

ACTION.

305

event in the audience near us. But there is an element more essential to audibility than loudness: this is distinctness. By distinctness I mean these traits: clearness or purity of tone, due deliberation or separation of the syllables, and especially careful articulation. *B. Distinctness* The public speaker must never move so rapidly as to huddle his syllables. While he observes due accent and emphasis, he must give space for the distinct enunciation of both the vowels and consonants of all unaccented syllables. There is a tendency growing in this our material age to a curtness and hurry of enunciation, which threaten to destroy the melody and the very identity of the English as a spoken language. This fashion is to disregard the characteristic vowel-sounds of all syllables except the one which bears the accent, and to reduce them to the *e* mute of the French or to the *shewa* sound of the Hebrew. Such speakers pronounce the adjective "capital," for instance, as though it were "*cap'tle*;" "cardinal" in their mouths is "*card'ntle*," "memory" is "*mem'ry*," "governor" is "*gouv'n'r*," "innocent" is "*innic'nt*." This detestable usage would reduce our noble tongue to a torrent of sibilant dissyllables. It is the vowels which are heard: they constitute the real voice of language; the consonants are but the checks or stoppages which the tongue, teeth, lips and palate impose upon the stream of sound. To suppress or diminish the vowel-sounds tends, therefore, to substitute for the music of the flowing river the perpetual gurgle and clatter of the valves of the mill. Rhetorical melody resides in the vowel-sounds. If you would possess this charming grace of speech, the vowels must be each one distinctly uttered.

306 LECTURES ON SACRED RHETORIC.

It is true that the consonants give the articulation: they give to human language that grand peculiarity which distinguishes it from the cries and songs of beasts and birds, and thus renders it symbolical of an infinite diversity of thought, while the merely vowel-sounds of the animal world only express a few instinctive passions. Both vowels and consonants should, then, receive their full enunciation.

c. orthoepy Next to distinctness of utterance perhaps the most essential requisite is orthoepy. The shade of sound, given to letters and combinations of letters, must be that established for each word by polite usage. The accent (on words of more than one syllable) must be placed on the syllable appointed for it by the same standard. In a word, the whole enunciation of the public speaker should be such as marks the man of breeding and polish. If your hearer is himself a gentleman, his taste requires this culture in the man who claims to instruct him; if he is a peasant, its possession always confers influence over him.

Let me now commend to you the same truth which we found so fruitful when considering the question of style. Speaking is but talking dignified. Therefore a natural utterance is cardinal to good elocution. Notice how intelligent and well-bred people speak in conversation; how they indicate the divisions or punctuations of their thoughts; how they express their sentiments by emphasis; how they vary their utterance to correspond with the varieties of their emotions: here you have your lesson. It is a model to be modified, indeed, by the facts that as an orator, you speak continuously, upon a grave subject, and to a crowd, instead of one person or