

Elocutionary Department

ELOCUTION—ARTICULATION.

BY R. LEWIS.

THE music and refinement of pronunciation depend chiefly upon the correct sound of the vowel elements of a word. The speaker or reader whose voice has been trained in inflections, pitch and all the varied modulations of speech, and who sounds every vowel element correctly cannot fail to give a noble and expressive utterance to the thought and emotion which language clothes and which he has justly conceived. But that utterance may still be marred by indistinctness. The consonants have their important functions to be discharged, upon which mainly depend all distinctness and the perfection of uttered speech—the secret of being heard without undue loudness. Dr. Rush has arranged the consonants according to their tonic or non-tonic qualities. While he classes all vowels as tonics, or letters sounded with a full tone, modified only by a slight action of the tongue and the lips, he gives the name of subtonics to the consonants, which are sounded with a union of tone and breath, as b, d, m, l, etc., and of atonics to letters whose utterance consists of breath only, as p, t, k, f, etc. All the consonants, however, are sounded by special action and arrangement of the vocal organs—the lips, the tongue and their connection with the teeth, the palate and the nasal passage; and, as distinctness and the correction or prevention of stammering, stuttering and other speech defects can only be effected by attention to the organic action of all perfect utterance, it is the view of the best teachers and writers on the subject that the organic action should be the basis of arrangement for the consonants.

The following table presents the consonants in the order of their organic formation, and named after that order, commencing with the front of the mouth and passing to the parts farthest from the front. The arrangement was made by Thomas Sheridan, father of the celebrated Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and adopted by the late eminent reader, Mr. Vandenhoff in his work on the Art of Elocution. Sheridan strongly recommends that the first exercises should be practised with a vowel *before* not after each consonant until the pupil can give the consonant sound distinctly finished, and especially urges the rule already given in these articles, that *no articulation can be finished until the organs brought into contact are promptly separated.*

TABLE OF CONSONANTS.

I.	II.	III.	ADDITIONAL AND SUGGESTIVE EXERCISES.
ORGANIC FORM.	CONSONANTS.	PRACTICE.	
1. Labial.....	B—P.	eb, ep.	bab, bib, pop, pip.
2. Labia-dental....	V—F.	ev, ef.	viv, rive, fite, laugh.
3. Lingua-dental...	D—T.	ed, et.	did, dud, tame, mit.
4. Lingua-dental...	TH—Th.	ETH, eth.	though, with, kith, thin.
5. Dental sibilant..	Z—S.	uz, us.	buzz, zeal, sis, son.
6. Palatine sibilant	Zh—Sh.	ezh, ash.	azure, vision, shoe, sash.
7. { Lingua palatine sibilant.....	T—Ch.	edge, etch.	judge, John, church, chime.
8. Palatine.....	G—K.	egg, ek.	big, gig, kick, cat.
9. Lingua palatine.	R—R.	row, err.	roar, drum, far, near.
10. Lingua palatine.	L	lull, ell.	lull, feel, fill, loyal.
11. Nasal labial...	M.	em.	muming, memory.
12. { Nasal lingual palatine....	N.	en.	know, none, mew, win.
13. Nasal palatine..	NG.	ing.	sing, winging, wrong.

Explanation of the table and methods of practice: Column I. gives the names of the consonants according to their organic formation; column II. gives the letters in the order of subtonic and atonic production; column III. gives practice according to Sheridan's suggestions; this practice can be extended by placing each of all the vowels and compound vowels in succession before the consonant when sounding it; column IV. gives practice commencing and ending each syllable with the same consonant. When practising column III. care must be taken to continue the sound of the subtonics, *b, v, d, z, j, g, ng*, with perfect vocality, that is, the full sound of each letter to the end. The general habit is to diminish the vocality until it passes into an atonic; thus *b* ends in *p*, *d* in *t*, *g* in *k* etc., as *nibp, headt*. It should be a rule in such exercises that when sounding words or syllables

ending in subtonics the force should be slightly increased rather than diminished to the close. And that close should be prompt and instantaneous.

When practising the forms in column IV. the same firmness and precision should be observed in beginning the sound as in ending it. The late Prof. Frobisher instructed his pupils to "stand firm with the lungs well-filled for each syllable, to dwell on the initial sound a moment, then pass on to the vowel sound between, and finally, firmly bear the voice upon the closing sound."* These and similar exercises may be safely practiced, and ought to be, through all the grades of the school, and by none more than the teacher.

Explanation of the organic action of sounding consonants. The methods of fixing the organs for this practice should be understood and explained by the pupils as well as the teacher.

B.P. In forming B the lips are gently but not perfectly closed, so that the subtonic sound of B may be heard. The sound should be continued as long as possible in the first attempts, that is, about two seconds, afterwards it may be finished promptly. In sounding P the action is similar to that of B, but the lips are pressed together more firmly, and then suddenly separated. No sound should follow this action. It is an explosion of breath held in the mouth by the momentary closure, but not followed by any additional breath from the lungs. The utterance is not accomplished in either case until the lips are explosively separated.

V and F are partly labial and partly dental; the middle of the lower lip is pressed against the edges of the upper teeth; F is similarly formed but V is voice and breath combined, while F is a breath production only. Neither of these letters ought to be prolonged in utterance.

D and T are named lingua dental sounds, because they are formed by pressing the edges and tip of the tongue against the gums of the upper teeth so as to obstruct the passage of the breath, and the utterance of the two letters is only effected and completed by suddenly separating the tongue from the gums. Unless this is done with force the D will sound in its close like T. The D can be prolonged like the B, for two seconds if possible. D is a voice and T a breath sound.

T H as in *with* and *th* as in *kith*. These sounds are formed by pressing the tip of the tongue against the upper teeth; but there is no protrusion outside of the teeth; the tip can just be seen. *Th* in *with* is a voice and in *kith* a breath sound. The French and the Celtic or genuine Irish often fail in sounding this element. The French pronounce *the* as *dé*, the Irish pronounce *with* as *widit*. The defect can be corrected by altering the position of the tongue. When *wid* or *de* is pronounced for *with* and *the*, the speaker puts the tip of the tongue in contact with the upper gum, and the defect is prevented by lowering the tip until, as already explained, it presses the edges of the upper front teeth.

Z and S are formed by directing the tip of the tongue towards the upper gum. Lipping is caused by sounding *Th* for S; that is the tip of the tongue is made to touch the edges of the upper teeth instead of being raised towards the upper gums and within the edges. Z is a voice and S a breath sound. Zh and sh are illustrated, the one in the sounds of *z* in *azure* and *sz* in *vision*, and the other in the sound of *sh* in *hush*.

L is the most musical of all the consonants. It can be prolonged in quantity and inflected like a vowel. It is formed by applying the fore part of the tongue to the rim of the palate, and the sides slightly in contact with the teeth; but the pressure is very light and the voice flows along uninterruptedly. When L is preceded by a vowel a disagreeable sound is commonly given to the finish of the letter by the intervention of a vowel, like short *u* in *run*. Thus *well, fill* and similar combinations have the sound of *wé+ul, fi+ul*. Another common defect is that of introducing a vowel between *l* and *m*, as *elum* for *elm*.

R has two sounds. When it precedes a vowel the tip of the tongue vibrates slightly between the jaws without touching them; but when it follows a vowel the vibration is too slight to be perceived. Its imperfections are often noticed by its absence when it ends a word, as *he-a* for *hear*, *fa* for *far*, and on the other hand by an excess of vibration where there should be none, as is often heard in Irish and Scotch utterances of *dearr*, *hearr*, etc. When R comes between two vowels as in *horror*, *squirrel*, *terror*, *quarrel*, etc., only *one* R is sounded,

* "Voice and Action," by Prof. J. E. Frobisher

and it should be made to begin the second syllable not end the first; as *hō-rür, tē-rür, qua-rël*. This order is often violated, and such words are sounded as monosyllables, as *quarl, squirrel*, etc.

G K are produced by contracting the tongue, drawing it backwards and raising the middle to the palate. G, as in *egg*, has a brief sound. K is simply a breath utterance; but G is often imperfectly finished by a relaxing effort which sounds like, *egk*.

M, N and NG rank with L in their capacity for modulation. M is formed by closing the lips, and the sound passes through the nose. N is formed by pressing more of the surface of the tongue to the palate than for L; it is also nasal and can be intoned. NG when sounded together commence, with a slight approach to the sound of N, which by a change of action in the tongue is emitted through the nose. The abuse of the sound is caused by a fuller sound of N being given, which passes to a fuller sound of G, as *sing-ging*, with a complete sound of G at the end.

While a perfect sound of each consonant can only be accomplished by a perfect separation of the organs which have been brought into contact to form it, great care must be taken to give this finish to cognate or similar sounds. The following are cognates: *b-p, d-t, g-k, j-ch, th-th, v-f, z-s, zh-sh*. When two words come together, the first ending and the second beginning with similar or with cognate sounds one is often omitted in usual pronunciation; as this summer, these seasons, a big cat, a big gun, a good time, some money, and like forms, are commonly pronounced *thi-summer, thee-seasons, a bi-cat, a bi-gun, a göö-time, sum-oney*. Pupils should be practised on these similar and cognate sounds. It is not always convenient or necessary to stop between each word; but if there be no pause to separate the two letters completely, which would always be the safest way for distinctness, the sound should be prolonged; as *some+money*, not *sü-money*. Indifference to this rule is one great cause of that indistinctness of speech which prevents the hearer understanding what a reader or speaker utters, and speaking "louder" will not remedy the defect. It may be safely stated that when we fail to hear a reader or speaker, imperfect articulation, not weakness of voice, is the cause, and phonetic spelling of every word inaudibly uttered, is the only mode of correction.

The next subject for these articles will treat of Voice Culture for expression.

Errata in last article, p. 344, col. 3, omit under compound sounds "ä as in an," and the inverted commas on lines 18, 19. P. 345, for "Adhemis" read "Adhem's."

THE WEIGHT OF A WORD.

HAVE you ever thought of the weight of a word That falls in the heart like the song of a bird, That gladdens the springtime of memory and youth And garlands with cedar the banner of Truth, That moistens the harvesting spot of the brain, Like dewdrops that fall on a meadow of grain; Or that shrivels the germ and destroys the fruit And lies like a worm at the lifeless root? Words! Words! They are little, yet mighty and brave; They rescue a nation, an empire save— They close up the gaps in a fresh bleeding heart That sickness and sorrow have severed apart. They fall on the path like a ray of the sun. Where the shadows of death lay so heavy and dun, They lighten the earth over our blessed dead. A word that will comfort, oh! leave not unsaid.

"EASE the grasp of memory by generalization." It is more difficult to hold a dozen separate things in your hand than the same number tied up in a bundle. So it is easier to retain a number of classified facts than the same number isolated. That, of course, is not the whole of the matter. The string that ties the bundle is an additional fact that is often of far greater importance than the separate facts which it holds together. There will be quite enough for memory to do when we have done our utmost to lighten its labor. Let us not forget, too, that the time and energy saved by a judicious employment of memory may be utilized in the employment of the higher faculties. I would also point out that to ease the grasp of memory in retaining facts is to strengthen the power of recovery in their reproduction. It is easier to find what we want in a series of labelled bundles than in the confusion of our drawer.—*Rev. Canon Daniel.*