

The art of reading in its highest sense embraces every subject connected with the study of the language. It is not pronunciation, articulation, modulation alone; it demands the fullest knowledge of the grammatical construction: the analysis of the sentence is one of the best keys to its just delivery, and often the most delicate shades of meaning attached to words, when wielded by the accomplished reader or speaker, give beauty and force and reality to the thought and conception which are utterly lost in common delivery. Expressive reading is a study embracing all other studies, and demanding such mental analysis as would in many respects constitute an education by itself.

Let us take the Temptation of Christ as an example. There are three modes of reading the passages of this event. We may read it as it is generally read, with perfect correctness as to pronunciation and articulation, but with no expression. The narrative and the dialogue are read alike, and with little regard to the emphasis of leading words. The *dramatic* is utterly neglected; and when so read the spiritual and the moral lessons of the Temptation fail in their solemn import. The reading is simply mechanical. The next method would be to read it with due attention to elocutionary rules, marking pauses, inflections and emphasis, and delivering the dialogue just according to the apparent value of the sentences. This also would be mechanical and utterly unimpressive, and would fail to convey the true purport and lesson of the narrative.

But let all these methods be combined and be made subject to the *spirit* of the narrative, and it becomes at once dramatic, commanding and impressive.

How shall this be done?—and the answer will convey some idea of the method to be adopted in the study of any passage for delivery.

We must first remember Who is tempted and Who tempts.

The strong probability is that Satan felt he was before one supremely powerful to create or to destroy. He knew that Christ could sweep him back into his native region of darkness and woe, and he therefore, we must suppose, approaches him with awe and reverence. "If Thou be the Son of God" is not uttered with any doubt of his divinity, and "Command that these stones be made bread" is not uttered in the manner of one who doubted or disbelieved the power of the Son to perform that miracle,—but with a faith in that power, yet a hope that Christ might be tempted to yield to the Satanic request. That yielding would have been an evidence of weakness, and Satan, with the cunning of supreme hypocrisy, would ask it with affected reverence for the Son's power. How, then, shall we read this passage? To read it fast would indicate defiance—express a challenge—be suggestive of scorn and contempt. When we challenge a boasting man to do impossibilities, we express ourselves in loud, boisterous, quick forms. But Satan believed, and trembled at the consequences of his audacity, and the expression of his request in that mental condition, would be marked by slow and reverential utterance. The same principle must guide us in the reading of the subsequent form of the temptation. We must conceive that Satan would quote Scripture in the 6th verse as if he believed that angels would bear Christ up. This can only be done by a solemn and slow reading; for to read it fast, as in the previous example, would be an expression of contempt for the promise, and of scorn for the tempted. The magnitude of the temptation, in the 9th verse, suggests the excitement inspired by ambition, and excitement suggests a quicker utterance. Then, supposing, as the text justifies us in that view, that Satan felt this magnificent temptation was irresistible, we may understand that he would utter the words, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me," with all dignity and apparent calmness, which would magnify his power on the one hand; and on the other, with the hesitancy and cautiousness

inspired by the dread of a refusal, and of the punishment his audacity was invoking.

Finally, the answer of Christ to the last temptation is a rebuke stern and indignant, when he says, "Get thee hence, Satan," and should, therefore, be uttered in quick and angry tones, while the delivery of the commandment must be marked by the solemn and slow delivery of dignified judgment.

Let us next pass under review the soliloquy of Hamlet. "To be or not to be." Here again the mental condition of the speaker must be fully understood by the reader who would realize the weight and nature of each utterance in this speech. Hamlet is overwhelmed and prostrated by difficulties which he can neither resist nor shun. His moral sense is confounded by the crimes which he has neither the fortitude to bear nor the energy to oppose. In this condition the only relief to his sufferings, the only solution for the problems of life to him at that moment, is death. Hence the first question suggested by doubt and despair is "To be or not to be."

"That" to him was the question, and none other. It can easily be seen, therefore, that in the utterance of these words *being* is contrasted with *not being*. To live or die—that was the question: and while the words must be spoken with solemn meditateness, the contrast must be expressed by giving emphasis to "be" in the first case, and "not" in the second. But the word "that" becomes a word of importance, because it is representative of all the subject of his meditation; and to give it due expression it demands slow delivery, a downward inflection, and a pause before the predicate. "Question" might be rendered with a rising or falling intonation. The falling would be expressive of calm consideration, as if Hamlet were a mere dialectician; but his condition is that of deep suffering, and under the excitement of despair he regards this as the grand question, and none other, and a rising intonation to "question" at once suggests the antithesis "and none other." The principal terms of the succeeding clauses are "to suffer" and "to take arms." In uttering the words,

"The stings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,"

the speaker, sympathizing with Hamlet in the perplexities which are unsettling his judgment and driving him into the reality of the madness that he only intended to affect, naturally gives to his delivery the tremulous tones of mournful feeling, but instantly changes the expression to one of mingled defiance and despair as he approaches the consideration of the dread alternative of suicide. For a moment faith is banished and the immortal destinies of the soul are disregarded. To end life and escape its woes—this is the relief the perplexed mind desires, and in that condition of thought Hamlet ponders the great problem "To die"—what is it? The problem is that of death, and as the mind regards it the words stand alone and take the falling intonation—always expressive of completeness—for that expression "to die" is simply the utterance of that single thought—Death. Then the answer which materialism suggests is, that death is sleep everlasting—annihilation, *nothing more*. Hence the "no more" is strongly negative, and for the moment satisfactory; and as it involves the possibility of antithesis it must take the rising intonation. The writer has had the privilege of hearing the greatest actors and readers of this age delivering this passage, and all excepting Fechter, about whose Hamlet the public formed the falsest views, have given it the intonation indicated in this description. The succeeding passages which form the commentary on this materialistic view of death, are delivered rapidly under the excitement inspired by the delusive relief which this view gives to the sufferer. But, then, Faith is not shattered,—only for a moment banished, and, with Reason,