

We are training our children to talk to ordinary people, not to elocutionists. There are certain points that must be attended to in order that the speech may be satisfactory to ordinary people; but in regard to other points, great latitude may be allowed.

Consonant elements and the vowels in accented syllables must be properly pronounced, but the vowels in unaccented syllables may be uttered in any sort of indefinite way without offending the ordinary ear. Accent and rhythm, I think, are of more importance than exact pronunciation.

In Visible Speech the voice symbol (*v*) is used to indicate an indefinite vowel sound like *er* in the word *her*, or like the *er* sound used by public speakers to fill up gaps in their sentences—*when—er—*they are not—*er—*very—*er—er—*sure—*er—*what they want to say. This indefinite vowel sign I consider a perfect God-send to the teacher of articulation, enabling him to get rid of half the labor of articulation teaching. In spelling phonetically the vast majority of the vowel sounds in the unaccented syllables may be represented by this indefinite voice mark; and it may also be substituted everywhere for glide *r*. I would recommend those who do not use Visible Speech to use a dash.

Ordinary people who know nothing of phonetics or elocution have difficulty in understanding slow speech composed of perfect elementary sounds, while they have no difficulty in comprehending an imperfect gabble if only the accent and rhythm are natural. Too much labor is bestowed upon unaccented syllables. Any child can give an indefinite vowel sound that may be combined rapidly with consonants. I have seen a teacher puzzling herself over the word *comfortable*. The first syllable gave no difficulty, but the second syllable was not pronounced easily by the child. There was an attempt on the part of the pupil to give long *o*, as in *pole*, followed by a consonant *r* of an exaggerated kind, and the teacher was trying to get the pupil to substitute *aw* for *o*. With regard to the last syllable the teacher was puzzled to decide whether the vowel should have the sound of *a* in *table*, *a* in *cat*, or *a* in *ask*. Now the fact is that the exact vowel sounds in the unaccented syllables are of no earthly consequence. An ordinary ear will accept an indefinite sound as good speech, if the word is uttered rapidly, with due accent on the first syllable. Even an elocutionist would not ask for a consonant *r* in the second syllable. He would simply demand a gliding of the tongue towards the position for *r*; but ordinary peo-