

GRAMMAR OF ELOCUTION

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Grammar of Elocution by John Millard

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JOHN MILLARD

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ELOCUTION**

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BY

JOHN MILLARD

ELOCUTION MASTER IN THE CITY OF LONDON SCHOOL

'I have never known that GENIUS in any art has ever been cramped by RULES. On the contrary, I have seen great geniuses miserably err by transgressing them, and, like vigorous travellers, who lose their way, only wander the wider on account of their own strength'

HARRIS, *Philological Inquiries*

SECOND EDITION, REVISED



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1882

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TO
MY OLD FRIEND AND SCHOOLFELLOW
WILLIAM MOORE, Esq., B.A. LOND.
HEAD MASTER OF THE PHILOLOGICAL SCHOOL
THIS LITTLE WORK
IS
WITH VIVID RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY FRIENDSHIP
AND CONTINUED KINDNESS
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

PREFACE
TO
THE SECOND EDITION.

THE following work is an attempt to systematise the study of elocution by furnishing such a collection of facts and rules as may enable a learner both to read and speak with propriety.

The numerous evidences of the importance attached by the Greeks and Romans to elocution compel us to believe that men must in the classical ages have regarded it as an accomplishment capable of being systematically learnt and taught. Yet no great time has elapsed since this apparently obvious truth was denied, and elocution regarded, as Dogberry regarded reading and writing, as a gift of nature, to be improved perhaps in some vague way by practice, but unworthy of being considered an art. This idea is gradually losing ground, but still lives, for were it not so, how would it be possible for so many men, whose business it is to read and speak effectively,

to allow themselves to come to their work so utterly unprepared?

Many object to a systematic reference to principles in teaching elocution, because some people speak or read correctly without knowing these principles. But objection might as well be urged against the study of logic or grammar, or any other art whose principles have been investigated and developed. For we know that a consciousness of the laws of thought is so far from necessary to the act of thinking that men can, and do, reason correctly without a knowledge of them. We should not, however, call such men logicians. Men, too, have spoken grammatically who never knew the difference between a noun and a verb. Yet we should not call such men grammarians. As arts, grammar, logic, and elocution are exercised by all of us with or without, as it may be, a knowledge of their laws. But it is from a knowledge of its laws that a master of any one of these arts derives his superiority and power. It is this knowledge which gives him authority as a teacher, and enables him to correct the shifting notions of individual taste by reference to the unvarying standard of truth.

The great difficulty, however, a teacher of elocution has to contend with, is the advanced age at which the majority of his pupils take up the study. A violinist would despair of a pupil beginning to learn at twenty. What can the writing-master do with the would-be clerk who takes his first lesson in writing at that age? How little, in short, can the majority of us do with pursuits taken up late in life! Our muscles have learned

other ways, and refuse to alter them. Yet how often do we have pupils who after spending twenty years in mispronouncing some sounds, and misproducing others—in accustoming their ears to vicious inflections and distorted rhythm—ask to be made rivals to Demosthenes, Cicero, and Garrick—in a course of twelve lessons? Could elocution be put on a par with the other subjects children learn, could an hour a week be given to it, as an hour is given to history or geography, there would in a few years be an end of the outcry against the lack of power to speak that disgraces the country.

The growing interest in the subject encourages the hope that at no very distant day it may more generally come to be regarded as an advantageous supplement to the course of education pursued in our public schools.

There have appeared from time to time able and comprehensive works on elocution, but their authors have had to contend with the difficulties that beset all the early workers at an art that has not yet been fully recognised, while the very limited scope allowed for the practice of their theory has precluded them from realising the great difference between a book for the study and a book for the schoolroom. And hence they have failed, if I may venture to say so, in conciseness and system. But I gladly acknowledge my deep obligations to Mr. Steele and Dr. Rush, as well as to other authors referred to in the text; while more than a passing acknowledgment of such indebtedness is due from me to Mr. B. H. Smart, to whose instruction, which I remember with gratitude and reverence, I owe whatever success

has attended my own labours as a teacher of elocution.

To the present edition have been added several appendices. Nos. I.—II. and IV.—VII. deal solely with articulation. Any deficiency in this respect is fatal to a speaker's progress. In other words, his ultimate success will depend upon his complete mastery of his *a, b, c*. A commanding presence, graceful gesture, a sonorous voice, melodious and expressive inflection—no one of these, nor all of these combined, can compensate for defects in this the fundamental requisite of his art. This portion of the subject, therefore, has been treated with a fulness and minuteness which would seem excessive but for its extreme importance. Materials have been furnished for the correction of every phase of weakness in articulation; and different speakers will find themselves benefited by special attention to different sections according to their individual needs. I am convinced that if the organs of speech are thus early trained to the niceties of articulation, absolute perfection will reward the perseverance of the pupil.

Of all defects of speech, stammering is the most distressing. Appendix III is devoted to a consideration of this defect; and I cannot but think that sufferers who will be at the pains of using my hints will find themselves amply repaid.

At the suggestion of several practical schoolmasters, I have inserted an appendix (No. VIII.) of passages for practice in recitation. These passages, however, have been selected with a view to their fitness for training

the learner, rather than to their popularity as recitations, and have been arranged for the purpose of illustrating certain definite points on modulation, energy, and rate, to which the learner's attention has been directed in the text. With these additions, I would hope that this little work may not only be of assistance to the private student, but also prove a really serviceable class-book in schools.

CITY OF LONDON SCHOOL :

April 1882.