

**ELOCUTION: VOICE,  
EXPRESSION, GESTURE FOR USE  
IN COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS  
AND BY PRIVATE STUDENTS**

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Elocution: Voice, Expression, Gesture for Use in Colleges and Schools and by Private Students  
by Sarah Neal Harris

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**SARAH NEAL HARRIS**

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ELOCUTION

# Voice, Expression, Gesture

FOR USE IN

Colleges and Schools  
and by  
.. Private Students ..

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SARAH NEAL HARRIS.

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# ELOCUTION.

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## ORATORY.

Eloquence holds the first rank among the arts. Rome borrowed her eloquence from Greece, as she did her other arts and learning, till "victorious Rome was herself subdued by Greece." Aristotle's definition of oratory was, "The power of saying on every subject whatever can be found to persuade;" Phocian's, "The power to express the most sense in the fewest words;" Quintilian calls it "The power of persuading." The ancients uncovered as Cicero approached, and cried, "Behold the Orator!"

While we award praise and glory to great musicians and painters, to great masters of sculpture and architecture, the prize of honor is decreed to great orators.

Art is the expression of the beautiful in ideas. It is also the beautiful in action. Poets are born; orators are made.

Perfect beauty is nowhere to be found. It must be created by synthetic work. You have a fine voice; it has its defects. Your articulation is vicious and your gestures unnatural. Do not rely upon the fire of momentary inspiration. Nothing is more deceptive. Garrick said, "Do not depend upon that inspiration which idle mediocrity awaits."

The orator should not even think of what he is doing. The thing should have been so much studied that all would seem to flow of itself.



The art of oratory is expressing mental thought by means of physical organs, and may be divided into three parts,—vital, mental, and moral.

Since each state can take the form of the two others, the result is nine distinct positions with their accompanying tones.

A tone must always be reproduced with an expression of the face.

The highest object of elocution and physical culture is a more perfect unity of tone, body, soul.

### POSITION.

Bring the weight of the body upon the front of the advanced foot. Raise the chest. Hollow the back at the waist line.

This position indicates a desire to please and interest your audience.

It also demands attention.

This is the attitude of the Apollo Belvidere, esteemed one of the noblest representations of the human frame.

An equal balance of the body upon its two feet is the sign of weakness, of respect. It characterizes, also, infancy and decay. It is the attitude of the soldier at "attention." It is used also in saluting a superior officer.

One foot advanced, with an equal weight upon both, denotes reflection and the absence of passion. It indicates calmness and strength, which are the signs of intelligence.

Bring the weight on the back foot. It is a sign of weakness which follows vehemence. Natural weakness is in the second position, sudden weakness in the fourth.

An inclination of the body to one side or the other is used in personation. It is a third to one side. Is generally passive when not used in personation. It indicates calmness and strength.

The sixth is one third crossed. It is an attitude of respect and ceremony. It is effective in the presence of princes. It also precedes a fall.

The seventh attitude is like the second position, with the feet farther apart. It denotes intoxication, overwhelming astonishment, familiarity, and repose.

One foot advanced, with the body facing one of the two legs. It serves for menace and jealousy. It is offensive and defensive. It leaves the audience in doubt, which can only be solved by the first or fourth.

An equal weight upon both feet, the body bending back, is the sign of distrust and scorn.

### GESTURE.

Gesture reveals what speech is powerless to express. It is not what we say that persuades, but the manner of saying it.

But one gesture is needed for the expression of an entire thought.

#### Application of Gestures.

Inexpressive motions should always be avoided.

No gesture should be made without a reason for it, and when any position has been assumed there should be no change from it without a reason.

The habit of allowing the hands to fall to the side immediately after every gesture is ungraceful, and the effect is bad; they must not be constantly in motion. Repose is a chief element of gesticulating effect. Some orators accompany every vocal accent by a bodily motion;—the consequence is, that gesticulate ever so well, and however energetic the gestures may be, they produce no effect. The eye is fatigued with gestures that illustrate nothing. The most difficult part of gesture is to stand still gracefully.

The frequency of gesture will depend on the variety of ideas and words that occur in the language.

A uniform strain will require but little gesture.

A variable, flighty, passionate strain will demand many gestures.

Gestures are either Directive, Illustrative, or Emotive.

Directive gestures carry the eye of the spectator to the object spoken of, which is either visible, or supposed to be visible, or figuratively presented to the mind's eye.

The gestures must be arranged with pictorial accuracy, thus: the hand and eye must be raised in pointing to sky or mountain, and to near objects above the speaker, and depressed below the horizontal elevation for near objects below the line of the speaker's eye; must be horizontal in addressing persons around us, and in pointing to objects at a distance.

Having located any fixed object by a directive gesture, we come to the same point in again speaking of it, or any object associated with it, without a change of scene.

Illustrative gestures should be suited to the idea or action they illustrate, thus: drawing a sword, etc.

Emotive gestures are such as fear, indignation, etc., spontaneous with the feeling.

The eyes should generally accompany the motions of the hands; but in directing attention to any object, the eye will first merely glance towards it, and then fix itself upon the person addressed, while the finger continues to point. The head must not lean from side to side on the gesture points, nor must it rise or fall with the inflections of the voice; it should be kept moderately, but not rigidly, erect. The motions of the arm must commence at the shoulder, not at the elbow. The upper part of the arms must not rest in contact with the sides. The motions of the arms must not be accompanied by any action of the shoulders. The shoulders must be kept square to the auditors' vision.