

The retaining of air in the lungs is an important point in the government of the breath. You hold the inspiratory muscles contracted, close the glottis as in swallowing and aid the operation by shutting as far as possible the air passages of the mouth and nose. If you ask for what time one may retain his breath without injury, the answer is: it varies with the person and his degree of skill. One may hold for a minute; for another forty-five seconds may be too long. The end to be gained is control over the muscles and, as in gymnastic exercises, that which is to be avoided most is straining.

Except for rest, the breath is to be set forth through the mouth. As in retaining, time has been divided into short, medial, long, very long. You may empty the lungs, as it were, at a blow or within a measurable time. In all cases expiration should be free, that is, without scraping, without obstruction. Whatever time you practice, a regular, even and full flow will give you more complete command than spasmodic or irregular jerks. The reader should imitate the athlete. In his private practice he will prolong his expiration to the utmost; in reading will not stretch beyond a quick recovery, but act within himself and at his best. To use up a breath as if it were one's last, necessitates, in almost every instance, an effort or gulping for the next, which is not more conducive to health, agreeable to an audience, characteristic of good delivery nor in itself more skilful, than "catching crabs" is evidence of superior oarsmanship.

Voluntary breathing is the foundation of public speaking. Under whatever defects one may labor, lisping, stammering or stuttering, if once he gain power over his respiratory muscles to use them at pleasure, he will be hindered neither by want of breath nor a surplus of it—the main stumbling-blocks of public speech—will not only avoid the throat-laceration which afflicts the clergy so deeply, but will have already overcome more than half the obstacles which lie in the way of distinct and effective delivery.

VOWELS—THEIR PRODUCTION.—How many vowels has the English language? Webster reckons 33, Ogilvie 14, Sweet 36, and other orthoepists say 40, 12, 9 or 6. There is no consensus of opinion as to the number of our vowels. How, then, may they be distinguished? Mr. Melville Bell gives a systematic answer. He subjects the mouth to minute experiment and classifies vowels mainly according to the positions which the tongue assumes in enunciation. Thus they are front,