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C. C. Bell
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I

INTRODUCTORY

This book is meant for the use of students in training colleges and training departments. While it is greatly to be hoped that in some years' time the effect of speech training in schools will be so widely felt that there will be little necessity for continued instruction after boys and girls leave school, there is at present such a need for this work in training colleges and departments as cannot be supplied in the brief time that is spared for it. Although it may be urged that these students have passed the age at which the best results of training in good speech can be expected, it is clear that every effort must be made to ensure a high standard of speech among teachers, if the results of training in the schools are not to be made nugatory by force of bad example.

By means of the opportunities of what has been called the "educational ladder", a large section of the population of this country to-day has been trained in the use of the King's English, as it is taught in the secondary schools and newer universities. These institutions have often failed to realize an important fact, i.e. that the English spoken in the homes from which their pupils are drawn is not the English in which the writers of English literature themselves thought and spoke. While these schools and colleges have succeeded in teaching written English of a high standard in the matter of vocabulary,

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grammar, structure and style, little attention has been paid to spoken English, with the result that there is often a wide discrepancy in the effectiveness of tongue and pen. It is easy to see how this difficulty has been overlooked, since it is one almost without precedent. Up till a few years ago, education, except of the most rudimentary kind, was in general confined to the children of educated people, whose home circumstances ensured that ease and fluency in cultured speech which it was therefore no part of the schools to provide.

The scope of this book is purposely limited; it aims at providing the essential basis of the theory and practice of good speech, from the point of view only of phonetic accuracy. Language or speech is much more than merely a mode of pronunciation. Even in a strictly limited sense, speech training should include voice production and the aesthetics of speech. In a fuller sense, it should explore speech as an aspect of personality, and show the incongruity of any mode of speech which is not one with the speaker. While no attempt is made to deal completely or thoroughly with the matter of breathing or voice production, a few suggestions have been made in Chapter II with a view to emphasizing the importance of a technique in breathing "for speech". Reference is made in the bibliography to works which deal adequately with this subject.

This book then is concerned with only a small though essential part of speech training, i.e. pronunciation of sounds. An attempt has been made, not to lay down rules as to how sounds *should* be pronounced, but to

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show how certain sounds *are* pronounced by a particular group of speakers, and to indicate a way of learning to alter one's own or another person's pronunciation, should one wish to do so. The claims of the particular type of pronunciation described to be regarded as "standard" are discussed in Chapter III.

It should be clearly understood that no amount of theoretical knowledge will take the place of actual practice of speech sounds with the help of an instructor who is able to suggest to the student, by pronunciation, a comparison of the sounds he intends to, and those he in fact does, make. A student whose ear is susceptible to small variations of sound will often correct his own speech with the minimum of theoretical knowledge of phonetics. The exercises in this book are intended as material for practice, but in no way as a substitute for practical work under a competent tutor. Speech training is one of the subjects which cannot be successfully exploited by the purveyors of correspondence courses.

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II

BREATHING FOR SPEECH

In the ordinary course of our daily affairs, we do not give much attention to the process of breathing. Our normal actions and conversation do not require us to modify our ordinary effortless intake and outflow of breath; indeed, it is only when we are called upon to make some special physical effort, or when we are suffering from some temporary physical disability affecting the organs of breathing and speech, that we are even conscious of the act of respiration. An athlete or a swimmer is obliged to learn to adapt his breathing process to the physical effort he makes. In the same way, to speak continuously, as in lecturing or teaching, requires some modification of the usual way of breathing.

The familiar breathing exercises of the drill class are not only useless as practice in breathing for speech, but actually make good speech impossible if they are used in this connection. *In the first place*, deep breathing, i.e. complete inflation and deflation of the lungs, is not a desirable practice in speaking. Beginning to speak with the lungs fully inflated makes for a rigidity of the chest and neck muscles, which shows itself in a tenseness of sound, while failure to renew the breath supply before it completely runs out results in inadequate force of breath in the concluding words of a phrase or sentence, and leads to a noisy, gasping sound in the subsequent

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inhalation. *Secondly*, inhaling through the nose with the mouth shut is a method quite unadapted to breathing for speech, as speaking or reading becomes jerky and discontinuous if the mouth is closed during an intake of breath. (There is no need to dwell upon the effects in speech of any attempt to exhale with the mouth closed.) *Thirdly*, any kind of rigidity of stance, such as standing at attention, prevents the relaxation of neck, chest and shoulder muscles necessary for effective voice production.

Breathing exercises for speech will therefore aim to achieve the following requirements: (1) Intake of breath through the nose and mouth together; (2) Relaxation of the muscles of throat, shoulders and chest; (3) Intake of a breath supply rather greater than that needed for the sentence or phrase to be spoken, and a quiet renewal of breath before the supply is exhausted.

Exercises in Breathing for Speech

In speaking or reading, we pause at the end of each "sense group" of words. While we may not need to take in a fresh supply of breath at the end of every such group, we shall not break the sense of any group for the purpose of taking breath. A good speaker or reader, therefore, takes in a breath supply adequate to the length of the group of words he intends to utter, and these groups will vary in length. One of the best exercises, therefore, in breathing for speech is to learn to vary the amount of breath taken in, according to the

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length of the group of words to be spoken. It should be noted that, since most modern punctuation is based upon grammatical construction rather than upon rhetorical effect, the sense groups will not necessarily coincide with the punctuation of a passage.

Read aloud the following[1] passages, taking breath only where the vertical[2] lines mark the sense pauses:

1. It was a little eminence, remote from any great road, covered with trees and plants of an agreeable verdure, | on the top of which was a stately palace, with a grand and beautiful court in the middle; | within were galleries, and fine apartments elegantly fitted up, and adorned with most curious paintings; | around it were fine meadows, and most delightful gardens, with fountains of the purest and best water. | The vaults also were stored with the richest wines, suited rather to the taste of debauchees, than of modest and virtuous ladies. | This palace they found cleared out, and everything set

[1] In most books of exercises for practice in breathing and speech sounds, the passages are chosen from the finest poems and prose works in the language. Students with any pretensions to literary taste generally dislike the association of great poetry and prose with corrective speech exercises. The extracts in this book have therefore been chosen particularly in the hope of avoiding this offence.

[2] It should be clearly understood that no attempt is here made to indicate a *correct* phrasing of the selected passages: in ordinary reading, the phrasing will vary according to the reader's own preference. The vertical marks merely suggest a grouping which will give useful practice in varying the breath supply.

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in order for their reception, | with the rooms all graced with the flowers of the season, to their great satisfaction. |

BOCCACCIO, *The Decameron* (translation)

2. The sport was at its height, the sliding was at the quickest, the laughter was at the loudest, when a sharp smart crack was heard. | There was a quick rush towards the bank, a wild scream from the ladies, and a shout from Mr Tupman. | A large mass of ice disappeared; the water bubbled up over it; Mr Pickwick's hat, gloves and handkerchief were floating on the surface; | and this was all of Mr Pickwick that anybody could see. |

Dismay and anguish were depicted on every countenance; the males turned pale, and the females fainted; | Mr Snodgrass and Mr Winkle grasped each other by the hand, and gazed at the spot where their leader had gone down, with frenzied eagerness; | while Mr Tupman, by way of rendering the promptest assistance, and at the same time conveying to any persons who might be within hearing, the clearest possible notion of the catastrophe, | ran off across the country at his utmost speed, screaming "Fire" with all his might. |

DICKENS, *Pickwick Papers*

3. Hence it is almost a definition of a gentleman to say that he is one who never inflicts pain. | This description is both refined and, as far as it goes, accurate. | He is mainly occupied in removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him; | and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself. | His benefits may be

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considered as parallel to what are called comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature; | like an easy chair or a good fire, which do their part in dispelling cold and fatigue, though nature provides both means of rest and animal heat without them. | The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast; | all clashing of opinion or collision of feeling, all restraint or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; | his great concern being to make everyone at their ease and at home. | He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, merciful towards the absurd; | he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate; | he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome. | He makes light of favours while he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. |

NEWMAN, *The Idea of a University*

4. They gave him a very bad bed-room, and Giglio, when he awoke in the morning, fancying himself in the Royal Palace at home, called, | "John, Charles, Thomas, my chocolate—my dressing-gown—my slippers". But nobody came. | There was no bell, so he went and bawled out for the waiter on the top of the stairs. |

The landlady came up, as cross as two sticks. "What are you shouting for here, young man?" says she. |

"There's no warm water—no servants, my boots are not even cleaned." |

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"He, he! Clean 'em yourself", says the landlady. "You young students give yourselves pretty airs. I never heard such impudence." |

"I'll leave the house this instant", says Giglio. |

"The sooner the better, young man. Pay your bill and be off." |

"You may well keep the Bear Inn", said Giglio. "You should have yourself painted as the sign." |

The landlady of the Bear went away growling. |

THACKERAY, *The Rose and the Ring*

5. We have illustrated our meaning by an instance taken from history. We will select another from fiction. | Othello murders his wife; he gives orders for the murder of his lieutenant; he ends by murdering himself. | Yet he never loses the esteem and affection of Northern readers. His intrepid and ardent spirit redeems everything. | The unsuspecting confidence with which he listens to his adviser, the agony with which he shrinks from the thought of shame, | the tempest of passion with which he commits his crimes, and the haughty fearlessness with which he avows them, | give an extraordinary interest to his character. | Iago, on the contrary, is the object of universal loathing. | Many are inclined to believe that Shakespeare has been seduced into an exaggeration unusual with him, and has drawn a monster which has no archetype in human nature. | Now we suspect that an Italian audience in the fifteenth century would have felt very differently. | Othello would have inspired nothing but detestation and con-

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tempt. | The folly with which he trusts the friendly professions of a man whose promotion he had obstructed, | the credulity with which he takes unsupported assertions, and trivial circumstances, for unanswerable proofs, | the violence with which he silences the exculpation till the exculpation can only aggravate his misery, | would have excited the abhorrence and disgust of the spectators. | The conduct of Iago they would have assuredly condemned; but they would have condemned it as we condemn that of his victim. | Something of interest and respect would have mingled with their disapprobation. | The readiness of the traitor's wit, the clearness of his judgment, the skill with which he penetrates the dispositions of others and conceals his own, would have ensured to him a certain portion of their esteem. |

MACAULAY, *Essay on Machiavelli*

6. The little hedgerow birds,
That peck along the roads, regard him not. |
He travels on, and in his face, his step,
His gait, is one expression: | every limb,
His look and bending figure, all bespeak
A man who does not move with pain, but moves
With thought. | He is insensibly subdued
To settled quiet; he is one by whom
All effort seems forgotten; one to whom
Long patience hath such mild composure given,
That patience now doth seem a thing of which
He hath no need. | He is by nature led,

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