1-1-1918

Side Talk No. 01, Value of Public Speaking

R. E. Pattinson Kline
VALUE OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

SIDE TALK No. 1

One of a Series of Talks on EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

By

R. E. PATTISON KLINE
Dean Public Speaking Department, Columbia College of Expression, Chicago

NORTH AMERICAN INSTITUTE
CHICAGO
OUTLINE OF ASSIGNMENT.

FIRST MONTH.

FIRST WEEK

First—Read this Side Talk on "Value of Public Speaking."
Second—Read carefully Lesson No. 1, "Training for Effective Speaking."
Third—Read carefully pages 3 to 8, Text Book, "Selected Speeches for Practice."
Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 1.

SECOND WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 2, "Mastering One's Self."
Second—Memorize and practice orally one new excerpt each day, on pages 12 or 13, Text Book, "Selected Speeches for Practice."
Third—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 2.

THIRD WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 3, "purposes of the Speech."
Second—State orally as if speaking to an audience, the substance of the short speech beginning on page 14, Text Book, "Selected Speeches for Practice."
Third—Memorize the short speech beginning on page 14, Text Book, "Selected Speeches for Practice," and deliver it orally as if to an audience.
Fourth—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 3.

FOURTH WEEK

First—Read carefully Lesson No. 4, "Matters of Personal Appearance."
Second—Memorize another of the short speeches beginning on page 14, Text Book, "Selected Speeches for Practice," and deliver it orally as if to an audience.
Third—Work out the Exercises in Lesson No. 4.
"The attitude with which a man approaches his task has everything to do with the quality and efficiency of his work, and with its influence upon his character."
VALUE OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

One who is in a position to observe is aware that there is a growing demand for training in public speaking. For this increasing demand there are two or three well defined reasons. In nearly every field of activity it has been found that the spoken word, when effectively spoken, is more productive of results than the written word. The business world knows that the personal contact is far more successful in the selling of goods than is the letter, however skilfully it may be written. Here there has been a decided raising of the standard. The commercial representative to-day is a much higher grade of man than that of ten and fifteen years ago. Intellectually, he is better equipped; in personal appearance, he is more prepossessing; in manners, more cultivated; and in matters of speech he is more effi-
cient, having acquired a better mastery of good English, having developed a more agreeable and better modulated voice, and having learned something of the arts of address.

The second reason for this increased demand for training in public speech, is to be found in the fact that the opportunities for public speaking have wonderfully increased. The rapid growth in the number of clubs, societies, political organizations, churches, lodges, and various kinds of associations has produced conditions demanding men who speak with a degree of effectiveness. Men are more and more coming to realize that ineffective speech will not be tolerated; and further, that those who do speak well are given places of leadership and influence.

A third reason for this increased demand, is suggested by the growth of democracy. In this form of government in which the people rule directly, there must be many who will attempt to mold public opinion through the spoken word. So, as our social and political structure
approaches more completely a pure democracy, opportunities and rewards of the speaker are continually increasing.

Nor is it true, as some have held, that the day of the orator has passed. A careful investigation of the situation shows that wherever there is one who can speak with power, there no inconsiderable audience will be found to listen to him.

Clearly, it appears, then, that most men who desire it, need not lack the opportunity of speaking to audiences, and that such men as can speak well in public will find that this ability proves a means of advancement, added power, and prosperity. Other things being equal, men are being chosen for positions of responsibility and influence who are effective in public utterance.

And yet there are several classes of men who do not seem to realize the great aid real training in public speech would be to them. The clergyman, the lawyer, the lecturer and the teacher do not take advantage of the benefits of training in this direction as largely as they ought. Much
good speaking is heard from these men, some that is really excellent, occasionally that which is of power, but the most falls below the standard of excellence which might be attained. Audiences, influence, and remuneration, in many, many instances could be greatly increased through greater attainment in vocal expression.

Clergymen have seen their audiences dwindle, lawyers have lost their cases, and lecturers have seen the demand for their lectures decrease, all because they have not been able to meet the demand of the public for a higher standard of speaking.

But it is a matter of much interest to find that the business man, in rapidly increasing numbers, is seeking increased power in speech. He has realized that effective speech for public use means a greatly added efficiency in private, social and business speech.

Aside, however, from the value that public speech may be to one, there are a number of benefits of a personal nature which come from the practice and discipline in speaking. Among these may be mentioned
three which influence, in no small degree, the personal appearance—and personal appearance has much to do, not only with effective speech, but also with success or failure in all undertakings. These three benefits are: abounding health, grace and ease of bearing, and virility.

Development of bodily health and vigor cannot be omitted from a course of training of this nature. These processes of physical education will develop a good appearance, and an ease and grace of movement which cannot fail to add to one's personal power in both private and public speech. The result of abounding health, and self-control and ease of movement will bring a poise and a dynamic virility, a vital animation and a vivacity which will give that physical effectiveness to speech that is indispensable. These traits of personal nature are invaluable in all the relations of life.

Another very great benefit to be derived from such a course of study is that of added power of mental concentration. Few tasks in life demand more of the brain than does public speaking. Here a gather-
ing of brain forces, an intensity and continuity of attention, a rapidity of action is required which is seldom necessary in other situations. So it can readily be seen, that as one gains in the power to speak well before an audience, he is acquiring a power of mental concentration which cannot fail to be of inestimable value in all conditions of mental activity.

Consider for a few moments the concrete situation. The student of public speaking finds that he speaks easily, with a fair degree of fluency, and with little trouble in securing either thought or structure, when, sitting, he is talking to one person or to a small group, or when he is at a social gathering where the people are standing in small groups around him. But when he stands in front of those who are to listen to him, and with some distance between him and the first row of hearers, and all eyes are centered at once upon him, his brain, then, refuses to act normally. Ideas which came to him readily enough in the social gathering or in personal conversation now elude him, and refuse to be
recalled. Very common words will not come to his tongue at his bidding. Sentence structures which ordinarily give him no trouble now come to the ear of his hearers as perfect wrecks of grammar and rhetoric. It is very evident that in situations such as this—and they are very common—there is a decided lack of mental concentration. The problem is to train the brain so that at all times, when demanded, it will center itself upon the matter at hand and give the best it has. The discipline necessary to bring about this change will certainly give one a mastery of the concentration of the mental processes which will be invaluable in all kinds of work that the brain has to do.

But while the speaker may not have these difficulties, the brain may refuse to stick to the idea, or refuse to bring out the most vital relations of the subject, or to think rapidly enough, or to become really interested in the idea or the audience. This playing truant is another evidence of a lack of power to hold the thinking steadily to its work. If the proc-
esses of training in public speech will overcome this lack there has been added an invaluable asset to the mental powers.

It must be remembered, however, that in securing this thorough possession of the thought powers before an audience, there enters another factor, and an exceedingly important one—namely, the will. A Frenchman, in writing of public speaking, once said, that training in public speaking is a training, primarily, of the will. Few truer things concerning public speech have ever been said. In all the processes of education the power of the will must be considered as absolutely necessary. In the situations mentioned above the brain did not act in a normal manner. It must be made to do the work it can do. In a situation where the attention is intensely interested in the subject, the audience and the occasion, the mind will not act so faultily as has been described. But such intense interest comes only occasionally, and therefore the problem is to get the mind to act at its best when it is not intensely interested in the subject, and further, to act at
its best when there may be many influences to deter it. Just this power is necessary: to have the brain under such control and mastery that it arises to the occasion in spite of difficulties. This mastery means self-control, and self-control is one of the greatest of all elements of character.

If then, this mode of training secures self-control under the trying circumstances of public utterance it surely must follow that the same self-mastery will be valuable in all other situations of life, and therefore one has added a very valuable and permanent possession to his character. Time need not be spent in explaining the relation to success, of self-mastery through the will.

Now, let the thought be carried one step further. When one speaks to an audience his ultimate end is the control of that audience. The speaker wishes to control their thinking, or their feeling, or their action. The speaker must dominate the audience. Out of the mass of public speeches there are comparatively few in which the speaker has dominated the audience. He must ac-
quire compelling power. He must have that power over others which will enable him to carry his point in spite of opposition. At times he must sweep them off their feet, as did Beecher in his Liverpool speech; or completely silence them, as did Lincoln in his Gettysburg speech; or, as did the French Bishop, strike fear into their hearts so that they are afraid to appear among their fellow men.

Such mastery over an audience cannot come to one except as he has mastered himself—his mental powers, not only, but his emotional and physical powers as well. Such self-mastery, succeeding under persistent training and practice to mastery over an audience, must sustain a very vital and effective relation to all one's activities. The really successful men have always dominated others. You and I cannot hope to be successful without being able to do likewise.

Consider another benefit. When one stands before an audience to speak, he frequently finds that his fund of information is smaller than he imagined; or that he
understands but a small part of the subject. The very meagerness of his information, he discovers, is a cause of his failure to make an acceptable speech. He is then taught the lesson that his brain will act more effectively when it realizes that it is thoroughly supplied with information. He learns that the larger fund of information gives to his speech more value—makes it more trustworthy—and also, by giving greater variety to his subject matter, adds greatly to its interest. The habit of being adequately informed upon a topic is an extremely valuable one to acquire. It is one of the characteristics which differentiate the expert from the hack worker. Thorough and reliable information gives a certainty and authority to what one says that commands both respect and acceptance. And it is a habit which will secure achievement in other fields of thought.

Consider further. Suppose one sits in the meeting of an assembly of which he is a member. During a discussion he makes an address, but finds that somehow his point of view, or his conclusion, or method of
presentation has not been acceptable. Being thoughtful and observant, he listens keenly to what is said, and analyzes every phase of the situation. He is compelled to admit that his effort has been a failure. His careful analysis of the whole matter leads him to the conclusion that in some way his judgment has been mistaken. Something in the method of his argument, or in his method of presentation, or in his attitude toward the subject, or toward the occasion, or toward the speakers made the audience reject his ideas, if not show their displeasure. He has made some mistake of judgment. If, then, he will put himself under the right kind of discipline, judgment in these matters will be greatly improved. He will learn to observe more clearly, to analyze more carefully, to reason more correctly, and to understand the situation with more insight. He will soon come to a power of right judgment which will be safe to follow, and one that will command respect and acceptance by the audience. The place of wise judgment in affairs is well understood.
In the development of a trustworthy judgment there will come two associate qualities of mind that are not only desirable, but necessary to real wisdom: liberal-mindedness and catholicity of sympathy. By the term liberal-mindedness is not meant a liberality which scouts all authority, and instantly accepts the new and the radical, but that type of mind which is capable of seeing the new and the radical in proper relation to fundamental truth and established ideas. There must be that initiative of the mind that will distinguish true progress from the false. James, in his psychology, says that genius is the ability to initiate new ideas. But he means ideas that are something more than new. For with this liberal-mindedness there must come a catholicity of sympathy. It is this quality which is most needed to-day. Inability to sympathize with another is the basis of future trouble, if not of tragedy. It is only as there is established a sympathetic understanding that difficulties which stand in the way of progress can be cleared away.
Finally, it will be readily seen that the processes of the preparation of a speech,—gathering material, analysis, arrangement of material, judgment of audience and the situation, are processes which must have a very quickening and improving effect upon the general thinking processes. Whatever, therefore, improves the thinking abilities in one direction must improve those abilities in all matters which must be considered.

Let, then, a summary be made. The ability to speak well publicly is of almost immeasurable value to anyone. There is an increasing demand for men in all walks of life who can speak effectively in public. Such ability means greater influence, greater opportunities, and greater financial returns. In addition to these there are other benefits derived from this discipline which are of great value: increased power of concentration, self-control, development of the will, power over others, enlarged social and business influence, breadth of information, safer judgment, improved thinking
processes, liberal-mindedness, and catholicity of sympathy.

Surely, with such great rewards to be obtained from the training leading to effective speech, one cannot hesitate to undergo the discipline.
"A man is commonly either made or marred for life by the use he makes of his leisure time."

—Jeremy Taylor.
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