hand, they do not care to do this, or think it would savour of artificiality and lack of dignity, let them teach themselves to repress it entirely, and retain that statuesque immobility which can always be made indicative of a certain power. As it is, the result is often stiff, or trivial, or meaningless; it may be even so wholly inappropriate as to dissipate rather than concentrate the attention desired. Young speakers are often advised "to use a little action"; and in obedience to this good but nebulous advice they indulge in small futile movements of the hand from the wrist, or of the arm from the elbow. Such movements as a rule, have a disastrous effect. Merely to move the hand or the arm, because one is told to "use a little

action" whilst speaking, is worse than useless. It involves a loss of dignity. It may do an even worse thing: it may absolutely negative the meaning of the words spoken. A preacher who talks of eternal love, and shakes a warning finger at his congregation, or pounds the front of the pulpit with his clenched hand, is clearly delivering two messages of different import. Yet such antagonism of meaning is by no means unusual in speaker-readers who think it necessary and desirable to "use a little action," but do not think it necessary or desirable to give thought and study to the matter, and have no natural gift of gesture.

The student should critically regard every gesture he proposes to use, if occasion require, by and in itself; ask himself what he means by it, and if it is significant of his intention. If he has to own that it is in itself meaningless, or is simply the automatic action of nervous energy and mental emphasis, he will be wise to relinquish and suppress it altogether. But he need not therefore be discouraged, and make up his mind that gesture is not for him. A little practice and observation

will soon give him resource in this matter. He will find his stock of action increase. With some of us the original and native supply is singularly scanty. I have known many people who have one gesture of emphasis which they apply indifferently and zealously to everything they may have to say. Without danger of artificiality a student may well teach himself several useful gestures, and make several actions so much his own that they come at last spontaneously to the call. There seems no need that all action for the occasions under note, should be academically graceful or based on the elaborate and most useful laws which have been laid down for this mode of expression. It may be useful indeed for some students who feel a strong bent toward a rather lavish use of gesture in speech to study these rules. For others they would be hampering and out of place. Natural, instinctive, and habitual gestures may always be cultivated to the point of use and advantage to a speaker. I should strongly advocate and plead for personal freedom and individual character in this matter. Some natural trick of the hand,

some characteristic action of arm or head, may be indisputably valuable in the personal impress of a speaker, and worth a dozen scholastically appropriate and expressive gestures. The student must, of course, exercise care and constant self-observation in all such traits, guarding himself against their too frequent repetition, and from that grotesque exaggeration which is apt to grow apace in such mannerisms. But personally I have as yet seen no sufficient reason of the elocution-master to justify the suppression of personal characteristics in a speaker; and I am confident that they often exercise a very potent charm and influence on the listeners, sometimes driving home the message of some great preacher or speaker in a way a more artistic but less individual gesture would fail to achieve.

A phase of gesture that should at most be employed very sparingly, and is better avoided altogether in this branch of reading, is the gesture of verbal description. Such gesture belongs purely to the stage and the reciter's platform. I venture to think that even thus it is often grossly misapplied and overdone. There may

be rare occasions where a preacher or lecturer may use a gesture descriptive of the actual word he is using with good effect; but it must be carefully and skilfully done, and it is a dangerous practice. The alert genius of humour is swift on the track of all such gestures and will assert himself on the slightest failure with startling suddenness and assurance. It is safer for a speaker to keep to gesture of the personal kind—of emphasis, of emotion, and of the feelings that underlie and prompt his words. To illustrate the meaning of the words themselves is perilous. The misapplication of that oft-quoted and mis-used excellent advice given by Hamlet to the players is responsible for much ill-advised and ill-timed gesture. The scheme and study of "action" for "the players" is as far removed from the action which is desirable for a preacher, speaker, or lecturer, as the declamation they should employ is from the delivery of the pulpit or the platform. What is admirable advice for the players is wholly inadmissible for speakers and readers. The gesture, in fact, should as a rule, be

personal, convincing, and emotional, not mimetic, descriptive, and dramatic. It is the gesture of the individual not of the impersonator.

Finally in this matter of gesture it must always be remembered that one of the most useful and important things to learn is how to stand quite still. The statement savours of an Irishism. But anyone who has carefully and experimentally considered and tested the matter, will allow that standing still entails as positive an effort and study as any gesture. Great power is gained by being able to speak with life and energy, even if necessary with emotion, whilst all action and movement is suppressed. Actors know this well. It is said that some great actors have forced themselves to speak the most impassioned speeches of Othello or of some character and situation of the highest dramatic import, whilst they remained immovable. To stand quite still while speaking earnestly is a very difficult task. I have seen many speakers and actors of great position and talent fritter away half their due effort by not being able to keep still. The

inclination is always to move, or twitch, or sway about, or to use little unnecessary gestures, which only distract attention and weaken the appeal of a really significant gesture when its proper moment calls it forth. All such movement should be repressed. Nothing gives greater force to a speaker than the faculty of standing still, and nothing undermines his power so much as fidgetiness and lack of repose. The slightest gesture *tells*, and a striking gesture gains twice its power and meaning when the speaker at other moments stands perfectly still. It would also seem that all students might at least train themselves to this. Gesture may require a certain natural gift before it can be successfully employed and educated. But those who have no such gift may attain the high excellence and valuable power of standing still. If the lecture or sermon or speech be well read in the method we are considering it will be found that it is best delivered either with gesture that gives a real increase of meaning—or with none. In both cases the power of standing still is a matter which should be steadily practised.

In this method of reading, it is of the first importance that the voice should have a natural inflexion, cadence, and quality. I began by saying that this sort of reading is really a simulated speaking; it should therefore be given with the natural voice of the reader. Tones and cadences which may be admissible, nay, even admirable, in Dramatic and in Rhythmic reading, are quite out of place in the delivery of the sermon or the lecture. A natural voice is clearly and obviously a variable quantity, and must be allowed to take its standard from the voice of the reader himself. It is extraordinary how few people even talk in everyday life in what could dramatically be called a natural tone. This lack of ideally natural cadence and lilt in colloquial speech is especially distinguishable amongst English people. The stiffness and immobility of our faces, and our inherent dislike of gesture in ordinary conversation, are discernible also in our voices. The purely Celtic nations, as a rule, use a far larger gamut of tones in natural speech than we do. One often hears folk say that the French and Italian languages "sound so pretty." But I think it

would be truer to say that French and Italian voices are, as a rule, more musical than ours, and have a greater range and variety of tone and inflexion. I contend that English is a beautiful language when spoken by cultivated people, and given a due vocal phrase and cadence. It is to be regretted that young people are not better trained, or do not more systematically train themselves to use the whole register of their voice. General culture will refine the pronunciation exquisitely; but it does not always liberate the voice itself, or employ the full vocal range. On the contrary, it sometimes gives a strange affectation of sing-song, and is very apt in our nation to develop the upper tones of the voice to the exclusion of the deeper notes in speech. Tennyson's well-known line anent "deep-chested music" might seem to contradict this statement; but we must remember when he uses that expression he is speaking of a poet, and a poet is more than a man of mere culture and refinement. I refer simply to ordinary people of culture and to scholars, and of such I believe it will be found to be true that the tendency is toward the develop-

ment of a "head" voice, rather than to any "deep-chested music."

But when the speaking voice is found to be full and mobile, it is curious to note how the moment it is employed in reading—even when the reading is of the colloquial and speaking method—a certain inflexibility and monotony is often introduced. The thing to be aimed at is to approximate the voice in this style of reading to the natural voice, and to preserve the cadence and intonation of actual speech. As I have before said, it is necessary herein to forget that you are reading, to liberate the voice from all conventional tones, and to allow it to take its natural and habitual way. This way, of course, must vary with each speaker. There is no definite path or key to be pointed out as the "right" one. It is natural to some men of ripe cultivation and deep thought to speak habitually with a certain gravity of tone, and with certain set cadences. With them it would involve a loss of appropriate dignity, and therefore even of naturalness, to assume a lighter and more varied cadence and intonation. In all such matters I should never tire of claiming right of way for the

individual characteristics of the speaker, and should never doubt that such characteristics would prove valuable alike to speaker and to listeners. But as an aim for the majority of readers in this method, a varied cadence, and what is called a natural tone, is the best ideal. I have already stated my firm belief that that inborn instinct, which asserts itself the moment one begins to read aloud, to adopt a different tone of voice to that which is used in ordinary conversation, is a true one—true to reason and true to art. It may be permissible to reiterate that reading is not speaking, and that the two ideas and points of view should never for a moment be confused in true reading. But the reader-speaker, the man who employs reading as a method of speech, must recollect that this is all changed in his work, as has already been pointed out. As he is, in truth, not reading at all, but speaking, so the natural speaking voice, the colloquial cadence and phrase, the personal impress and intonations must, as far as possible, be preserved. I think it will be found to be a good plan for a student who has to overcome a

determined tendency in his voice to become inflexible and conventional, and to lose its natural quality directly he begins to read, to commit a page or so of his written matter to memory. He will then be able to look away from the page before him; and a colloquial and easy tone is nearly sure in time to assert itself. He would thus accustom himself to speak what he has written naturally, and would begin to recognise wherein the difference lies between a sentence thus seemingly read and a passage which he really has to read. The habit of the conventional reading voice would thus be broken, and the student would get more at ease, so to speak, with his own voice.

In this matter men are too apt to think practice and thought are unnecessary and undignified. Care and art, thought and polish, are lavishly and well given to the words written; but for the delivery of these words, sincere intention and the light of nature are supposed to be all that is needed or should be expected. But why? If the words were to be printed, see what skill and care, what delicate machinery and work would be employed;

what revision would be given, what attention accorded to every point, almost to every letter and sign of punctuation! Why should that which is but another form of publication—an audible instead of a visible type—be less heedfully given? Why should the workman in the latter case give but a tithe of the time, thought, and skill which he accords to the printed page? And if the printed page can claim greater honour in the way of wider area of appeal than the spoken word, the spoken word may well be considered to be more vital and direct than any printed page. It surely possesses possibilities of living response and effect which are far above those of the same words when charactered in type. Without unduly weighting with importance the value of a good delivery and method of reading it may, I think, without question be said that at least one-third of any great preacher's or lecturer's success will be found to be traceable to his delivery. Indifferent matter may be made to do good work by well-directed earnestness; and beyond question many a fine sermon and learned lecture is spoilt and wasted by the lamentable and inadequate manner in

which it is read. The question, therefore, is one of distinct importance, and should be faced as such by all who have to treat reading as a method of public speech.

This method is so varied in object and application, has such wide use, and holds such a strong power of appeal, that it must be considered—although it is in a way no part of reading proper—to be a most important branch of the art. And indeed it is not until this method of reading is confessed, and is given its own lines, and it is not until their point of departure from those of all other methods of reading is clearly acknowledged, that the art of reading assumes definite outline and stature. The various methods I have briefly discussed, then take their proper places; and in them a coherent system of study may be found, a system such as, I think, is sought and desired by many students in the professions wherein reading forms a not unimportant part of public work.

CHURCH READING

READING is a subject which must always be considered a matter of great importance in the work of the Church. I do not wish for a moment to exaggerate its importance. Many of the laity are apt to do this. To hear some people talk one would suppose that a man ought to be made a bishop if he preaches peculiarly well, and that no man should gain the episcopate unless he is a shining light in the pulpit. The fact that preaching is possibly one of the least, and certainly is not one of the greatest, claims for ecclesiastical preferment seems but little realised. But all that is outside the subject in hand. No one will deny the desirableness of good reading and speaking in a parson. A large portion of his public work lies in reading.

Few people, however, realise the difficulties of this church reading. The clergyman is beset with peculiar and exceptional difficulties in the character

and range of elocution which is required for his work. To take one entire service he need be a perfect and finished elocutionist in the best sense of that word. In many a country church the priest works single-handed. Possibly there is a choir, but its work often ends with the *Te Deum* and the *Jubilate*, the *Nunc Dimittis* and the *Magnificat*, the *Glorias*, and the usual hymns. All the rest of the service lies between the parson and the congregation. See, then, what a wide range he has to work over in the matter of reading, in one morning or evening service. In the Psalms he may well adopt the Rhythmic method (the congregation are unconsciously certain to do so) as best fitted to their measured and lofty eloquence, and the musical rise and fall of strophe and antistrophe. In the lessons, one of the Dramatic methods seems to be clearly needed. Whilst in the sermon the reading moves out of reading proper and becomes preaching—a method of reading which was considered in the foregoing section. And then comes the consideration of how to read the prayers—and the rest of the service. Here, indeed, is a difficult question. The reading of the

Church service is a thing that surely stands apart from all other reading, and can scarcely be judged by any standard, or referred to any formulated rules. Criticism on this point, however, would seem to be a tempting and an easy thing, if one may judge by the lavish generosity with which it is given. But I have often wondered if some people who are glib and resolute in criticism of clergymen's reading, have any just standard of judgment on the question, or in any true way realise the many and grave difficulties to be met, and the many sides that have to be considered. Some of them doubtless know what they themselves would like, and what they admire in a reader; and they appear to think that settles the matter. They are too often sustained in fact by a conviction that the method they admire is the "right" one, and by a surprising ignorance of what is to be said on the other side of the question. I am minded to think that the greater number of the malcontents in the matter of Church reading simply want a quasi-dramatic, emotional way of reading — something which would make them what is called "feel" the words. They want the words

spoken, in fact, not read. I have often been amused to hear a layman of this school abuse some parson's reading for its dulness and monotony, and more than hint that he, the layman, could show the parson how to read the service. For I have known that it was more than probable that if the layman were permitted to read the service, he would find the task a harder one than he had reckoned with; that he would, further, nearly certainly fall into the very faults he condemned; and that most of the congregation would put a new and private clause into the litany. Further, I have known that it was also more than probable that the parson himself could read very well in the desired emotional way (such cases have come under my experience), but that he positively had rejected such reading as meretricious and unsuited to the occasion and work—as indeed it may well be held to be. For personal emotion and feeling on the part of the priest seems out-of-place in reading a service that is congregational. The priest is surely for that occasion impersonal and official. He is, as it were, the audible voice of the Church, and the audible

expression of the congregation. The listeners do not, I maintain, want anybody's, even the priest's, private convictions and feelings impressed upon them. The utterance should be that of the office and not of the man. There should, in fact, be the marked difference which exists between the corporate voice of public worship, and the personal voice of private devotion.

This, at least, seems to me the leading idea of the Church service as it stands. Any other view is open to even more serious objections than can be urged against this; and if we may judge from the large and growing preponderance of churches where the official method is observed, and the way these churches are crowded, it would seem that "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" in the way of religious services in our Church is secured thereby.

Doubtless every age brings peculiar temptations and special characteristics to each art. It would almost appear as if the danger nowadays in the art of Church reading (for art it must be allowed to be) is toward what I may call an aggrieved and aggressive character of tone and

delivery. Possibly it is a natural reaction from the suave and comfortable style which apparently was once the fashion of the Anglican "three-decker" reading-desk. But, whatever may be the cause, it is patent that a certain number of parsons nowadays, read in a petulant and somewhat hostile tone of voice. I have heard a passive congregation quite scolded in this way,—the very sense of the words often being thus reversed. Spiritual earnestness nowadays seems more often to take the note of polemics than of persuasion. Amongst a class of young men of essentially sturdy and athletic training—men who may be reasonably looked on as specimens, more or less developed, of the public-schoolboy and the undergraduate—this strenuous form of delivery is perhaps natural enough. The persuasiveness of the ideal English schoolboy is apt to be a trifle energetic in its enunciation. It takes no great effort of imagination to see that the normal type of the Anglo-Saxon of to-day would, with many great and solid virtues, be likely to lean to the forcibly convincing methods of utterance. We are not

a vocally expressive race. Great care should therefore be taken by young men in entering holy orders, to guard themselves against this tendency towards those tones of voice that would naturally express a seeming determination to take the kingdom of heaven by storm. I am quite aware that oftentimes when the speaker seems possessed by some inward irritation and annoyance, he has quite a different aim in view, and would be genuinely surprised if he were asked who it is that has offended him? or at what is he annoyed? It is probable that the unwitting effect of anger on the part of the reader has been produced by the desire—so attractive to a man of scholarly training and restrained and orderly habits of life and thought—to avoid all tricks of cheap emotionalness, to make his utterance calm and judicious and expressive of a strong and rooted conviction. He desires to gain an unemotional and impersonal tone of voice. Therein we may hold he is right. But his aim has not been carried out. His practice defeats his theory, for a fault-finding and irritated intonation is the very reverse of the impersonal, and

produces a distinct emotion. It is powerfully personal in effect, although it is probably not in the least personal in feeling.

And here it is worth noting, by the way, how many clever and capable people do not seem able in reading to call into play the tones and cadences of voice of which they approve, and for which they work. They recognise vocal effects and mistakes in others, and can often argue and talk about the matter admirably. They talk, indeed, so well and judiciously of what they wish to do in reading, and with what inflexion they propose to read a given passage, that you are minded to think the true method is perceived, and will be carried into practice. But perception of an artistic truth does not necessarily include power of execution. They read the lines in question, and lo! all the fine theories have gained no audible correspondence in the spoken words. They seem physically unable to do what they themselves wish to do in the way of vocal expression. The dead level of ordinary English speech has its Nemesis. The voice loses flexibility and power of response to the call of the mind.

It is rather a sad comment on British masculine human nature that the tone of voice, which always seems ready for use in reading, is that of a slight irascibility!

Every virtue has its attendant vice, they say—and there is a price, we are told, to be paid for everything. Perhaps we have to pay the price of some of those attributes and characteristics we English admire, desiderate, and foster in our clergy by having to put up with a little hardness of utterance, a slight rigidity and over-virility of tone. It is, therefore, well to point out to young men who are entering the Church that there is this danger ahead in Church reading; to urge them to practise flexibility of voice and precision in its correspondences with the intentions of the reader; and that to be impersonal is not necessarily to be impassive, any more than earnestness is synonymous with irritability.

In reviewing a possible synopsis of reading for the Church service, I named the Dramatic method as suited to the lessons. I would not venture to lay down any axiom on such a subject, since

what is good and suitable for one reader is neither suitable nor good for another. But still I think the lessons may be quoted as the culminating opportunity for the exercise and use of the highest form of Dramatic reading. Here all the qualities I named when dealing with the subject in one of the foregoing sections, receive their highest exemplification and field of exercise. The magnificent and moving passages, which, in the course of the year, a clergyman has to read at the lectern, open out a field of drama, both spiritual and narrative, so large in its area, so manifold in its demands, that the finest reader who ever entered the field would never be able to exhaust its possibilities for good. The opportunities are truly great. At moments everyone must be minded (and none more than those who do the work as best they can) to regret that they are often sadly wasted—wasted not through lack of will, but of skill. But if the opportunities be great, we must not forget that equally great are the difficulties. So much has to be done in this reading of the lessons; such a mass of conventionality has to be torn aside; so many

words that have grown dull with familiarity and repetition have to be quickened, and made as though they were heard for the first time; exaggeration and over-zeal have to be held in check; restraint and seeming coldness spurred into movement. Unaffected natural earnestness seems desirable for such work; and yet with most English people a manner wholly unaffected and natural is generally impassive and unemotionalising to the point of gentlemanlike dulness. And if earnestness be added to this without artistic knowledge (intuitive or instructed) of how to express it, eccentricity is very apt to be the result. It is only fair to think of these things, in considering the difficulties of the work the clergy have to perform in this matter of reading. The very splendour of the opportunity given in the reading of the Church lessons is a little unnerving in itself, if it is duly realised—at least to any man who is not supported by the quiet strength which always comes with the sense and possession of a talent to do the thing required.

I have heard many Church readers, and have listened attentively to the various

methods they have employed in reading the lessons. I am bound to say that the greater number of the best readers I have heard have used the Rhythmic method for this purpose, and with a most impressive result on at least the major part of the congregation. Yet I will own that, theoretically speaking, I consider the Dramatic method is the truer one for this work. But it needs great skill and care in its application. Anything approaching over-emphasis of the drama, and merging on the theatrical, would be worse than the lowest level of commonplace dulness. It is, however, obviously desirable that the lessons—the epistle, and the gospel—should stand apart, as it were, from the other portions of the service. And to gain this result, the parson could scarcely do better, I think, than employ the Dramatic method in one of its forms—keeping it always to the object in view, and hinting at the twofold drama of the words that are being read, and the purpose and occasion of the reading.

A few pages back, I noted the grave difficulties which attend the reading of the prayers in the Church service. It is

because these difficulties are so numerous and so grave, that "intoning" seems to be by far the most generally satisfactory and satisfying method of giving them; and it is encouraging to see that this is clearly a growing conviction alike with the clergy and the laity. Intoning is a permissible, and at the same time a noble and justifiable way out of a great difficulty. In it we secure a good method of developing clear pronunciation, and a greater power of "carrying" than mere speech can give in a large area (the vibration of the sustained note being added to the *timbre* of the voice), and through all, the utterance remains impersonal and official.

A truly impersonal and yet intelligent voice, without the aid of intoning, is one of the most difficult of all tones to gain. If the natural voice of everyday conversation, *minus* its colloquial cadence, could be employed, it might be found to supply the required tone. But it is questionable whether anyone can sustain this tone without striking a dead level of dull monotony; and, certainly, to employ it successfully would tax the best skill of

a highly trained and gifted speaker. Of course, all this advocacy of impersonal reading, freed from private feeling and passing emotion, is highly and wofully unpopular; and in advocating this method of reading portions of the Church service, one is always prepared for strong disapprobation and denial from the admirers and upholders of the Dramatic method. Its unpopularity is not, however—to some of us—a strong argument in its disfavour. If we take the severe canons of any high art we shall find that when they are stated in black and white they sound very cramping and hard, very narrow in their limitations, and very destructive of feeling, and even of talent. A musical student listens with delight and longing to some great work of a master; but when the hundred and one intricate rules of Harmony and Thorough Bass which the master obeyed are enunciated to him, he thinks all fire and originality must be crushed by them. It is much the same with the laws of all good art. They sound cruelly cold and hard and cramping. But when they are mastered and ruled by an artist they evolve work that is neither hard nor

cold—work which moves everyone. The impersonal (but not therefore necessarily impassive) reading I have spoken of in connection with the Church service is unquestionably a difficult art, and it sounds unattractive. But there can be little doubt that it is a high and true method, and an expert will use it with effect and permanent satisfaction to the larger section of his hearers. Like all good art it needs to be well done. Failure is easily detectable and quickly censured. The personally-convicted and Dramatic method is easier to attain in this matter, and its failures are less direct and obvious. But I am sure that a "high failure" in the one "overleaps the bound of low success" in the other. And it is evident to any impartial and wide observer that the world around us is more and more prizing the higher methods of reading the Church service.

Thus we see that in his work as a reader the clergyman has to face difficulties and meet demands which, as far as I know, have no parallel in any other of the departments of reading. When all those difficulties and demands are considered,

one cannot reasonably expect a very high level of the art to be generally gained and habitually held by our clergy —men with whom the art of the profession is rightly and naturally one of its least claims to their study and practice. But, for my own part, I must confess that I consider the level sustained is, on the whole, a very fair one, whilst at times it rises to excellence. The finest reading I have ever heard has been from parsons.

THE WORDS WE READ

ANYONE who interests himself in reading will discover, in an ever-increasing degree, the surprising life which animates words—even the commonest words. The perception of the life of words is, I take it, at the root of all moving and constraining utterance. That words have a vitality and force of their own is a truth that doubtless would be admitted by most people. But the belief in it is, as a rule, of an easy-going, second-hand nature; and the freshness of the truth has lost itself in the conventionality of a truism. Despite the trite confession of the value of words, of their vitality and force, we use words casually and unappreciatively in daily life and conversation, and choose them without pause or thought. The word *choose*, indeed, is almost too nice to use in such a statement. There is little or no choice employed. Words come as they may in answer to the haphazard demands. The edge and character

of language is blunted and blurred by this usage. The life in words may be said almost to shrink away and hide itself from sight under such rough handling. To re-discover and renew this life; to make it fresh and evident to the listener; to call out the inner force of the word till it answers to the call, and touches the hearer with the startling sense of unexpected and unsuspected presence; this surely is the higher work of all good readers. Their aim must be to make the words they read alive. They must try to redeem words from the atrophied and empty condition in which they are passed about in the repetition of well-worn phrases and expressions so familiar that they have lost their primal meaning and true appeal. Many readers give us dead words instead of living ones. And how are words to be made alive? In chief measure it is clear that the speaker or reader must be the lifegiver. And to be this he must bring knowledge and will to his work. Words do not yield up their secrets lightly, or to everyone. It is necessary to know their roots, to be acquainted with their original meaning,

and to find it always new and fresh. There is a potential life in words, but it needs the quickening touch from within the speaker to evoke it. It may sound somewhat over-fanciful to some people to credit words with potential life; but without straining such a thought into any mystical theories, it may be accepted as holding a certain truth. Archbishop Trench did not shrink from the thought. He proclaims it even daringly, and says: "I have asserted the existence of a moral element in words. . . . They do not hold themselves neutral in the great conflict between good and evil, light and darkness, which is dividing the world." There can be little doubt that, whether they have this inherent life or not, words have a power of receiving life from the speaker. In this way they undoubtedly gain for the listeners a very real life—a life which until the vitalising moment when the speaker used them, was often wholly unsuspected.

To a reader who feels that he has no "gift" for reading, and small power of adopting one of the great methods of reading with any individual skill or chance

of success, a sustaining and invigorating motive-power may be found in the exercise of a practical belief in the life of words. Such a belief is a refuge for one who has to read often either in private or public, and for all who wish to escape from the self-consciousness of deliberate study in the matter of elocution.

There are dangers attendant on every rule, and care must be taken lest a thought of this kind lead to grotesque verbal emphasis. It can quickly issue practically into eccentricity and over-accentuation. A certain licence, however, on the side of emphasis may be permitted to the reader. Some of the most moving speakers and readers I have heard, have at times used an emphasis that was startling. Anyone who loves words and realises their meaning—a meaning as of a thing seen for the first time—can scarcely resist the temptation to emphasise what is to him so emphatic. Such emphasis is often more than pardonable, it is admirable. To read without emphasis and accentuation may be very artistic, but it is also very dull. Reading seems to me pre-eminently an art wherein rules—

however good in themselves—must be as sedulously restrained as they are observed, or a dry-as-dust effect inevitably ensues. It is well to remember that elocution deprecates the use of verbal emphasis. But it is also well to remember that verbal emphasis is sometimes the swiftest and most attainable means at command of the reader to strip away the film of conventionality from some well-worn word, and to make its secret and real life flash out anew to the listeners.

But emphasis is not always needed. If the life of the word be known to and realised by the reader (an *if* that really needs in its turn to be emphasised, even in the case of many well-informed people), and the conscious will-power be exercised that that life shall claim its own from the intelligence of the listener, then I have a firm belief that the force will act without the aid of verbal emphasis. The question of how and why such force works presents a curious line of thought in the study of telepathy; but that is no part of this page. The statement of the force must therefore be left to be received or rejected at will by the reader of this page, accord-

ing to his bent or conviction. Of course, such a force will not act on every listener. Alas! it seems certain that it will act on but the few. It is like other unseen forces —physical as well as psychic. For the force to do its work the two poles must be present and applied—the positive and the negative. In the case of a given word, the life of which is to be evoked, the ear that hears must be the negative pole to the positive power of the speaker. Then the chain, so to speak, is complete, and the word that is spoken is also "heard." Sometimes in actual delivery there may be some unconscious pause—some mental italicising of the word—on the part of the reader; but it does not seem necessary that it should be so, and the effort is often undetectable. All that is needed is that there should be the conscious wish that that word should be a living one.

I have found this a growing help and resource to me in my work. Yet I do not consider that this thought finds its highest expression, or most befitting field for operation on the platform of the reciter. It is, perhaps, to the preacher that it

would seem to give its best help, for he pre-eminently asks the words he speaks to exercise their true power, and he also has, beyond question, to deal with words, and to utter phrases which have become dulled by repetition and obscured by conventionality. The thought is exercised, I have but little doubt, by most great speakers and readers in church. Turning in memory to many distinguished preachers and readers I have heard, I recognise that their chief source of appeal lay in this power of making the words they used start into life. In many of these instances I fancy the power was exerted unconsciously, or rather as the natural working of an earnest and scholastic mind, in men to whom words were things of winged life. But there is no reason why the power should not be even in such a case increased by being made a conscious and systematic one, rather than one of mere impulse; nor why it should not be articulated into a working thought, and thus become an efficient help to the public speaker or reader who feels that his words often fail to obtain their just effect. Such a thought, even when formulated and

given the hard name of a rule, is not likely to sink into formalism or unreality. Its appeal is solely to the inner consciousness, and involves a living effort of the mind, which must always keep it sincere. Its dynamic cannot be supplied by any second-hand advice or elocutionary flourish. It is not dependent on any particular method of speaking. It must be true and personal, or it ceases to exist.

And surely we have all listened to readers whose earnestness and intelligence were beyond question, yet who sadly failed to move or keep our interest. It is grievous to think how much good work in the way of sermons and lectures is wasted thus. And what is the reason of this frequent failure? Well, sometimes I think it is because the reader has no knowledge of elocution; but sometimes, too, it is because he has too much—or at least has more than he can assimilate. I have known instances where men have stood up with words of their own to read which were well worth the hearing — words on which thought and experience, imagination and learning had been generously expended, yet who, on facing their

audience, had little power of realising the vitality of their own words, because they were thinking of, or trying to remember, how they had been told to produce the voice, and how to poise their sentences, etc. etc. etc. Concentration of thought was therefore impossible, the power of will was never called forth, and the words, put together with such care and skill, fell dead. How much better, surely, it would have been for such a reader to mass his strength on an impersonal thought, to seek refuge from nervousness by entrenching the mind in the conviction that the words to be read had an immanent and absolute life of their own, and to believe they could become a vital and active force under the dominance of a human will. Thus he would become strong in the possession of power other than his own, and, having grown unselfconscious, would probably begin to read naturally, and, therefore, to a certain point, well—since natural reading must always have some sort of appeal; at least he would gain a measure of calm power impossible under other conditions.

It may be permissible whilst thinking

of this subject—without dipping in any way into the deep questions of philology —to consider some few of the many testimonies that we have constantly before us as to the life of words.

"Words are the man," Tennyson makes his Harold say. And this is said merely in the sense of verbal truth and personal integrity. For a nature as direct and simple as that accredited to the traditional Harold, it seems no impossible task that the man should fit every word he uses into his honest purpose and open meaning. For natures more diverse and complicated, the question would become a more tangled one. Words to such are more than the man, as in other ways he is more than they. Words may become impersonal; whilst in a higher sense words can grow divine, and rise into an almost limitless sphere of meaning. Every great theology and philosophy the world has known has dwelt on the life of Names — of words. The merest suggestion of this vast consecration of words need only be given. The thought has materialised itself in our life and the history of man. Words have often been

matters of life and death. We need not turn to the ancient Kabbala to learn how much magic and mystery lies in words. Awful and beautiful alike are the proclamations which have come down to us through the ages as to the sovereign power of words, their origins and issues, the secrets they embalm, and the revelations they can accord. Words contain a chronicle of man's higher life. Words, as the Spoken Thought, ascend into the loftiest conceptions of the mind. It may be that they penetrate the arcanum of the Unseen.

Words there are so wonderful that even to the casual student whole mysteries of thought lie as it were crystallised in them. Trench speaks of such as "the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embalmed and preserved," and again as "the incarnation of the thoughts and experiences of a nation—yea, often of many nations, and of all which through centuries they have attained to and won." Of such words there is no lack; some of them are well-known and confessed: others, I think, wander amongst us with scant recogni-

tion. Amongst these latter might be mentioned *Individuality* and *Personality*— words that hold in themselves an entire system of thought, — but certainly of thought "occult, withheld, untrod." Such, too, are the precious string of words that deal with the breath and breathing, from the *Spiral* that may be taken to represent the first sign of life, to the *Inspiration* which may be said to be its last gift, and the *Spirit* that is its origin and end. For such words no will-power or emphasis is sufficient to fully reveal their life and meaning in a moment, even to the ear that is willing to hear as well as to listen. And yet I believe that a deep realisation of the life of even such wonderful words as these, and the honest wish that their life may exercise its force on the hearers, will not be without some answer and effect.

To turn for a moment to lighter things in connection with the life of words, it may be pointed out how many people go through life without realising the meaning of some of the more ordinary words which are daily on their lips. If they gave a thought as to the derivation of those

words, they might perceive the outline of the original idea at once: but the thought is not given. These poor, clipped, debased coins in our verbal currency may, however, be suddenly restored to their proper value and proportion by a speaker who has the knowledge and will to make them new and fresh again. And, colloquially, few things are more pleasant than when a word we have handled and passed about for years without examination, suddenly presents to us its true image and superscription.

It is natural that most great writers should possess the power of enduing words with their proper life. Words are living things to them, and go out from their lips with accredited and conscious authority. Thus I think it is that when a great writer reads his own work aloud, the hearers are generally deeply moved, even when every pet rule of the elocutionist is being ignored. In this way, Lord Tennyson's reading was very arresting and remarkable. The force and meaning, the grace and play of his words were surprising.

But to gain this vitality for our words it is clearly necessary that their true mean-

ing should be known and recognised. This sounds very like a truism; but it is one that bears statement, for it is a fact that many so-called educated people do not know the true, or at least the original meaning of many of the words they habitually use. In one sense, of course, people may be credited with a knowledge of what they are saying. But the knowledge is for the greater part merely colloquial and conventional. It is surprising to find how ignorant we are of the real construction and original signification of our words. Anyone who doubts this fact should look into the delightful and suggestive pages of Trench's little volume on Words. Therein we find commonplace words we have used conventionally all our lives, assuming unexpected forms, and, as it were, looking at us with the freshness and force of a discovery. The words become suddenly alive.

Words, thus scrutinised and analysed, reveal themselves to us oftentimes with an irony that touches on humour—the humour which generally accompanies the truth. The word *Recreation* thus assumes a new and grave aspect which can scarcely be regarded without the consciousness of

having received a salutary satire. Does not *Revelation* account for its own very veiled character? How many people fail to discern, either verbally or in practice, that *Amusement*—word of social import! —means in truth a reverie—a retirement from the business and action of life to the refreshment of concentrated thought—a *musement?* It would certainly surprise and disconcert a great many excellent people one knows to offer them as a form of amusement an hour of retirement and reverie. Or, if we should prefer to go to the Muses for the true derivation of the word, we still find a life in it which is, beyond question, unsuspected by many people who are fond of using it somewhat lavishly, and, as they believe, putting it into practice unstintingly.

To seek for the life that is latent in our words is a most rewarding quest; and, to the good reader, it is an all-important one.

In reading, however, the difficulty to be solved in this matter is how the reader can best impress on his listeners his own valuation of his words. The realisation of their life too often begins and ends in the mind of the speaker. It never seems

to look out of the windows, so to speak, or to walk abroad. In such a matter, rules are hard to lay down. The result is achieved in different cases by such different means. To suggest fixed rules and methods for exercise in this style of reading is to introduce the very element from which the reader addressed desires to escape. To truly develop the life of words, the words themselves must be appealed to and believed in as the agents of power. The speaker supplies only the evocative will. Emphasis is likely to be the result. When it is natural and instinctive, it will probably justify itself; but to advise it as a means is to begin at the wrong end, and would probably lead to failure. No rule for such reading is therefore to be given. It is not a matter of rules; it is rather a refuge from them for such readers as feel neither inclination nor skill for their inception and practice. Some of the most powerful and moving readers I have ever heard have seemed to me to be themselves moved and actuated more by this belief in the life of words than by any other thought. From the elocutionist's point of view they

ought to have failed utterly in their delivery of their words. Yet they did not fail. They succeeded in a way that was beyond dispute; they must be held to have fulfilled the aim of all speakers—namely, to bring home to the listeners the message of their spoken words.

The statement of this thought—the life of words—may be, then, a help to some readers: a help the more acceptable and workable from the fact that it demands none of the special and technical methods of elocution. The thought thus suggested has, at least, the good appeal that it takes the mind of the reader off himself, and strengthens him with a force that he can truly feel is great.

"I would urge on you," says Trench, "how well it will repay you to study the words you are in the habit of using. . . . It will indeed repay you better than you can easily believe. I am sure, at least, that for many a young man, his first discovery *of the fact that words are living powers* has been like the dropping of scales from his eyes, like the acquiring another sense, or the introduction into a new world."

(1) AN agreeable tone of voice must be ranked as one of the first conditions for pleasant, sustained reading. It may be held that a pleasant voice is a natural possession, and is no more to be acquired than good looks. But although a really beautiful voice "must be esteemed a gift and not an art," still, much depends on a proper use of the lungs and a proper management of the breath. Such use and management can improve a beautiful natural voice, it can preserve it, and it can even produce a very creditable imitation thereof. Few English people have naturally fine voices. As a rule, we all of us "speak up in our heads," and not from our chests. Our voices have a squeezed, strangled quality, and sadly lack sonority and fulness. The often-abused English climate may, in some considerable measure, account for this. We instinctively do not inhale deep draughts of air, or use our full lung-power. It is observable that

the southern nations have, as a rule, deeper voices. Our men's voices do not seem to possess the virility of tone which the men themselves, one is glad to remember, as a nation, exhibit in their character. We seldom have our lungs filled, seldom employ their full power, seldom take a deep inspiration of breath in speaking. Yet everyone, I think, recognises the charm of a deep-toned, rounded voice. Now, something of this character of voice may be gained by everyone by a due attention to right breathing. It seems a pity children are not taught to breathe properly, and that it should be taken for granted that we all of us breathe in the right way by instinct. We should have better voices, less disease, and, let it be added as "an *aside*," less snoring, if we had all been taught how to breathe.

The inspiration should be deep, and sufficient to fill the whole of the lungs; the expiration, slow and even. And we should always accustom ourselves to breathe, not through the mouth, but through the nostrils.

The thought of breathing is one of extraordinary and deep interest, and it

would be a tempting and even wonderful subject for inquiry and study. But its real interest and deeper meanings lie all outside the present subject. We need but briefly consider it practically, as it bears on the subject of reading.

Purity of tone cannot be gained unless the lungs are well filled. It is an easy experiment to test the difference of tone on any deep note that is observable when one speaks with lungs full of air, or at the end of one's breath. By taking a deep inspiration and letting the breath out very slowly, one can gain a considerably deeper note on the voice, as well as a greater fulness of tone, than when the lungs are half empty. Many of the early stages of stammering, and hesitation over certain sounds, many peculiarities of what I may call spasmodic pronunciation, would, I believe, be held in check, by keeping the lungs thoroughly well supplied with air. No long sentence can be properly read—no stately or involved period, either in prose or verse, can be properly delivered, unless the reader has taken in at the outset plenty of the material that makes "breath."

And to take in this material—to stoke the engine with the necessary fuel—there is a right and a wrong way. It is to be feared that the perversity of human nature chooses in this—as in most things!—the wrong way. Most people breathe through the open mouth. A large proportion of our speakers' voice-troubles—that peculiar ill known as "clergyman's throat," etc.—all arise mainly from this evil habit. Nature has provided us, in the nose, with a perfectly constructed apparatus whereby we may breathe. The air taken in through the nostrils is warmed before it reaches the throat and the lungs, and, furthermore, is purified and cleansed. To gulp air down in a raw draught straight to the throat and on to the lungs can only be likened to drinking impure water that has not been filtered, when a first-rate filter is ready for our use. In a large city, or in a dusty or malarious country, the danger of this unfiltered air is seriously increased. It is, however, unnecessary to go into the medical part of the subject, further than to point out that, what is good for the art of reading is also good for that art which is thought so much about nowadays, and

is exercised so freely—the art of living. It is a well-known fact that races accustomed to live and sleep in the open air have learned the wisdom of breathing through the nose. Catlin mentions several occasions when he saw the Indian squaws pressing the lips of their sleeping babies together, so that the habit of breathing through the nostrils might be contracted. I can speak from personal experience on the matter of breathing thus. By nature I have a voice of no great power or depth, and a throat decidedly susceptible to congestion; but by careful breathing I have added several notes to my voice, and seldom suffer any inconvenience from my two hours of hard and incessant speaking. This method of breathing is easy to learn—especially easy in youth. A habit of many years is, of course, difficult to overcome, and I have heard people who have always accustomed themselves to the open-mouth-breathing declare that suffocation would indubitably ensue if they tried the other method. But I have clung to the conviction that the danger was one of imagination alone.

Most volumes on reading and speaking

begin with pages many and learned on the medical aspect of voice-production, and the anatomical structure and constitution of the throat, lungs, and diaphragm, etc., ornamented, furthermore, with diagrams and woodcuts of an inquisitorial and introspective nature, altogether gruesome and disconcerting. Of the value and practical use of such pages and illustrations to the ordinary reader or reciter I will not venture to speak. Myself I have always regarded them with the curiosity and wholesome reverence of the ignorant. Doubtless to the aspiring and enthusiastic seeker after Initiation into the Mysteries of recitation these terrifying appearances assume the aspect of a sort of Dweller on the Threshold. I can, alas! place no such impressive symbols of occult knowledge on my pages. I shall content myself with a very simple rule. Breathe through the nostrils, and keep the lungs well filled with air.

(2) The next essential attribute of good reading is a careful and finished pronunciation. Here is a matter in which many people are thoughtless and careless, and yet in which all might easily attain pro-

ficiency. For this requires none of those subtler gifts or attainments which go to make up fine reading, expressive declamation, and inoffensive recitation. It is a mere question of cultivation, and a certain full employment of the organs of speech. People do not, as a rule, put sufficient work and material into their pronunciation. If we want to do anything well we must take pains and trouble. To speak clearly is quite hard work. Somebody once said that the difference between a good picture and a bad one was that the good one was finished and the bad one wasn't. This, of course, was meant to be a caricature of a truth—but the truth was there. Half the failures in the world surely come about by want of work, want of material given, want of force employed. Few people seem to have a notion what a lot of work and what full motive-power lies behind any, even the least, success. Good pronunciation demands the full exercise of the lips, teeth, and tongue, as well as full knowledge of the construction of the word. Rigid, unplastic lips, and half-closed teeth are as much enemies to pronunciation as ignorance. The old rule about attending to the

consonants and letting the vowels take care of themselves, is on the whole a very apt one. The vowels are a little bit savage. They are the natural instincts of human speech, and like natural instincts, seem pretty sure to assert themselves. As culture advances, the consonants come to the fore. To pronounce them fully we must use the lips and teeth and tongue with facility and energy. A due attention to the initial and final consonants of a word almost necessitates labial and lingual ease. As a pianist must practise his scales, beginning his work by taking the notes slowly, striking each note firmly and truly in the centre of the note, and with precision and force; so it is well for everyone to practise what I may call the scales of reading—selecting any short sentence and repeating it slowly, taking each word duly and fully, and pronouncing it from the initial to the final sound with elaborate care and force. Ease and precision are thus secured; and a power to read or speak—if occasion require—very rapidly, and yet very clearly, will be gained.

The great difficulty is to get a delicate and firm pronunciation without the effect

of pedantry. A pedantic pronunciation spoils all sense of power and all power of appeal. It is said that in all art the great secret is to study the laws, and having learnt how to obey them, to know when and where they may be disregarded. This is the rock scholastic readers split on. They lose power by their attention to finished utterance. The ordinary listener (and he is just the person who is often the one whose attention is most desired) finds the pronunciation of the words uttered, getting in his way and shutting off the message the words are sent to deliver. This is a sad mistake, and brings immediate and unequivocal failure with it—a failure often inexplicable to the reader or speaker himself. Reading is a branch of art wherein the worker is oftentimes less of artist than scholar. Such a reader never masters that best art that conceals art. An over-elaborated pronunciation is almost as undesirable for a reader—at least, for a public reader—as a slovenly one. It savours of affectation; and affectation is the worst fault that can disfigure any artist. For myself, in my work, I often have to choose between a scholastically correct

pronunciation wherein general power and force of meaning is marred, or a popularly accepted pronunciation, wherein the scholar must be offended; and I always unhesitatingly choose the latter.

The clergy are naturally peculiarly beset by a temptation to pedantic pronunciation. This is reasonable enough. They are often very scholarly men, much given to the exactitudes and proprieties of thought and utterance. They also naturally like to please one another—for in what profession are not passwords and professionalisms of speech and manner dear? They have heard of the necessity of good pronunciation in reading, and as this is a matter in which, by scholarship, they are eminently fitted to excel, they almost centre their attention, not unnaturally, on this one point. The sense of proportion is thus lost. The reading is all pronunciation. It is as if in an organ one stop were pulled out to the detriment of the whole harmony and full concert of sound.

I have observed, however, with satisfaction, that great men of letters rarely make this mistake. They are not, as a rule,

given to pedantry in their reading. They seldom sacrifice power and breadth of appeal to mere accuracy of pronunciation. Of the many poets and men of letters I have heard read, I do not remember one who could be truly said to pronounce pedantically. On the other hand, I have heard many ecclesiastics develop pronunciation to a point of ripeness which approximated decay. The just distinction between power and pedantry in pronunciation is one which divides the reading of the artist from that of the mere scholar.

A good reader, like a good Christian and a good diplomatist, will imitate St Paul. He will, as far as may be, be "all things to all men." If he be reading to the scholar he will be rhythmic and exact; if to the general listener or the lover of expressive reading, he will be dramatic. But in all methods he will remember that a nice pronunciation, finished but not finicking, is a matter of the first importance.

Whilst on this subject of pronunciation, it may be well to point out that grave faults of mispronunciation are rife amongst cultivated and well-bred people, who

would probably repudiate such an accusation with *naïf* surprise. But really I see no reason why these mispronunciations of the "Classes" should not be called vulgarisms quite as truly as those of the "Masses." Both are often equally far removed from the true pronunciation of the word in question. And the mistakes of the ignorant are in reality far more pardonable than the wilful perversions of the cultivated. I have often wondered what effect is produced on the mind of an intelligent and well-informed artisan by the extraordinary verbal vagaries and conversational airs and graces of the rank of society which is called "smart"? It is, for example, no exaggeration of the farcical writer, of the comic caricaturist, or of the cynical democrat, which declares that some of our "young bloods" and fine ladies pronounce *here*, *pier*, *dear*, *beer*, and words of that ilk, as *he-ah*, *pe-ah*, *de-ah*, and *be-ah*. Ears that are accustomed to these and similar affectations of the leisured classes fail to recognise them; or if they recognise them, they fail to think them anything but very charming, very befitting, and quite unexceptionable.

Many dear people who habitually use them would laughingly aver that it is a grotesque caricature to accuse them of the custom. Most English people we know, absolutely and indignantly deny any truth in the conventional French caricature of the English tourist and his lady. The caricature has its truth and point none the less, and the impartial observer smiles, and remembering his Burns, murmurs,

> "Oh wad some power the giftie gi'e us
> To see oursel's as ithers see us!"

The mispronunciations of the cultivated and well-born are many and gross. I have heard men and women of Society talk, whose every word was tainted with class affectations, and whose whole intonation was a *falsetto*. Many ladies and gentlemen cannot even say "Yes" and "No" properly. Why should we note with disapproval the Midlandshire gutteral emphasis of the letter g, and call it a provincialism, if we think it is quite the right and knowin' thing to drop that same letter entirely when it is at the endin' of a word? What defence, save

that of long use and custom, and the dignity of exalted example, can be urged in defence of this habit of pronouncing *singing*, *going*, *doing*, *speaking*, *reading*, and all words ending in *ing*, without their final letter? Yet an honourable and reverend gentleman I once heard reading the service in a country church, who was so pedantically exact as to ask deliverance from "the dev-il," gave us "everlastin' damnation" in the very next line; and further, when he announced the verse of the hymn that was to be subsequently sung he assured us all that

> "The life that knows no sorrow,
> The tearless life is the-ah!"

Yes: undoubtedly, the verbal eccentricities which can be culled from the speech of the leisured classes form a quaint and most profitable field of observation; and the good reader should as carefully eschew them as he should avoid the mistakes of the ignorant, or the pedantry of the mere scholar.

(3) A third essential point in good reading is an unfailing recognition of punctuation and pause. I think every-

one who desires to read well should study punctuation, and consider the comparative values of the stops on the printed page. People are often very lax on this point, both in their writing and in their reading. Admirably expressed letters are often very inadequately punctuated. There is a great charm in right punctuation, when its value and use are once mastered. It gives a wonderful drama and significance to the printed page. There should be a due correspondence to this significance in the reading. A reader should so mark his sentences with pauses that the listener might write down the text from the reading, and punctuate it very much, if not exactly, as the author gives it. Indeed, if the stops be systematically observed — (the parenthetical paragraphs duly separated from the leading line of the sentence)—the reading must possess a measure of excellence, and even of variety. It would be well, therefore, for anyone who has to read much in public or in private, to thoroughly learn what the different stops mean, and the value to be attached to each. It is well also to remember that when a parenthesis

occurs, a slight pause may be given both before and after the clause, a lower note than the one used for the main sentence taken for the parenthesis, and then (after the pause) the original higher note of the sentence resumed. With a little practice this is found to be very easy.

There is an old rule in reading. Don't drop the voice at the end of the sentence. It is a good rule, if not over-emphasised; and also if it is borne in mind that the "drop" has reference quite as much to the force and tone of the voice as to its note. It is liable to the somewhat strained interpretation that it is well to actually raise the voice at the end of a sentence. This is wholly unnecessary, as a rule, and has a most unpleasing and unsatisfying effect on the listener. It bears an analogy to finishing a piece of music on the dominant. The resolution of the chords is imperative. I take the meaning of the rule to be chiefly that the force and fulness of the voice should not be dropped, —that the sentence should not die away weakly as if from want of vocal force to end it as forcible as it was begun. If the *force* be held up, the *note* may be dropped

at option of the reader, and to give the effect of the common chord at the end. We must all have heard readers who, with too much zeal, have obeyed this rule, carrying obedience beyond its mark, and raising the voice at the end of every sentence or line of poetry in a way that rendered patient listening a Counsel of Perfection.

The chief points in this matter are, to scrupulously observe and mark all the punctuation of your author; and to keep the force, the power, the tone of the voice on to the end of the sentence.

(4) I have sometimes been asked whether gesture of any kind is admissible in dramatic reading. I should not naturally have supposed such a question could arise; but in that it has been brought to my notice, and in that I have seen some readers emphasise their words with a certain amount of action, it may be as well to name the subject. I will at once say that, to my mind, gesture of any description is wholly out of place in reading. I can recall one or two notable instances in my experience when a reader has seen fit to illuminate his meaning by a slight sug-

gestion of gesture; and the result, to my mind, trended dangerously on the ludicrous, if it did not actually pass into its domain. Even little gestures of emphasis and earnestness are unnecessary, and weaken rather than strengthen the appeal of the words that are being read. A confusion on the subject of reading, and of what is allowable therein, has doubtless arisen from the fact that there are occasions when reading has to pretend more or less to be speaking. With these occasions I have already briefly dealt in the section of the volume wherein I speak of preaching and lecturing; I need therefore do no more than refer to them here. They may truly claim gesture as a part of their method; but in reading, pure and simple, I have never yet seen it employed with any measure of success, nor can I contemplate such employment without a distinct disturbance of gravity. Even when gesture is refined down to mere facial expression, it fills one with consternation to picture to oneself a reader indulging in any marked mobility of feature. All such lavishness of misapplied intelligence is desolating. On the whole, and

in brief, gesture in reading must be pronounced inadmissible.

(5) The fifth and last point I would briefly name is this. It is most necessary in reading aloud not to stoop over the book. A contracted chest, and a neck that is bent, are enemies alike to good reading and to health. Reading is an admirable drill; and in all drilling we must hold ourselves up. Whether we stand or sit to read, the chest should always be expanded, and the shoulders back. There is a fine Law of Correspondences generally at work in most things; and what makes for good in one thing is probably right for another. Reading is peculiarly at one in all its rules with the rules of health. It is therefore doubly well to know them, and somewhat dangerous, for anyone who has to read much, to disobey or ignore them.

I began these hints by advising the reader to keep his lungs full, and breathe through his nose. I end them by a rule which, I fear, sounds equally crude and personal. It is, briefly, this—Hold yourself up.

There are many points which might be named here, but I wish to make these

hints as few and brief as possible, and to avoid all appearance of elaboration and technicality. I shall not attempt to give any selected passages of prose or verse, "pointed" for practice and imitation. I do not at all desire to decide arbitrarily on points where individual conviction and taste have the right-of-way. For myself, I should object to be told where I am to pause and where to hasten on; where and why I am to use now the rising inflexion and now the falling; where I am to be greatly surprised, or pained, or angry, or sinister, or pathetic; where I am to exhibit malicious joy or pretended vexation, injured innocence or boundless fury. All such laying down of the law seems to me to infer a too pessimistically low view of the average intelligence of the student, and a far too optimistic belief in my own powers of authority. I have therefore contented myself with these few hints.

In writing about the art of reading one is apt to think overmuch about the offices of public reading. They are many and important. But, in reality, the subject is one which affects almost everybody, and enters into the home life of every family.

Most of us are grateful for "being read to" sometimes; most of us have sometimes to be readers. Let us try to do as we would be done by—viz. read, not so much as we ourselves like, but as our listeners like. To read well in any method is a delightful and useful art, all the more valuable from its homeliness and constant applicability. Some few hints may be given, some few methods hinted at. Thought and observation are admirable masters, and are obtained at will, even where other tuition is impracticable or unacceptable. The art is one that enters both actively and passively into all our lives, and is one to which we may well give more than a passing thought. I shall be glad if any words written here, or spoken elsewhere, help to direct or give impetus to such thought.

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