

## LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS

and send down their voices through it, as an athlete would roll a ball down an alley. We advise men training for speaking professions to peddle wares in the streets for a little time. Young ministers might go into partnership with newsboys awhile, till they got their mouths open and their larynx nerved and toughened.

Gentlemen, a needful rule is – *ALWAYS SUIT YOUR VOICE TO YOUR MATTER*. Do not be jubilant over a doleful subject, and on the other hand, do not drag heavily where the tones ought to trip along merrily, as though they were dancing to the tune of the angels in heaven. This rule I shall not enlarge upon, but rest assured it is of the utmost importance, and if obediently followed, will always secure attention, provided your matter is worth it. Suit your voice to your matter always, and, above all, in everything be natural.<sup>1</sup> Away for ever with slavish attention to rules and models. Do not imitate other people's voices, or, if from an unconquerable propensity you must follow them, emulate every orator's excellencies, and the evil will be lessened. I am myself, by a kind of irresistible influence, drawn to be an imitator, so that a journey to Scotland or Wales will for a week or two materially affect my pronunciation and tone. Strive against it I do, but there it is, and the only cure I know of is to let the mischief die a natural death. Gentlemen, I return to my rule – use your own natural voices. Do not be monkeys, but men; not parrots, but men of originality in all things. It is said that the most becoming way for a man to wear his beard is that in which it grows, for both in colour and form it will suit his face. Your own modes of speech will be most in harmony with your methods of thought and your own personality. The mimic is for the playhouse, the cultured man in his sanctified personality is for the sanctuary. I would repeat this rule till I wearied you if I thought you would forget it; be natural, be natural, be natural evermore. An affectation of voice, or an imitation of the manner of Dr Silvertongue, the eminent divine, or even of a well beloved tutor or president will inevitably ruin you. I charge you throw away the servility of imitation and rise to the manliness of originality.

We are bound to add, *ENDEAVOUR TO EDUCATE YOUR VOICE*. Grudge no pains or labour in achieving this, for as it has been well observed, 'How-

<sup>1</sup> When Johnson was asked whether Burke resembled Tullius Cicero, 'No, Sir', was the reply, 'he resembles Edmund Burke.'

*On the Voice*

ever prodigious may be the gifts of nature to her elect, they can only be developed and brought to their extreme perfection by labour and study.' Think of Michelangelo working for a week without taking off his clothes, and Handel hollowing out every key of his harpsichord, like a spoon, by incessant practice. Gentlemen, after this, never talk of difficulty or weariness. It is almost impossible to see the utility of Demosthenes' method of speaking with stones in his mouth, but any one can perceive the usefulness of his pleading with the boisterous billows, that he might know how to command a hearing amidst the uproarious assemblies of his countrymen; and in his speaking as he ran up hill that his lungs might gather force from laborious use the reason is as obvious as the self-denial is commendable. We are bound to use every possible means to perfect the voice by which we are to tell forth the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

Take great care of the consonants, enunciate every one of them clearly; they are the features and expression of the words. Practise indcfatigably till you give every one of the consonants its due; the vowels have a voice of their own, and therefore they can speak for themselves. In all other matters exercise a rigid discipline until you have mastered your voice, and have it in hand like a well-trained steed. Gentlemen with narrow chests are advised to use the dumb-bells every morning, or better still, those clubs which the College has provided for you. You need broad chests, and must do your best to get them. Do not speak with your hands in your waistcoat pockets so as to contract your lungs, but throw the shoulders back as public singers do. **Do not lean over a desk while speaking, and never hold the head down on the breast while preaching. Upward rather than downward let the body bend.** Off with all tight cravats and button-up waistcoats; leave room for the full play of the bellows and the pipes. Observe the statues of the Roman or Greek orators, look at Raphael's picture of Paul and, without affectation, fall naturally into the graceful and appropriate attitudes there depicted, for these are best for the voice. Get a friend to tell you your faults, or better still, welcome an enemy who will watch you keenly and sting you savagely. What a blessing such an irritating critic will be to a wise man, what an intolerable nuisance to a fool! Correct yourself diligently and frequently, or you will fall into errors unawares, false tones will grow, and slovenly