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Side Talk No. 03, The Analysis of Two Famous Speeches

R. E. Pattinson Kline

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EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

SIDE TALK No. 3

THE ANALYSIS OF TWO FAMOUS SPEECHES

NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO

THE ANALYSIS OF TWO FAMOUS SPEECHES

SIDE TALK No. 3

One of a Series of Talks on
EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

By
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Dean Public Speaking Department,
Columbia College of Expression, Chicago

NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO

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OUTLINE OF ASSIGNMENT.

Third Month.

FIRST WEEK

First—Read this Side Talk on "The Analysis of Two Famous Speeches."

Second—Read carefully Lesson No. 9, "The Speech as Effected by the Audience."

Third—Read carefully pages 51 to 54, Text Book, "Training of the Voice." Practice orally the sentences on pages 53 and 54.

Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 9.

SECOND WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 10, "The Speech as Effected by the Occasion."

Second—Read carefully pages 55 and 56, Text Book, "Training of the Voice," practicing the Exercises.

Third—Memorize the speech, "The New Patriotism," page 16, Text Book, "Selected Speeches for Practice," and practice it orally.

Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 10.

THIRD WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 11, "How to Emphasize."

Second—Read carefully page 57, Text Book, "Training of the Voice," practicing the Exercises.

Third—Memorize the Speech, "Human Knowledge," page 18, Text Book, "Selected Speeches for Practice," and practice it orally.

Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 11.

FOURTH WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 12, "Simple Laws of Gesture."

Second—Read carefully page 60, Text Book, "Training of the Voice," practicing the Exercises.

Third—Memorize the Speech, "Laugh Away the Clouds," page 21, Text Book, "Selected Speeches for Practice," and practice it orally.

Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 12.

"Prepare in Advance for Opportunities."

THE ANALYSIS OF TWO FAMOUS SPEECHES

1. The Birth of an Orator. John Haynes Holmes. A description of the first great speech made by Wendell Phillips. This description will throw light upon the effect of audience and occasion upon the character of a speech.

2. Liberty or Death. Patrick Henry. An analysis of this famous speech shows the effect of the occasion upon the character of the speech.

THE BIRTH OF AN ORATOR * (1912).

On the 9th day of December, 1837, there was held in Faneuil Hall, in the city of Boston, a great public meeting in protest against the recent murder, in Alton, Illinois, of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy. The

* From a sermon delivered in the Church of the Messiah, New York City, by John Haynes Holmes.

historic old edifice was filled upon this momentous occasion to suffocation, as feeling was running very high upon both sides of the slavery question; and the audience was about equally divided between the friends and enemies of the cause. The meeting was opened with a brief and impressive address by Dr. Channing. Resolutions denouncing the murder of Lovejoy were then read and formally seconded. Everything seemed to be moving smoothly, when a man was seen making his way through the excited crowd to the great gilded eagle in the front of the gallery. He was instantly recognized as James T. Austin, a parishioner of Dr. Channing, a popular politician, and at that time the Attorney-General of the Commonwealth. Gaining his position, he began a harangue, calculated to fire the crowd and break up the meeting. He compared the slaves of the South to a menagerie, and likened Lovejoy to one who should "break the bars and let loose the caravan to prowl about the streets." He talked of the rioters of Alton as akin to the "orderly mob" which threw the tea into Boston

Harbor in 1773; and, in direct allusion to his minister, Dr. Channing, he closed by asserting that a clergyman with a gun in his hand, or one "mingling in the debates of a popular assembly, was marvelously out of place."

No sooner were these words spoken than the chairman lost all control of the meeting. The Attorney-General had captured his audience, and friends and foes seemed to vie with one another in calling for the resolutions that they might vote them down, and thus turn the protest of the occasion into an endorsement. At this wild moment, when all hope of saving the meeting seemed to be lost, a young man with pale face and close-pressed lips, was seen pushing his way to the platform through the frenzied mob. A few persons recognized Wendell Phillips, a son of one of the richest and most conservative families of Boston, a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School, and now just entered upon the practice of his profession. Leaping upon the stage, this unknown stripling faced the crowd, as tall and fair and beau-

tiful as an Apollo, and, raising his hand, spoke two or three words in those marvellous silvery tones which were destined ultimately to chant their music in so many halls and before so many popular assemblies. Instantly the wild "tumult and shouting" was hushed, while men leaned forward curiously to hear what this foolish youth could find to say in answer to the Attorney-General. "Mr. Chairman," he began, "we have met for the freest discussion of these resolutions, and the events which gave rise to them. I hope I shall be permitted to express my surprise at the sentiments of the last speaker—surprise not only at such sentiments from such a man, but at the applause which they received within these walls. * * * Sir, when I heard the gentleman lay down principles which place the murderers of Lovejoy side by side with Otis and Hancock, Quincy and Adams, I thought [pointing to the portraits of the revolutionary heroes in the hall] those pictured lips would have broken into voice to rebuke this recreant American—this slanderer of the dead."

Instantly, with this utterance of magic eloquence, the tide of popular feeling was turned. Sentence after sentence fell from the speaker's lips like thunderbolts from the hand of Jove, until at last his words were swept away in the wild tumult of applause; and with a mighty shout the resolutions were put and carried. Thus was the day unexpectedly saved, and from that moment on Faneuil Hall was identified with the name of Wendell Phillips, as it had previously been identified with the names of James Otis and Samuel Adams, and was dedicated to the cause of anti-slavery, as it had hitherto been dedicated to the cause of political independence.

LIBERTY OR DEATH * (1775).

1. No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different

* Delivered by Patrick Henry in the Virginia Convention, on a resolution to put the commonwealth into a state of defense, March 23, 1775.

lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful of those gentlemen, if, entertaining as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfil the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offence, I should consider myself as guilty of treason toward my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the Majesty of Heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

2. Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren, till she transforms us into beasts. Is this

the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those, who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

3. I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British Ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House. Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with those warlike preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets

and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, What means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British Ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What

terms shall we find, which have not already been exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves longer. Sir, we have done everything that could be done to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the Ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne! In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon, until the glorious object of our contest shall

be obtained—we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

4. They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us.

The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone, it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat, but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

5. It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, peace, peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

ANALYSIS.

Before studying the oration be sure to take time to recall the times in which it was uttered. It was but a little more than a year before the Declaration of Independence. The people throughout the Colonies were thoroughly aroused. There was a divided sentiment regarding the best line of action. The preponderance of opinion was crystallizing into the movement for independence. Feelings were running high. A struggle, however, with such a power as England seemed hopeless.

Definite action has been asked for—to put the State in a thorough condition of defense. As the oration is studied bear in mind continually the conditions surrounding its making, and discover how these conditions influence the development of the thought and style, and also the delivery.

Study paragraph one carefully. Note the tone of conciliation. Note the attitude of respect for those whom he disagrees with. One must learn to be controversial without bitterness and without contempt

for one's opponents. Do not fail to observe the high ground the speaker takes at the close of the paragraph. An occasion of "awful moment" demands the highest type of human action.

Paragraph two finds its opening thought in an attitude of hope that all things would work out well without war or any serious action on the part of the Colonies being necessary. In a time when sharp differences of opinion are held is the interrogation wiser than a direct statement? All through the oration change the interrogations into direct assertions, and having spoken each form analyze the strength or weakness of each.

Paragraph three is an exceedingly well done bit of oratorical composition. Note first that the speaker takes his stand upon a fundamental fact. Nothing better could be done. To stand upon a fundamental fact or principle when basing an argument means great strength. His sole purpose seems to be that of destroying the false hope that some of them have. Study carefully his method of asking a question, and

then answering it himself. Study the rapidity of movement that is secured through the short sentence forms. Note at the close of the paragraph, the high motives he appeals to in order to secure the action he desires. "High actions, and high passions," high actions by and through high passions.

Having shown that there is no hope in looking for more favorable action from England, Patrick Henry meets the question of their ability to cope with England in a clash of arms, a matter that had been much discussed. In this paragraph 4 and in paragraph 5 note how steadily he advances to the climax. Observe how the thought development alternates between the high principle on which they stand and the fact that God fights with them and the accusation that they are not men but cowards if they do not fight to free themselves. Quickly he strikes the next show of fire in the statement that war is already upon them, and following this with the inference that they are indeed base cowards if they would purchase peace at the "price of chains and slavery." Henry at the close appeals to

several of the most fundamental motives of the human heart—those which can be counted on always to arouse men when large affairs are at stake.

History records that Patrick Henry put a great deal of action into the delivery of the speech. There must have been action in the varying changes of expression that swept over the face; there must have been considerable action of the arms and hands; and at times the whole body must have engaged itself in what the language of the stage calls acting. The student would do well to make a careful study of this matter. Think much of the thought and live the emotions keenly and intensely and see what actions the body tends to use. Ask yourself afterward whether these actions aid in the general effect or not. Try other action after study if the first does not suit you.

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—President Woodrow Wilson.

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