

is in the oration the essay and the debate that we build the palace.

In these societies, nothing is of greater importance than just and judicious criticism. To a great extent the efficiency of society work depends upon the ability, tact, and above all the energy of the critic.

To these important officers we would make a few suggestions. Nay, do not bid us farewell and leave. We are aware that advice is cheap and no art so difficult as to make it agreeable. There are, however, a few general principles which should form a part of the unwritten constitution of every literary society. First of all, societies should choose wisely in filling this office. The critic need not shine in debate or on the rostrum but he should have a thorough knowledge of our language and be well versed in our literature. It is not enough that he point out the faults and correct the errors—that he should tear down what others build up—but he should be able to suggest some method of improvement, some plan of progress.

Too often is the critic's report in the average society the driest part of the programme, and the most deserving of severe criticism. Have you not sometimes felt the need of all your reserve piety, when some fine production was marred and distorted by some bungling critic? Let him then point out the errors in pronunciation, use of words, etc., but this can be done without humiliating the performers. The most effective criticism is not always the most severe. While he points out the faults to be avoided, let him not forget the excellencies to be imitated.

But when all this is done, much still remains. Every meeting should be made the occasion of a systematic critique on some class of performances, or some particular element of society work. Let one or more evenings be devoted to each of such topics as, the writing or delivery of orations, the writing or reading of essays, the conduct of debate, the principles of attitude, and so on, indefinitely. Let these

critiques be well prepared, and there is no reason why the critic's report may not be the most instructive, as well as the most interesting part of the programme.

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Two years ago a mania for spelling swept over the land like an epidemic. Perhaps its greatest benefit was in exposing the latent ignorance on this fundamental element of education. There is but little doubt that the result would be even more surprising if a mania on pronunciation should follow. While correct spelling is of great importance, we deem correct pronunciation as even more desirable. Spelling is usually done where we have the time and opportunity to verify our work, but in pronunciation the first impulse finishes it; *nescit vox missa reverti*. Spelling is usually done in private and at leisure, but pronunciation before the fastidious public, and with no time to correct. Habits of pronunciation always follow you. They are present at the table, in the parlor, in the office, and in society as well as on the stage.

The habit of correct pronunciation is the index of an accurate mind. As an accomplishment it may rank with music, and as a recommendation for scholarship it goes far beyond a college diploma. How our confidence in an instructor in the sciences or the languages, where the greatest accuracy is required, lessens when we find him inaccurate in his vernacular. How often the beautiful thoughts of the orator are marred and impeded by some gross error in pronunciation. Nay, how often is the divine truth sent forth on its sacred mission, halt and maimed by blunders that a little care would avoid.

It may be urged that thought is more important than language. But language is the vehicle of thought, and anything that mars the language must impede the thought. Thought and language are so inseparably connected that they must suffer mutually.

If, then, correct pronunciation is so desirable, how shall it be attained? That