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Lesson No. 18, How to Develop Emotion

R. E. Pattinson Kline

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EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

LESSON No. 18

HOW TO DEVELOP EMOTION



**NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO**

HOW TO DEVELOP EMOTION

LESSON No. 18

**One of a Series of Lessons in
EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING**

By

R. E. PATTISON KLINE

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

**NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO**

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HOW TO DEVELOP EMOTION

In the preceding lesson there were considered the problems connected with making ideas clear. Since by far the greater portion of speech has clearness as its end and since the securing of other effects, such as emotion, conviction and action, is frequently dependent upon the clear understanding of the idea presented, the importance of acquiring the ability to set forth thoughts and relations unmistakably would seem to need no further emphasis. The next most necessary end after clearness is that of impressiveness—the arousing of interest. This interest may be either of the mental type or of the emotional. At this time, however, there is to be considered the arousing of interest or the making of ideas impressive through the appeal to the emotions. The special field pertaining to the arousing of emotion with action as the end

will be left to the consideration of that end, the arousing to action. It is desired here to discuss the general process whereby emotion may be strongly aroused. The result will be the creating of a more or less lasting impression according to the intensity or sweep of the emotion aroused.

The first principle to be laid down is that the public speaker cannot expect to arouse emotion in his audience unless he himself is deeply moved. It is true that there are those of such fine sensibilities, such responsive sympathies, that mere presentation to their minds of an idea emotional in nature is sufficient to produce a decided degree of emotional response. There are a few who have kept active their power of imagination, so that a suggestion is sufficient to arouse fullness of image or idea. When there is fullness of idea or image there is every likelihood that there will come also adequacy of emotion.

But they of rather sensitive sympathies and alert imaginations are comparatively few in number, therefore if large numbers in the audience are to be emotionally

aroused it will be necessary to do more than to suggest or to present slightly the idea. Masses of people always have been cold, unemotional, indifferent toward those matters which have not directly interested them. A little fire will not warm them; a feeble spirit will not enliven them; low-pressure energy will not stir them; timidity will not drive them.

In this day feeling, emotion, is frequently frowned upon, being considered an evidence of soft-heartedness and weakness. But in spite of this condition men and women demand that from the speaker which they refuse to themselves. He must show the heat of fire. If he does radiate this fervent heat it will be communicated to those in his audience and a fire will be kindled within them that may burn with great intensity.

Rufus Choate in discussing the "Eloquence of Revolutionary Periods" rapidly reviews the great questions that have caused people of different times and nations to carry on revolutions. He says:

“Filled with these, with these flashing in every eye, swelling every heart, pervading

electric all ages, all orders, like a visitation, an 'unquenchable public fire,' men come together,—the thousands of Athens around the Bema, or the temple of Dionysus,—the people of Rome in the Forum, the Senate in that Council Chamber of the world,—the masses of France, as the spring-tide, into her gardens of the Tuileries, her club-rooms, her hall of the Convention,—the representatives, the genius, the grace, the beauty of Ireland into the Tuscan Gallery of her House of the Commons,—the delegates of the Colonies into the Hall of Independence of Philadelphia,—thus men come,—in an hour of revolution to hang upon the lips from which they hope, they need, they demand to hear the things which belong to their national salvation, hungering for the bread of life.

“And then and thus comes the orator of that time, kindling with their fire; sympathizing with that great beating heart; penetrated, not subdued; lifted up rather by a sublime and rare moment of history made real to his consciousness.”

Here Choate represents the orator as one

who reflects a fire which burns within the bosoms of the people, but a study of great periods of history will show that more frequently the orator has been the one to feel first the heat of the burning ideas of national salvation and has been the one to kindle the national conflagration.

This point Choate himself rather suggests when he says that the orator comes:

“Charged with the very mission of life, yet unassured whether they will hear or will forbear; transcendent good within their grasp, yet a possibility that the fatal and critical opportunity of salvation will be wasted; the last evil of nations and of men overhanging, yet the siren song of peace—peace when there is no peace—chanted madly by some voice of sloth or fear.”

He who is to move audiences, then, must learn to realize the issues of his own heart and spirit. He must not only be willing to be moved to great emotional heights, properly controlled, but he must learn to share his spiritual possessions, even to the extent of occasionally baring the naked soul to the

gaze of the world. The men who have most profoundly influenced social and political affairs have been those great spirits capable of a fire of emotion which was well nigh consuming. The world is not led or moved by the great intellect alone, it is the heart of man appealing to the heart of his fellows which secures the great changes in the upward march of humanity. The great orators and speakers of the world have always possessed great hearts which became passionately aflame for the rights and happiness and good of every fellow-man.

It was a Moses, or an Isaiah, or a Demosthenes, or a Christ, or a Cicero, or a Savonarola, or an O'Connell, or a Mirabeau, or a Luther, or a Gladstone, or a Patrick Henry, or a Phillips, or a Grady, or a Webster, or a Lincoln who had the unerring sight of truth and a soul that could burn white hot with the passion for truth and righteousness and for the rights of humanity who has vitalized this too careless, unfeeling and unimaginative human mass and compelled it to be up with a quickened march toward the higher things of life.

There are two principles involved in arousing personal emotion. These are the length of time and the concentration with which a thought is held in the mind, and the presence of motive. Examining your personal experience you remember having remarked to yourself or to someone else on some occasion, "The longer I thought of it, the angrier I became," or "the longer I thought of it, the deeper my humiliation," or "the longer I thought of it the more I laughed." To keep the attention keenly fixed upon some thought which carries emotion is to intensify the emotional response.

What is true of the individual is also true of an audience. The greater the length of time an idea is held before their attention and the more keenly that attention can be centered upon the idea, the greater the emotional response. It will be well to remember at this point that the very matter of keenly and unreservedly holding the attention of a large audience upon the given idea is a more difficult task than doing the same thing for a small audience. It, there-

fore, follows that as the audience increases in size the speaker will be compelled to enlarge and intensify his process of operation.

The question may be asked what is implied in this process of keeping an idea before the attention of an audience and concentrating their attention. Keenly consider the concrete illustration: Were the speaker to say to an audience, "I saw a man strike a boy yesterday afternoon," the chances are that there would be a few in the audience so mentally alert and imaginative that nothing further would be needed to arouse a considerable degree of sympathy and feeling. But were the speaker to say, "I saw a big, burly, strong brute of a man strike a boy of six years of age upon the head yesterday afternoon. This boy was lame; he used a crutch; he had done nothing to provoke this brutish attack; he was peaceably minding his own business, selling papers in an effort to help his widowed mother support a family," it will readily be seen that the sympathies and feelings of an audience will be much more quickly and

more thoroughly aroused. Examining the process somewhat, it will be seen that details of the affair have been rather fully put in and that these details appeal to sympathy quickly because they are of that nature which universally arouse the sympathies pretty readily of even cold-hearted men and women. So out of these illustrations there grow two fundamental suggestions, first, the statement of details tends to arouse feeling more greatly because it more keenly concentrates the attention, and second, the appeal to sympathies which are pretty thoroughly fundamental and universal can be counted upon generally to produce the strong emotional response.

A suggestion made at the beginning of this discussion may be stated here as a truth that may be considered as a method of procedure. Emotion begets emotion of a like nature. There is a story told of a gentleman who happened to get into a church where a funeral service was being held. It was noticed that he appeared untouched emotionally while the entire audience otherwise seemed to be greatly moved.

Afterward he was asked why he remained unmoved, and he replied: "I did not belong to the parish." The author does not believe the story illustrates a general condition. Those watching an individual whose appearance indicates that he is deeply moved by some strong emotional impulse will find the same emotion developing in their hearts. The old saying, "Laugh and the world laughs with you," illustrates the point, but the second part of the saying is not always true, "Weep and you weep alone." There may be a cold world that refuses to be touched by pity and by sympathy, but fortunately there are many who have responded to grief and sorrow and shame and despair. The expression of emotion by the bodily agents: the eyes, the face, the chest, the arms, and even the whole body at times, is the one cause which may be relied upon to arouse emotion similar to that which is being expressed.

So he who would move men and women in large numbers must have emotion himself. He must have it in abundance. He must often feed it until it is well nigh a consum-

ing fire. He must know how to share this emotion with his audience; he must radiate his own heat until it warms, or melts, or even scorches or fires the hearts of his hearers.

It must, however, be remembered that this emotion must be under control. Emotion uncontrolled leads often to ridiculous results, and the greater the uncontrolled emotion, the more unfortunate the results. The concrete example will more readily make this clear. In real life tears stream down the face when one is deeply moved by grief, but upon the stage or upon the public platform the tears must be repressed. The intensity of emotion that would produce tears must be present, but the tears must be repressed. The appearance before an audience of an actor or speaker with a face wet with tears would be the cause for laughter and ridicule. On the other hand when the will controls the grief so that the tears are prevented from streaming down the face the effect is very great. The audience is moved deeply by this sight and many of them may not succeed in holding back the tears as the actor or orator has done.

One last observation is to be made. That which the speaker must secure is the genuine emotion. There must be no counterfeiting. Many seem to think that real emotion is not necessary; that as long as there are the outward appearances of emotion, this is sufficient. Often, in every field of public speech, those are heard who, lacking the real spirit, make every effort to secure in their delivery those elements and qualities which the real emotion would develop. The result is an insincere, untrue, unreal type of utterance. It has a sound, but the sound is that of "sounding brass and clanging cymbal." It is maudlin and bombastic. To "tear a passion to tatters, to very rags" is as great an offense against effective speech as can be given.

EXERCISES.

These exercises are provided as a means of testing the students' knowledge of the subject and for training through actual practice. Exercises are not to be sent to the School.

1. Write down a list of principles, causes, ideals, or human sufferings about which you feel intensely. ✧

2. Analyze your feelings to ascertain the facts, states or reasons for your intense feelings.

3. Consider whether the reasons for your feeling keenly about these matters would be sufficient to arouse strong feeling in others.

4. Formulate a topic for each one of these causes, principles, ideals or sufferings you feel deeply about, having as the end that of impressiveness.

5. Plan, in the form of a speech outline, the various means you think you can use to impress an audience intensely with the strength and significance of your idea.

6. Having thoroughly memorized your

outline, and fixed in mind your methods of appeal, make the speech at least three times before an imaginary audience, seeking to secure within yourself the genuine emotion, and then seeking to communicate it to the audience.



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