Material for an article on
~~"The American Voice"~~
~~or~~ "The Transatlantic Voice"
~~and many other notes~~ on the Voice, followed
by clippings from newspapers & magazines
on the same subject.

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[Sir William Osler was interested in this subject for years and on going abroad from the United States it was his custom to take "The Voice" with him. Many of the notes were written in England.]

The American Voice

by

William Osler

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1 The problem stated

2 The cause.

3 The cure.

III The cure is not easy, so universal, so ingrained, so unconscious is the habit — an indictment.
The first essential is a recognition of the ~~[illegible]~~ need of a change & this is by no means easy to
~~when we~~ living in an engine room we get accustomed to the noise and we get accustomed to shock harsh, unmelodious tones, even in those we love, & it had never notice them. Why all this fuss then — if ~~we do~~ not noticed, it is not there!

The American Voice

There must always be distinctive features in the speech of the peoples, qualities that will enable the Southern, the Western, the Northern & the Canadian man 'bewrayed' as soon as he speaks the morning salutation. Such have existed among all people at all times, these are the characters that enable us to recognize the English scotch & Irish, the South from the North German, the Breton from the Parisian & both from the man from the Midi. It is not dialect, not the words themselves but the way the words are spoken. It betrayed the Galilean Peter, it cost the Ephraimites as I have mentioned [illegible] many [illegible]. The [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] depended on the [illegible] certain [illegible] words, & licences, were pronounced & recognized in history [illegible] reference to this universal peculiarity. They complained at Rome that of Trajan that [illegible] so much away from Rome the true Imperial accent was lost.

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voice, by which is meant [and here largely by] the spoken speech, is the one distinguishing trait separating the ~~Anglo-Saxon~~ dweller of this continent from his relatives in Gt. Britain & elsewhere - a Schibboleth of identification as unerring as that which enabled the Gileadites to make such slaughter of the Ephraimites at the passages of the Jordan.

Talk as we may of differences between the Englishman & the American (social, intellectual, commercial & moral) beneath the surface, at heart, perhaps better at pocket, they are the same, ~~both~~ a sort of latter-day Semite, upright yet rapacious, religious yet worldly - true children of the praying & fearful robbers who have ~~taken~~ in the past three centuries taken by violence so large a share of the kingdom of the world. Vox et praeterea nihil distinguishes ~~them apart~~ us from hope-dying [?] Britishers, and ~~as~~ when we have so much ~~on this continent~~ that it is a special aggravation of the guilty goddess ~~that she did~~ not to have provided better for us this, to the ear at least, greatest of all earthly blessings! At the outset let it be frankly acknowledged that the ~~human~~ voice as heard on this side of the Atlantic is not ~~often~~ as a rule agreeable in quality; but often harsh, [thoroughly?] often undescribably bad. From Halifax to San Francisco, from Winnipeg to Key West the vocal organ is [in the same tone] out of tune. To make this humble confession, to seek for the probable causes of this misfortune and to ask suggestions for its alleviation are the object of the present communication.

I must first relieve myself of an embarrassment. Not for a moment would I, a pampered [dweller for 21 years] guest in the United States, refer to peculiarities on which nations as individuals are naturally sensitive were ~~these~~ peculiarities not noticeable in myself as well as in my countrymen of the North. So far as speech is concerned Canadians are equally with the Americans ~~are~~ Galileans - betrayed at once by the [morning salute?]. As individuals we do not know the sound of our own voices so as nations ~~we~~ remain happily deaf to the striking changes

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which have passed on their speech sounds – changes at which Shakespeare would gaze – he spoke of – "states unborn & accents yet unknown". Carlyle shrewdly remarks "all men have accent of their own though they only notice that of others". This blissful unconsciousness is very remarkable and the accent is sometimes very disagreeable. I have heard Canadians criticize & amplify the barbarities of American speech with voices illustrating a well marked variety of it. Americans too are rarely aware of any characteristic quality in their speech sounds. I shall never forget the naïveté with which a charming young woman, who had recently returned from her wedding trip, told of a little difference with a London cabby, who as a parting thrust said "the [illegible] new york". [illegible] To the artless innocence of her question "how on earth did he know I was an American?" could I imagine her face make other answer than that the style of dress was a sufficient distinction? Even among the [illegible] the same happy ignorance is found. I have been told of an interesting incident at a meeting of the Modern Language Association of America. A professor asked if any steps could be taken to improve the voices of the school children and suggested that in the selection of teachers a mellow soft voice should be taken into account. Whereupon a western professor innocently asked whether Americans as a rule had a twang. "Certainly" said the President "& you yourself sir have it in an extreme form". At the same meeting I am informed that at the same meeting a distinguished southern professor denied the existence of a "twang" in the South or of any distinctive accent in Maryland. In reality as a writer (R.C) in the "Week" (Oct. 16 1884), says, referring also to the incident just given "the twangs blend into one another from Ontario to Florida; but nasal and lacking in mellowness and courteous restraint and open vowels and distinctness of utterance are the tongues of the vast majority of Americans"

Peculiarities of voice, probably of the nature of dialects have existed from the earliest times. The reference already given to the Ephraimites who lost their lives tho. inability to pronounce the word Shibboleth shows that as early as the century B.C. contiguous communities of the same blood could be recognized by speech differences. and years later the Gallilean accent in Peter was used as a means of his identification just as today we would pick out an Irishman by his brogue.

Plato expressed solicitude about the training of childrens voices, and I have seen somewhere the statement that Quintilian refers to the importance of careful early training of the voice. That peculiarities such as we recognize at present were common among the ancients is known by many references to the lisp of Alcibiades and in The Symposium appollodorus nicknamed the Pausanias, his measuring speech.

Trajan is said to have "betrayed but an imperfect command of the Roman accent by almost constant absence from the city" (Merivale) Catullus in his famous verse parodies the cockney of his day

Lucian rejoices that he had got rid of all traces of his barbarous Syrian speech & reached a pure attic diction

No doubt these brief references which I have met with in my very general reading might be extensively supplemented by any one widely read in classical authors but they suffice to show that peculiarities such as afflict us existed then

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Analysis

1 Introduction. Existence of speech distinctions & peculiarities in the United States & Canada. Universal nature of voice distinctions - usually dialectic. Antiquity of them - references

2 Voice characters.

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3 Peculiarities of speech sounds in this continent
(a) general. (b) local.
c changes.

4 Causes discussion of. (a) Causes of difference in the speech sounds formation. (a) Physical conformation of naso-pharynx. (b) climate & catarrh. (c) Puritan influences. (d) Imitation

5 Correctives.

6/ Aesthetic

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(2) When the change in the British voice first became apparent in this continent, what is its essential cause, and how has it gradually become effective are questions to which we cannot give very complete answers.

Setting aside the question of the nature of the primary change, an cause now effectively prevailing is imitation. Plato laid down the fundamental principle in the Cratylus that language is imitative sound, and this, as already noted in the brief physiological discussion, is the basis of speech. The child acquires by imitation not only speech but the voice qualities, racial, dialectic etc., of those with whom he comes in contact, parents & nurses, teachers & schoolfellows. The extremely plastic character of the faculty is illustrated [illegible] two children aged 4 & 5 transplanted from New York State to the seaside, Scotland, returned in two years talking Aberdonian Scotch which they had picked up from their nurses & playmates. They now, at 12 & 13, talk plain American. Imitation is not alone potent in childhood.

In an extensive & varied Hospital practice I have for many years taken the pains to note the speech sounds of a large number of English, Irish, Scotch & Welsh who have lived in this country for a variable number of years. Two changes have been perceptibly noticeable, first, the pitch of the voice is raised and second, to some degree the intensity of what we call the accent is as a rule lessened. The English of the better class are most strikingly influenced by residence in the United States & Canada. I remember in Vienna in 1874 meeting young men from N.Y., cousins of a fellow student. I could scarcely credit their statement that they had only been residents of New York for ten or twelve years. Not a trace of English accent remained, though they came from the midland counties in which pronunciation peculiarities are marked. One meets not infrequently with English men in this country in good social position whose voices give no indication whatever of their nationality. In Canada where the generation are not so far from the old stock, [illegible] are not unfrequent of contrasting the voices of brothers or sisters who may have been separated for years

by the broad Atlantic. In 1882 I dined with a Scotchman called R. who had lived in Montreal for thirty years and in whose voice the Glasgow accent still persisted. At the table was his brother a younger man who had never been out of Glasgow. That evening I noted "striking contrast in the voices of the two brothers. The Scotch accent in G. R. who has lived so long in Montreal is scarcely noticed beside that of his brother; the pitch of his voice is also higher." A more pronounced instance came under my observation near Hamilton Ont. An English woman aged seventy five who had lived in Ontario for more than forty years and in this time had not only lost all trace of English accent but had a voice high-pitched and " At the time of my visit her sister aged seventy six had come from England, not having before been in America. The sisters were very much alike in size & feature but the voice of the visitor was low pitched soft & sweet, decidedly English though without trace of dialect. The lower class English retain their voice peculiarities for a longer time, particularly the three-form defect in which the letter H is misplaced. I know of no instance of a man who misplaced his aspirates correcting the fault by long residence. Erroneously regarded as distinctive of a cockney, this extraordinary phenomenon is wide spread among the Hodge class in England and is peculiar in London only in so far as it extends up the scale and is met with in many of the shop keeping class & even in commercial circles in the City. It is remarkable as a distinctive English occurring in no other and disappearing completely in the colonies & in the United States. It disappears too in England. I have known in a family the grandparents with it in a most pronounced degree the children slipping occasionally; the grandchildren without a trace.

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and English voice is thoracic & laryngeal, the
French more buccal & the American nasal in quality.

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Notes 1

It is useless to expect a change ~~unless~~ in the absence of a recognition of the foundation and a wish for improvement. a complacent attitude of mind is ~~expd~~ only too widespread as expressed by an American woman. When an American woman writes "In contrast with various European people we seem rather quiet of speech and our intonations sound agreeable." (Telegraph. Sept. 30/07)

— That sharp crispness ~~[illegible]~~ is apt to shade into, and minute uncultivated voice, that jars like [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

— [illegible] of [illegible] - [illegible] [illegible] influence of the school, [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the language. Gives a commonplace [illegible] to speech

— The twang ~~and~~ Francis Rogers obvious note. - The nasal timbre

Catarrh - changeable climate.

— Influence of cultivation - actors - preachers.

— Part of the eager striving

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A Welsh Triad says that the three unconcealable traits of a person by which he shall be known are the glance of his eye, the pronunciation of his speech, and the mode of his self motion — in briefer words, his look, his voice and his gait (Southey). Of the three the voice is the most important & distinctive. Not by the language he speaks alone but by the tone of the spoken voice is a man betrayed. That has been so from the earliest days and that it persists. Three remarkable incidents of the same type illustrate that. At the passages of the Jordan (Judges XII. 5) the Ephraimites forty & two thousand were slain because they could not frame to pronounce aright the word Shibboleth. Though neighboring tribes on opposite banks of the Jordan the Gileadites & Ephraimites knew the common word meaning stream or flood as a shibboleth of a different pronunciation. In the great massacre of the Normans in Sicily, March 31, 1282, the famous Sicilian vespers the test was to pronounce ceci e ciceri which the French though resident in the island for   , pronounced sesi e seseri, and with the loss of   . And only a few months ago the test by which the Chinese told the Manchu was the pronunciation of the word. The speech of Peter betrayed him as a Galilean. Throughout ancient literature there are innumerable references to vocal peculiarities. To give a few instances the lisp of Alcibiades as referred to by Plato & by Aristophanes, the measured speech of Pausanias, the parody by Catullus of the Roman cockney, the criticism of Trajan's voice which in his wanderings had lost the Roman accent, & the rejoicing of Lucian that at Athens he had got rid of his barbarous Syrian speech.

The English, Scotch & Irish, the American, the Canadian the Australian, the West-Indian are betrayed at once by the morning salutation. A Parisian picks out the Norman from the dweller in the Midi. The North German, the Saxon the Bavarian & the Austrian have characteristic tricks

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of ~~speech~~ tongue. Though the speech ~~may be~~ is the same, the utterance is different. It is not a question of dialect but of vocalization of the way in which the words leave the lips, the enunciation. ~~The language is the same~~, The language of spoken by the Educated ~~dweller~~ of in London, Edinburgh or Dublin, correct, faultless though it may be, "gives away" the speaker at once - bewrayed as readily as was Peter by the first. The Aberdonian does not speak like the Glasgow man & neither like the dweller in 'Auld Reekie'. The men of Cork Dublin & Belfast may be told not only as Irishmen but their brogue tells their cities. These local differences ~~of~~ of speech are universal and express a general law, the particulars of which are bound up with inherited peculiarities of speech mechanism and with the domestic & social environment in which speech sounds play so important a part ~~It is not~~ That ~~the~~ vocal traits should show themselves in the

Refers to the [illegible]

mark [illegible]

Probably his aunt Picton, "the young girl of 80" whom he brought out in 1884 [illegible] with his mother.
W.W.F.

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Change of Voice in Englishmen

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C. Agrippa i De Oc. phil. Cap xxiv p ccv in voce

~~Emigrants~~ Emigrants to the United States & Canada change in time their voices sometimes losing entirely the distinctive qualities, more often losing only certain peculiarities. An Englishman ~~after ten years~~ in New York may soon speak so that he cannot be distinguished from an American: and my observations lead to the conclusion that more readily than any other nationality he picks up the speech of the country. I have noted in the voices of Englishmen after residence of 5, ten, & 12 years in New York, Phila & Chicago who had notably lost every vestige of their original pronunciation but were not to be distinguished from ~~the~~ natives. On the other hand Scotch, Welch & Irish never part entirely with their trill of tongue. Mr. P. after 30 years in New York still spoke the broadest Scotch. Mr W. aged 69 I recognized as a Welshman though he had been in the Wyoming valley for nearly 50 years. As a rule there are marked changes. A Scot after 10 years in Montreal still speaks Scotch but not quite as his brother does in Edinburgh. I sat at dinner one evening at the St James Club in that city with two brothers - alike as two peas but the difference in their voices was striking. ? ~~One Scotsman~~ Englishman aged 80, invited her sister who had been in Canada fifty years. Extraordinary resemblance between them in body & mind, only the voice different, as for the Canadian every trace of the distinctive Anglican voice of the sister had gone. A gentleman from Chicago called the other day - a typical alert-Westerner, in voice & glance & gait. Aged 40 he had lived 17 years in the United States & this was his first visit to his home near Banbury. Sometimes prolonged residence just rubs off the accent & leaves a voice which cannot be classed. As I write I saw a man aged about 56 who had been in Australia [illegible] for 35 years - except in a few words the Scotch had been rubbed off his tongue. There are notable instances of Englishmen who have acquired the "Yankee twang" in an extreme degree. The celebrated Professor Draper had gone to New York when [illegible]. At the famous British Assoc. meeting at Oxford when Huxley & the Bishop had such a wordy [illegible] in one of the descriptions (Huxley's life & letters) it is remarked "When Professor Draper had ceased his hour & a half of nasal Yankeeism"

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Like Americans, Canadians are sensitive, but unlike Americans they are not yet fully alive to this question of voice peculiarities. Visiting England the average Canadian resents his identification as American, in the sense of a dweller in North America, but the Englishman recognizes no difference between the voices, and usage has naturalized it. It comes as a great shock to a Canadian to realize that he has a developed voice with specific continental peculiarities, by which he is unerringly labelled as trans-atlantic. Some years ago I was in London with an Ontario friend, a Canadian of the 3rd generation but with exaggerated Anglican leanings. To be taken in the shops for an American, & be asked what part of the 'States' he came from upset his equanimity, as he had not realized the possession of a 'twang'. And this is a common story. Unfortunately too it has grown worse & worse. In the thirty years during which I have made notes on the subject I have heard with pain the increased viciousness of the Canadian particularly the Ontario voice. While I do not agree with Lady Jephson ("A Canadian Scrap Book") that the Canadian "twang" [illegible] is unequalled all over the world for ugliness, she is right in saying that a most hopeless feature in the case is that the victim is unconscious of the gravity of the situation.* This illustrates Carlyle's remark: all men have an accent of their own — though they only notice that of others (... 1888, p. 247). Its distinctiveness as a sub-variety is fully established. I can recognize at once an Ontario voice — I do not think I can a Quebec or a Western Canada. There are three groups (a) The general voice of the country as one meets it in the men & women who do the work of the land — the farmers, mechanics &c. The voices one hears at a base-ball match on the Toronto Island or those of Buffalo & Detroit — with here & there slight differences. The children of the public schools in song & speech have voices which with Shakespeare we may God amend. (b) [illegible] of families with close English affiliations, where perhaps the children have been educated in England, the voices are softer & better. I know families in which some children educated in England talk English — others talk Canadian. Just as in Scotland one meets with families some boys & girls educated south of the Tweed talk English, those who remain at home talk Scotch.

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Voice, as we have said, is a natural, racial, character, a muscular expression and its quality, reaching its hearers can depends partly on the language spoken, partly on ~~the~~ what may be called its instrumentation ~~the~~ now the ~~words~~ column of air is played upon after leaving the glottis, is vocalized.

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Dryness of the air, and particularly the ~~hot~~ superheated houses is often referred to as a cause and it is no doubt a contributory one but we must not attribute too much importance to it. Dwellers in high & dry regions of the United States have not voices higher pitched or harsher than elsewhere, indeed I should say it was the reverse. In the driest of all known climates, the desert of North Africa ~~& Arabia~~ the Arabs have very rasping harsh voices so much so that Kinglake speaks of the Arabs as "un peuple criard". Scheen makes the same comment "Cette vieille langue du désert à la fois barbare et raffinée dont les voyelles ou des rugissements de lion, dont les consonnes s'entre choquent avec des cliquetis de instruments à cordes" The voices on the Nile certainly have these characteristics. The leader of the boatmen who rowed us from the Dam to Assouan sang in a voice, as I noted at the time, of a singularly hard nasal quality and the men chanted in reply with high-pitched strident tones". As a rule the arabic spoken by the Egyptians is harsh & 'criard' and in the frequent contretemps which our 'Reis' had with the Nile boatmen the Billingsgate exchanged might have been flung on the Mississippi. To the changeable climate, dry air & hot houses have been attributed the prevalence of nasal catarrh, with which the American voice has been associated & attributed

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Hudibras This light inspires and plays upon
The nose of Saint-like bag-pipe drone. — The trilled r'

— Cowley. a budget-priest that noses long prayer. (Puritan & Papist)

Lauder Brunton tells me that in the ~~Scotch~~ Presbyterian Colleges of Scotland there was taught a "praying tone" which ~~was distinctly nasal~~ to pray with nasalation & upturned eyes'
Like the Prioress in the Canterbury Pilgrims who sang the service "Entuned in her nose ful semely" (Skeat Ch. p. 420

— The puritans cultivated it is said, on principle a nasal inflection, as was of the many distinctions of the cloth

The quacky, metallic brazen quality
"True nasality is not very common today in America: it seems to be dying out." Fletcher Osgood.

— a hateful harsh unpleasing tone - reminding me of OWH.

— An element in hurry the voice tends to become nasal. It seems less effort to say "no, no" quickly & sharply through the nose than through the mouth, and then ~~no pleasure~~ muscles in action as in the former case the ~~[illegible]~~ soft palate is not used.
The 'strenuous note', forceful, emphatic sharp, even strident

Epidemic quality Cause & cure.

Nasal quality met with in England, isolated instances of a marked degree. Mr Jyle Macclesfield has called attention to its existence in Cornwall, and suggests that possibly the origin of the Yankee twang is to be sought among the Cornish ~~[illegible]~~ members of the early settlers. Judging from the rapid spread of the aggravatingly catching twang, we may be sure that a little leaven would soon leaven the whole lump
— Nasal ~~quality~~ intonation met with in many counties - Dorset & Wiltshire for example, & in New Forest, as well as Cornwall, and I have heard it stated that "the twang" exists in Lincolnshire the home of so many New Englanders.

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A Virginian does not use the flat 'a' and does not he says the Book of ~~Baracas~~ as do most Northerners & Canadians; and yet he does not pronounce the 'a' exactly as does the Englishman, but ~~with no distinction~~ the result "I have read the morning Psalms" with a said with a generically distinctive American voice

What is sought is simple clean speech with distinct not nasal oral enunciation, ~~issuing~~ - the speech accultured ~~of the cultivated~~ with possibly with no ~~as little~~ distinctive accent ~~as possible, the~~ or at any rate only so much as a man's nationality is entitled to, soft, not harsh, with music not noise in its tones. - the ~~human~~ a prominent instrument which when trained is the most

- The clipping of words - the yes for yes, the vulgarization of vowel sounds &c. and of consonants &c.

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Theories

~~Of the theories~~ To explain the change of quality in the transatlantic voice the oldest & a widely accepted theory is that the nasal inflection ~~it~~ was taken to New England by the Puritans, who according to Hudibras 'blasphemed custard through their nose'; and who in their mode of speech, dress, & style of wearing their hair cultivated as many distinctions as possible from the Cavaliers. Prayer & praise seems to have favor a nasal quality in the voice in England for many generations, even before the Puritans, the Prioress in the Canterbury Pilgrims sang the service "Entuned in her nose ful seemly". Hudibras has many references to the habit

> This light inspires & plays upon
> The nose of saint-like bag-pipe drone'

Cowley speaks of "a budget priest that noses long prayers" and a praying voice was cultivated. Lauder Brunton tells me that in the Scotch Theological colleges there was taught a praying tone, and the students were instructed "to pray with nasilation & upturned eyes" For the importation theory it is contended that the Puritans of New England having on principle adopted the nasal inflection "and as they married closely among one another's families a race would grow up, and propagate itself with a prevailing tendency which would be cultivated from generation to generation out of respect for tradition, to employ the nose in speech, both public & private, and that ultimately there would be developed a type in which what we know as 'Yankee twang' would be physically the normal mode of speech" (Spectator, Yankee twang date not given) It is not the transmission of a type of vocal machinery that makes only the nasal inflection possible but ~~the practice~~ once adopted & wide spread the practice becomes a settled habit of speech, according to the laws of imitation already laid down.

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Imitation

"Did you ever observe how imitation beginning in early youth and continuing far into life at length grows into habits, and become second nature, affecting body voice and mind". Rep. iii 395. In these words Plato gives us the key to the solution of the ~~[illegible]~~ problem. More than in anything else in voice the whole vocation of the child is endless imitation. Democritus defined speech as the shadow of action; the shadow rather of a variety of actions chiefly muscular of which the sounds emitted in the larynx are modified in their outward passage. In ~~[illegible]~~ part speech is but the gesture of the tongue.

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"In contrast with various European peoples we seem rather quiet of speech, and our intonations sound agreeable" (Telegraph Sep 30th '07 an Amer. girl!

Designation - crispness, sharp, indicating energy sonap. - Nasal timbre nullphrase, : The voice of a strenuous hurrying unresting generation nasality -

Of not drawl - consider "sic" careful inning as Charles says in Newmans "Loss & Gain" "That we as it were exhale ourselves in every breath we draw".

Vocal short comings, defects.

~~There are~~ No better voices are heard in the world than in America. in men and women, rich, clear & sweet. The late Franklin Gowan could have chanted with Seraphel, and there are many with that excellent thing & the soft low & gentle voice

Actors to be successful must get trained out of the vocal inflections & peculiarities which would betray their origin

- ~~There~~ are genera species & varieties of voice The national voice - English, Scottish, ~~Irish~~, American, Australian - represent. Large differences in enunciation. The provincial voice The Cockney has its peculiarities by which we recognize a New Englander an Aberdonian or Belfast man, and in these areas, every ~~shire~~ voice of a family peculiarity as much as the glance of the ~~eye~~ or the ~~[illegible]~~ gait. Not only do brothers & sisters ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ but cousins and all the members of a family may speak alike. I have on several occasions identified individuals ~~recognized people~~, whom I had never seen before by vocal resemblance to cousins whom I knew well.

- Plato's Socrates about childrens voice

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Notes -

The quality ~~so~~ of beauty ~~[illegible]~~ in a voice depends first in the pitch or key and next in the subtle variations in enunciation the delicate shades, modulations, due partly to muscular effort partly to changes in the sounds as they pass through the teeth & lips

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Use a word do much to mitigate the evil. The voice of a shrill-tuned Fulvia from a woman we love may become the sweetest of all sounds. (As Anacreon says "Habit alone can win love [illegible]"

It is not accent — from which no man is free, ~~which~~ the natural part of his tongue, and which he has a right to have and to be proud of and over which he has really no control, but it is the way in which he moulds his words, the auditory

the vocal quality which they have on leaving him — the quality they possess when they reach our auditory hair cell

~~(the right of the heaven)~~

— Let us first understand a few simple facts about voice — & I cannot do better than quote from Dr W H Griffiths interesting little book on Dramatic Singing. (London 189) "Intra laryngeal Vibration strengthened and supplemented intranasally equal voice; voice articulated is equal Speech; voice modulated and articulated equal song; and voice modulated, articulated & modified to express sentiment, emotion & passion is equal dramatic singing

— It is a serious matter to lose the capacity to recognize ~~[illegible]~~ a noise when one hears it. "Noise and musical tone are not only different physically in their mode of production but are so feebly related physiologically that separate structures in the ear are allotted for their reception" (W H G.)

— Some, as Thomas Fuller, with voice harsh & untutored may have to wait until admitted to the choir of heaven for their more harmonious ones.

— The voice which like the [illegible] of Formicarus, "less apt to charm than pain us" (Catullus)
— Voices tuned to vibrate in the heart as well as in the ear

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For once Americans & Canadians may be thankful – mastery over the terrible H. The misuse of the aspirate is one of the most extraordinary peculiarities of English speech, not confined to London but widely spread among the laboring classes. In London met with in the shop-keeping class & in the mercantile circles of the city the habit displays a tenacity unequalled by any other vocal peculiarity. No amount of training after youth will get rid of it finally, and the initial aspirate is the sore spot of many a man who has risen in the social scale. I have known it to appear at times in the highly educated children of city people, heretofore the victims of the habit. It usually disappears completely in the 3rd generation in whom I have watched the gradual mastery of the words. I have never known an adult-cockney emigrant in the United States or Canada gain control of the h, but children may do so perfectly. This misuse of the initial aspirate is no new thing. Catullus satirizes (Arrius) Skeat calls attention to evidence of its existence in England in the 13th century [Globe Dec 11.1895] & his explanation is worth quoting "The phenomenon is due to the collision of two habits that of the Norman, who pronounced the 'h' in a very few words, but usually dropped it, and that of the Saxon whose habit it was to pronounce it strongly. While the Norman was striving to learn English, in which he ultimately succeeded, and the Saxon was adopting a large number of words into the English tongue, many attempts to imitate the pronunciation of unfamiliar words were made on both sides with more zeal than success, and the confusion has lasted to the present day".

YANKEE TWANG.

From the London Spectator.

A busy man on his holiday, especially if he is spending it in the balmy but somewhat enervating climate of the Cornish coast, may be excused for occupying his hours of delicious idleness with almost any theory on almost any subject. He is also clearly entitled, if he can secure the connivance of the editor, to propound his theories in the *Times*. Having cheerfully made these concessions, we must proceed to say that the theory so propounded by that able and well-known librarian, Mr. J. Y. W. Macalister, as to the origin of certain peculiarities of American speech, seems to us quite one of the least hopeful theories we have ever come across. This, it appears, is the second consecutive holiday which Mr. Macalister has spent in Cornwall, and on both occasions he has been struck by the "decidedly 'Yankee' twang" of the "less sophisticated inhabitants." Last year this experience, he says, "set me wondering whether in Cornwall might be found the original source of that peculiar so-called nasal inflection which is so characteristic of the New Englander (the true 'Yankee') and in a less degree of all United States folk, except perhaps the Virginian." He does not know, but thinks it "extremely probable" that a goodly number of Cornish folk were among the early emigrants from Plymouth; "and if so, a very little of their leaven of twang would soon leaven the whole lump for," adds he, "of all the tricks of speech I ever heard there is none so aggravatingly catching as the 'Yankee.'" As is the way with so many of us, Mr. Macalister's holiday life is so completely detached from his work-a-day life that he did not avail himself of the copious resources at his disposal for the examination of the grounds of his theory during the long months that passed before he could revisit the far Southwestern shore and its gracious and interesting inhabitants. But now that he is among them again, the same sound of their voices has struck upon his ear; his theory revives, and he invites corroboration or criticism. A good deal more of the latter than of the former has been at his service.

There are two main objections to his theory, either of which is tolerably conclusive, and which, brought to bear together, leave it in a mangled and hopeless condition. In the first place, if the speech of the "unsophisticated" classes in England at the present day is to be regarded as throwing any light at all upon the origin of the twang current among the descendants of Englishmen who emigrated more than two and a half centuries ago, Cornwall can have no prima facie claim to a commanding share of the honor. For Cornwall is very far indeed from possessing now any monopoly of "nasal inflection" among English counties. That element is powerfully present in the voices of the lower-middle and working classes of, for example, Hampshire and Dorsetshire. In the New Forest the other day it was remarked to the present writer that Mr. Macalister need not have gone so far West as the Lizard to find suggestions towards the explanation of the New England accent. And an anonymous correspondent of the *Times* observes that while on a walking tour in South Lincolnshire, lately, he noticed so strong a "twang" in the speech of some of those with whom he conversed, that he could hardly believe that they were natives of that district and not of Massachusetts. But, in the second place, as the correspondent just mentioned and others point out, not only is there no evidence that the early emigrants from Plymouth were drawn largely from Cornwall, but there is abundant ground for believing—indeed, it may almost be said to be common knowledge—that the leading spirits among them came from other parts of the country, and in particular from Lincolnshire and the Eastern counties, where the twang may now be found; and also, we may add, to a considerable extent from Nottinghamshire, where, so far as we are aware, it is absent. Under the cross-fire thus directed upon it, Mr. Macalister's theory, as indicated by its author, obviously suffers total demolition. It falls as irreparably as Humpty-Dumpty, and a hornpipe is, if we may say so, executed somewhat cruelly, though unintentionally, upon its remains by Mr. Lach-Szyrma, now Vicar of Barkingside, who formerly held a Cornish living, and who gives it as his deliberate opinion that the "Yankee twang" observed by Mr. Macalister at the Lizard and Land's End, has been acquired and spread in those parts by Cornish miners who have emigrated in this century to the States, and subsequently returned to their own country.

Our feelings towards Mr. Lach-Szyrma, if we were Mr. Macalister, would be slightly tinged with bitterness, and still more so towards Mr. Harold Frederic, who writes in a superior tone to the same effect from the National Liberal Club. Certainly we must not grudge him any consolation he may be able to draw from Mr. Goman's tremendous effort to repair and re-establish his theory on a broader foundation. Mr. Goman is a native of Devonshire, who, on lately revisiting that charming county after a considerable absence, was powerfully impressed by the "nasal inflection" characterizing its dialect; and who believes that, between them, Cornwall and Devon may reasonably claim the parentage of the most distinctive features of American speech. He does not rest this faith merely on the persistence, in what may, for the nonce, be called the mother-counties, of that particular element in the spoken language of the daughter-States which is the subject of this article. On the contrary, he attaches much importance to the presence in the speech of the humbler classes of Devonshire of counterparts or exact dittoes of words, such as "betterment," and even phrases, often ignorantly described in this country as "Americanisms,"—and to the fact that American humorous compositions, such as those of Artemus Ward, are freely read in Devonshire without reference to a glossary. The feelings of Devonshire men as to the glorious part played by their forefathers in the building up of the New World are, we apprehend, even when they take somewhat argumentative expression, too sacred subjects for argumentative treatment. As things are, it does not seem becoming to do more than suggest that the literary accomplishment alluded to by Mr. Gorman is perhaps less rare than he has supposed in other parts of England than Devonshire; that elsewhere than in Devonshire there may be found in use among the common people words and expressions closely corresponding to so-called Americanisms; and that, on the whole, in view of such considerations as have been referred to in dealing with Mr. Macalister's theory pure and simple, the predominant belief is likely to remain that not even the whole of the great West of England is historically responsible for the present existence of "Yankee twang."

Other theories on the subject are, however, not wanting, some of them involving the great issue now dividing biological philosophers: Can acquired characteristics be transmitted? Lord Archibald Campbell, in a brief letter marked by a certain flippancy of tone, intimates that he always understood that the "Yankee twang" originated in the mode of speech affected by the Puritans to distinguish them from the Cavaliers. As a representative of what was the greatest house among the Covenanting Lords in Scotland, he speaks with some authority, and indeed it may, we should suppose, be taken for granted, in view of countless contemporary allusions, that in their manner of utterance as well as in the tenor of their talk, their habit, and the style of wearing their hair, the rigid Puritans did cultivate as many distinctions as possible from those whom they regarded as their worldly opponents. As a mark of religious or political separation, all these distinctions have with us for a long period ceased to exist. But it may be contended that as the New England States were predominantly settled by Puritans of strong character, who had adopted a "nasal inflection" on principle, and as they married closely among one another's families, a race would grow up and propagate itself with a prevailing tendency, which would be cultivated from generation to generation out of respect for tradition, to employ the nose in speech both public and private; and that ultimately there would be developed a type in which what we know as "Yankee twang" would be physically the normal mode of speech.

We say that it may be so contended. But of course Professor Weismann and his school would strenuously maintain the contrary. As we understand their position, they would be constrained to hold that the child of the thousandth generation in which nasal inflection has been practised would be no more apt, from the construction of his vocal or aural machinery, to put on that inflection than the child of one of the Pilgrim Fathers who took passage by the Mayflower. "After all," they would say, "it is less than three centuries since the practice into which you are inquiring began, while it is three thousand years or more since the Chinese began the custom of cramping their unfortunate female children's feet. Yet a girl is never born in China with the cramping done for her by Nature, so how can you expect that a descendant of the straitest line of New England Puritans will be born with a nose and throat adjusted to the inflection first thought proper by an ancestor in the early seventeenth century?" In replying to that question, we imagine that Lord Archibald Campbell would need some assistance from Mr. Herbert Spencer, and might either not receive it, or receive it in vain. Dr. Symons Eccles has a suggestion which deserves mention. He does not think that New England was largely settled by Cornishmen, but he holds that a large proportion both of existing Cornishmen and existing New Englanders suffer from "nasal, post-nasal, and pharyngeal catarrh." If so, those complaints must flourish under conditions the most diverse in regard to humidity of climate. But this line of investigation looks promising, and in the hope that it may be pursued, we present our thanks to Mr. Macalister for starting the whole subject at the present season.

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THE AMERICAN ACCENT.

"ENGLISH IMPROVED."

From Our Own Correspondent.

NEW YORK, Sunday.

The American accent is all wrong, and the English is all right. This axiom underlies "The Society for the Study of Spoken English," which has just been organised in New York, with the philanthropic object of reforming the Yankee manner of speech from beginning to end. In recent years blow after blow has been dealt by purists on this side of the Atlantic against the American accent, but it was not until yesterday that an American Speech Reform Association was launched. It will undoubtedly have an exciting career, because lots of people amongst our population of 85,000,000 object to what they are pleased to call "the English accent" just as much as purists in London object to the nasal twang and the weird intonations which are characteristic of many American tourists.

I have seen versatile play critics here write about Mrs. Patrick Campbell's and Mr. Forbes Robertson's "pronouncedly English accent" as if those exponents of speech might be expected to speak with a German or French accent. However, the largest portion of educated Americans admit that the English accent is the right accent for English-speaking people, and, to acquire that valuable asset, many school-teachers here have in recent years visited your shores, while it is quite fashionable for people of means to employ English nurses and English tutors. Most New Yorkers will tell you that the American language is "English improved," and it is partly to eradicate this linguistic heresy that the new society has been formed. It has done something already by issuing broadcast a circular, giving a few preliminary hints on how to speak English correctly. Here they are:

Do not splash your words into each other; speak distinctly.

Do not talk through your nose with your throat tight shut.

Do not get an underground railway shriek in your efforts to be heard above the roar.

Do not use the same phrase a thousand times a day.

This circular, it is announced, is only preparatory to a more ambitious work, but in the meantime it is gratifying to hear from members of the new society that people in the United States should neglect no opportunity of hearing good speakers from England, and more particularly your best actors and actresses. To this excellent body of reformers, indeed, what is called the American twang is almost as objectionable as chewing gum or expectorating, two habits formerly very prevalent on this side of the Atlantic, but now steadily disappearing. According to our newly fledged society the chief difficulty in America in securing pure speech is the existence of school teachers who are the daughters of foreigners or of uneducated persons, and who have all the faults of accent and pronunciation that their parents had. They have the accent of the city street boys, the twang of the Far West, or of New England, or the dialect of the South. Nowhere is there any standard speech required of teachers or taught to children. This has been made much worse by the mixture of foreign accents, slang, and style of speech, until English is no longer recognisable.

No steps, the society complains, are taken to better this condition, and the necessity is obvious of some organised movement to establish and enforce a standard which must be obligatory before a teacher shall be qualified to take a position in a public school. The directors of the society include Professor Todd, of Columbia University, and other eminent educationalists.

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Telegraph Sept 30 '17

MISPRONUNCIATIONS.

Professor W. W. Skeat, in The London Globe.

In an article in "The Globe," December 11, 1899, with this title, various mispronunciations are dwelt upon, but it seems to be assumed that they cannot be explained.

The misuse of the initial aspirate is nothing new. As shown in my "Principles of English Etymology," Series 1, page 359, it is found in the Lincolnshire Romance of Havelok, in the thirteenth century. I have since shown that the MS. was written out by a Norman scribe. The phenomenon is, of course, due to the collision of two habits, that of the Norman, who pronounced the "h" in a very few words, but usually dropped it, and that of the Saxon, whose habit was to pronounce it strongly. While the Norman was striving to learn English, in which he ultimately succeeded, and the Saxon was adopting a large number of words into the English tongue, many attempts to imitate the pronunciation of unfamiliar words were made on both sides with more zeal than success, and the confusion has lasted to the present day. The Shropshire man alone succeeded in establishing a false uniformity by the simple process of never pronouncing an "h" at all; so that, at any rate, he never inserts one in the wrong place. The misuse of "h" is by no means confined to London; it is common (to say no more) in many parts of East Anglia.

The loss of a final "r" after a vowel has nothing to do with want of education. It is the habit of all classes in the South of England; being, in fact, dialectal. In the speech of many (not all) educated Southerners the words "morn" and "dawn" form a perfect rhyme, though some differentiate them by declaring that they pronounce the "r" in "morn," meaning thereby that they introduce in the place of the "r" a faint indeterminate vowel like the "a" in "China." But this is only a vocalic sound, and not a true trilled "r." The introduction of "r" in the phrase "Mariar Ann" is simply because "Maria" ends with a vowel and "Ann" begins with one; hence there is confusion with such phrases as "there he is," the habit being that the "r" in "there" is only trilled before a word beginning with a vowel, whereas in the phrase "he is there," the final "ere" is either vocalic or diphthongal, if the speaker is a Southerner. A Northerner would perhaps give it the true trill.

In the case of "clerk" there is no real use of "a" for "e"; rather, the combination "er" becomes "ar," as is common in old French; so that it is of Norman origin. This rule is carried out in common speech much further than in polite talk; hence we hear of "varmin," "sarpent" or "sarpint," "'varsity" for "university" and so on.

The appearance of "a" for "e" in the word "Thames" is of different origin altogether, being the result of the pedantry of the Renaissance period. The Old English spelling was "Temese," now reduced to "Tem'se," which is quite right. But the pedants discovered that the Latin spelling had once been "Thamesis," so they wrote "Tham" instead of the English "Tem."

In short, all the phenomena have been frequently explained in books that treat of English phonetics, but are still caviare to the general. I have little doubt that this statement will eagerly be assailed, but it is not worth while defending what is sufficiently known to the initiated. There is no subject regarding which those who have never studied it are so irrepressibly eager to prove that they have not done so as the study of English pronunciation. As a fact, the study of phonetics abounds with difficulties, many of which an unpractised ear cannot discern at all.

AMERICANS AND BARBARISM

REPLY TO ENGLISH CRITICS.

By AN AMERICAN GIRL.

Are Americans reverting to barbarism? A writer in an English illustrated periodical recently answered this question in the affirmative, and in an American magazine devoted to the interests of women an American writer returned to his native land after many years' absence reached a similar conclusion, at least as far as the American young woman is concerned. His subject was "The Speech of American Women," and in the strident voices and lack of distinction in enunciation and intonation, as well as in the hoydenish manners of present-day young ladies, he perceived a lamentable falling from the grace that blessed New England a quarter of a century ago. In all Boston and its environs he was able to find only one woman who in his opinion preserved the purity and precision of speech that once was characteristic of all cultivated Bostonians.

The fact that the young ladies of a fashionable and expensive school were finely developed physically, that they possessed many kinds of information, and that they had a superb confidence in themselves, and a supreme indifference to the opinions of others, merely helped to mark them as young savages in the eyes of their critic, who lamented the passing of the ladylike, if inefficient, teacher of other days, who at least imbued her pupils with a gentility that the schoolgirl of to-day is utterly unacquainted with. With all this has vanished a charm that cannot be compensated for by a broader and more thorough acquisition of knowledge, thinks the writer, who is one of the most analytical of modern novelists.

The English writer expresses the opinion that Americans are tending toward the barbarian type in physical appearance, that more and more we are coming to resemble the North American Indians whom we have displaced, not by way of retributive justice nor by an amalgamation of the races. It is merely the resemblance obtaining between one people and another because of their common barbarism. Some of the qualities which he adduced as proofs of our barbaric tendencies seemed to lead rather far from the methods of the red man, whatever similarity in taste there may be. Our growing dependence upon illustration in the newspapers and magazines and the cumbrous titles and elaborate sub-titles given to magazine articles seemed to the Englishman substantial proof of a lapse from civilisation, as do our advertising methods and our pride in inventions. Even if they lack conviction, such affirmations are suggestive. We who so confidently believe ourselves to be in the van of progress are impelled to make swift denial to any accusation of retrogression. We point to a thousand proofs of our superiority and advancement in wealth, financial activity, commercial enterprise, scientific and industrial development, and literary production. Whether the quality of these achievements makes for the truest and highest culture we have been at no pains to discover. It is more agreeable to assume a conclusion than to reach it by laborious analysis. With so many self-sufficient facts at command we have felt it unnecessary to do more than state them.

CORRECTNESS OF SPEECH.

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CORRECTNESS OF SPEECH.

Even if we are willing to concede the prevalence of a certain degree of barbarity, the criticisms of the writer referred to do not seem to have got to the heart of the matter. With the exception of the rather amusing statement of our growing resemblance to the North American Indian, the charges are those that might be brought against a growing civilisation rather than a passing one. In the matter of American speech one is struck with a crispness indicating the possession of vital energy rather than mere loudness or uncouthness. In contrast with various European peoples we seem rather quiet of speech and our intonations sound agreeable.

There was a time when the ability to speak well in this country centred in Boston, and remained the prerogative of a few persons in favoured circles. Now, however, it has become a commonplace of all educated Americans, and almost all Americans are educated. A German lady remarked, "It is impossible that English should be well spoken in the United States; you have too many foreigners." The German mind cannot conceive of the American ability to assimilate all nations and races. As a matter of fact, the strong desire and determined effort of the foreigner to learn the language of the country to whose citizenship he aspires, often helps him to acquire an accuracy and proficiency in its use which shames the native American. The mingling of all classes in the public schools in the United States, while it tends to prevent a specialised form of speech characteristic of the upper class, as in England, on the other hand, helps the lower classes to better speech. That is what characterises American speech, commonplace correctness rather than distinctive peculiarities. Such a tendency, whether it be admirable or not, is certainly not in the direction of barbarism. The same affirmation may be made of our manners. We have an excellent average. We lack something in elegance of diction, we are wanting in reserve, in composure, in grace of bearing and gesture, but we are not guilty of many flagrant violations of propriety. Our characteristics are those of an energetic people keenly engrossed with the practicalities of life.

"In our country," said a puzzled Canadian, "we have only two classes—we who are well-born and well-bred, and those below stairs; in the States you have so many people who are nobody, but who can read and write." That is an advantage that accrues to citizens of a democracy, carrying with it the corresponding detriment of the destruction of picturesqueness and the lack of manners and speech specialised according to class, if such a lack be a detriment.

Yet we are barbaric. We have swung around the circle from one kind of barbarism to another. Beginning with the simplicity that belongs to the barbaric state, we have passed through a rapid development without taking time for proper assimilation, and find ourselves in a cycle of blatant conditions, none the less barbaric because so complicated.

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Ladies' Home Journal. MAY, 1893

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VOICES OF AMERICAN WOMEN

By Junius Henri Browne

HARDLY anything adds more to the gratification of social intercourse than a pleasant voice, woman's voice particularly. Many, even among educated persons, never cultivate the pitch, variation or cadence of the voice. So long as they make themselves understood without difficulty they are satisfied. The finer uses of the voice, while they may be lost on the multitude are deeply appreciated by those having a sensitive ear. The tone in which language is conveyed answers to style in writing, and conveys either an agreeable or a disagreeable impression. It either attracts or repels, and the difference, in a woman's case, is, socially, of the first importance. Is she aware of it? Deductively, not, since she shows no concern with the subject. And in regard to whatever is agreeable, if it consciously affects her, she is apt to exhibit the liveliest interest.

American women's voices are not generally good. In truth, it may be frankly acknowledged that many are bad, unequivocally bad; not, perhaps, in comparsion with Europeans at large, but with the English women of the better classes, who have, on the whole, the most agreeable voices in civilization. Of the untrained, the uncultivated nothing should be expected; they have not the time, if they had the inclination, to develop their larynx, regulate their organs, or modulate their tones. The peasantry of the Old World, or the backwoodsmen of the New, are naturally as indifferent to such things as they would be to polish of habit or conventionality of behavior. Rustic surroundings and associations, whether abroad or at home, are not conducive to external polish. For this, the life of towns, with their accompanying flux and fiction, is necessary.

The women of America are unlike European women in that they are all on a level, political if not social. They are not shut out from anything. There is no position to which they may not attain. They are more intelligent, more discriminating, more intuitive. Those who live in the interior, away from crowded centres, look, dress and bear themselves as do their sisters in Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore or New York. They all appear to have been educated at the same school. One part of their education has been neglected—their voices—and the neglect is grievously audible in any and every company in most of the northern States. Voice is largely the result of climate, and the long winters, with their many and sudden changes in the territory lying north of the parallel of 40°, cause numberless colds and the national catarrh. This is specially observable in New England, where high, shrill, nasal voices are so common as to have become proverbial.

A great many New England women, notably those of pure strain and careful rearing, have as soft, sweet voices as any one would wish to hear, but, unhappily, they are not representative. Some of the ruralists who dwell on the seacoast, who are out in all weathers and whose diet consists chiefly of fish, have disagreeable voices. They are of the firmest moral fibre; they are as stanch and true as steel; they are capable of heroism, of any sacrifice; they are the daughters of sea kings but when you talk with them you are in danger of forgetting all their virtues because of the lack of music in their voices. To a certain extent it is so with any harsh feminine voice. It leaves a disagreeable impression and fills the ear with painful echoes. The American voice is not so frequently bad as it seems to be, but every time we hear a bad one it revives the memory of others we have heard, until we appear at times to live amid a universal cacophony. We have lately grown to be a sensitive, self-critical nation, over-willing, perhaps, to expose and confess our defects. We surely have far less chauvinism than our neighbors (the whole globe is contiguous now) on the other side of the Atlantic—the French, the Spaniards, the Italians, the Germans or even the British. The French, for example, have, as a rule, disagreeable voices, hard, sharp, nasal; so have many of the northern Italians and most of the Germans. But have they ever admitted it? The English are very fond of assailing our voices (theirs, for a wonder, are, in the main, remarkably good, thanks to their insular situation and their deep chests) and grossly exaggerating their disagreeableness. They imagine that almost every American of either sex invariably shouts and talks, as the phrase is, through his or her nose, and they come to believe it by supposing that any one they encounter in their own land, or on the Continent, who fails to do this, cannot possibly be an American.

It is a strange fact and to be regretted that so many—not the majority, by any means—of our native women, who are pretty, clever, interesting, cultured, have disagreeable voices. The contrast between these and themselves emphasizes the unwelcome fact, which is obvious in polite circles in our largest, often in our oldest cities. In the south, where it is warmer and less variable, vocal tones are low, clear, round, pleasant, very much as in old England. Generally speaking, latitude determines the quality of the voice. This is manifest from the difference in the pitch of the people in Naples and Piedmont, in Provence and Champagne, in Greece and Finland, in Louisiana and Michigan.

But apart from climate, another cause, nervousness, materially affects the voices of our women. Nervousness is even more a natal disorder than catarrh. It is well-nigh universal; it affects and determines measurably the character of the entire nation. Our women are perfect bundles of nerves, and the consequence is that they lack inward repose when they are in society, their excitement revealing itself in their speech, which is often high and shrill. If a woman's voice is defective she can conceal its defectiveness by pitching it low and keeping it there. The American woman frequently wants the middle register, and when she quits the lower she mounts at once to the higher register, and remains at that unmelodious altitude. No voice will bear such a strain steadily. It must in time break and lose its quality, which cannot be regained.

Control of the nerves would have a most desirable effect, as it would, after a while, sensibly alter our women's tones, not render them sweet, perhaps, but at least take away their stridency. Some of our women so surrender self-restraint in conversation as to almost shriek, and to trouble every delicate ear within range. Would they but cultivate quietness it would be communicated to their utterance, and thus work a most welcome transformation. Deranged nerves would seem to be, on the whole, more hurtful to the intonations than the widely-prevalent catarrh, and they can be regulated by severe self-discipline. It would doubtless surprise and delight hundreds of women afflicted with what are called bad voices, to learn by actual experiment how these could be improved by zealous study of repose.

So many young women here waste time and money in laboring to sing, when singing well is entirely beyond them, that it is a pity they do not occupy themselves more profitably in training themselves to speak properly. Not many lessons would be required to make their voices smooth, even agreeable, as we see in young women who have been prepared for the stage. There is no substantial reason why American women of average intelligence, notwithstanding nerves and climate, should offend by their harsh tones. The day is not distant, let us hope, when the number will be reduced to a minimum. The coming century will, in all likelihood, not only see a new order of things, but will hear a new order of voices that it will be pleasant to listen to and pleasant to remember.

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have been to conceive that any serious harm could result from making public, with the permission of all parties concerned, a conversation of the kind in question. But they have chosen to pursue a very different course and one which can scarcely commend itself to their warmest supporters as consistent with the rights and dignity of the Canadian Parliament. The subject-matter of the conference is one of vital importance to the well-being of Canada. We pride ourselves justly on the thoroughly democratic character of our institutions. Members of Parliament are the chosen and accredited representatives of the people. The officers and members of the Government are the servants of the people, accountable to them through their representatives. The position taken by the Premier and Mr. Foster, to the effect that all the people's representatives have a right to know is the result reached in any such International Conference, cannot be admitted for a moment. There are many cases easily conceivable when it is of the first importance that Parliament and the people should know the steps by which certain results were reached, or the causes which led to failure of results. Even in their informal discussions at Washington, the Government delegates were not acting, could not act, as private individuals. They were still the representatives of the Government and of the country. In this particular case it is easy to see that vast if not vital interests depend upon the positions taken by the respective parties in the informal discussion and upon the causes of failure. Without such knowledge it is impossible for Parliament or people to form correct and just opinions as to the manner in which the Government and its delegates performed the mission for which they had expressly sough a popular mandate, and as to the desirability of attempting further negotiations of the same kind. In a word, the House of Commons will, it seems to us, fail in their duty to the people, show themselves remiss in guarding the principle of responsible government which a former generation so highly prized, and possibly sow the seeds of future trouble, if they do not in this case strictly hold the Government to its accountability, and insist upon the right of the people and the Commons to the fullest information as to the attitude of both their own Government and that of the United States in regard to the burning question of commercial reciprocity.

The idea that the Imperial Government might have reasons of its own for wishing the information in question to be [illegible] from the Canadian people seems to us too improbable to need argument. Such a suggestion, if it were really meant, would be unjust to the Mother Country and adapted to give rise to surmises which we are sure can have no foundation in fact. England has not given us self-rule with her right hand to withdraw it with her left.

Electric search lights are being adopted by customs officers in England in order to avoid the possibility of explosion while rummaging for goods on board tank and other vessels carrying petroleum or explosives. Ruby-colored lights for the examination of imported cases of photographic negatives in a dark chamber are also to be supplied to obviate the risk of premature development.--New York World.

SPEECH SOUNDS IN CANADA.

a ago; æ act; aa alms; qq all; ei veil; ea bear.

A letter in a recent issue of The Week on "Our National Voice," opens up a very interesting subject. It can hardly be denied that many of our people have rather a harsh way of treating their vowel sounds. If attention could be directed to this by teachers in our schools a great improvement might be made. Most teachers themselves, indeed, should examine their own way of speaking and teach by example as well as by precept.

The article referred to speaks of what is called the flat sound of "a" in many words in which other parts of the English speaking world use the beautiful Italian sound. This "flat" sound is the vowel usually written by modern phonetists—Ellis, Sweet, Murray, Miss Soames and others—æ. It is correctly used in such words as act, atom, carry, arrow, have, hand, madcap: (ækt, ætom, kæri, æro, hæv, hænd, mædkæp.) But there is a tendency with many speakers in Canada to use it erroneously instead of the Italian (a), written phonetically (aa) in calm, halve, calf, psalm, palm, and with a few speakers even in ah, father, alms. It is amusing and unpleasing to Old Country speakers to hear the Book of Psalms pronounced as the Book of Sams. The Italian a is sounded with the mouth moderately wide open and the tongue very little raised and farther back than æ. All the authorities give it as the correct sound in all the above words: (kaam, haav, kaaf, saam, paam, aa, faadhr, aamz); and in words in which the a is followed by r, either at the end of a word or followed by other consonants, as are, car, far, armour, Arthur, cartridge, Parliament: (aar, kaar, faar, aarmr, Aarthr, kaartridzh, paarlimant).

In another class of words such as ask, fast, master, France, can't, command, dance, the same Italian a is given by many—and I think the best—of the authorities. This is universally used in London and the south of England and very largely in Edinburgh and other parts of Scotland: (aask, faast, maastr, fraans, kaant, kamaand, daans). It is perhaps more particularly with regard to this class of words that usage in Canada tends to (æ), which we hear (æsk, fæst, mæstr, fræns, kænt, kamænd, dæns). It is impossible to dogmatise about such words. Usage unquestionably sanctions both. But even those in Canada who admit the greater beauty of the sound (aa) in such words, hesitate to adopt it, because they have been accustomed to hear (æ) and it seems affected to change. If, however, we honestly do prefer the (aa), we should have the same courage to adopt it that we have to drop any other objectionable habit, such as using an ungrammatical phrase or a wrong pronunciation. It will not improve matters to attempt the use of an intermediate sound between (æ) and (aa). People who have a difficulty in striking a sound between ant (ænt) and haunt (hqqnt) (see next paragraph) will not succeed very well in attempting one between ant (ænt) and aunt (aant). And if any one desires to discontinue the use of (æ), it can only be done by using a vowel clearly distinguishable from it.

Another class of words spelt with au but usually pronounced (a), such as jaunt, haunch, are often pronounced by Canadians with the vowel in all, awl, haunt (phonetically written qq), as (hqqntsh, dzhqqnt), instead of (haantsh, dzhaant). This practice also extends to some words written with (a) alone. Thus we find Chicago pronounced (shikqqgo, shikæægo, and even shikaargo); Hochelaga, (hoshilqqga or hoshilææga). The correct sound is of course (shikaago, hoshilaaga). The tendency with such speakers is to carefully avoid the use of (aa) except before r.

Once more, Canadians do not seem to show care enough in distinguishing the two different sounds of (a) in such a word as Canada. The first sound is (æ), the other two are the "obscure" or "natural" vowel which is found also in the unaccented syllable of the words *a*go, oce*a*n, ide*a*, silent, freedom, London, *s*uccumb. This is the most frequent sound of (a) in the English language, and is therefore the sound representd by the later phoneticians by the single letter (a). The word Canada therefore is (kænada,) but we often hear it (kænædæ), and I remember hearing Sir Adolphe Caron pronounce it (kænaadaa), which is natural to a French speaker and better than the other error. Some Americans, chiefly New Englanders, would say kænadei (ei being a phonetic sign often used for long a) or kænadi. We hear also (eisei, amerikei) or (eisi, ameriki), for Asa, America (eisa amerika). This does not prevail to any great extent in Canada. But we do hear it in the indefinite article a, as in (ei mæn, ei hors), for (a mæn, a hors).

I don't know what is the correct pronunciation of the word "a" when under stress or emphasis. I rather think (aa) is to be preferred to (ei) or (æ). In all the other European languages this is the ordinary sound of the letter a, not only in Italian, but in French, German, Spanish, and in our own Scotch. When not under stress the indefinite article is of course the natural vowel (a), while its other form is ('an') if unaccented, ('æn') if under stress. For long a we have given as a phonetic digraph (ei). This does not imply that it is a diphthong, though there is usually a perceptible glide in most words; that sign is used only because there is no single letter available. Before r where there is no glide suggestive of i, long a is written by Miss Soames (ea) as in (bear).

The above all refer to the letter a. Many curious points might be mentioned for all the vowels and for some of the consonants. On the question of Italian a, we are inclined to South English usage, as stated above. On the sound of long o, of long a (ei), and on the treatment of r before a consonant, I think we, should resist the South English practice.

Two excellent books might be referred to as useful for instruction to teachers especially. One is called "Pronunciation for Singers," written by Alex. J. Ellis, the greatest orthoepist who has written in English, author of the article on Speech Sounds in the Encyclopædia Britannica. This book is published by John Curwen and Sons, London, 1877. It is intended primarily for singers, but is in every way as useful for speakers, and is the only simple book I know of that covers the ground fully. Another most useful book is an Introduction to Phonetics by Miss Laura Soames of Brighton, with an endorsement by Miss Dorothea Beale, Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College. There are several excellent works by Henry Sweet, but they are perhaps rather too closely based on London colloquial speech.

School-teachers should give attention to this subject and a revolution might easily be effected in the direction of purifying and beautifying the language of our Canadian youth.

ARCH. McGOUN, JR.

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THE AMERICAN SPEAKING VOICE

By Francis Rogers

ICTOR MAUREL, the greatest acting singer this country has known, once wrote to a Parisian journal of seeing Richard Mansfield play the character part of "Prince Karl," and praised, in especial, the facility and verisimilitude with which Mansfield imitated with his voice different musical instruments and the voices of other people. The French artist described the somewhat nasal timbre of Mansfield's natural voice as being more or less typical of the American speaking voice in general, and held this fundamental quality to indicate the capacity for vocal development that is so notable among our singers in the operatic world to-day. But foreign observers, as a rule, have been much less laudatory in their comments on the American voice and have discovered in it a twang and a strenuous note distressing both to ears and to sensibilities. We, on our side, have accepted these strictures with meekness, admitting their justness and deploring dispiritedly our own vocal shortcomings, but making little or no attempt to better a remediable situation.

Some of these critics have maintained that, owing to our abominably changeable climate, we are all, in some degree, sufferers from catarrh, so that our national nose is in a chronic state of "no thoroughfare"—hence our high-pitched and nasal tones. This explanation is hardly to be taken seriously, and I, for one, do not believe that we are a more catarrhal people than are the inhabitants of any other country within the north temperate zone. Our American winters, so full of bright sunshine and bracing air, are, despite the sudden changes in temperature and the occasional severe storms, quite as healthful, I am sure, as the dank, sunless winters of London, Paris, Milan, and Berlin.

The American voice is not inherently (or catarrhally) nasal or unmusical, but it is certainly crude and uncultivated. Its disagreeable qualities are due to our generally slovenly utterance and to our neglect of the mere technique of speech. Under cultivation our voices are as beautiful as any. Our best actors, a few public speakers like W. J. Bryan and President Eliot, and our singers in every opera-giving country furnish ample proof of this assertion. As a people, we are lamentably careless in our speech. Our restless, hasty lives drive from our minds the impulse for self-culture that would lead us to train intelligently the mechanism of vocal expression.

"Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low,—an excellent thing in woman"—because the tones of the voice betokened the lovely qualities of tenderness, unselfishness, and humility. No organ of the body is more truly indicative of character and mental states than is the voice. A melodious voice attracts us; a strident voice repels us. A strain of sentiment creeps into our voice, and our hearers sense at once the feeling behind it. A shadow in the voice, and instinct straightway guesses the lurking insincerity or falsehood. A friend of mine maintains that he can read character correctly at the first hearing of a voice. What persuasive power lies in a noble, mellifluous utterance! Bryan's sonorous, fluent tones are among his most effective oratorical weapons.

The physical conformation of the throat and head has much to do with the power and quality of the voice, but in this matter psychology plays quite as influential a part as physiology. If we are a hasty, strenuous, and materialistic people, our voices will inevitably tell the story, and not till we hav mended our tense, eager, self-seeking w shall we learn to speak altogether me ously.

But it is not my intention here to p the simple life. I wish only to enter a for a greater attention to the purely phys aspects of the question. The study of vo production, whether for singing or fo speaking, may, in a general way, be divided into two parts. One concerns itself with the column of air, the base of which rests

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upon the diaphragm, and which passes through the larynx and vocal cords into the resonating cavities of the head; the other deals with the processes of articulation and pronunciation, which take place entirely in the mouth. The column of air is the tone itself in the rough; the mouth, tongue, and lips mould it into the vowels and consonants requisite for the formation of intelligible speech.

The foundation of good voice production is good breathing, and nature will attend to this, if we give it half a chance. If we stand or sit erect, without stiffness, but with our backbone straight from its base to the neck, the lungs will act freely and correctly. Over the vocal cords we have no direct conscious control, and the less we try to do with the throat, the better will be the tones we utter. The throat should always be free from any tightness whatsoever. Any infringement of this law impairs infallibly the beauty of the tone. The driving power of the vocal machinery comes from the base of the column of air, and it is in that region only that muscular effort is permissible.

After the tone reaches the mouth the jaw, tongue, and lips shape it into either a vowel or a consonant sound. When we sigh we breathe out softly the vowel *u* (as in *up*). When we laugh we aspirate the vowel *a* and say "Ha! Ha!" When we hum we vocalize the consonant *m*. These are all spontaneous utterances that we do not need to be taught, but in the study of a complicated and highly developed language like English we must learn to form consciously and correctly the many vowel and consonant sounds. A deaf child may be taught to speak by a system known as "visible speech," by means of which, under the guidance of the eye alone, the tongue, lips, and jaw are trained to assume the correct positions for the production of the desired sounds. By this system it is possible to correct defects of utterance and crudities of accent in all languages. There is practically no difference in accent or inflection between the best American and the best English actors, and this is because both have trained themselves out of the dialectic and provincial peculiarities with which their speech may originally have been afflicted, and now speak on a higher level of excellence which is common to both countries.

An element of capital importance in determining the general character of national utterance is, of course, language, and the voice itself is radically affected by the qualities and defects of the mother-tongue. Of the four great European languages, English, French, German, and Italian, Italian is by far the simplest phonetically. It contains only seven or eight distinct vowel sounds, all of them pure and open, and a relatively small number of consonants. For this reason it is the easiest language of all to pronounce swiftly and correctly, and it strikes the foreign ear as delightfully frank and transparent. On the other hand, its phonetic poverty makes for a certain monotony and a lack of resource in the expression of imaginative and highly differentiated thought. The typical Italian voice is, therefore, rather high in pitch, vibrant, and penetrating, but not subtle or orotund. (The mighty Salvini stands outside of this generalization; Novelli does not.) Throatiness and huskiness of quality are entirely absent.

French has a rich assortment of vowel sounds, pure, mixed, nasal, and covered, none of which seem in the mouths of the best speakers ever to resonate farther back than the front teeth and often sound on the surface of the very lips themselves. The tendency of the language has been always to cast out unmusical and difficult consonant sounds, especially sibilants, and this facilitates greatly the emission of the voice. France, above all other countries, takes an effective pride in the transparency of its language and prizes a fine diction so highly that even in singers a limpid utterance is of more importance than beauty of voice. The French voice, consequently, is, like Italian, rather high in pitch, and of unequalled clearness, but somewhat nasal and dry in quality and lacking in nobility and sensuous charm.

German is a noble language, in number of words and in phonetic variety second to English alone, but its complicated syntax, its husky gutturals, its close-crowded consonants, and its deep-toned vowels produce a heavy, dark voice, poorly adapted to clear utterance or to the expression of the lighter sentiments, though unquestionably impressive in serious or majestic moments.

England and America possess in common a language of unequalled richness in respect

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to both number of words and variety of sounds. It contains all the Italian vowels and, in addition, about a dozen pure and shade (or compound) vowels, some of which are not to be found in the other tongues. Happily, it lacks the French nasals and the German gutturals. So we have on our palette a choice of tone colors greater than that of any other linguistic race, and, consequently, the material with which to paint the very noblest word pictures. To master the diction of so rich a language as English is, compared with, say, Italian, a long task, but it is a question of length of time rather than of relative difficulty.

English as it is spoken commonly in England and as it is spoken by the rank and file in America presents many points of difference. The best speech in both countries is, as I have said above, practically the same. England is pre-eminently the land of conservatism and tradition—an animal with a remarkably prehensile tail, Emerson called it—and has preserved many of its dialects and old tricks of speech, despite the influence of universal education toward creating and maintaining a common standard of purity of accent. We Americans, on the other hand, are almost altogether without local or linguistic traditions. We move about freely within a territory as long and as broad as the country itself, feeling at home in every part of it. Our public schools, the outgrowth of the old New England system, are pretty much the same everywhere. We all read the same magazines and derive our knowledge of the doings of the whole world from the same associated press reports. Our national turn of mind, which concerns itself with the present and the future rather than with the past, and our uniform educational influences make for a similarity of speech that often renders it difficult to guess from what part of the country a speaker comes. I do not mean to assert that distinguishing peculiarities of speech do not exist at all in our country, for such localisms as the open *o*'s and the flat *a*'s of eastern New England, and the softened utterance of those Southerners that have been surrounded all their lives by colored people are undeniable, but these peculiarities are disappearing gradually and our national speech is becoming as unisonant and as free from local color as our national architecture is uniform.

Correct habits of utterance and, consequently, an agreeable, melodious speaking voice, can be acquired and maintained only by one ambitious in self-culture. Good schooling turns our faces in the right direction; it is for our maturer years to decide if we are to continue in the path of self-improvement. We Americans have yet to show ourselves very wise or very open-minded seekers after culture. In a new country where inherited fortunes are exceptional and where almost every man and many a woman have had to scratch for a living, the task of bread-winning naturally assumes a position of prime importance, and the average citizen asks the world about him not to bother him with responsibilities and problems not immediately connected with his struggle for wealth. And so this average American citizen, although he can read and write and cipher, and in his early youth has had at least a bowing acquaintance with the humanities, forgets his "morning wishes" and unreflectingly accepts, in their place, "a few herbs and apples." Among his forgotten morning wishes is the wish to have an intelligent appreciation of music, art, and literature. He will listen to no serious music; the artistic movements of the day concern him not. His reading is limited to the daily papers, the cheaper magazines, and an occasional "best-seller." His correspondence passes through the hands of a stenographer and his epistolary style becomes altogether commercial and journalistic.

With a horizon limited to the stretch of his ambition to become rich and to help his family up in the social world, it is small wonder that our average citizen never even so much as turns his mind toward the subject of the correct and elegant utterance of his thoughts. Enough for him if he makes himself understood in the give and take of his hasty life. Caring nothing for the beauty of his own utterance, he sets a wretched example to his children, and thoughtlessly leaves to the school the responsibility for training them to express themselves in melodious speech. The school, in its turn, has little or no time to give to voice-training, and the result is that the child reaches maturity almost entirely unversed in this important branch of culture.

A mellow, sonorous voice is rare in any country. Its beauty in the rough is usually

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due to an harmonious nature and good health, but just as by conscious effort we are able to harmonize our natures and improve our health, so also may we cultivate in ourselves a spontaneous, simple, and agreeable utterance in well-controlled and well-modulated tones. Such an utterance brings out all the potential beauty of the natural voice and is within the capacity of everybody. So long as we remain a nation of mere money-seekers, so long shall we speak in dry, eager, money-seeking voices, and it is only as we begin to realize (as, indeed, an ever-increasing number of Americans are beginning to realize) that material success is only a small part of the real success of life, that we shall place a proper estimate on the substantial value of a well-trained voice.

We are already agreed that every child ought to have some training in drawing and music, even though in later life he may never put it to any regular use, but every child, except the dumb, is sure to use his voice daily as long as he lives. Why not, then, have it trained and developed to its full capacity for beauty and power? Its eloquence, no matter what his walk in life, will be for him a useful and a potent weapon, and for those he knows and meets a balm and a delight.

Foreigners may reproach us for our unmusical voices; the remedy lies with ourselves. We have inherited from our ancestors a noble and expressive language. We have received from nature voices potentially as melodious as those of any other people. Let us strive, then, by every means in our power to make our voices and utterances as noble and expressive as the language of our inheritance.

·THE POINT OF VIEW·

HAVING acquired, if not celebrity, at least that measure of notoriety that makes one available for the purposes of our daily press, I was not long ago solicited to lend my attention for an hour or two to a searching inquiry into my past life, to retrace the first steps of my career, to explain the methods of my work, the services of my inspiration, my future projects, and, by natural progression, to elucidate any theories I might have to account for the happy conservation of my hair "for a longer period than some of my contemporaries," as Whistler once put it.

Entertaining Angels Unawares

I have no word to say against this pleasant habit of interviewing, which my publisher assures me is not without its uses in the upward climb to the ranks of the "best sellers," for it is so firmly established in our manners and customs that few escape it; unless, perhaps, to question if its wide-spread benefits are not diminished by their very quantity. Still less shall my voice be raised against the practitioners who are employed upon this delicate inquest into the personality and the work of those who happen to travel under the search-light along the pathway of momentary notoriety. They conduct their difficult task with all the consideration possible, and are generally willing to submit their report to the interviewed to avoid misquotation; so that the public can rest assured that in the majority of cases the disclosure of details concerning the work or the personal appearance of one of our celebrities has been carefully edited by its subject and thus possesses autobiographic value.

In the present instance at least, these conditions were carefully observed, and the emissary of the press being a charming young person with a properly high appreciation of her calling, nothing could exceed the chirurgical skill with which the journalistic probe was handled —quite without the infliction of pain to the patient. A few days later I was enabled to read the interview in manuscript, and, beyond a certain surprise at the well-rounded periods and a certain soulful tone into which my conversation had apparently lapsed, I was pleased to recognize its general integrity and was able, in journalistic phrase, to release it for publication.

But of this momentous experience there remains one impression and certain reflections born of it, which from slowness of perception I fear I did not make clear to my fair interviewer;