

www.e-rara.ch

Lectures On Rhetoric And Belles Lettres

Blair, Hugh

Basil, M DCC L XXXIX [1789]

Universitätsbibliothek Basel

Shelf Mark: UBH AO IV 63, 63a, 63b

Persistent Link: <https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-87759>

Lecture XXXII. Pronunciation, or Delivery.

www.e-rara.ch

Die Plattform e-rara.ch macht die in Schweizer Bibliotheken vorhandenen Drucke online verfügbar. Das Spektrum reicht von Büchern über Karten bis zu illustrierten Materialien – von den Anfängen des Buchdrucks bis ins 20. Jahrhundert.

e-rara.ch provides online access to rare books available in Swiss libraries. The holdings extend from books and maps to illustrated material – from the beginnings of printing to the 20th century.

e-rara.ch met en ligne des reproductions numériques d'imprimés conservés dans les bibliothèques de Suisse. L'éventail va des livres aux documents iconographiques en passant par les cartes – des débuts de l'imprimerie jusqu'au 20e siècle.

e-rara.ch mette a disposizione in rete le edizioni antiche conservate nelle biblioteche svizzere. La collezione comprende libri, carte geografiche e materiale illustrato che risalgono agli inizi della tipografia fino ad arrivare al XX secolo.

Nutzungsbedingungen Dieses Digitalisat kann kostenfrei heruntergeladen werden. Die Lizenzierungsart und die Nutzungsbedingungen sind individuell zu jedem Dokument in den Titelinformationen angegeben. Für weitere Informationen siehe auch [Link]

Terms of Use This digital copy can be downloaded free of charge. The type of licensing and the terms of use are indicated in the title information for each document individually. For further information please refer to the terms of use on [Link]

Conditions d'utilisation Ce document numérique peut être téléchargé gratuitement. Son statut juridique et ses conditions d'utilisation sont précisés dans sa notice détaillée. Pour de plus amples informations, voir [Link]

Condizioni di utilizzo Questo documento può essere scaricato gratuitamente. Il tipo di licenza e le condizioni di utilizzo sono indicate nella notizia bibliografica del singolo documento. Per ulteriori informazioni vedi anche [Link]

LECTURE XXXIII.

PRONUNCIATION, OR DELIVERY.

HAVING treated of several general heads relating to Eloquence, or Public Speaking, I now proceed to another very important part of the subject yet remaining, that is, Pronunciation, or Delivery of a Discourse. How much stress was laid upon this by the most eloquent of all Orators, Demosthenes, 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 catch-

LECT.
XXXIII.

LECT. ing an Audience. But this is far from being
 XXXIII. 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 cer-
 tainly 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 pas-
 sionate cry, unaccompanied by words, convey
 to others more forcible ideas, and rouse within
 them stronger passions, than can be communicat-
 ed by the most eloquent Discourse. The signifi-
 cation 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 na-
 ture has dictated to all, and which is understood
 by all; whereas, words are only arbitrary, con-
 ventional symbols of our ideas: and, by conse-
 quence, 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 Deli-
 very; 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 connection 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 Callidius 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. Callidi nisi fingeres, sic ageres?" In Shakespeare's Richard II. the Dukes 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 in jest;
His words come from his mouth, ours from our breast:
He prays but faintly, and would be deny'd;
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

LECT. 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*.

XXXIII.

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 use for ordinary in public Discourse. For it is a great mistake,

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

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 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 will 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 and outrun 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 an 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

L E C T. naturally and mechanically utter our words with
 XXXIII. 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 vehemence 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 flurring, 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, drawling Pronunciation, which allows the minds of the hearers to be always outrunning 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 Quinctilian, "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,

LECT that found which the most polite usage of the
 XXXIII. 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 percussion, and to pass more slightly over the rest. Now, having once 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 persons 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 L E C T.
greatly both from its agreeableness, and its XXXIII.
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 Emphases, 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 rest 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, depends the whole life and spirit of every Discourse. If no emphasis

LECT.
XXXIII.

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 into 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 depends 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 prostituted

ing the signal of peace and friendship, to the purpose of a mark of destruction. LECT.
XXXIII.

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 feeling 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 Emphases 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 memory. Were this attention oftener bestowed, were this part of Pronunciation studied

LECT. with more exactness, and not left to the moment
 XXXIII. 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 multi-
 tude 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 hear-
 er'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 Em-
 phasis; and are subject to the same rules; especially
 to the caution just now given, of not repeating
 them too frequently. For as they excite uncom-
 mon attention, and of course raise expectation,
 if the importance of the matter be not fully an-

swerable to such expectation, they occasion disappointment and disgust. LECT.
XXXIII.

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 can 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 Sentences, 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 for certain contracted one of the worst habits into which a Public

LECT. Speaker can fall. It is the sense which should
 XXXIII. always rule the pauses of the voice: for wherever there is any sensible suspension of the 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 denotes 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 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

LECT. against. The close of the line, where it makes
 XXXIII. 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 *cæsural* 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 *cæsural* 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 heav'nly 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 *cæsural* pause, we then feel a sort of struggle between the sense and the sound, which renders it difficult to read such
 lines

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 cæsural 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,

LECT.
XXXIII.

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

I fit, with sad civility I read.

The ear plainly points out the cæsural 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 "fit," 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

LECT. and pauses; consisting in the modulation of the
 XXXIII. 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; insomuch, that he who should tell another that he was very angry, or very 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 language and expression of tones, therefore, deserves to be attentively

* " 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 suc-
 " cession 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 pas-
 " sions, 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.

studied by every one who would be a successful Orator. LECT.
XXXIII.

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 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

“ 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.”

SHERIDAN on the Art of Reading.
 D d 2

LECT. tones, in the room of the genuine expressions of
 XXXIII. 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 inflexions of voice, you would on such an occasion express yourself, when you was 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 not many attain; 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 this 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

LECT.
XXXIII.

LECT. manner, from an absurd fancy of its being more
 XXXIII. 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, indignation, compassion, or any other emotion, discovers itself to most advantage in the common inter-

* "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 tensa declamitet omnia voce.

"Tu loquere, ut mos est hominum; Boas 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 1679

course 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 their own gestures. But I am afraid, persons are not always the best judges of the gracefulness

LECT. of their own motions, and one may declaim long
 XXXIII. 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 11th 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 for-
 wards towards the hearers, which is a natural expression of
 earnestness. As for the countenance, 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, consists
 the chief part of gesture in Speaking. The ancients con-
 demned 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 em-
 ployed. Warm emotions demand the motion of both hands
 corresponding together. But whether one gesticulates with

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.

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."

410 PRONUNCIATION, OR DELIVERY

LECT. 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 any 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 corrupt 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,

OF A DISCOURSE. 411

or thinking of his tones and his gestures. If he be
so employed, study and affectation will appear. L E C T.
He ought to be then quite in earnest; wholly XXXIII.
occupied with his subject; and his sentiments;
leaving Nature, and previously formed habits, to
prompt and suggest his manner of Delivery.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.





