

ad bestias, aut etiam, ut longius progrediari, si in aliqua desertissima solitudine, ad saxa et ad scopulos, hæc conqueri et deplo-rare vellem, tamen omnia muta atque inanimata, tanta et tam in-digna rerum atrocitate commoverentur.\* This, with all the deference due to so eloquent an orator, we must pronounce to be declamatory, not pathetic. This is straining the language of pas-sion too far. Every hearer sees this immediately to be a studied figure of rhetoric; it may amuse him, but instead of inflaming him more, it, in truth, cools his passion. So dangerous it is to give scope to a flowery imagination, when one intends to make a strong and passionate impression.

No other part of discourse remains now to be treated of, ex-cept the peroration, or conclusion. Concerning this, it is need- less to say much, because it must vary so considerably, according to the strain of the preceding discourse. Sometimes, the whole pathetic part comes in most properly at the peroration. Some- times, when the discourse has been entirely argumentative, it is fit to conclude with summing up the arguments, placing them in one view, and leaving the impression of them full and strong on the mind of the audience. For the great rule of conclusion, and what nature obviously suggests, is, to place that last on which we choose that the strength of our cause should rest.

In sermons, inferences from what has been said, make a common conclusion. With regard to these, care should be taken, not only that they rise naturally, but (what is less com- monly attended to) that they should so much agree with the strain of sentiment throughout the discourse, as not to break the unity of the sermon. For inferences, how justly soever they may be deduced from the doctrine of the text, yet have a bad effect, if, at the conclusion of a discourse, they introduce some subject altogether new, and turn off our attention from the main object to which the preacher had directed our thoughts. They appear, in this case, like excrescences jutting out from the body, which form an unnatural addition to it; and tend to enfeeble the impression which the composition, as a whole, is calculated to make.

\* "Were I employed in lamenting those instances of an atrocious oppression and cruelty, not among an assembly of Roman citizens, not among the allies of our state, nor among those who had ever heard the name of the Roman people, not even among human creatures, but in the midst of the brute creation; and so farther, were I pouring forth my lamentations to the stones, and to the rocks, in some remote and desert wilderness, even those mute and inanimate beings, would, at the recital of such shocking indignities, be thrown into commotion."—c. 67.

The most eloquent of the French, perhaps, indeed, of all modern orators, Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, terminates in a very moving manner, his funeral oration on the great Prince of Condé, with this return upon himself, and his old age: "Accept O prince! these last efforts of a voice which you once well knew. With you all my funeral discourses are now to end. Instead of deploring the death of others, henceforth it shall be my study to learn from you, how my own may be blessed. Happy, if warned by those grey hairs, of the account which I must soon give of my ministry, I reserve, solely for that flock whom I ought to feed with the word of life, the feeble remains of a voice which now trembles, and of an ardour which is now on the point of being extinct."\*

In all discourses, it is a matter of importance to hit the precise time of concluding, so as to bring our discourse just to a point; neither ending abruptly and unexpectedly; nor disap- pointing the expectation of the hearers, when they look for the close; and continuing to hover round and round the conclu- sion, till they become heartily tired of us. We should endeavour to go off with a good grace; not to end with a languishing and drawing sentence; but to close with dignity and spirit, that we may leave the minds of the hearers warm; and dismiss them with a favourable impression of the subject and of the speaker.

## LECTURE XXXIII.

### PRONUNCIATION, OR DELIVERY.

HAVING treated of several general heads relating to elo- quence, or public speaking, I now proceed to another very im- portant part of the subject yet remaining, that is, the Pronuncia- tion, or Delivery of a Discourse. How much stress was laid upon this by the most eloquent of all orators, Demosthenes,

\* "Agréez ces derniers efforts d'une voix qui vous fut connue. Vous met- trez fin à tous ces discours. Au lieu de déplorer la mort des autres, grand prince! dorénavant je veux apprendre de vous, à rendre la mienne sainte. Heureux, si, averti par ses cheveux blancs du compte que je dois rendre de mon administra- tion, je réserve au troupeau que je dois nourrir de la parole de vie, les restes d'une voix qui tombe, et d'une ardeur qui s'éteint."—These are the last senti- ments of that oration: but the whole of the peroration from that passage, "Venez, peuples, venez maintenant," &c, though it is too long for insertion, is a great masterpiece of pathetic eloquence.

appears from a noted saying of his, related both by Cicero and Quintilian; when being asked, what was the first point in oratory? he answered, Delivery; and being asked, what was the second; and afterwards, what was the third? he still answered, Delivery. There is no wonder that he should have rated this so high, and that for improving himself in it, he should have employed those assiduous and painful labours, which all the ancients take so much notice of: for, beyond doubt, nothing is of more importance. To superficial thinkers, the management of the voice and gesture, in public speaking, may appear to relate to decoration only, and to be one of the inferior arts of catching an audience. But this is far from being the case. It is intimately connected with what is, or ought to be, the end of all public speaking, persuasion; and therefore deserves the study of the most grave and serious speakers, as much as of those whose only aim it is to please.

For, let it be considered, whenever we address ourselves to others by words, our intention certainly is to make some impression on those to whom we speak; it is to convey to them our own ideas and emotions. Now the tone of our voice, our looks, and gestures, interpret our ideas and emotions no less than words do; nay, the impression they make on others, is frequently much stronger than any that words can make. We often see, that an expressive look, or a passionate cry, unaccompanied by words, conveys to others more forcible ideas, and rouses within them stronger passions, than can be communicated by the most eloquent discourse. The signification of our sentiments, made by tones and gestures, has this advantage above that made by words, that it is the language of nature. It is that method of interpreting our mind which nature has dictated to all, and which is understood by all; whereas, words are only arbitrary conventional symbols of our ideas; and, by consequence, must make a more feeble impression. So true is this, that, to render words fully significant, they must, almost in every case, receive some aid from the manner of pronunciation and delivery; and he who, in speaking, should employ bare words, without enforcing them by proper tones and accents, would leave us with a faint and indistinct impression, often with a doubtful and ambiguous conception of what he had delivered. Nay, so close is the connexion between certain sentiments and the proper manner of pronouncing them, that he who does not pronounce them after that manner, can never persuade us, that he believes, or feels, the sentiments themselves. His delivery

may be such as to give the lie to all that he asserts. When Marcus Cælius accused one of an attempt to poison him, but enforced his accusation in a languid manner, and without any warmth or earnestness of delivery, Cicero, who pleaded for the accused person, improved this into an argument of the falsity of the charge, "An tu, M. Cæli, nisi fingeres, sic ageres?" In Shakespeare's Richard II. the Duchess of York thus impeaches the sincerity of her husband:

Pleads he in earnest?—Look upon his face,  
His eyes do drop no tears; his prayers are jest;  
His words come from his mouth; ours, from our breast;  
He prays but faintly, and would be denied;  
We pray with heart and soul.

But, I believe it is needless to say any more in order to show the high importance of a good delivery. I proceed, therefore, to such observations as appear to me most useful to be made on this head.

The great objects which every public speaker will naturally have in his eye in forming his delivery, are, first, to speak so as to be fully and easily understood by all who hear him; and next, to speak with grace and force, so as to please and to move his audience. Let us consider what is most important with respect to each of these.\*

In order to be fully and easily understood, the four chief requisites are, a due degree of loudness of voice; distinctness; slowness; and propriety of pronunciation.

The first attention of every public speaker, doubtless, must be, to make himself be heard by all those to whom he speaks. He must endeavour to fill with his voice, the space occupied by the assembly. This power of voice, it may be thought, is wholly a natural talent. It is so in a good measure; but, however, may receive considerable assistance from art. Much depends for this purpose on the proper pitch, and management of the voice. Every man has three pitches in his voice; the high, the middle, and the low one. The high, is that which he uses in calling aloud to some one at a distance. The low, is when he approaches to a whisper. The middle, is that which he employs in common conversation, and which he should generally use in public discourse. For it is a great mistake, to imagine, that one must take the highest pitch of his voice, in order to be well heard by a great assembly. This is confounding two

\* On this whole subject, Mr. Sheridan's Lectures on Elocution are very worthy of being consulted; and several hints are here taken from them.

things which are different, loudness, or strength of sound, with the key or note, on which we speak. A speaker may render his voice louder, without altering the key; and we shall always be able to give most body, most persevering force of sound, to that pitch of voice, to which in conversation we are accustomed. Whereas, by setting out on our highest pitch or key, we certainly allow ourselves less compass, and are likely to strain our voice before we have done. We shall fatigue ourselves, and speak with pain; and whenever a man speaks with pain to himself, he is always heard with pain by his audience. Give the voice, therefore, full strength and swell of sound; but always pitch it on your ordinary speaking key. Make it a constant rule never to utter a greater quantity of voice, than you can afford without pain to yourselves, and without any extraordinary effort. As long as you keep within these bounds, the other organs of speech will be at liberty to discharge their several offices with ease; and you will always have your voice under command. But whenever you transgress these bounds, you give up the reins, and have no longer any management of it. It is a useful rule too, in order to be well heard, to fix our eye on some of the most distant persons in the assembly, and to consider ourselves as speaking to them. We naturally and mechanically utter our words with such a degree of strength, as to make ourselves be heard by one to whom we address ourselves, provided he be within the reach of our voice. As this is the case in common conversation, it will hold also in public speaking. But remember, that in public as well as in conversation, it is possible to offend by speaking too loud. This extreme hurts the ear, by making the voice come upon it in rumbling indistinct masses; besides its giving the speaker the disagreeable appearance of one who endeavours to compel assent, by mere violence and force of sound.

In the next place, to being well heard, and clearly understood, distinctness of articulation contributes more, perhaps, than mere loudness of sound. The quantity of sound necessary to fill even a large space, is smaller than is commonly imagined; and with distinct articulation, a man of a weak voice will make it reach farther than the strongest voice can reach without it. To this, therefore, every public speaker ought to pay great attention. He must give every sound which he utters its due proportion, and make every syllable, and even every letter in the word which he pronounces, be heard distinctly; without slurring, whispering, or suppressing any of the proper sounds

In the third place, in order to articulate distinctly, moderation is requisite with regard to the speed of pronouncing. Precipitancy of speech confounds all articulation, and all meaning. I need scarcely observe that there may be also an extreme on the opposite side. It is obvious, that a lifeless, drawing pronunciation, which allows the minds of the hearers to be always outunning the speaker, must render every discourse insipid and fatiguing. But the extreme of speaking too fast is much more common, and requires the more to be guarded against, because, when it has grown up into a habit, few errors are more difficult to be corrected. To pronounce with a proper degree of slowness, and with full and clear articulation, is the first thing to be studied by all who begin to speak in public; and cannot be too much recommended to them. Such a pronunciation gives weight and dignity to their discourse. It is a great assistance to the voice, by the pauses and rests which it allows it more easily to make; and it enables the speaker to swell all his sounds both with more force, and more music. It assists him also in preserving a due command of himself; whereas a rapid and hurried manner is apt to excite that flutter of spirits, which is the greatest enemy to all right execution in the way of oratory. "Promptum sit os," says Quintilian, "non præceps, moderatum, non lentum."

After these fundamental attentions to the pitch and management of the voice, to distinct articulation, and to a proper degree of slowness of speech, what a public speaker must, in the fourth place, study, is, propriety of pronunciation; or the giving to every word, which he utters, that sound, which the most polite usage of the language appropriates to it; in opposition to broad, vulgar, or provincial pronunciation. This is requisite both for speaking intelligibly, and for speaking with grace or beauty. Instructions concerning this article can be given by the living voice only. But there is one observation which it may not be improper here to make. In the English language, every word which consists of more syllables than one, has one accented syllable. The accent rests sometimes on the vowel, sometimes on the consonant. Seldom, or never, is there more than one accented syllable in any English word, however long; and the genius of the language requires the voice to mark that syllable by a stronger percussive, and to pass more slightly over the rest. Now, after we have learned the proper seats of these accents, it is an important rule, to give every word just the same accent in public speaking, as in common discourse. Many per-

sons err in this respect. When they speak in public, and with solemnity, they pronounce the syllables in a different manner from what they do at other times. They dwell upon them, and protract them; they multiply accents on the same word; from a mistaken notion, that it gives gravity and force to their discourse, and adds to the pomp of public declamation. Whereas, this is one of the greatest faults that can be committed in pronunciation; it makes what is called a theatrical or mouthing manner; and gives an artificial affected air to speech, which detracts greatly both from its agreeableness, and its impression.

I proceed to treat next of those higher parts of delivery, by studying which, a speaker has something farther in view than merely to render himself intelligible, and seeks to give grace and force to what he utters. These may be comprised under four heads; emphasis, pauses, tones, and gestures. Let me only premise, in general, to what I am to say concerning them, that attention to these articles of delivery is by no means to be confined, as some might be apt to imagine, to the more elaborate and pathetic parts of a discourse. There is, perhaps, as great attention requisite, and as much skill displayed, in adapting emphasis, pauses, tones and gestures, properly, to calm and plain speaking; and the effect of a just and graceful delivery will, in every part of a subject, be found of high importance for commanding attention, and enforcing what is spoken.

First; let us consider emphasis. By this is meant a stronger and fuller sound of voice, by which we distinguish the accented syllable of some word, on which we design to lay particular stress, and to show how it affects the rests of the sentence. Sometimes the emphatic word must be distinguished by a particular tone of voice, as well as by a stronger accent. On the right management of the emphasis depend the whole life and spirit of every discourse. If no emphasis be placed on any words, not only is discourse rendered heavy and lifeless, but the meaning left often ambiguous. If the emphasis be placed wrong, we pervert and confound the meaning wholly. To give a common instance: such a simple question as this, "Do you ride to town to-day?" is capable of no fewer than four different acceptations, according as the emphasis is differently placed on the words. If it be pronounced thus: Do *you* ride to town to-day? the answer may naturally be, No; I send my servant in my stead. If thus; Do you *ride* to town to-day? Answer, No, I intend to walk. Do you ride *to town* to-day? No, I ride out in the fields. Do you ride *to town to-day*? No; but I

shall to-morrow. In like manner, in solemn discourse, the whole force and beauty of an expression often depend on the accented word; and we may present to the hearers quite different views of the same sentiment, by placing the emphasis differently. In the following words of our Saviour, observe in what different lights the thought is placed, according as the words are pronounced. "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" *Betrayest thou*—makes the reproach turn on the infamy of treachery. *Betrayest thou*—makes it rest upon Judas's connection with his master. *Betrayest thou* the Son of Man—rests it upon our Saviour's personal character and eminence. *Betrayest thou* the Son of Man *with a kiss*?—turns it upon his prostituting the signal of peace and friendship, to the purpose of a mark of destruction.

In order to acquire the proper management of the emphasis, the great rule, and indeed the only rule possible to be given, is, that the speaker study to attain a just conception of the force and spirit of those sentiments which he is to pronounce. For to lay the emphasis with exact propriety, is a constant exercise of good sense and attention. It is far from being an inconsiderable attainment. It is one of the greatest trials of a true and just taste; and must arise from feeling delicately ourselves, and from judging accurately of what is fittest to strike the feelings of others. There is as great a difference between a chapter of the Bible, or any other piece of plain prose, read by one who places the several emphases every where with taste and judgment, and by one who neglects or mistakes them, as there is between the same tune played by the most masterly hand, or by the most bungling performer.

In all prepared discourses, it would be of great use, if they were read over or rehearsed in private, with this particular view, to search for the proper emphasis, before they were pronounced in public; marking, at the same time, with a pen, the emphatical words in every sentence, or at least in the most weighty and affecting parts of the discourse, and fixing them well in the memory. Were this attention often bestowed, were this part of pronunciation studied with more exactness, and not left to the moment of delivery, as is commonly done, public speakers would find their care abundantly repaid, by the remarkable effects which it would produce upon their audience. Let me caution, at the same time, against one error, that of multiplying emphatical words too much. It is only by a prudent reserve in the use of them, that we can give them any weight.

If they recur too often; if a speaker attempts to render every thing which he says of high importance, by a multitude of strong emphases, we soon learn to pay little regard to them. To crowd every sentence with emphatical words, is like crowding all the pages of a book with Italic characters, which, as to the effect, is just the same with using no such distinctions at all.

Next to emphasis, the pauses in speaking demand attention. These are of two kinds; first, emphatical pauses; and next, such as mark the distinctions of sense. An emphatical pause is made, after something has been said of peculiar moment, and on which we want to fix the hearer's attention. Sometimes, before such a thing is said, we usher it in with a pause of this nature. Such pauses have the same effect as a strong emphasis; and are subject to the same rules; especially to the caution just now given, of not repeating them too frequently. For as they excite uncommon attention, and of course raise expectation, if the importance of the matter be not fully answerable to such expectation, they occasion disappointment and disgust.

But the most frequent and the principal use of pauses, is to mark the divisions of the sense, and at the same time to allow the speaker to draw his breath; and the proper and graceful adjustment of such pauses, is one of the most nice and difficult articles in delivery. In all public speaking, the management of the breath requires a good deal of care, so as not to be obliged to divide words from one another, which have so intimate a connection, that they ought to be pronounced with the same breath, and without the least separation. Many a sentence is miserably mangled, and the force of the emphasis totally lost, by divisions being made in the wrong place. To avoid this, every one, while he is speaking, should be very careful to provide a full supply of breath for what he is to utter. It is a great mistake to imagine, that the breath must be drawn only at the end of a period, when the voice is allowed to fall. It may easily be gathered at the intervals of the period, when the voice is only suspended for a moment; and by this management, one may have always a sufficient stock for carrying on the longest sentence, without improper interruptions.

If any one, in public speaking, shall have formed to himself a certain melody or tune, which requires rest and pauses of its own, distinct from those of the sense, he has, undoubtedly, contracted one of the worst habits into which a public speaker can fall. It is the sense which should always rule the pauses of the voice; for wherever there is any sensible suspension of the

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voice, the hearer is always led to expect somewhat corresponding in the meaning. Pauses, in public discourse, must be formed upon the manner in which we utter ourselves in ordinary sensible conversation; and not upon the stiff artificial manner which we acquire, from reading books according to the common punctuation. The general run of punctuation is very arbitrary; often capricious and false; and dictates an uniformity of tone in the pauses, which is extremely disagreeable: for we are to observe that to render pauses graceful and expressive, they must not only be made in the right place, but also be accompanied with a proper tone of voice, by which the nature of these pauses is intimated; much more than by the length of them, which can never be exactly measured. Sometimes it is only a slight and simple suspension of voice that is proper; sometimes a degree of cadence in the voice is required; and sometimes that peculiar tone and cadence, which denote the sentence finished. In all these cases, we are to regulate ourselves, by attending to the manner in which nature teaches us to speak, when engaged in real and earnest discourse with others.

When we are reading or reciting verse, there is a peculiar difficulty in making the pauses justly. The difficulty arises from the melody of verse, which dictates to the ear pauses or rests of its own; and to adjust and compound these properly with the pauses of the sense, so as neither to hurt the ear, nor offend the understanding, is so very nice a matter, that it is no wonder we so seldom meet with good readers of poetry. There are two kinds of pauses that belong to the music of verse; one is, the pause at the end of the line; and the other, the caesural pause in the middle of it. With regard to the pause at the end of the line, which marks that strain or verse to be finished, rhyme renders this always sensible, and in some measure compels us to observe it in our pronunciation. In blank verse, where there is a greater liberty permitted of running the lines into one another, sometimes without any suspension in the sense, it has been made a question, whether in reading such verse with propriety, any regard at all should be paid to the close of a line? On the stage, where the appearance of speaking in verse should always be avoided, there can, I think, be no doubt, that the close of such lines as make no pause in the sense, should not be rendered perceptible to the ear. But on other occasions, this were improper: for what is the use of melody, or for what end has the poet composed in verse, if, in reading his lines, we suppress

his numbers; and degrade them, by our pronunciation, into mere prose? We ought, therefore, certainly to read blank verse so, as to make every line sensible to the ear. At the same time, in doing so, every appearance of sing-song and tone must be carefully guarded against. The close of the line, where it makes no pause in the meaning, ought to be marked, not by such a tone as is used in finishing a sentence; but without either letting the voice fall, or elevating it, it should be marked only by such a slight suspension of sound, as may distinguish the passage from one line to another without injuring the meaning.

The other kind of musical pause, is that which falls somewhere about the middle of the verse, and divides it into two hemistichs; a pause, not so great as that which belongs to the close of the line, but still sensible to an ordinary ear. This, which is called the *caesural* pause, in the French heroic verse falls uniformly in the middle of the line. In the English, it may fall after the 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th syllables in the line, and no other. Where the verse is so constructed, that this *caesural* pause coincides with the slightest pause or division in the sense, the line can be read easily; as in the two first verses of Mr. Pope's *Messiah*:

Ye nymphs of Solyma! begin the song;  
To heavenly themes, sublimer strains belong.

But if it shall happen that words, which have such a strict and intimate connection as not to bear even a momentary separation, are divided from one another by this *caesural* pause, we then feel a sort of struggle between the sense and the sound, which renders it difficult to read such lines gracefully. The rule of proper pronunciation in such cases is, to regard only the pause which the sense forms; and to read the line accordingly. The neglect of the *caesural* pause may make the line sound somewhat unharmoniously; but the effect would be much worse, if the sense were sacrificed to the sound. For instance, in the following line of Milton:

——— What in me is dark,  
Illumine; what is low, raise and support—

The sense clearly dictates the pause after "*illumine*," at the end of the third syllable, which, in reading, ought to be made accordingly; though, if the melody only were to be regarded, "*illumine*" should be connected with what follows, and the pause not made

til the 4th or 6th syllable. So, in the following line of Mr. Pope's (*Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*):

I sit, with sad civility I read—

The ear plainly points out the *caesural* pause as falling after "*sad*," the 4th syllable. But it would be very bad reading to make any pause there, so as to separate "*sad*" and "*civility*." The sense admits of no other pause than after the second syllable "*sit*," which therefore must be the only pause made in the reading.

I proceed to treat next of tones in pronunciation, which are different both from emphasis and pauses; consisting in the modulation of the voice, the notes or variations of sound which we employ in public speaking. How much of the propriety, the force and grace of discourse, must depend on these, will appear from this single consideration; that to almost every sentiment we utter, more especially to every strong emotion, nature hath adapted some peculiar tone of voice; inasmuch, that he who should tell another that he was very angry, or much grieved, in a tone which did not suit such emotions, instead of being believed, would be laughed at. Sympathy is one of the most powerful principles by which persuasive discourse works its effect. The speaker endeavours to transfuse into his hearers his own sentiments and emotions; which he can never be successful in doing, unless he utters them in such a manner as to convince the hearers that he feels them.\* The proper expression of tones, therefore, deserves to be attentively studied by every one who would be a successful orator.

The greatest and most material instruction which can be given for this purpose is, to form the tones of public speaking upon the tones of sensible and animated conversation. We may observe that every man, when he is much in earnest in common discourse, when he is engaged in speaking on some subject which

\* "All that passes in the mind of man may be reduced to two classes, which I call ideas and emotions. By ideas, I mean all thoughts which rise and pass in succession in the mind. By emotions, all exertions of the mind in arranging, combining, and separating its ideas; as well as all the effects produced on the mind itself by those ideas, from the more violent agitation of the passions, to the calmer feelings produced by the operation of the intellect and the fancy. In short, thought is the object of the one, internal feeling of the other. That which serves to express the former, I call the language of ideas; and the latter, the language of emotions. Words are the signs of the one, tones of the other. Without the use of these two sorts of language, it is impossible to communicate through the ear all that passes in the mind of man."—SHERRIDAN on the Art of Reading.



interests him nearly, has an eloquent or persuasive tone and manner. What is the reason of our being often so frigid and unpersuasive in public discourse, but our departing from the natural tone of speaking, and delivering ourselves in an affected artificial manner? Nothing can be more absurd than to imagine, that as soon as one mounts a pulpit, or rises in a public assembly, he is instantly to lay aside the voice with which he expresses himself in private; to assume a new, studied tone, and a cadence altogether foreign to his natural manner. This has vitiated all delivery; this has given rise to cant and tedious monotony, in the different kinds of modern public speaking especially in the pulpit. Men departed from nature; and sought to give a beauty or force, as they imagined, to their discourse, by substituting certain studied musical tones, in the room of the genuine expressions of sentiment, which the voice carries in natural discourse. Let every public speaker guard against this error. Whether he speak in a private room, or in a great assembly, let him remember that he still speaks. Follow nature; consider how she teaches you to utter any sentiment or feeling of your heart. Imagine a subject of debate started in conversation among grave and wise men, and yourself bearing a share in it. Think after what manner, with what tones and inflections of voice, you would on such an occasion express yourself, when you were most in earnest, and sought most to be listened to. Carry these with you to the bar, to the pulpit, or to any public assembly; let these be the foundation of your manner of pronouncing there; and you will take the surest method of rendering your delivery both agreeable and persuasive.

I have said, let these conversation-tones be the *foundation* of public pronunciation; for, on some occasions, solemn public speaking requires them to be exalted beyond the strain of common discourse. In a formal studied oration, the elevation of the style, and the harmony of the sentences, prompt almost necessarily, a modulation of voice more rounded, and bordering more upon music, than conversation admits. This gives rise to what is called the declaiming manner. But though this mode of pronunciation runs considerably beyond ordinary discourse, yet still it must have for its basis the natural tones of grave and dignified conversation. I must observe, at the same time, that the constant indulgence of a declamatory manner is not favourable either to good composition or good delivery; and is in hazard of betraying public speakers into that monotony of tone and cadence, which is so generally complained of. Whereas, he who forms

the general run of his delivery upon a speaking manner, is not likely ever to become disagreeable through monotony. He will have the same natural variety in his tones, which a person has in conversation. Indeed, the perfection of delivery requires both these different manners, that of speaking with liveliness and ease, and that of declaiming with stateliness and dignity, to be possessed by one man; and to be employed by him, according as the different parts of his discourse require either the one or the other. This is a perfection which is not attained by many; the greatest part of public speakers allowing their delivery to be formed altogether accidentally; according as some turn of voice appears to them most beautiful, or some artificial model has caught their fancy; and acquiring, by these means, a habit of pronunciation which they can never vary. But the capital direction, which ought never to be forgotten, is, to copy the proper tones for expressing every sentiment from those which nature dictates to us, in conversation with others; to speak always with her voice, and not to form to ourselves a fantastic public manner, from an absurd fancy of its being more beautiful than a natural one.\*

It now remains to treat of gesture, or what is called action in public discourse. Some nations animate their words in common conversation, with many more motions of the body than others do. The French and the Italians are in this respect, much more sprightly than we. But there is no nation, hardly any person so phlegmatic, as not to accompany their words with some actions and gesticulations, on all occasions, when they are much in earnest. It is therefore unnatural in a public speaker, it is inconsistent with that earnestness and seriousness which he ought to show in all affairs of moment, to remain quite unmoved in his outward appearance; and to let the words drop from his mouth, without any expression of meaning or warmth in his gesture.

The fundamental rule as to propriety of action, is undoubtedly the same with what I gave as to propriety of tone. Attend to the looks and gestures, in which earnestness, indig-

\* "Loquere," (says an author of the last century, who has written a treatise in verse, de Gestu et Voce Oratoris,.)

— "Loquere; hoc vitium commune, loquatur.

Ut nemo; at tanta declamatrix omnia voce.

Tu loquere, ut mos est hominum; boat et latrat ille;

Ille ululat; rudit hic; (fari si talia dignum est)

Non hominem vox ulla sonat ratione loquentem."

JOANNES LUCAS, de Gestu et Voce.—Lib. ii. Paris, 1675.

nation, compassion, or any other emotion, discovers itself to most advantage in the common intercourse of men; and let these be your model. Some of these looks and gestures are common to all men; and there are also certain peculiarities of manner which distinguish every individual. A public speaker must take that manner which is most natural to himself. For it is here, just as in tones. It is not the business of a speaker to form to himself a certain set of motions and gestures, which he thinks most becoming and agreeable, and to practise these in public, without their having any correspondence to the manner which is natural to him in private. His gestures and motions ought all to carry that kind of expression which nature has dictated to him; and unless this be the case, it is impossible, by means of any study, to avoid their appearing stiff and forced.

However, although nature must be the groundwork, I admit that there is room in this matter for some study and art. For many persons are naturally ungraceful in the motions which they make; and this ungracefulness might, in part at least, be reformed by application and care. The study of action in public speaking, consists chiefly in guarding against awkward and disagreeable motions, and in learning to perform such as are natural to the speaker, in the most becoming manner. For this end it has been advised by writers on this subject, to practise before a mirror, where one may see and judge of his own gestures. But I am afraid, persons are not always the best judges of the gracefulness of their own motions; and one may declaim long enough before a mirror, without correcting any of his faults. The judgment of a friend, whose good taste they can trust, will be found of much greater advantage to beginners, than any mirror they can use. With regard to particular rules concerning action and gesticulation, Quintilian has delivered a great many, in the last chapter of the eleventh book of his *Institutions*; and all the modern writers on this subject have done little else but translate them. I am not of opinion that such rules, delivered either by the voice or on paper, can be of much use, unless persons saw them exemplified before their eyes.\*

\* The few following hints only I shall adventure to throw out, in case they may be of any service. When speaking in public, one should study to preserve as much dignity as possible, in the whole attitude of the body. An erect posture is generally to be chosen; standing firm, so as to have the fullest and freest command of all his motions; any inclination which is used should be forwards towards the hearers, which is a natural expression of earnestness. As for the

I shall only add further on this head, that in order to succeed well in delivery, nothing is more necessary than for a speaker to guard against a certain flutter of spirits, which is peculiarly incident to those who begin to speak in public. He must endeavour above all things to be recollected, and master of himself. For this end, he will find nothing of more use to him than to study to become wholly engaged in his subject; to be possessed with a sense of its importance or seriousness; to be concerned much more to persuade than to please. He will generally please most, when pleasing is not his sole nor chief aim. This is the only rational and proper method of raising one's self above that timid and bashful regard to an audience, which is so ready to disconcert a speaker, both as to what he is to say, and as to his manner of saying it.

I cannot conclude without an earnest admonition to guard against all affectation, which is the certain ruin of good delivery. Let your manner, whatever it is, be your own; neither imitated from another, nor assumed upon some imaginary model, which is unnatural to you. Whatever is native, even though accompanied with several defects, yet is likely to please; because it shows us a man; because it has the appearance of coming from the heart. Whereas a delivery, attended with several acquired graces and beauties, if it be not easy and free, if it betray the marks of art and affectation, never fails to disgust. To attain an extremely correct, and perfectly graceful delivery, is what few can expect; so many natural talents being requisite to concur in forming it. But to attain, what as to the effect is very little inferior, a forcible, and persuasive manner, is within the power of most persons; if they will only unlearn false and cor-

tenance, the chief rule is, that it should correspond with the nature of the discourse; and when no particular emotion is expressed, a serious and manly look is always the best. The eyes should never be fixed close on any one object, but move easily round the audience. In the motions made with the hands, consist the chief part of gesture in speaking. The ancients condemned all motions performed by the left hand alone; but I am not sensible that these are always offensive, though it is natural for the right hand to be more frequently employed. Warm emotions demand the motion of both hands corresponding together. But whether one gesticulates with one or with both hands, it is an important rule, that all his motions should be free and easy. Narrow and straitened movements are generally ungraceful; for which reason, motions made with the hands are directed to proceed from the shoulder rather than from the elbow. Perpendicular movements too with the hands, that is, in the straight line up and down, which Shakespeare in *Hamlet* calls "sawing the air with the hand," are seldom good. Oblique motions are, in general, the most graceful. Too sudden and nimble motions should be likewise avoided. Earnestness can be fully expressed without them. Shakespeare's directions on this head are full of good sense: "Use all gently," says he; "and in the very torrent and tempest of passion, acquire a temperance that may give it smoothness."



rupt habits; if they will allow themselves to follow nature, and will speak in public as they do in private, when they speak in earnest and from the heart. If one has naturally any gross defects in his voice or gestures, he begins at the wrong end, if he attempts at reforming them only when he is to speak in public. He should begin with rectifying them in his private manner of speaking; and then carry to the public the right habit he has formed. For, when a speaker is engaged in a public discourse, he should not be then employing his attention about his manner, or thinking of his tones and his gestures. If he be so employed, study and affectation will appear. He ought to be then quite in earnest; wholly occupied with his subject and his sentiments; leaving nature, and previously formed habits, to prompt and suggest his manner of delivery.

## LECTURE XXXIV.

### MEANS OF IMPROVING IN ELOQUENCE.

I HAVE now treated fully of the different kinds of public speaking, of the composition, and of the delivery of a discourse. Before I finish this subject, it may be of use to suggest some things concerning the properest means of improvement in the art of public speaking, and the most necessary studies for that purpose.

To be an eloquent speaker, in the proper sense of the word, is far from being either a common or an easy attainment. Indeed, to compose a florid harangue on some popular topic, and to deliver it so as to amuse an audience, is a matter not very difficult. But though some praise be due to this, yet the idea which I have endeavoured to give of eloquence, is much higher. It is a great exertion of the human powers. It is the art of being persuasive and commanding; the art, not of pleasing the fancy merely, but of speaking both to the understanding and to the heart; of interesting the hearers in such a degree, as to seize and carry them along with us; and to leave them with a deep and strong impression of what they have heard. How many talents, natural and acquired, must concur for carrying this to perfection! A strong, lively, and warm imagination; quick sensibility of heart, joined with solid judgment, good sense, and presence of mind; all improved by great and long attention to style and composition; and supported also by the

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exterior, yet important qualifications, of a graceful manner, a presence not ungainly, and a full and tunable voice. How little reason to wonder, that a perfect and accomplished orator should be one of the characters that is most rarely to be found!

Let us not despair, however. Between mediocrity and perfection, there is a very wide interval. There are many intermediate spaces, which may be filled up with honour; and the more rare and difficult that complete perfection is, the greater is the honour of approaching to it, though we do not fully attain it. The number of orators who stand in the highest class is, perhaps, smaller than the number of poets who are foremost in poetic fame; but the study of oratory has this advantage above that of poetry, that, in poetry, one must be an eminently good performer, or he is not supportable:

—*Mediocribus esse poetis,*

*Non homines, non Di, non concessere columnæ.\**

In eloquence this does not hold. There, one may possess a moderate station with dignity. Eloquence admits of a great many different forms; plain and simple, as well as high and pathetic; and a genius that cannot reach the latter, may shine with much reputation and usefulness in the former.

Whether nature or art contribute most to form an orator, is a trifling inquiry. In all attainments whatever, nature must be the prime agent. She must bestow the original talents. She must sow the seeds; but culture is requisite for bringing these seeds to perfection. Nature must always have done somewhat; but a great deal will always be left to be done by art. This is certain, that study and discipline are more necessary for the improvement of natural genius, in oratory, than they are in poetry. What I mean is, that though poetry be capable of receiving assistance from critical art, yet a poet, without any aid from art, by the force of genius alone, can rise higher than a public speaker can do, who has never given attention to the rules of style, composition, and delivery. Homer formed himself; Demosthenes and Cicero were formed by the help of much labour, and of many assistances derived from the labour of others. After these preliminary observations, let us proceed to the main design of this lecture; to treat of the means to be used for improvement in eloquence.

\* "For God, and man, and lettered post denies,  
That poets ever are of middling size."—FRANCIS.

In the first place, what stands highest in the order of means, is personal character and disposition. In order to be a truly eloquent or persuasive speaker, nothing is more necessary than to be a virtuous man. This was a favourite position among the ancient rhetoricians: "Non posse oratorem esse nisi virum bonum." To find any such connexion between virtue and one of the highest liberal arts, must give pleasure; and it can, I think, be clearly shown, that this is not a mere topic of declamation, but that the connexion here alleged, is undoubtedly founded in truth and reason.

For consider, first, whether any thing contribute more to persuasion, than the opinion which we entertain of the probity, disinterestedness, candour, and other good moral qualities of the person who endeavours to persuade? These give weight and force to every thing which he utters; nay, they add a beauty to it; they dispose us to listen with attention and pleasure; and create a secret partiality in favour of that side which he espouses. Whereas, if we entertain a suspicion of craft and dissimulation, of a corrupt, or a base mind in the speaker, his eloquence loses all its real effect. It may entertain and amuse; but it is viewed as artifice, as trick, as the play only of speech, and, viewed in this light, whom can it persuade? We even read a book with more pleasure, when we think favourably of its author; but when we have the living speaker before our eyes, addressing us personally on some subject of importance, the opinion we entertain of his character must have a much more powerful effect.

But, lest it should be said, that this relates only to the character of virtue, which one may maintain, without being at bottom a truly worthy man, I must observe further, that besides the weight which it adds to character, real virtue operates also, in other ways, to the advantage of eloquence.

First, nothing is so favourable as virtue to the prosecution of honourable studies. It prompts a generous emulation to excel; it inures to industry; it leaves the mind vacant and free, gaged from those mean pursuits, which have ever been found the greatest enemies to true proficiency. Quintilian has touched this consideration very properly: "Quod si agrorum nimia cura, et sollicitudo rei familiaris diligentia, et venandi voluptas, et dati spectaculis dies, multum studiis auferunt, quid putamus fecuras cupiditatem, avaritiam, invidiam? Nihil enim est tam occupatum, tam multiforme, tot ac tam variis affectibus concisum, atque laceratum, quam mala mens. Quis inter hæc, literis, aut ulli

bonæ arti, locus? Non hercle magis, quam fugiendus in terra sentibus ac rubis occupata."

But, besides this consideration, there is another of still higher importance, though I am not sure of its being attended to as much as it deserves; namely, that from the fountain of real and genuine virtue, are drawn those sentiments which will ever be most powerful in affecting the hearts of others. Bad as the world is, nothing has so great and universal a command over the minds of men as virtue. No kind of language is so generally understood, and so powerfully felt, as the native language of worthy and virtuous feelings. He only, therefore, who possesses these full and strong, can speak properly, and its own language, to the heart. On all great subjects and occasions, there is a dignity, there is an energy in noble sentiments, which is overcoming and irresistible. They give an ardour and a flame to one's discourse, which seldom fails to kindle a like flame in those who hear; and which, more than any other cause, bestows on eloquence that power for which it is famed of seizing and transporting an audience. Here art and imitation will not avail. An assumed character conveys nothing of this powerful warmth. It is only a native and unaffected glow of feeling, which can transmit the emotion to others. Hence the most renowned orators, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, were no less distinguished for some of the high virtues, as public spirit and zeal for their country, than for eloquence. Beyond doubt, to these virtues their eloquence owed much of its effect; and those orations of theirs, in which there breathes most of the virtuous and magnanimous spirit are those which have most attracted the admiration of ages.

Nothing, therefore, is more necessary for those who would excel in any of the higher kinds of oratory, than to cultivate habits of the several virtues, and to refine and improve all their moral feelings. Whenever these become dead, or callous, they may be assured, that, on every great occasion, they will speak with less power, and less success. The sentiments and disposition

\* "If the management of an estate, if anxious attention to domestic economy, a passion for hunting, or whole days given up to public places of amusement, consume so much time that is due to study, how much greater waste must be occasioned by licentious desires, avarice, or envy? Nothing is so much hurried and agitated, so contradictory to itself, or so violently torn and shattered by conflicting passions, as a bad heart. Amidst the distractions which it produces, what room is left for the cultivation of letters, or the pursuit of any honourable art? No more, assuredly, than there is for the growth of corn in a field that is overrun with thorns and brambles."—XII. l. 6.

tions, particularly requisite for them to cultivate, are the following: the love of justice and order, and indignation at insolence and oppression; the love of honesty and truth, and detestation of fraud, meanness, and corruption; magnanimity of spirit; the love of liberty, of their country, and the public; zeal for all great and noble designs, and reverence for all worthy and heroic characters. A cold and sceptical turn of mind is extremely adverse to eloquence: and no less so, is that cavilling disposition which takes pleasure in depreciating what is great, and ridiculing what is generally admired. Such a disposition bespeaks one not very likely to excel in any thing; but least of all in oratory. A true orator should be a person of generous sentiments, of warm feelings, and of a mind turned towards the admiration of all those great and high objects, which mankind are naturally formed to admire. Joined with the manly virtues, he should, at the same time, possess strong and tender sensibility to all the injuries, distresses, and sorrows of his fellow-creatures; a heart that can easily relent; that can readily enter into the circumstances of others, and can make their case his own. A proper mixture of courage, and of modesty, must always be studied by every public speaker. Modesty is essential; it is always, and justly, supposed to be a concomitant of merit; and every appearance of it is winning and prepossessing. But modesty ought not to run into excessive timidity. Every public speaker should be able to rest somewhat on himself; and to assume that air, not of self-complacency, but of firmness, which he speaks a consciousness of his being thoroughly persuaded of the truth, or justice, of what he delivers; a circumstance of no small consequence for making impression on those who hear.

Next to moral qualifications, what, in the second place, is most necessary to an orator, is a fund of knowledge. Much is this inculcated by Cicero and Quintilian: "*Quod omnibus disciplinis et artibus debet esse instructus orator.*" By which they mean, that he ought to have, what we call, a liberal education; and to be formed by a regular study of philosophy, and the polite arts. We must never forget that,

*Scribendi recte, sapere est, et principium et fons.*

Good sense and knowledge are the foundation of all good speaking. There is no art that can teach one to be eloquent, in any sphere, without a sufficient acquaintance with what belongs to that sphere; or if there were an art that made such

pretensions, it would be mere quackery, like the pretensions of the sophists of old, to teach their disciples to speak for and against every subject; and would be deservedly exploded by all wise men. Attention to style, to composition, and all the arts of speech, can only assist an orator in setting off, to advantage, the stock of materials which he possesses; but the stock, the materials themselves must be brought from other quarters than from rhetoric. He who is to plead at the bar, must make himself thoroughly master of the knowledge of the law; of all the learning and experience that can be useful in his profession, for supporting a cause or convincing a judge. He who is to speak from the pulpit, must apply himself closely to the study of divinity, of practical religion, of morals, of human nature; that he may be rich in all the topics, both of instruction and of persuasion. He who would fit himself for being a member of the supreme council of the nation, or of any public assembly, must be thoroughly acquainted with the business that belongs to such assembly; he must study the forms of court, the course of procedure; and must attend minutely to all the facts that may be the subject of question or deliberation.

Besides the knowledge that properly belongs to his profession, a public speaker, if ever he expects to be eminent, must make himself acquainted, as far as his necessary occupations allow, with the general circle of polite literature. The study of poetry may be useful to him, on many occasions, for embellishing his style, for suggesting lively images, or agreeable allusions. The study of history may be still more useful to him; as the knowledge of facts, of eminent characters, and of the course of human affairs, finds place on many occasions.\* There are few great occasions of public speaking, in which one may not derive assistance from cultivated taste, and extensive knowledge; they will often yield him materials for proper ornament; sometimes, for argument and real use. A deficiency of knowledge, even in subjects that belong not directly to his own profession, will expose him to many disadvantages, and give better qualified rivals a great superiority over him.

Allow me to recommend, in the third place, not only the attainment of useful knowledge, but a habit of application and in-

\* "Imprimis vero abundare debet orator exemplorum copia, cum veterum, tum etiam novorum, adeo ut non ea modo, quae conscripta sunt historiis, aut sermonibus velut per manus tradita, quæque quotidie aguntur, debeat nosse; verum ne ea quidem, quæ a clarioribus poetis sunt facta, negligere."—*COURT lib. xii. cap. 4.*

dustry. Without this, it is impossible to excel in any thing. We must not imagine, that it is by a sort of mushroom growth, that one can rise to be a distinguished pleader, or preacher, or speaker in any assembly. It is not by starts of application, or by a few years' preparation of study afterwards discontinued, that eminence can be attained. No; it can be attained only by means of regular industry, grown up into a habit, and ready to be exerted on every occasion that calls for industry. This is the fixed law of our nature; and he must have a very high opinion of his own genius indeed, that can believe himself an exception to it. A very wise law of our nature it is; for industry is, in truth, the great *continentum*, the seasoning of every pleasure, without which life is doomed to languish. Nothing is so great an enemy both to honourable attainments, and to the real, to the brisk, and spirited enjoyment of life, as that relaxed state of mind which arises from indolence and dissipation. One that is destined to excel in any art, especially in the arts of speaking and writing, will be known by this more than by any other mark whatever, an enthusiasm for that art; an enthusiasm which, firing his mind with the object he has in view, will dispose him to relish every labour which the means require. It was this that characterised the great men of antiquity; it is this which must distinguish the moderns who would tread in their steps. This honourable enthusiasm, it is highly necessary for such as are studying oratory to cultivate. If youth wants it, manhood will flag miserably.

In the fourth place, attention to the best models will contribute greatly towards improvement. Every one who speaks or writes should, indeed, endeavour to have somewhat that is his own, that is peculiar to himself, and that characterises his composition and style. Slavish imitation depresses genius, or rather betrays the want of it. But without, there is no genius so original, but may be profited and assisted by the aid of proper examples, in style, composition, and delivery. They always open some new ideas; they serve to enlarge and correct our own. They quicken the current of thought, and excite emulation.

Much, indeed, will depend upon the right choice of models which we purpose to imitate; and, supposing them rightly chosen, a further care is requisite, of not being seduced by a blind universal admiration. For, "deceit exemplar, vitis imitabilis." Even in the most finished models we can select, it must not be forgotten, that there are always some things im-

proper for imitation. We should study to acquire a just conception of the peculiar characteristic beauties of any writer, or public speaker, and imitate these only. One ought never to attach himself too closely to any single model; for he who does so, is almost sure of being seduced into a faulty and affected imitation. His business should be, to draw from several the proper ideas of perfection. Living examples of public speaking, in any kind, it will not be expected that I should here point out. As to the writers, ancient and modern, from whom benefit may be derived in forming composition and style, I have spoken so much of them in former lectures, that it is needless to repeat what I have said of their virtues and defects. I own, it is to be regretted, that the English language, in which there is much good writing, furnishes us, however, with but very few recorded examples of eloquent public speaking. Among the French there are more. Saurin, Bourdaloue, Flechier, Massillon, particularly the last, are eminent for the eloquence of the pulpit. But the most nervous and sublime of all their orators is Bossuet, the famous bishop of Meaux; in whose *Oraisons Funèbres*, there is a very high spirit of oratory.\* Some of Fontenelle's Harangues to the French Academy, are elegant and agreeable. And at the bar, the printed pleadings of Cochin and d'Aguesseau, are highly extolled by the late French critics.

There is one observation which it is of importance to make, concerning imitation of the style of any favourite author, when we could carry his style into public speaking. We must attend to a very material distinction between written and spoken language. These are, in truth, two different manners of communicating ideas. A book that is to be read requires one sort of style; a man that is to speak must use another. In books we look for correctness, precision, all redundancies pruned, all repetitions avoided, language completely polished. Speaking admits a more easy copious style, and less fettered by rule; repetitions may often be necessary, parentheses may sometimes be graceful; the same thought must often be placed in different views; as the hearers can catch it only from the mouth of the speaker, and

\* "The criticism which M. Crevier, author of *Rhétorique François*, passes upon these writers whom I have above named, is, "Bossuet est grand, mais inégal; Flechier est plus égal, mais moins élevé, et souvent trop fleuri; Bourdaloue est solide et judicieux, mais il néglige les grâces légères; Massillon est plus réelle en images, mais moins fort en raisonnement. Je souhaite donc, que l'orateur ne se contente dans l'imitation d'un seul de ces modèles, mais qu'il tâche de réunir en lui toutes leurs différentes vertus."—Vol. ii. chap. dernière.

have not the advantage, as in reading a book, of turning back again, and of dwelling on what they do not fully comprehend. Hence the style of many good authors would appear stiff, affected, and even obscure, if, by too close an imitation, we should transfer it to a popular oration. How awkward, for example, would lord Shaftesbury's sentences sound in the mouth of a public speaker? Some kinds of public discourse, it is true, such as that of the pulpit, where more exact preparation and more studied style are admitted, would bear such a manner better than others, which are expected to approach more to extemporaneous speaking. But still there is, in general, so much difference between speaking and composition designed only to be read, as should guard us against a close and injudicious imitation.

Some authors there are, whose manner of writing approaches nearer to the style of speaking than others; and who, therefore, can be imitated with more safety. In this class, among the English authors, are Dean Swift and Lord Bolingbroke. The dean, throughout all his writings, in the midst of much correctness, maintains the easy natural manner of an unaffected speaker; and this is one of his chief excellences. Lord Bolingbroke's style is more splendid, and more declamatory than Dean Swift's; but still it is the style of one who speaks, or rather who harangues. Indeed, all his political writings (for it is to them only, and not to his philosophical ones, that this observation can be applied) carry much more the appearance of one declaiming with warmth, in a great assembly, than of one writing in a closet, in order to be read by others. They have all the copiousness, the fervour, the inculcating method that is allowable and graceful in an orator; perhaps too much of it for a writer; and it is to be regretted, as I have formerly observed, that the matter contained in them should have been so trivial, or so false; for, from the manner and style, considerable advantage might be reaped.

In the fifth place; besides attention to the best models, frequent exercise, both in composing and speaking, will be admitted to be a necessary mean of improvement. That sort of composition is, doubtless, most useful which relates to the profession, or kind of public speaking, to which persons addict themselves. This they should keep ever in their eye, and be gradually inuring themselves to it. But let me also advise them, not to allow themselves in negligent composition of any kind. He who has it for his aim to write, or to speak correctly, should, in the

most trivial kind of composition, in writing a letter, nay, even in common discourse, study to acquit himself with propriety. I do not at all mean, that he is never to write or to speak a word, but in elaborate and artificial language. This would form him to a stiffness and affectation, worse, by ten thousand degrees, than the greatest negligence. But it is to be observed, that there is, in every thing, a manner which is becoming, and that propriety; and opposite to it there is a clumsy and faulty performance of the same thing. The becoming manner is very often the most light, and seemingly careless, manner; but it requires taste and attention to seize the just idea of it. That idea, when acquired, we should keep in our eye, and form upon it whatever we write or say.

Exercises of speaking have always been recommended to students, in order that they may prepare themselves for speaking in public, and on real business. The meetings, or societies, into which they sometimes form themselves for this purpose, are laudable institutions; and under proper conduct, may serve many valuable purposes. They are favourable to knowledge and study, by giving occasion to inquiries concerning those subjects which are made the ground of discussion. They produce emulation; and gradually inure those who are concerned in them, to them to know their own powers, and to acquire a command of themselves in speaking; and what is, perhaps, the greatest advantage of all, they give them a facility and fluency of expression, and assist them in procuring that *copia verborum* which can be acquired by no other means but frequent exercise in speaking.

But the meetings which I have now in my eye, are to be understood of those academical associations, where a moderate number of young gentlemen, who are carrying on their studies, and are connected by some affinity in the future pursuits which they have in view, assemble privately, in order to improve one another, and to prepare themselves for those public exhibitions which may afterwards fall to their lot. As for those public and promiscuous societies, in which multitudes are brought together, who are often of low stations and occupations, who are joined by no common bond of union, except an absurd rage for public speaking, and have no other object in view, but to make a show of their supposed talents, they are institutions not merely of an useless, but of a hurtful nature. They are in great hazard of proving seminaries of licentiousness, petulance, faction, and

folly. They mislead those, who, in their own callings, might be useful members of society, into fantastic plans of making a figure on subjects which divert their attention from their proper business, and are widely remote from their sphere in life.

Even the allowable meetings into which students of oratory form themselves, stand in need of direction in order to render them useful. If their subjects of discourse be improperly chosen; if they maintain extravagant or indecent topics; if they indulge themselves in loose and flimsy declamation, which has no foundation in good sense; or accustom themselves to speak perty on all subjects without due preparation, they may improve one another in petulance, but in no other thing; and will infallibly form themselves to a very faulty and vicious taste in speaking. I would, therefore, advise all who are members of such societies, in the first place, to attend to the choice of their subjects; that they be useful and many, either formed on the course of their studies, or on something that has relation to morals and taste, to action and life. In the second place, I would advise them to be temperate in the practice of speaking; not to speak too often, nor on subjects where they are ignorant or unripe; but only when they have proper materials for a discourse, and have digested and thought of the subject before hand. In the third place, when they do speak, they should study always to keep good sense and persuasion in view, rather than an ostentation of eloquence; and for this end, I would, in the fourth place, repeat the advice which I gave in a former lecture, that they should always choose that side of the question to which, in their own judgment, they are most inclined, as the right and the true side; and defend it by such arguments as seem to them most solid. By these means they will take the best method of forming themselves gradually to a manly, correct, and persuasive manner of speaking.

It now only remains to inquire, of what use may the study of critical and rhetorical writers be for improving one in the practice of eloquence? These are certainly not to be neglected; and yet, I dare not say that much is to be expected from them. For professed writers on public speaking, we must look chiefly among the ancients. In modern times, for reasons which were before given, popular eloquence, as an art, has never been very much the object of study; it has not the same powerful effects among us that it had in more democratical states; and therefore has not been cultivated with the same care. Among

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the moderns, though there has been a great deal of good criticism on the different kinds of writing, yet much has not been attempted on the subject of eloquence or public discourse; and what has been given us of that kind, has been drawn mostly from the ancients. Such a writer as Joannes Gerardus Vossius, who has gathered into one heap of ponderous lumber, all the trifling as well as the useful things, that are to be found in the Greek and Roman writers, is enough to disgust one with the study of eloquence. Among the French, there has been more attempted on this subject, than among the English. The bishop of Cambray's writings on eloquence I before mentioned with honour. Rollin, Batteux, Crevier, Gilbert, and several other French critics, have also written on oratory: but though some of them may be useful, none of them are so considerable as to deserve particular recommendation.

It is to the original ancient writers that we must chiefly have recourse; and it is a reproach to any one, whose profession calls him to speak in public, to be unacquainted with them. In all the ancient rhetorical writers, there is, indeed, this defect, that they are too systematical, as I formerly showed; they aim at doing too much; at reducing rhetoric to a complete and perfect art, which may even supply invention with materials on every subject; inasmuch, that one would imagine they expected to form an orator by rule, in as mechanical a manner as one would form a carpenter. Whereas, all that can, in truth, be done, is to give openings for assisting and enlightening taste, and for pointing out to genius the course it ought to hold.

Aristotle laid the foundation for all that was afterwards written on the subject. That amazing and comprehensive genius, which does honour to human nature, and which gave light into so many different sciences, has investigated the principles of rhetoric with great penetration. Aristotle appears to have been the first who took rhetoric out of the hands of the sophists, and introduced reasoning and good sense into the art. Some of the profoundest things which have been written on the passions and manners of men, are to be found in his *Treatise on Rhetoric*; though in this, as in all his writings, his great brevity often renders him obscure. Succeeding Greek rhetoricians, most of whom are now lost, improved on the foundation which Aristotle had laid. Two of them still remain, Demetrius Phalerens, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus; both write on the construction of sentences, and deserve to be perused; especially Dionysius, who is a very accurate and judicious critic.



I need scarcely recommend the rhetorical writings of Cicero. Whatever, on the subject of eloquence, comes from so great an orator, must be worthy of attention. His most considerable work on this subject is that *De Oratore*, in three books. None of Cicero's writings are more highly finished than this treatise. The dialogue is polite, the characters are well supported, and the conduct of the whole is beautiful and agreeable. It is, indeed, full of digressions, and his rules and observations may be thought sometimes too vague and general. Useful things however, may be learned from it; and it is no small benefit to be made acquainted with Cicero's own idea of eloquence. The *Orator ad M. Brutum*, is also a considerable treatise; and, in general, throughout all Cicero's rhetorical works there run those high and sublime ideas of eloquence, which are fitted both for forming a just taste, and for creating that enthusiasm for the art, which is of the greatest consequence for excelling in it.

But of all the ancient writers on the subject of oratory, the most instructive, and most useful, is Quintilian. I know few books which abound more with good sense, and discover a greater degree of just and accurate taste, than Quintilian's Institutions. Almost all the principles of good criticism are to be found in them. He has digested into excellent order all the ancient ideas concerning rhetoric, and is, at the same time, himself an eloquent writer. Though some parts of his work contain too much of the technical and artificial system then in vogue, and for that reason may be thought dry and tedious, yet I would not advise the omitting to read any part of his Institutions. To pleaders at the bar, even these technical parts may prove of some use. Seldom has any person, of more sound and distinct judgment than Quintilian, applied himself to the study of the art of oratory.

## LECTURE XXXV.

### COMPARATIVE MERIT OF THE ANCIENTS AND THE MODERNS—HISTORICAL WRITING.

I HAVE now finished that part of the course which respects oratory or public speaking; and which, as far as the subject allowed, I have endeavoured to form into some sort of

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system. It remains, that I enter on the consideration of the most distinguished kinds of composition both in prose and verse, and point out the principles of criticism relating to them. This part of the work might easily be drawn out to a great length; but I am sensible, that critical discussions, when they are pursued too far, become both trifling and tedious. I shall study, therefore, to avoid unnecessary prolixity; and hope, at the same time, to omit nothing that is very material under the several heads.

I shall follow the same method here which I have all along pursued, and without which these lectures could not be entitled to any attention; that is, I shall freely deliver my own opinion on every subject; regarding authority no farther, than as it appears to me founded on good sense and reason. In former lectures, as I have often quoted several of the ancient classics for their beauties, so I have also, sometimes, pointed out their defects. Hereafter, I shall have occasion to do the same, when treating of their writings under more general heads. It may be fit, therefore, that, before I proceed farther, I make some observations on the comparative merit of the ancients and the moderns; in order that we may be able to ascertain rationally, upon what foundation that deference rests, which has so generally been paid to the ancients. These observations are the more necessary, as this subject has given rise to no small controversy in the republic of letters: and they may, with propriety, be made now, as they will serve to throw light on some things I have afterwards to deliver, concerning different kinds of composition.

It is a remarkable phenomenon, and one which has often employed the speculations of curious men, that writers and artists, most distinguished for their parts and genius, have generally appeared in considerable numbers at a time. Some ages have been remarkably barren in them; while at other periods, nature seems to have exerted herself with a more than ordinary effort, and to have poured them forth with a profuse fertility. Various reasons have been assigned for this. Some of the moral causes lie obvious; such as favourable circumstances of government and of manners; encouragement from great men; emulation excited among the men of genius. But as these have been thought inadequate to the whole effect, physical causes have been also assigned; and the Abbe du Bos, in his *Reflections on Poetry and Painting*, has collected a great many observations on the influence which the air, the climate, and other such