

*Posture, Action, Gesture, etc.*

But I must return to my subject, and I do so by repeating the belief that boxed-up pulpits are largely accountable for the ungainly postures which some of our preachers assume when they are out of their cages and are loose upon a platform. They do not know what to do with their legs and arms, and feel awkward and exposed, and hence drop into ridiculous attitudes. When a man has been accustomed to regard himself as an 'animated bust' he feels as if he had become too long when he is made to appear at full length.

There can be no doubt that *MANY MEN ARE MADE AWKWARD THROUGH FEAR*. It is not the man's nature, nor his pulpit, but his nervousness which makes a guy of him. To some it is a display of great courage even to stand before an audience, and to speak is an ordeal indeed; no wonder that their attitude is constrained, for they are twitching and trembling all over. Every nerve is in a state of excitement, and their whole body is tremulous with fear. Especially are they perplexed what to do with their hands, and they move them about in a restless, irregular, meaningless manner; if they could have them strapped down to their sides they might rejoice in the deliverance. One of the clergy of the Church of England, in pleading for the use of the manuscript, makes use of the remarkable argument that a nervous man by having to turn over the leaves of his discourse thus keeps his hands occupied; whereas, if he had no paper before him, he would not know what to do with them. It is an ill wind that blows no one any good, and it must be a very bad practice indeed which has not some remote and occasional advantages. For nervousness, however, there must be a more effectual treatment; the preacher should try to conquer the evil rather than look for a mode of concealing its outward manifestations.

Practice is a great remedy, and faith in God is a still more potent cure. When the minister becomes accustomed to the people he stands at ease because he is at ease, he feels at home, and as to his hands or legs, or any other part of his person, he has no thought: he goes to work with all his heart, and drops into the positions most natural to an earnest man, and these are the most appropriate. Unstudied gestures, to which you never turned your thoughts for a moment, are the very best, and the highest result of art is to banish art, and leave the man as free to be graceful as the gazelle among the mountains.