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ALFRED AYRES, SPEECH TEACHER, AS A CRITIC OF LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN THEATRE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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** ** **

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ........................................... 11

**Chapter**

I. **INTRODUCTION** ........................................... 1

II. **TRANSATLANTIC BACKGROUND FOR THE PERIOD** ............ 3

   - Introduction ........................................ 4
   - Conventional Formalism Giving Way to Nature Methodized 8
   - Return to a Mere Classical "Grand Style" ................ 12
   - Decline of Kemble-Siddons in the Wake of a New Romanticism 15
   - Natural Trend Continuing in the Domestic Touches of Macready 18
   - A Little Too Much of the Familiar ...................... 21
   - Compromise Achieved by the Personality of Irving .... 25
   - Art's Creative Histion Supplanted by playwright's Puppet 27
   - Summary ............................................... 30

III. **DOMESTIC BACKGROUND FOR THE PERIOD** ............... 32

   - The Star System for Better but Then for Worse ........ 32
   - Tenor of Thought ..................................... 37
   - Advent of a New Burlesque ................................ 41
   - Venus with Voice ....................................... 47
   - Burlesque versus the Traditional Pattern ................ 49
   - Threatened Extinction of Drama as Intellectual Entertainment 52
   - Stock Company Training Replaced by Schools of Acting and Amateur Theatricals 60
   - The Stage Is Set ....................................... 70
   - In Transition .......................................... 73

IV. **PERSONAL BACKGROUND FOR THE MAN** ............... 78

   - His Life in Brief ..................................... 79
   - His Education in Oberlin College ...................... 89
   - His Personality and His Style in Writing ............. 96
   - His Professional Affiliations .......................... 107
   - Summary ............................................... 118
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>AUTHORITY ON ACTING</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>A Great Debate in Acting:</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fundamentally, Coquelin versus Irving</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In America, for Ayres and Wheeler:</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thought versus Emotion</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forrest and Cushman as a Basis for Ayres</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Old as Opposed to the New School in Acting</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| VI.    | THEATRE CRITIC OF VOCAL DELIVERY | 173 |
|        | Introduction | 173 |
|        | Of Emphasis | 179 |
|        | Of Slurring | 187 |
|        | Of Breath Control | 191 |
|        | Of Modulation | 194 |
|        | Of Natural Delivery | 199 |
|        | Of Pause | 203 |
|        | Of Preparation for a Role | 211 |
|        | Of Pronunciation | 213 |
|        | Summary | 225 |

| VII.   | THEATRE CRITIC OF ACTING AND ACTORS | 228 |
|        | Of Bodily Action | 229 |
|        | Of the Immediate Followers in the | 255 |
|        | Forrest-Cushman Tradition | 255 |
|        | Of the Reputedly Great Actor Edwin Booth | 246 |
|        | Summary | 263 |

| VIII.  | THEATRE CRITIC OF A NEW SCHOOL IN ACTING AND DELIVERY | 270 |
|        | Of Individuality Replacing Intelligence; | 271 |
|        | Underplaying Vocal Delivery with Overacting | 271 |
|        | Of Shakespearean Drama under the New Regime | 287 |
|        | Summary | 305 |

| IX.    | ADDITIONAL CAPACITIES | 307 |
|        | Author and Editor | 308 |
|        | Playwright and Adapter | 345 |
|        | Actor and Public Reader | 356 |
|        | Teacher and Coach | 367 |

| X.     | IN SUMMARY | 388 |

| SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY | 415 |
| AUTOBIOGRAPHY | 447 |
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this investigation is to search out the relation which Alfred Ayres (1834-1902) had to the theory and the practice of speech and theatre in his own time and, incidentally, to suggest his influence upon later developments. Because a master's thesis has already surveyed Ayres's "Contribution to Speech Training," the present study focuses on his function as a critic of late nineteenth-century American theatre. Ayres himself claimed to "write less for the purpose of teaching the art of reading than for the purpose of showing the

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1Richard Hanna Hadley, "Alfred Ayres and His Contribution to Speech Training" (unpublished M. S. thesis, Northwestern University, 1933). The first page of this eighty-page thesis, directed by Professor Cornelius Carman Cunningham, indicates that the "field will be limited to Ayres' own writings on elocution, and will not include his books on pronunciation." But pronunciation had been a property essential to elocution since the shift in meaning of this term from style, in classical rhetoric, to delivery (i.e., what the ancient rhetoricians had designated pronuntiatio or actio), in John Wilkins' Elocutionary, or, A discourse concerning the Gift of Preaching As it falls under the Rule of Art . . . ., originally published at London in 1646. See Wilbur Samuel Howell, "Sources of the Elocutionary Movement in England: 1700-1748," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLV (February, 1959), 1-18. See especially p. 5. Cf. ibid., n. 19: "A New English Dictionary, s. v. Elocution, gives Robert Cawdrey's A Table Alphabetically, containing and teaching the true writing and understanding of hard vs. new English Words, 3rd ed. (London, 1613), as the earliest English work to define elocution as delivery. The next instance listed in the RED is dated 1678."
The deficiency of the dramatic profession in a knowledge of the art.  

The general aim of the project is an examination of Ayres, whose real name was Thomas Embley Osmun, in terms of: (1) the theatre scene on both sides of the Atlantic and, also as a preliminary guide, the events which comprise his personal background; (2) his apparent knowledge of the theory and the practice of speech and theatre; (3) his selection, and application, from the above tools of his profession as he trained actors and public readers, himself included, and critically evaluated many theatre performances; together with, of course, (4) his rejection of certain prevailing doctrines and practices; and (5) developing out of this discrimination (which helped to bring forth a revitalized elocution to serve twentieth-century theory and practice), in conclusion, his rightful position in the annals of speech and theatre.

Specifically, the study aims to determine the achievements of Alfred Ayres which fall into place under these various professional capacities: (1) theatre critic and correspondent, (2) author and editor, (3) playwright and adapter, (4) actor and public reader, and (5) teacher and coach. Notwithstanding, the investigation proceeds primarily relative to Ayres’s application of certain basic principles, that formulate a theory for acting and for the delivery of language, in shaping a workable method to guide his practice as a theatre critic.

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CHAPTER II

TRANSatlantic Background for the Period

The United States of America was still young during Ayres's lifetime. In many areas, it was just beginning to make advances along its own national lines. Its theatre had been highly dependent upon developments operating from abroad. But even at home, exuberant forces were at play setting the stage for the twentieth century. Unbounding energy and vigorous imagination were busy inventing everything from the Steele Mackaye Spectatorium to a metal rack, for men's hats, beneath theatre seats. The two chapters to follow provide background for the period in which Ayres lived.

Alfred Ayres (1831-1902) related his life's work to the world of the theatre. His special interest was vocal delivery. He surveyed this specialty in terms of the styles in acting which, periodically, give birth to the various forms which delivery is capable of taking.

Influence from abroad played a dominant part in shaping delivery for the American theatre of the late nineteenth century. Both the best and the worst from the old world's theories on acting affected performers in America. Before being observed in action, on an American stage, such techniques were often sifted through the interpretations of representative British actors. This policy was encouraged, naturally, by the fact that these two English-speaking countries shared performers, as well as by the language and literature they held in common. Incidentally, Ayres's
personal contact with the theatre of Germany and of France, during the
mid-fifties, will be noted wherever the need arises in the body of this
investigation.

This chapter examines successive styles, in British stage delivery,
which reached across the Atlantic to influence American theatre practice.
For a better understanding of the processes at work, the chapter begins
by introducing basic determinants of stage delivery and by postulating,
as a characteristic of acting style, a cyclic progression back and forth
between the two extremes of delivery.

Introduction

The forces at work motivating the form taken by stage delivery,
during a certain period, include: (1) the conventions of the time, (2) the
nature of the playwright's script, (3) the demands of the theatrical
style employed, (4) the abilities of the individual performer, (5) the
scenic investiture, together with the acoustics and the stage lighting
of the theatre housing the performance, (6) the psychology of the actor,
and (7) numerous sub-divisions more or less related to the above categories.

Not only is stage delivery shaped by the conventions of a particular
time but also by various reactions against these conventions. Delivery
takes into account what a certain society, including its playwrights as
proponents of the drama then in vogue, expects from its various types of
actors. Then too, certain forces in the society tend to encourage change
and, thereby, also help to mold the exact delivery used.
Moreover, a dramatist's choice of words and his style of writing dictate, to a great extent, the manner in which an actor can best deliver the lines. Difficulties in delivery are commonly encountered when drama from a former period is produced. For current conventions or traditional procedures often stand in opposition to the type of expression which the style of composition, in the earlier play, calls for. This disparity also works against the successful staging of drama which is written with the hope of introducing new standards for the future.

Naturally, an actor's own abilities, native and acquired, determine delivery on the stage. Winton Tolles points out that Tom Taylor, in drafting an 1851 dramatization of the Sir Roger de Coverley essays, adapted the script to the declining abilities of the leading actor. The playwright "remembered the elder Farren's failing powers of speech and made Sir Roger as taciturn as possible." In this connection, too, Allardyce Nicoll cites a legend concerning the skills of John Rich, who was known popularly as Lun. Rich, "finding that he could not speak so well as he could act, turned to dumb show." In England, during the eighteenth century, the excellence of Rich's Harlequin in dumb show led the traditions of Italian commedia dell'arte to pass into the pantomime.

In this case, factors operating relative to delivery were responsible not only for the style of one actor, or for the form of a play, but also for

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1 Winton Tolles, Tom Taylor and the Victorian Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 80. The actor William Farren, Sr., who at that time was more than sixty years of age, had suffered a stroke in 1843.

the course taken by an important theatrical movement.

Other physical limitations look beyond the individual performer to consider the influence of the scenic design, as well as the acoustics present and the type of stage lighting possible. An inadequately illuminated stage, for example, encourages loudness, even bombast, and a lack of subtlety in characterization. But to return to the individual actor, his so-called psychology is another factor which helps to form stage delivery. Many actors will try a startling innovation or attention-getting device simply to attract the general public or to satisfy their own egos.

The foregoing item can be related, after a fashion, to the theatrical conventions of the time. Some sub-divisions of the basic determinants, cited above, are: the needs imposed by characterization which reflects current stereotypes and, accordingly, employs sub-standard speech; the foreign-dialect factor; and the influence from schools of elocution and from contemporary rhetorical practice. Additional clues to the specific form, taken by stage delivery, reside in whether the audience as a whole came to see the actor, to witness an effective production, to be educated by the play's message, or merely to be seen themselves; and in whether or not the age looks to royal patronage, theatrical monopoly, state censorship, a coterie audience, the control of a producer-director, ensemble acting, the resident stock company, the star system, the road company, together with the combination company, and the like.

In general, then, delivery on the stage is shaped by numerous forces, some rather superficial and ephemeral. Fundamentally, though, the various styles in theatrical delivery can be located at relative points along a continuum. This gradation stretches between the declamatory and the natural. At the one extreme, declamation strives for a
rhetorically calculated delivery of language. At the other extreme, naturalness caters to an individual performer's emotional reaction at the moment of delivery.

Each of the two basic styles in delivery, the declamatory and the natural, however, claims to follow nature, but each in its own way and after fundamentally different philosophies. As a matter of fact, the term natural or nature became a "verbal jack-of-all-trades" during the eighteenth century. A. O. Lovejoy suggests the diversity of the word by describing as many as sixty different meanings which this term has made use of.  

Notwithstanding, the observation remains that effective verbal communication suffers when either basic style is used in excess. As a result, on occasion, each style must be applied to curb the excesses of the other. If the two methods of delivery are not encouraged to complement one another, the declamatory becomes mechanical and stilted and the natural style descends into the commonplace and the unintelligible.

Generally speaking, when a wave of naturalness counteracts the evils of inbred declamation, the event is termed a romantic revival. In contrast, when the trend is in the other direction, that is, toward a return to the prescribed rules of declamatory delivery, the movement is called neo-classical.

According to the theory of the neo-classicist, following nature meant expressing what was considered to be typical in nature and in

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human experience. The neo-classicist followed standard rules and consid­
ered imitation desirable. The romanticist, on the other hand, advocated
an expression of the unique in nature and in human experience. He en­
dorsed irregularity, did not follow prescribed rules, and looked askance
at imitation.4

A cursory view of style, in the general history of the theatre,
seems to indicate a cyclic progression back and forth between the de­
clamatory and the natural extreme. When the declamatory becomes unduly
emphasized, the result is a trend back toward the natural mode in
delivery, and the reverse is true. Such assumptions gain support in the
following analysis of successive acting eras, with their distinctive
vocal delivery, which have drawn audience favor in the English-speaking
theatre.

Conventional Formalism Giving Way to Nature Methodized

Among British actors who are representative of successive periods
in theatrical delivery, Charles Macklin and David Garrick will be dis­
cussed first. Essentially, Macklin and Garrick represent a trend in
eighteenth-century delivery from conventional formalism to nature
methodized. It is also interesting to note, in this connection, that
French ideas anticipated British practice in both the declamatory and the
natural style.

4Daniel E. Vandnaegen, "Thomas Sheridan and the Natural School," 
Speech Monographs, XX (1953), 58-64. See especially pp. 59-61.
John B. Bowman has summarized an account, furnished by Margaret Barton, concerning stage delivery during this period.

British stage speech in the eighteenth century was an imitation of the style that had developed in France somewhat earlier. Actors spoke their lines in a cadenced monotone that paid little heed to meaning but which thumped the regularity of the rhythm and the rhyme and played entirely on the beauty of the sound of the language. Lines were read for their auditory magnificence when chanted in this cadenced monotone, and many of the speeches of plays written in this style sound like nonsense when read in an ordinary tone of voice.

Into this milieu David Garrick's realistic, meaningful reading of lines burst like a skyrocket showering infinite varieties of enunciation upon adoring audiences. For perhaps the first time in generations, theatre audiences listened to the lines of the play rather than to the voices and the readings of the actors.5

France was a source not only for the preceding declamatory era in the history of British stage delivery; after a fashion, France also influenced Macklin and Garrick toward naturalness. Even as early as 1684, Baron had been waging a then unsuccessful fight for natural acting at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Significantly, around the mid-eighteenth century, the French critic Denis Diderot endorsed a turning away from the false in the classic ideal and a return to nature. "In Garrick he saw his theories embodied."6

Obviously, Garrick's natural delivery was different in style from today's naturalism. But Garrick's manner did stand in sharp contrast to that of the preceding period. In this respect, his performance represented a romantic tendency. With regard to delivery before Garrick,


audiences usually had come to the theatre to compare the intonation patterns of leading actors in a well-known role from standard repertory. In Garrick's performance, the lines took on more meaning as he attempted to establish communication with his auditors through the use of a more natural delivery. Garrick's main contributions were threefold: (1) his naturalness put into action a French theory, which until then had not been faring well on the continent; (2) his philosophy influenced the romantic pronouncements of the actor-eloquence and theatrical manager Thomas Sheridan; and (3) his practice was systematized and mechanized in the influential doctrine of John Walker.

By present-day standards, of course, Sheridan's method while delivering dialogue drew upon elements of declamation, yet his philosophy abounded in naturalistic principles. It is pertinent to note the professional relationship of Garrick and Sheridan. Garrick had created a sensation with natural delivery during his acting debut in London's Goodman's Fields Theatre in 1741. No more than four years later, he was associated with Sheridan as joint manager of Dublin's Smock Alley Theatre, and in 1762, Sheridan's romantic pronouncements appeared in A Course of Lectures on Elocution.

Standing in opposition to Garrick's and Sheridan's romanticism was a rising neo-classical spirit which looked to the more mechanistic dicta.


8 Vandraegen, op. cit., 64.
of James Burgh (The Art of Speaking, 1762) and of John Walker (Elements of Elocution, 1781). Walker, like Sheridan, had acted on the stage and had been a fellow player of Garrick himself.9

John Walker drew a decidedly mechanistic formula and much of the raw material for his system of elocution from Joshua Steele’s Prosodia Rationalis. An Essay towards establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech to be expressed and perpetuated by Peculiar Symbols, published in 1775. Moreover, Walker “was trying to teach David Garrick’s elocution.” Conveniently, Steele’s book recorded, in a quasi-musical system of notation, Garrick’s manner with a Hamlet soliloquy. Incidentally, although Steele’s work “had nothing to do with the teaching of elocution in the first place,”10 Garrick is reported to have asked Steele about the possible uses to which Steele’s method of transcription could be put.11 Walker, however, was the one who made practical use of Steele’s transcription of Garrick’s style in vocal delivery. Walker’s method listed types of emotions and moods and designed patterns appropriate to every phase of vocal modulation, inflection, emphasis, and pause. Therefore, Garrick’s philosophy, which Thomas Sheridan attempted to capture in his romantic doctrine, became lost in John Walker’s influential system of elocution. Eventually, then, a mechanical ordering of nature was destined to replace the Garrick craze for less calculated naturalness.

10Ibid., 68-69. Italics are in the original.
In 1776, Garrick retired from the stage and his school of naturalness underwent decline. His influence remained in Sheridan's romantic pronouncements, and Walker mechanized Garrick's practice for future use. Then too, Sheridan and Walker had been instilling interest in the propriety of speech and in the art of declamation.

The time was ready for the advent of a "grand style" in acting based on artistic theories of stage deportment. The artist Sir Joshua Reynolds provided such theory, in 1776, while presenting his Seventh Discourse as the first president of the Royal Academy. Reynolds believed that art "must not offend the . . . ear by inharmonious sounds. . . . [and] must raise and elevate nature." It then follows that "harsh screamings of the voice, however great the occasion, or however natural on such occasion, are therefore not admissible in theatrical art." His conclusions were expressed on the stage in the classical elegance of John Philip Kemble and of the latter's sister--Sarah Siddons.

12 Apparently only the actor John Henderson was qualified to carry on the Garrick tradition; he rivaled John Philip Kemble's new style until his own death in 1785. But even Henderson was guilty of trying to make natural on the stage what had been written as decidedly artificial dialogue, e.g., Dr. Johnson's Irene. See James Boaden, Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons (2 vols; London: H. Colburn, 1827), II, 48-49.

Just as the artist Reynolds was a force behind the new grand style of acting, there is reason to believe that an earlier artist, William Hogarth, had been influential in shaping a nature-in-art theory for application in Garrick's natural school. To contrast these two styles, in vocal delivery, the grand style was elocutionary rather than realistic, declamatory rather than natural, and presentational rather than representational. The grand style of the Kembles and Mrs. Siddons came into being around the year 1776 and held almost absolute sway from 1782 until the early years of the nineteenth century.

Regarding the grand style, the German critic Ludwig Tieck felt that a "mannerism, which often shows itself in Kemble . . ., reminds one of the tragic recitations of the French, who in every scene fling out some verses at a galloping pace in succession to passages spoken with measured and exaggerated emphasis." Tieck criticized John Philip Kemble for having a weak and tremulous voice, for pausing between every two or three words, and for ending his speeches in a high key. Such "musical declamation," he claimed, made true acting impossible. Although Tieck admitted that Kemble's voice was full of expression, he maintained that Kemble's efforts to round off every passage as an artistic whole defeated the purpose in acting.15

James Edward Murdoch worked with some British actors of the Kemble school, around the year 1830, while he was serving an apprenticeship in the American theatres of the South. Murdoch found the patterned rise and fall in voice by Kemble-trained actors exceedingly tiresome. Their emphatic words, he reported, "were marked with extended and repeated

waves or swelling prolongations of sound, resembling the effects often observable in the reading of the church-service.\textsuperscript{16}

Charles Kemble, who followed the manner in acting of his elder brother John Philip and sister Sarah Siddons, came to America in 1832. He brought his elder daughter, Frances Anne (Fanny) Kemble, to act with him. Fanny Kemble had also inherited the family traditions of acting.

She spent a large part of her life in the United States where she excelled as an interpretative reader from plays. The Spectator, during the year 1830, had criticized unfavorably both Fanny Kemble and her uncle's chief pupil—Charles Mayne Young.

\begin{quote}
The Spectator frequently condemned her unnatural manner of reading, saying "Blu-r-r-d" for "blood" (III, 1830, 346), and, at greater length: "We have condemned the musical sweetness of Miss KEMBLE'S voice; and greatly desirable as is the endowment, it is not without its perils. YOUNG is an example of the seduction of a fine voice: he sounds as though his ear dwelt on it more than his understanding on the words. He caresses his long-drawn accents, lingers with love on them, and seems enraptured with his own melody. Miss KEMBLE must avoid this infecting self-relish, which we slightly trace in some parts of her recitation. . . ." —III (1830), 52.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

As Kemble's school thus began to decline in favor, its detractors dubbed it "the old teapot style of acting." They ridiculed its characteristic pattern for gesticulation: "one hand on the hip, the other extended and moving in curved lines, with a gradual descent to the side."\textsuperscript{18}

Also, these performers' common use of a treble voice may be compared with the sound given off by a teapot. In this connection, Dion Boucicaut

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[16] The Spectator, pp. 48-49.
\item[17] Downer, "Players and Painted Stage," 531 n.
\item[18] Murdoch, op. cit., p. 49; 49 n: The three-time mayor of Chicago and member of Congress John E. Rice, Esq., who made his first appearance as an actor in Philadelphia about the time of my own [Murdoch's] advent, had been trained at school in this old declamatory style of speaking, and before he broke himself of its habits was called 'Walker Elocution Rice.'
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
likened their vocal manipulation to playing on a flute.\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Decline of Kemble-Siddons in the Wake of a New Romanticism}

As the dignified, declamatory, deceitful school of the Kembles was gradually rejected, a new romantic revival was gaining support. For the consciously interpretative methods of the grand style had been relying heavily upon mechanical application. The critic William Hazlitt's review of John Philip Kemble's \textit{King John} (Act III, scene iii) supports the observation that even as early as 1816, the year before this actor's retirement, Kemble's neo-classical school had been losing its appeal. Hazlitt reported:

\begin{quote}
It was well done and skilfully, \textit{according to the book of arithmetic}; but no more. . . , he changes his voice three several times, in repeating the name of Hubert; and the changes might be fine, but they did not vibrate on our feelings; so we cannot tell. Through most of the whole scene this celebrated actor did not seem to feel the part itself as it was set down for him, but to be considering how he ought to feel it, or how he should express by rule and method what he did not feel. He was sometimes slow, and sometimes hurried; sometimes familiar, and sometimes solemn; but always with an evident design and determination to be so.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Even though Kemble's style had been handed down somewhat intact only in the work of such a few minor players as Charles Mayne Young and the elder Vandenhoff and John Cooper, Kemble's influence did not wholly die out. It continued to flavor the more romantic styles of Macready and Phelps among his successors, and emerged as a major aspect of the acting technique of Edwin Booth.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19}Downer, "Players and Painted Stage," 529.
\textsuperscript{20}Quoted \textit{ibid.}, 530-531. Italics are in the presentation by Downer.
\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Ibid.}, 532-533.
Key figures in this new romantic revival were George Frederick Cooke, Edmund Kean, and Junius Brutus Booth. Cooke, reputed to have been "a new kind of Macklin," came to the London stage in 1801. His style represented a throwback to the naturalness which had been developed by Macklin and Garrick. Incidentally, Cooke spent the last two years of his life in America and, when sober, played with great success in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Providence. Cooke's "style never brought him the popularity of Kean because John Kemble was then at the very height of his power."

Because Kean referred to Cooke as "a perfect actor" and praised his "spirit and genius," it seems logical to conclude that Kean received inspiration from Cooke. Therefore, in using Cooke as a model, Kean was being indirectly influenced by the stage practice of Garrick and Macklin.

In this connection, the German critic Tieck, writing of Edmund Kean in 1814, asserted:

Many who remember Garrick maintain that Kean is like him; even Garrick's widow, who is still alive, is said to concur in this opinion; but she will hardly agree with the many admirers of Kean, who hold that he acts in Garrick's manner, and even surpasses him in many of his parts.23

Kean's naturalness stood in opposition to the grand style of Kemble's declamatory school. In Kean, the Kemble-Siddons "stateriness and elevation gave way to fiery outbursts of emotion and dazzling displays of vocal

22 Quoted ibid., 535.
23 Quoted by Murdoch, op. cit., pp. 385-386.
Tieck declared that Edmund Kean spoke quickly, applied an excess of emphasis, and used unpredictable and sudden pauses.

He frequently imports into the verse a meaning which, in a general way, is not to be found in it. He stares, starts, wheels around, from his voice, and then raises it suddenly to the highest pitch . . . breaking up his part into a thousand little frequent breaks, tragical or comic, as it may happen . . . . If he does not weary the attention as Kemble does, one is being constantly circumvented by him, and defrauded, as by a skilful juggler, of the impression, the emotion, which we have a right to expect. Now, on the artist's part all this is done in mere caprice, with the deliberate purpose of giving a great variety of light and shade to his speeches . . . . This is, therefore, playing with playing, and more violence is done to an author—especially if that author be Shakespeare—by this mode of treatment than by the declamatory manner of the Kembles.

Thus it becomes evident that one set of vocal tricks was exchanged for another when Kean's erratic naturalness replaced Kemble's studied declamation.

Kean brought his style in delivery to America in 1820-1821 and in 1825. His follower Junius Brutus Booth arrived on the American scene in 1821 and established a home. Primarily through the efforts of the elder Booth, Kean's new romanticism, with its comparatively more natural style, influenced American theatre delivery.

Booth's tactics commonly looked to Kean who, in turn, had followed Cooke in trying to make the delivery of blank verse more natural by

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25 Quoted by Murdoch, op. cit., pp. 386-387. Italics are in the presentation by Murdoch.
destroying its rhythm. Instead of employing the monotonous alternating waves of Kemble's neo-classical school, Kean's romantic departure in style relied for effect upon the variety in sudden shifts of tone.

These abrupt transitions eventually took on the anathema of a mannerism. Kean's critics heard vestiges of rant when he began to depress his voice mechanically, to pause suddenly and then rush on, and erratically to put a damper on his voice and then, with all the volume he could summon, to burst forth from this whisper into passionate vehemence. In fact, his versatility took pride in being able to vary at will the mode of delivery during impassioned passages.

Throughout the nineteenth century, this style in delivery was destined to flourish among numerous melodramatic actors, whose subject matter craved such adornment. Most immediately though, the manner of William Charles Macready was to take up echoes from Kean's delivery, inheriting especially the latter's thunderous power.

Natural Trend Continuing in the Domestic Touches of Macready

William Charles Macready differed from his predecessors in that he incorporated certain domestic touches within his delivery. Basically, this delivery drew upon Kemble's poetic declamation, as well as upon the manner of Edmund Kean. In adding domestic touches to his pattern of delivery, Macready began to cultivate what has been dubbed "the Macready pause." Thereby, at least in the beginning, he pleased his audiences because they loved such touches of nature.

At first, Macready's significant pauses made the meaning of an involved speech more easily understood by listeners. His innovation in
method resulted in meaningful oral punctuation for difficult verse.

Later, however, in Macready’s

over-anxiety to make everything that he said reach every one of his audience, he had fallen into a painful habit of breaking up his sentences, which not only marred the rhythm of the verse he had to speak, but gave a "jerky" unevenness to his elocution that became at times irritating.26

Although Macready followed Edmund Kean and attuned vocal delivery to a domestic style of acting, sometimes he unexpectedly dropped into the restraint characteristic of Victorian society. At times, too, he meticulously avoided almost every "point" or calculated effect which was then being made by his foremost rival—Edmund’s son, Charles Kean.

Even though most critics credited Macready with intelligent, studied conceptions, they did not endorse his performances completely. The principal fault seemed to be that "Macready’s art exhibited the art too fully." This tendency was especially evident when the actor tried to give a correctly emphasized interpretation to a script which he felt was ambiguous or obscure.

Macready was also criticized because he eventually forsook his early standards of delivery and employed novel tactics in order to gain audience favor. Murdoch pictured Macready as originally a promisingly effective actor who, unfortunately, came to feel that "his performances lacked the so-termed startling originality of effect which in theatrical parlance brings an audience to their feet and makes them hoarse with approving

Consequently, whereas earlier Macready had depended upon natural tones, he turned to the artificialities of an affected intonation. His voice finally lost its clear ring and became harsh and sometimes even repulsive. Gradually, at the expense of limiting his scope and deadening his poetic temperament, Macready's desire for moneyed success and public acclaim led him to become overly precise in minute details. His natural delivery became more theatrical, even stagy.

Still, however, in some roles Macready's new-found precision and polish in delivery became pleasingly incorporated within his basically natural, domestic style. Such was the case especially in his portrayal of Werner. "No man who ever saw Macready as Werner could fail to accept the performance as the perfection of natural acting untrammeled by the obtrusion of affected art." In this poetic drama, which the playwright Lord Byron interlarded with domestic traits demanding natural delivery, "the vocal peculiarities of the actor [Macready] seemed so entirely appropriate that one might fancy that Werner talked as Mr. Macready did."27

In summary, Macready's career began with a vocal delivery which reflected Kean's naturalness and thunderous power combined with Kemble's poetic declamation. Macready soon added domestic touches that gained him acclaim. Later he began to use many novel tactics and to overuse the pause. He became overly polished, precise, and stagy. Finally, however, Macready achieved a happy fusion of polished precision and domestic naturalness in his delivery.

27Murdoch, op. cit., pp. 114, 117-118, and 120.
Downer regards Macready, representing the British scene, not only as the last great leader of the Old School . . . [but] also the earliest of the New. The combination which he perfected of grace and passion, of the lofty and the familiar, was ideally suited to the temper of the period and enabled the romantic drama of Shakespeare to maintain a grip on an increasingly naturalistic stage. . . . his disciples were many, and his influence is marked upon the style of acting of Shakespeare in particular, nearly a century after his death.  

Samuel Phelps, an important follower of Macready, was "almost the last actor, the criticism of whose work invariably dealt with his rendition of particular passages, with his delivery of dramatic dialogue."  

By that later time, the London theatre had been witnessing a definite decline in the use of effective elocution. Little criticism was made in terms of an actor's ability to deliver dialogue.

In truth, any vocal delivery which drew upon elements of elocution, from the grand and lofty style, was open to suspicion. For the natural, domestic manner of Macready yielded place only to a natural, familiar style in the delivery of Robertsonian realistic comedy. The advent of the latter firmly established the reign of the natural mode.

A Little Too Much of the Familiar

After Macready, then, a new school of naturalness came into vogue. Its cardinal principle of reserved force endorsed acting without exaggeration but rather with delicacy, moderation, and ease. This development was

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28 "Players and Painted Stage," 544-545.

not surprising because "an increasing tendency to the familiar" had been characterizing acting style through the first half of the century. Especially, Macready's domestic touches and Charles Mathews's work in toning down comedy and burlesque had anticipated the movement.

Ushered in by Alfred Sidney Wigan, Leigh Murray, and Fanny Stirling, the new natural style came to be known as the Prince of Wales's school. The name originated from the fact that, in 1865, the Bancrofts' company established the principle of reserved force during performances of Tom Robertson's realistic comedy, in the Prince of Wales's Theatre. Actors began to sense the value of exercising reserve in delivering poignant, though suppressed, emotions of refined, respectable Victorian society.

But Tom Robertson died in 1871, only six years after his first realistic plays had been produced by the Bancrofts. At that time, no other British dramatist was able to supply plays which would be well suited to "underplaying, quietness, colorlessness, limpness and dribbling, and reliance merely upon physical mannerisms of observed external types." Therefore, the new natural school began to translate and adapt current French plays. Conveniently, much French drama called for the same acting style which had been engendered in England by the playwright Robertson, for the French theatre had been the source of this new natural mode in delivery.

30 Downer, "Players and Painted Stage," 558 n.

Together with Sir Squire Bancroft and his wife Marie Wilton, such British actors as Charles Kean, Ben Webster, Barry Sullivan, and Mrs. Stirling rejected the native serious plays of Shiel and Knowles and looked to the continent for dramatic material. They also began to copy the French originators of their roles in the use of restraint, elegance, delicacy, and piquancy of by-play. But it had been suggested, even as early as 1861, that such a familiar manner in acting might be carried too far for the good of the theatre. The prediction was to prove true, for such overwhelmingly commonplace dramatic fare could breed only commonplace delivery.32

This natural, familiar mode of delivery developed further in the emotional acting of French-educated Charles Albert Fechter, who had made his debut as an English-speaking actor in London at the Princess's Theatre in 1860. Fechter's potent brand of naturalness reflected his personal nature in various ways: (1) he spoke inadequate and broken English, (2) he employed minutely detailed stage business and exciting physical by-play, and (3) he performed high tragedy in a commonplace manner.

It has been conjectured that Fechter's broken English helped to prepare audiences "for a faithful imitation on the stage of the broken sentences and careless enunciation of the actual world."33 This "foreigner's" inadequate delivery of English, then, probably heralded the approach of stage representation for careless everyday speech.

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33J. Comyns Carr, "English Actors:—Yesterday and To-day," Fortnightly Review, XXXIX (February, 1883), 222.
Pechter's emotional inspiration for delivery and his detailed physical by-play upset traditions in English acting. Even though the public generally endorsed Pechter's novel technique, his delivery often became indistinct and even unintelligible, especially during moments when he let himself be carried away by passion. Moreover, the penetrating critic George Henry Lewes looked with dismay upon Pechter's commonplace treatment of high tragedy.

It is not consistent with the nature of tragedy to obtrude the details of daily life. All that lounging on tables and lolling against chairs, which helped to convey a sense of reality in the drama, are as unnatural in tragedy as it would be to place the 'Sleeping Pawn' of Phidias on a comfortable feather-bed. When Pechter [in the role of Othello] takes out his doorkey to let himself into his house, and, on coming back, relocks the door and pockets the key, the intention is doubtless to give an air of reality; the effect is to make us forget the 'noble Moor,' and to think of a sepoy. . . , and when he employs that favorite gesture which reminds us but too forcibly of a gamin threatening to throw a stone, he is certainly natural—but according to whose nature?34

Fechter spent most of the last ten years of his life in America. During 1870, when he brought Hamlet to Niblo's Garden in New York City, his unique and personal manner elicited such comments as the following:

He was peculiarly intense in everything he did, while in what are called the intense scenes of the tragedy he was often more subdued and natural even than Mr. Davenport, who was remarkably free from emotional acting. His reading, apart from the accentuations and inflections which were natural to him at all times, was peculiar; he hurried through some of the finest passages at a gallop, and lost some of the finest points; but his Hamlet as a whole was impressive and magnetic, the oftener seen the better liked.35


Hechter's successful innovation in art disregarded, perhaps never knew, many of the customary points made by its predecessors. Hechter built his performances upon traits stemming from his own nature. However, as the natural mode tended to become commonplace and overly familiar in delivery, Henry Irving stepped in to temper the excesses of an inbreeding style.

**Compromise Achieved by the Personality of Irving**

Sir Henry Irving represented a compromise with the time's conflicting histrionic techniques. His declamatory-natural mode evinced borrowings from Macready, from the Prince of Wales's school, and from Hechter. Irving "succeeded in making a brilliant personal solution to the conflict of the techniques" and enchanted his audiences. He "sums up in his style all that the Victorian theater had learned about the art of acting. The treatment of high tragedy by the Macready school he modified by character acting in the manner of Hechter and, to a lesser extent, the new English school [of natural delivery]." ³⁷

Foremost in Irving's skill were his sense for the picturesque, his art of bric-a-brac or ability to give significance to small commonplace details, his dynamic personality, and his emphasis upon intelligent

³⁶Edward J. West, "Histrionic Methods and Acting Traditions on the London Stage from 1870 to 1890, Studies in the Conflict of the Old and the New Schools of Acting" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University, 1940), "Digest." Hereinafter the study will be cited as West, Dissertation, followed by appropriate pagination.

interpretation. These assets compensated for his physical awkwardness, a lack in good vocal quality, and "confirmed habits or tricks of accent or pronunciation."  

The critic Henry James, as well as Alfred Ayres himself, disapproved of Irving's vocal ability. Concerning cultured vocal utterance, James concluded that "Mr. Irving's theory eliminates it altogether."

During 1875, James found Irving's manner, in the role of Macbeth, not of a kind to provoke enthusiasm, and I [James] can best describe it by saying that it strikes me as the acting of a very superior amateur. . . . In declamation he is decidedly flat; his voice is without charm, and his utterance without subtlety. . . . with a thick, unmodulated voice, but with a decided sense of the picturesque, [Irving] grappling in a deliberate and conscientious manner with a series of great tragic points.

James maintained that "Irving has several points in common with Edwin Booth, and belongs to the same general type of actor"; although "Edwin Booth comes nearer being a man of genius," the critic found "Irving more comfortable to see."

It must be remembered, of course, that "Henry James, newly arrived from Paris, finding the English theatre inferior, analyzed it by rigorous continental standards and prescribed training schools for actors." He believed that "the basis, the prime condition, of acting is the art of finished and beautiful utterance -- the art of speaking, of saying, of

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Even though Irving's use of natural effects led to critics' calling his delivery "an adulterate vestige" of the old grand and lofty declamatory style, he stood in compromise with the conflicting histrionic techniques of the time. On the whole, Henry Irving displayed a naturalness in exploiting commonplace details and a fire in poetic interpretation that momentarily helped to keep alive the majestic creations of Shakespeare. Drama of such caliber demanded some calculated technique. In satisfying this need, Irving held in check the limitations of the new natural mode, which threatened extinction for great actors as well as for great drama.

*Art's Creative Histrion Supplanted by Playwright's Puppet*

Although the new natural delivery of the Bancrofts had been kept within bounds by Irving, the increasing popularity of realistic plays eventually succeeded in gaining decided support for this vocal style. The result was that the spotlight shifted from the creative actor to the playwright. Since these plays required only familiar, even commonplace delivery, there was little need for the neo-classical actor with his elocutionary technique and artistic interpretative ability.

True, in such natural performers as the Bancrofts, the W. H. Kendals, John Hare, John Clayton, and Arthur Cecil, as well as in Irving,
for a while the actor was to remain dominant as a potent creative force. Soon, however, playwrights were directing theatre activities, and actors became merely their slaves and puppets.

The realistic playwright Tom W. Robertson had declared, "I don't want actors. I want people that will do just what I tell them." The new dramatist complimented his new actor for denying the value of training in traditional repertory and, in effect, for thereby limiting this actor's ability only to mouthing the commonplace realism which this dramatist was providing. Perhaps the dramatist's interest was a selfish one, for he could not control the old-school actor, "and if the actor runs away with a speech, a scene, or a play, who cares who wrote the speech, the scene, the play?" Notwithstanding, both craftsmen "were in danger of committing artistic suicide."^46

The new-school actor, in his pronounced efforts to conceal acting as acting and delivery as delivery, soon became unqualified to cope with classic and standard drama. Having lost command over the elements of theatrical technique, he willingly became a slave to new-school playwrights, for they provided him with novelty of plot, the audience appeal in social

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46 West, "From a Player's to a Playwright's Theatre," 435–436.
problems, or the brilliant wit inherent in the dialogue of Oscar Wilde and
of G. Bernard Shaw. The few actors remaining from the declamatory school
were either deserting the stage or about to retire. Thus the gifted in-
dividual actor gave way to ensemble playing.

The Bancrofts failed in their efforts to apply Robertsonian methods
to interpret plays of Shakespeare and of Sheridan. These dramas, de-
signed for the actor as artist, were performed less and less frequently.
With the disappearance of these test pieces, audiences eventually forgot
traditional technique and became incapable of judging the histrionic skill
of a specific actor. Instead, because audiences liked the novelty in see-
ing and hearing everyday problems produced on the stage, they were attract-
ed to realistic plays performed in a natural manner. Playwrights
quickly capitalized on this appeal and often used their plays as an in-
strument of propaganda.

Then too, the professional critic's interest shifted away from an
actor's vocal technique to focus upon a playwright's commonplace delinea-
tions of the currently familiar. Criticism of acting began to look to
the stage business, make-up, and costuming of the performers, as "the
greater personalities of the older school disappeared from the London
stage toward the end of the seventies." Thus dramatists, actors,
audiences, and critics allied themselves with the new natural mode in
acting and delivery.

Although the new player lost histrionic stature, society began to
admit him to distinguished gatherings, for he forsook his predecessors'
erratic, vociferous individualism in public and cultivated mild-mannered

\[47\text{Ibid.}, 432.\]
social graces. Both on stage and off, the actor became a gentleman con-
versing with his friends. Perhaps, for the acting profession as a whole,
his drawing-room quietness reflected the crushed spirit of a once skilled
solo artist now reduced to the servitude of an efficient teamworker. This
new performer was expected to reproduce naturally, on the stage, contem-
porary life amid familiar surroundings. In order that this actor might
study his models from a close vantage point, the society welcomed him as
an active participant.

It is significant, however, that the better actors of the new
natural school in delivery had been allied in some way with the strength
of the old declamatory school of tradition. Some of these players,
including the W. H. "Kendals, Modjeska, Barrymore, Coghlan, Willard[,]"48
forsook the English for the American stage.

Summary

For a better understanding of the influences which reached across
the Atlantic, to help shape American practice in the theatre of Ayres's
time, the current chapter has examined a series of successive developments
in British stage delivery. The survey revealed an alternating pattern in
style, with emphasis first on the declamatory and then on the natural,
but with an over-all spiraling effect, especially from the time of Kean,
moving in the direction of the natural extreme.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, all extant types
of drama were making use of natural delivery in production. This policy,
which often went on to employ domestic and even familiar touches of nature,

resulted in a different level of effectiveness and of financial success for each dramatic form. Not till a purer breed of so-termed naturalism developed later, almost exclusively within its own dramatic scripts, would such colloquialism be surpassed in the speech of the theatre.

During all these stylistic comings and goings, the theatre in the United States of America did more than act as a receptacle for modes of delivery which, in one way or another, brought influence to bear upon American actors. Although hampered at times, especially by the influx of so-called stars on the termination of the London theatrical monopoly in 1843, the American theatre selected and rejected elements contributed from abroad and developed its own cyclic progression in acting style and vocal technique.
CHAPTER III

DOMESTIC BACKGROUND FOR THE PERIOD

Turning from the transatlantic background for the period in which Ayres lived, attention now focuses upon developments in acting and stage delivery which more directly relate to the American scene. As has been indicated in the previous chapter, a foundation for developments in American delivery was laid by influences operating from abroad. This chapter, then, deals with domestic factors which helped to shape late nineteenth-century acting style and vocal delivery in the American theatre.

The Star System for Better but Then for Worse

The manner of the starring artist could have been observed in such performers as John Philip Kemble and Edmund Kean, already mentioned, and in Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, the first great actor associated with the new nation. Cooper dominated the American theatre in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. During this period, the star system was noted for the benefits it afforded the American theatre by bringing leading performers to the general public. Then too, Cooper's practice exemplified other advantages of the star system, especially where it was well integrated with the playing of a resident stock company.

His starring was so regular, so dependable, and so long continued, that it was reduced to all the advantages of stock acting. . . .
His relation with all [local stock companies] was a perfect illustration of the extent to which starring is not only allowable, but absolutely beneficial and almost indispensable, by enriching the season with variety.\(^1\)

During the eighteen-thirties the star system hit its stride in America; even hinterlands witnessed performances by leading actors.\(^2\) This system eventually encompassed the traveling road company. In turn, the latter development led to a similar but more integrated playing together, even in New York City, by the members of a so-called combination company, which was formed only for the run of a given production.

The regular appearance of the traveling star with road and with combination companies deprived stock company training of its practical function. For the star no longer needed the support of local stock companies to fill out his cast. The novice with acting aspirations had to look elsewhere, unfortunately, for instruction and for initial experience. By that time, however, the star system had begun to give off other signals of developing weakness.

Around the year 1843, a pernicious influence had developed from the breakup of the London theatrical monopoly. For this event had resulted in hordes of so-called stars\(^1\) having been heaped upon American stages. Although these foreign adventurers were always billed as stars, they were often less competent in histrionic skill than local stock company members.

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But because of their claim to star casting, these British actors "took away in one night twice as much as they [local stock company actors] could earn as their whole weekly wages." Consequently, many home-grown players, encouraged to vie for a comparable salary, hurriedly aspired to stardom and did gain top billing.

As a result, then, generally competent stock actors, who until then had been satisfied in their former positions, stopped supporting others and sought immediate billing as stars. Potential actors forewent beneficial stock company training, commonly imitated the manner of some already established performer, and made their debuts in roles of leading characters. Therefore, "all the minor parts are given of necessity to performers wholly incapable and totally uneducated, who think, of course, if they think at all, that stage direction, manner, deportment, dressing, and even the first rules of grammar concern no one but the [leading] performer."

Formerly, the American standard of stage pronunciation and of delivery in general had rivalled, if not exceeded, in excellence that of the over-all cast in a British production. Now vocal delivery was destined to experience decline in the garbled English of histrionic scarecrows as they stood in awkward support. The result was a general inability to handle higher drama which, of course, demanded an advanced level of vocal prowess.

In addition, around mid-century, other weaknesses within the star system were becoming obvious. The theatrical manager William B. Wood had noted early the inadequate form which so-called rehearsals took under a regime dominated by the whims of the visiting star. For example, "one
star is very tall, and will play with no person of diminutive stature. The company must be changed to suit him. . . . One star brings half a company with him, and the stock actors thus displaced, retire in dis­appointment."

Also it became common for the star not to arrive until the very afternoon of the first performance. Even if a rehearsal should be scheduled at that time, his part was usually read by someone else. The star often sat at the manager's table, writing letters or talking with a friend. Seldom did he interrupt the proceedings, unless he detected that his own plans for stage business or vocal pyrotechnics were being interfered with.

Moreover, in supporting a star, local stock company actors could not be expected to maintain consistently any high level in delivery. For not infrequently one or more from their number had

to learn from three to five hundred lines (sometimes much more) within twenty-four hours, during which he must also appear in the play for the evening. . . . Time, therefore, is not . . . given even to learn so much as the language of the author. Even where the words were caught for the hour, yet being learned in haste, confusion and anxiety, with no reference at all to its meaning or effect, the memory cannot retain them, and an effort nearly equal to the former is required every time the piece is performed. It is a fact well known to me [Wood], that during the reign of the star system many pieces which in London occupied the study and labor of the best and most practised actors for weeks, have been produced here after a study of as many days, and sometimes of no more than as many hours.

Even though one actor would have been better able to handle a given role if he had only the time needed to perfect his conception, the part usually went to another who was often less capable but who had the power to memorize an excessive number of words quickly.

Due to these weaknesses, the star system tended "to destroy the effect of the whole representation, and so to destroy the drama
The chief purpose of this playing had been to provide the star with the necessary milieu in which to exhibit himself as a solo virtuoso performer. The Shakespearian scholar Richard Grant White warned of the danger imminent in a typical star of 1869, who continued to serve as the focal point around which all other theatrical elements were compelled to move. He chastised the star system for becoming "that grand step downward of the theatre, carried out to its absurd but legitimate conclusion, by which to all intents and purposes the drama becomes a monologue; and thus, having run its course, ends where it began two thousand five hundred years ago."

White regarded "the fact that an actor can go on playing one part for years to thronged houses, as evidence, strong and unequivocal, of the decadence of the drama." Such a lack in versatility reflected another weakness in the star system. The school of versatility in acting had been introduced in America around the year 1817, by James William Wallack, and had such notable followers as James E. Murdoch and Edwin Booth. Its progress was impeded, eventually, by the nature of the star system, which "is at variance with general acting. It must be the great tragedian or the great comedian, and which ever line they adopt they confine themselves to a few characters in it. The result is, that there is a want of that constant though regulated variety in the performances which every manager knows is necessary to sustain the public interest."

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3Quoted by Nagler, op. cit., pp. 550-556.

Hopefully though, by its very excesses the star system seemed to be in the process of destroying itself, as well as of prostrating the drama employed, "and so been working a revival of the drama."\(^5\) Audiences, nonetheless, were being discouraged from patronizing traditional repertory where the nature of the dramatist's diction required a greater vocal skill than was available.

Consequently, a theatre catering to the eye rather than to the intellect was established. This type of theatre not only satisfied popular taste but also proved a welcome relief from many painful attacks, which had been made upon cultured sensitivity, by the frenzied efforts of lesser histrionic ability. It follows, then, that the age witnessed a general tendency away from the formerly traditional pattern toward a seeming extinction of drama as intellectual entertainment.

**Tenor of Thought**

Acting style and vocal technique, during a certain time, tend to mirror the spirit of the age in which they develop. Consideration, therefore, should be given to the tenor of American thought during the period. Significantly, in practice, the United States lagged behind "William Dean Howells and the Realism of the Commonplace." Although America professed a realistic approach after the manner of Henry James, like him also it truly yearned for the romantic. These conflicting values come to the fore "in the eighties [when] realism begins to excite interest and the

\(^5\)Quoted by Nagler, *op. cit.*, pp. 559 and 557.
movement gets under way, though the American taste is still romantic.  

Such romanticism, however, generally avoided Henry James's nostalgia for culture; rather, it continued to seek solace in melodramatic spectacles and eye-arresting novelties. To the detriment of artful vocal interpretation, attention centered upon patterns of gesture and movement, upon handling stage business.

Writing in America during August of 1869, White was telling his readers that a leading British literary periodical, namely, the "Saturday Review," with mockery in its tones and a sardonic smile upon its lips, is the type of the critical temper of the present day. Nothing is so sure to provoke the shafts of that pitiless paper as high-strung speech or writing, except, perhaps, the exhibition of any emotion. . . . When we are threatened with a flood of feeling we take the tone and the language of the antediluvian, and declare that there is not going to be much of a shower.

White continued to declare that his views were "sustained by other observers of the temper of the times." Three months after the publication of the passage cited above, however, White admitted that his beliefs were "a little in advance of general opinion here" but "were, in fact, behind those of one writer in England." In addition, White analyzed the treatment of emotion in such contemporary novels as Mr. Shirley Brooks's *Sooner or Later*. He concluded "that we now do not seem to be equal to a grand scene of passion, because our nervous system will not bear the strain, and that we cower under a tempest of feeling, and seek refuge in

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scorn and ridicule."

The New York Tribune agreed by observing that "Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth are metamorphosed into mountebanks." The buffoon George L. Fox, for example, played Hamlet in the style of Edwin Booth up to the point where the Ghost says "Swear!" Then Fox's loud "Damn!" sounded the keynote for the remainder of the performance. Another explanation for the popularity of such ridicule also refers to the tenor of thought.

What sent tragedy into retirement was the total change in the thought of the people. . . . Because the classic tragedy was so linked with pessimism and defeat, it was utterly rejected by the modern theatre, which was reflecting the modern thought of serene hope and complete faith in man's ultimate perfection.

The theatre, as "a mirror, accurately reflecting the popular thought," sought profitable production by adapting to the following attitudes: the general public's "decline of sympathy with the violent expression of emotion . . . . [and] The faint dislike for tragedy which is so decided an intellectual feature of our time." In this serious drama from classic and standard repertory, of course, many opportunities reside for the expression of poignant emotion through vocal techniques associated with

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8"The Play of the Period," 687-688.


great acting. But the current era distrusted the former period's way with
drama and hurled the anathema "vocal pyrotechnics."

For appreciation, this older style of delivery found it necessary
to look to members of the audience who were less educated in the critical,
self-conscious sophistication of the age. On them the skilled tragedian
could still work his magic, "as on imaginative children." By contrast,
the stalls and the boxes, even while applauding, watch his face critically,
with something of contempt, not for him, but for all that tempest of
emotion.**11

The thoroughness with which society had trained itself to suppress
a display of sincere emotion soon led to a general distrust for attaching
any value, whatsoever, to a serious consideration of these emotions. The
age became "too intolerant of displays of emotion in others, too much
ashamed of them ourselves, to permit us to enjoy serious drama, not to
say tragedy, heartily."**12 This sophistication, then, gave signs of
becoming amused only by entertainment which demanded no great intellectual
effort to understand and no great vocal prowess to communicate.

To generalize, toning down and suppression, commonly associated
with Queen Victoria's era, influenced American thought. Even further, by
1869, the United States had begun to witness reactions against this
Victorian calm in *The Black Crook* extravaganza and in a successful in-
vasion by Lydia Thompson and her troupe of English blondes.

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11White, "The Play of the Period," 688, quoting "Audiences, Old and

12White, "The Play of the Period," 687.
During the early part of the nineteenth century, the general public had adhered to certain puritanic prejudices concerning what would be proper in the theatre. As early as 1814, John Philip Kemble had revised Hamlet and suppressed its objectionable language. He felt obligated to cut several lines mentioning incest, all of the exchange between Hamlet and Ophelia before the Play Scene, and righteously changed all the "Gods" to "Heavens."

[Edwin] Booth followed Kemble in the main, although he restored the Prayer Scene, a good portion of Act IV and some of the "Gods." Also, shortly before Edwin Forrest's debut in America during the eighteen-twenties, certain British clergymen had been levying strict censure against the theatre. John Styles, D. D., for example, could have been heard quoting from Dr. Witherspoon's Letter respecting Play Actors:

"Another collateral argument of some importance against the Stage may be drawn from the general character of PLAYERS. The sentiments of mankind have ever consigned this wretched class of beings to infamy. . . . It is impossible to entertain respect for a player; and there is not a family of any consideration in Britain, which would not count it an indelible disgrace, if any of its members were to embrace this dishonourable profession."

The American theatre, though, was beginning to throw off the yoke of ill repute, which the public mind had lowered into place when the dignity of the Greek actor was reduced to slave status in ancient Rome.

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During the last half of the nineteenth century, however, a reaction against Victorian strictness took place in the theatre. A desire to view the pleasant and the familiar on stage, rather than to be preached to, drove the general public to burlesque and to realistic performances. This change in public opinion, along with the already discussed weaknesses in the star system, caused a decline in production of the higher drama as well as a decline in actors' vocal ability.

Henry James was "struck with the high—the oppressively high—moral tone of dramas replete with aesthetic depravity." A late nineteenth-century American periodical inadvertently summed up the theatre's answer to Victorian limitations: "The majority of modern theater plays consist almost solely of gorgeous scenery, splendid equipage, and almost innumerable immodest, indecently exposed females, and, of course, are an assured pecuniary success."

The current age had rejected classic tragedy: its blood-letting and pessimistic content, together with its poignantly emotional saturation. An audience was thereby denied satisfying emotional experiences in such theatrical decorum and was compelled to seek elsewhere. The mocking spirit of a so-called new burlesque suited well the emotion-shy critical temper of the time. This innovation also gained favor by delighting the eye, soothing the ear, and titillating a spectator's sense of the daring.


To the theatre historian George C. D. Odell, the ten years from 1869 to 1879 appear "almost the very palmiest days of the drama in New York."\(^{17}\) Significantly, "the public evidently likes playgoing, and is willing to pay for it—to pay a good deal, and to pay often. . . . The public at large is very ignorant and very good-natured, and anything is possible."\(^{18}\)

A contemporary theatrical manager Sol Smith summed up the period initiating the last three decades of the century in the following manner:

In latter years the legitimate drama seems to have been nearly crushed out by what may be termed Black Crookery and White Fawnery, consisting of red and blue fires, a fine collection of French legs, calcium lights, and grand-transformation scenes. . . . Where are the theatres? They seem to have nearly all vanished, and in their places we have "Academies of Music," "Olympics," "Varieties," "Gaieties \[^{sic}\]," "Athenaeums," and "Opera Houses." The name of theatre — plain theatre — has been discarded by managers, except in a few instances. Such an organization as a regular company, engaged for a full year, is now scarcely known in New York City . . . . Actors and actresses are engaged by the job, or during the run of a piece. . . . Two of our best tragedians are obliged to make up strolling companies and roam through the rural districts, in hopes of finding some lovers of the good old drama in villages which have not yet had the love of Shakespeare fumigated out of them by red fire and blue biases. Occasionally we see a company organized "for one night only" to play in Brooklyn, Newark, Paterson, or Williamsburgh \[^{sic}\].\(^{19}\)

Moreover, by the year 1869, much of the general public approval which had been gained for American theatre was reported in danger of being destroyed. This aftermath had been set in motion by the Black Crook musical extravaganza, of 1866-1868, and by Lydia Thompson's troupe of English blondes in the New York of 1868.


\(^{19}\) Quoted by Eaton, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.
Olive Logan, herself a former actress from a theatrical family, could have been heard speaking at a Woman Suffrage Convention, in New York’s Steinway Hall, during May of 1869. Her general target: "What the Tribune calls the Dirty Drama, the World the Nude Drama, the Times the Leg Drama, and other journals various other expressive adjective styles of drama, I [Logan] call the Leg Business, simply." Her specific target: "the set of brazen-faced, clog-dancing creatures, with dyed yellow hair and padded limbs, who have come here in droves from across the ocean."

Perhaps significantly, during this very year, Logan’s books Women and Theatres and voluminous Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes were being made ready for publication. The lady also attracted attention to herself by writing a letter to the New York Times. There she cited her idea of the type of questioning which typical theatrical managers posed to prospective actresses in search of employment.

1. "Is your hair dyed yellow?"
2. "Are your legs, arms and bosom symmetrically formed, and are you willing to expose them?"
3. "Can you sing brassy songs, and dance the can-can, and wink at men, and give utterance to disgusting half words, which mean whole actions?"
4. "Are you acquainted with any rich men who will throw you flowers, and send you presents, and keep afloat dubious rumors concerning your chastity?"
5. "Are you willing to appear to-night, and every night, amid the glare of gas-lights, and before the gaze of thousands of men, in this pair of satin breeches, ten inches long, without a vestige of drapery upon your person?"
"If you can answer these questions affirmatively we will give you a situation; if not, there’s the door."

It may be assumed that such carryings-on related to a branch of show business other than the legitimate drama, for example, performances of Model Artists. "Such exhibitions . . . are now made on the stage of many
leading theatres however; "the rage for nudity has intruded in some shape upon the stage of every theatre in this city [New York], except one."

Logan then proceeded to list New York's once legitimate theatres. She hastened to observe that whereas two are now closed, "it is rumored that one of them is to be opened for the use of a newly organized troupe of nude women." As has been stated, only one, Booth's Theatre which had been in business only a few months, can claim that it has always been free from any symptom of this licentious fever.

"Four weeks from this time," says the New York Review of May 15, [1869] "there will be only two theatres in New York that will offer dramatic works. The rest will be show shops, having as little to do with dramatic art as so many corner groceries."

Logan became incensed by the insolence of Cora Pearl, Vestvali, Adah Isaacs Menken of Mephe fame, Lydia Thompson, Pauline Markham, and their like, in invading the stage.

Her ire increased when she considered that an honest, modest, legitimate actress must be begging in vain for employment.

She sought employment, as a respectable actress, at fifteen or twenty dollars a week. She would have refused five hundred dollars a week salary to do what the Nude Woman does.

If the above instance does not indicate managerial requirements sufficiently, take these statements from managerial lips:

"Devil take your legitimate drama! I tell you, if I can't draw the crowd otherwise, I'll put a woman on my stage without a rag on her."

A proprietor of one of the theatres above named, where a legitimate play was running without paying expenses, rubbed his dry old hands together and said --

"Aha! we must have some of those fat young women in this piece
to make it draw.\textsuperscript{20}

True, Logan's verbal blows are calculated, even loaded, for effect. Some indication of a decline in dramatic products, nevertheless, resides in her remarks concerning the contemporary stage.

Writing in the twentieth century, Eaton agrees with the conclusion that by 1869 "the blonde burlesque had captured it [the New York stage], and completed the breach made by The Black Crook and the Mazeppas. Lydia Thompson and her troupe invaded New York in 1868, and after that--the Deluge." Eaton, also, draws upon statements made by Logan, this time apparently in her book \textit{Women and Theatres}, to reveal that entertainers in the leg business

made more money than any other class of performers; more money than the poetic Edwin Booth; infinitely more than the intellectual E. L. Davenport. . .

\ldots . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

When the part they portray calls for the speaking of words, we lift our hands in blank astonishment that any creature with audacity enough to assume such a position can have so little ability to fill it.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{21}Quoted by Eaton, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 276, 273-274, and 276.
Not all critics, however, were in whole-hearted concurrence with Olive Logan's views. Some challenged her unrelenting negative appraisal for current theatrical exploitation of feminine charms. Granted, in such an evaluation, the male view may be guided by vested interests. Accordingly, more than a half century later, a then much more degraded brand of burlesque was destined to elicit favorable criticism from George Jean Nathan.

Specific reactions to the vocal delivery of burlesque entertainers are more germane to this investigation. Logan's harangue against their common inability to speak well, cited by Eaton at the close of the last section, requires qualification. It is possible to adjudge Logan as somewhat out of joint with the time. For contemporary audiences began to register pleasure when they saw that the value which they had been placing upon natural delivery was enhanced in the vocalizations of at least certain burlesque performers.

In this connection, although the previously mentioned scholar White agreed in the main concerning the low level of an average burlesque, his opinion changed with the advent of Lydia Thompson and Pauline Markham. White endorsed the naturally beautiful manner which their speaking of words took. On viewing Lydia Thompson for the first time, White "had expected to find a coarse, Anglo-Saxon exaggeration of Mile. Tostée." Instead, he "found one of the most charming comic actresses it had been [his] good fortune to see. . . . It was as if Venus, in her quality of the goddess of laughter, had come upon the stage."
Seemingly, White was not greatly influenced in his judgment by the revealing fact that also Thompson’s costume approached that of Venus in nature (a scenic “appointment” which he felt could result in no harm to the cross-section-of-life audience present). White’s favorable reaction pivoted upon one striking excellence in this [Sinbad the Sailor] company of actresses—the beautiful manner in which they speak English. It is noticeable in all, but particularly in two, one of whom is Miss Thompson herself; the other is the second lady of the company, Miss Pauline Markham, she who has found the long lost arms of the “Venus of Milo,” and whose speech is vocal velvet. It is with a recollection of all the public elocution and private conversation that ever impressed me, that I say that Miss Markham, whose voice and style are not of the heroic or high-tragedy order, speaks the most beautiful colloquial English that I ever heard.

Pauline Markham’s speech, “so lovely in manner and in tone,” also graced the role of Maria in a short-lived revival of The School for Scandal.

Granting that these entertainers “utter the puns and doggerel of their parts, which are almost as significant and as silly as the words of Italian opera,” White accepted their efforts for the fun they professed to instil. He believed that even “the ladies of our most cultivated society,” addicted as they were to the insanities of comic opera, would continue to enjoy listening to Thompson, Markham, and their companies.

A topic for conjecture, however, concerns how much the inflation of White’s ego, on detecting apparent use of his own material in such burlesques, led him toward accepting the over-all pattern of delivery.

How thoroughly she [Thompson] seems to enjoy that queer word “thunk,” which the author has given her for thought! I [White] must confess, with proper contrition, that I liked her performance in this part [in Sinbad the Sailor] better than much high tragedy that I have seen — better for instance, than Mr. Forrest in Hamlet. As to thunk, I venture to say that her author probably took that word from a passage in an article on “Words and their
Uses," where I used it some months ago, whimsically, of course.\textsuperscript{22} The passage also reveals that even the once great Edwin Forrest, at least in such possibly unsuitable roles as the introspective Hamlet, was being forced to take a lesser place.

The craze of the time for a more natural delivery found realization in the activities of "gayety\textsuperscript{23}" girls. Moreover, the advent of a new burlesque, where Venus gained a naturally dulcet voice as well as shapely limbs, helped to encourage a radical turning away from the formerly traditional pattern associated with the American theatre.

**Burlesque versus the Traditional Pattern**

The eye-catching and dulcet-toned antics of a new burlesque stood in opposition to the intellectual and cultural appeal of the higher drama. Even if one disregards the later distraction of padded feminine charms, the mocking nature of these burlesques began early to undermine audiences' faith in histrionic illusions. Burlesque ridiculed older dramatic themes, as well as old-school methods of vocal and bodily interpretation and of scenic investiture.

To suit its purpose of playing up incongruity, burlesque selected a seemingly undesirable facet from the traditional pattern of presentation. It then proceeded to transplant this element, often into a different context or mode of treatment, and to exaggerate its now

\textsuperscript{22}"The Age of Burlesque," 260, 261, and 260-261. Italics are not in the original.

\textsuperscript{23}White, "The Play of the Period," 684.
apparent malfunction. The temper of the time made travesty the order of the day and enhanced and extended the influence of this procedure in burlesque.

The greater the success of such caricature, the greater was the probability that the entire pattern, of which the ridiculed element had been only a part, would be laughed from the boards on its next serious bid for audience approval. This situation encouraged any serious production to play down heroic gestures in favor of what the public had been led to believe were more natural touches and to look to representation of the acceptably commonplace and the pleasantly familiar.

But when burlesque was compared with a then typical modern drama, such as Dion Boucicault's *Formosa; or, the Railroad to Ruin*:

> Burlesque is better than this. . . . We are not called upon to believe, or to make believe, that burlesque means anything. Its only end is entertainment, careless gayety of heart—which the world, and [war-torn] America chiefly of all the world, is now so much in need of.

At that very time, White criticized the current theatre more for inanity than for obscenity and indecency. "The dancing is the most vulnerable part of these burlesque performances, and is worthy of condemnation even more for its silliness than its indecorum."

Significantly, the manner of burlesque performers in delivery spread in influence throughout the theatre, Garff B. Wilson has concluded:

> The kind of entertainment offered by the popular theatre, and the

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25 *The Age of Burlesque,* 261.
audience which patronized it, combined to produce acting which was (a) Direct in its appeal, (b) Informal and "folksy" in manner, (c) Instantly intelligible to the ear and entertaining to the eye, (d) Rapid in its pace, and (e) Flexible enough to permit spontaneity and improvisation. This style of playing . . . contributed to the decline of the Murdoch-Booth school of acting. It influenced all legitimate playing toward a greater informality, a heightened naturalness, and a faster tempo.  

Incidentally, Eaton attributes the success of burlesque to "those waves of lubricity which seem more or less periodically to break over our Anglo-Saxon play-house." He further explains:  

The evil may not have been wholly devoid of good, however. Possibly such occurrences in the theatre answer for us the purpose of that orgy which the late William James recommended as an occasional corrective for too much Chautauqua.  

In this connection, it may be noted that "many of the educated patrons of the theatre were spending their time at lectures and Lyceum programs." No doubt this particular citation, by Wilson, was meant to be in line with his contention that, at least earlier, "the public's fondness for the oratory of Clay, Calhoun, and Webster added to the interest in the poetry and rhetoric of classical drama." Later, however, this interrelationship diminished when theatre began to function primarily as psychological relief from life's social and mental problems, serving its addicts liberal doses of fun and relaxation.

With the decline in vocally effective production of the higher

26 Dissertation, p. 27. See Wilson's chap. iv, pp. 113-143. Under his discussion of "The 'Popular' Theatre," Wilson includes the divisions: vaudeville, minstrelsy, the circus, and comics, as well as burlesque.

27 op. cit., p. 280.

drama, potential theatre patrons in search of intellectual stimulation often hied themselves elsewhere. They attended Lyceum and Chautauqua meetings and later the illustrated travelogues which were available especially during the Lenten season, when regular theatrical fare did little business. Thus it came to pass that, even for the audience whom Chautauqua and theatre shared in common, intellectual stimulation and theatrical entertainment severed their unified power of attaining dramatic effect.

**Threatened Extinction of Drama as Intellectual Entertainment**

As the general public attended plays from classic and standard repertory less and less frequently, the financial interests of theatrical managers did not long hesitate to provide the public with what it would pay to see or with what was calculated to rejuvenate a lagging interest in theatre. In order to replenish the coffers of this seemingly dwindling institution, one dynamic appeal was channeled through the attraction of feminine epidermal display.

The theatre also sought an answer for its attendance problem through capitalizing upon the spectator's apparent comfort and pleasure in viewing the familiar on stage. Calling especially on the crafts of the stage carpenter and machinist to help spectacularize and melodramatize such representation of the commonplace, the new theatre resolved its own difficulties while catering to the romantic-realistic conflict which was at work within its clientele.

During the Civil War years, the North, enriched by activity in
manufacturing, had given birth to an influential profiteer class. The latter's tastes demanded entertainment of a somewhat different nature from that formerly endorsed by the theatre-going society. As a result, frequently the eye rather than the ear was appealed to, as knowing "dramatic authors . . . seldom introduce[-d] poetic speeches or philosophical discussions into their works."

Around the year 1870, the actor Joseph Jefferson noted "a growing disinclination on the part of the general public to listen to dialogue unless it revealed the plot of the play or abounded in easily understood wit." Commenting in a similar vein, White passed the following judgment:

> The public, even the cultivated public, in all countries, prefers that kind of theatrical entertainment at which it is not required to think. It asks, not diversion, a turning of the mind from one object to another, but the pleasure of the senses while the mind lies dormant. It seeks only to be amused. Of this mood, burlesque or "spectacular extravaganza" is the natural and inevitable product.

In fact, even earlier, the French actress "Rachel [had] discovered that tragedy, the cold, magisterial, classic drama, was not to the taste of Americans in the middle of the nineteenth century. [Notwithstanding,] People paid large sums to see her play it and were politely bored, while the press showered praises upon her." White enumerated the tenets upheld in current theatrical practice:

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30 "The Age of Burlesque," 266. Italics are in the original.

realistic representation of everyday life in costume, scenery, language and manner, on the one hand, and on the other, the production on the eye or the mind of a sudden, strong sensation. The latter is necessary as a relief to the former; or rather it is like the strong compensating color. . . . The great playwrights dramatized the chronicles of the ages past; the playwrights of today dramatize that chronicle of the day, the newspaper.

The year 1869 believed that "the spectacle must be of something that is of our own period. We like to see our own parlors and kitchens put upon the stage, and will go a mile or two and pay money to see that which we can see better and for nothing, dry-shod at home." This attitude, however, was not to prevail unchallenged.

By the year 1875, only the Fifth Avenue Theatre "gives us our fellow-citizens in their habits as they live." That is to say, at least in New York City, the audience-appeal of the exotic supplanted that of the mirrored representation of "nature as it [the public] knows nature."

In addition to the favorable introduction in America of Boucicault's reflection of Irish nature, "the French and English images indeed are multiplied, and an Italian image, we perceive, looms above the horizon. The images may be true to an original or not; the public doesn't care. It has gone to look and listen, to laugh and cry—not to think."

America could lay little claim to the actors who, ignoring the new order, continued to deliver high tragedy effectively. The model for success in this approach had been the work of such foreign artists as Ristori and Rachel, "but not in Great Britain or the United States; and

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32 "The Play of the Period," 680 and 685. Italics are not in the original.

33 Henry James, quoted by Wade, op. cit., pp. 25, 22, and 23.
even on the continent of Europe they would fail to attain the success
they had if they were to begin their careers now." Believing Rachel
"to have been the greatest actress the world ever saw," White queried:
"Will the world see another Rachel? I think not. Nature is not ex-
hausted; but her riches are taken from her bosom only when they supply a
need; and the need of great actors, or even of acting of a high grade,
seems to be no longer felt."  

The age was usually satisfied with, say, Boucicault's

skill and shrewdness in knocking together effective situations
and spinning lively dialogue . . . . Mr. Boucicault [acting in
The Shaugrann] smiles too much, we think . . . ; but these exag-
gerations perhaps only deepen the charm of his rendering; for
it was his happy thought to devise a figure which should absolutely,
consummately, and irresistibly please. It has pleased mightily.
. . . all this goes on to the tune of the finest feelings possible.
Love, devotion, self-sacrifice, humble but heroic bravery, and
brimming Irish bonhomie and irony, are the chords that are touched.  

When the public of 1869 bothered to listen "to the play—what the people
do and say in the scenes," they were "not exacting, except on one point:
It must not express too much thought or feeling, and it had better not
be too witty."  

Even on considering the appeal of the time's most popular actor,

White had this to say concerning

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34 White, "The Play of the Period," 680.
35 The Age of Burlesque," 266.
37 White, "The Play of the Period," 685.
the secret of Mr. [Edwin] Booth's success. He produced splendid spectacles, and great pictorial stage combinations. Mr. Booth, a good Hamlet, is a poor Romeo; but if he and Miss McVickar had been able to play the Veronese lovers as they have not been played since Shakespeare's day, the drama could have produced no effect while the actors were reeling through such an orgie [sic] of silks and scenery. And the audiences of our day are more than content to take silk and scenery, as a substitute for acting, at least in tragedy.38

Writing earlier during the same year, 1869, Lucia Gilbert Calhoun observed that "in ten years Edwin Booth has done more for the stage in America than any other man. . . . An old tendency to attitudinize has almost disappeared. . . . Year by year he reads with finer apprehension and with simpler naturalness." Nonetheless, Calhoun could not refrain from hoping that in Booth's new theatre, he will but give us Shakespeare with an intelligent actor in every part . . . , surely, it is not to demand too much of Mr. Booth to insist that the gentleman who plays Richmond shall speak the English language . . . or that Ophelia should be told . . . that she is not a singing chambermaid.

By the way, perhaps a vivid illustration of the year 1869's little regard for "breaking through a sound barrier" can be observed in Calhoun's entreaty: "Will not ladies . . . abandon the ugly little frights called evening bonnets? . . . a bonnet that hurts her ears, and hinders sound, and impedes the view of those behind her."39 Fashion designers at that time were not the only ones who did not care much whether sounds from a stage established meaningful communication with an audience; members of

38"The Age of Burlesque," 258.

the audience eagerly became slaves to this particular fashion.

Eaton informs that during 1869, "in spite of Miss Logan's gloom, New Yorkers had the opportunity that year to see Jefferson play Rip Van Winkle. John E. Owens play Solomon Shingle, Maggie Mitchell play Panchon ... Miss [Kate Josephine] Bateman play Leah, and Lester Wallack's company revive The School for Scandal. Finally, on both sides of the water, Boucicault's Formosa ... was being hailed with delight."\(^{40}\)

But White likened Formosa to a burlesque spectacular extravaganza. ... Such is the humor in which people now go to the theatre, that if [the character] Tom Burroughs were at any period of the play, even the most serious, to climb a greased pole or go flying into the air on a broom-stick, or sing "Villikins and his Dinah," they would applaud, and, if possible, obtain a repetition of the feat. The dialogue of "Formosa" rarely makes even a slight impression upon the delighted audience, and is so absolutely void of thought or even of significance, that it is difficult to remember in one scene what was said in its predecessor.

Also in this connection, White lamented that those parts of the play [Rip Van Winkle] that best please his [Joseph Jefferson's] audiences are his tipsy scenes and the dénouement -- the very passages in which Irving's conception is degraded; and when the actor represents Rip as waking ... [and] the white-haired, white-bearded face turns upon you with an expression worthy of the grief of half-crazed Lear, the people laugh.\(^{41}\)

On the other hand, mounting The School for Scandal from standard repertory resulted in a production whose life-span did not exceed two weeks. After the novelty appeal of the opening night, the size of its audience began diminishing appreciably. However, such was not the fate of the melodrama Formosa: or, the Railroad to Ruin, with its spectacular


\(^{41}\)"The Play of the Period," 681, 682, and 687.
boat-race scene. Boucicault's earlier sensational spectacles of *Colleen Bawn*, *Arrah-na-Pogue*, and *After Dark; or, Neither Maid, Wife, nor Widow* were replete with attempted murder by drowning (in a realistic harbor scene) or by lashing a one-armed soldier to a railroad track. Such tactics introduced a new type of dramaturgy "in which a striking mechanical effect was the principal attraction, and ... the actor became of secondary importance to the machinist and the scene-painter."

Coming to a close was the era when theatrical criticism embraced "whole treatises on a wrongly-accented syllable, and dissertations on a pause misplaced." In a review of the theatrical manager Augustin Daly's melodrama *Under the Gaslight*, the day when the actor's vocal delivery occupied the critic's attention can be seen giving place to "scenery by Farren, Schelland, Seaver, and the machinery by Denham, and music by Tissington, [which] were elaborate and very effective."

In the acting department, "the pet of the spectators from the first scene to the conclusion" was one "Miss Rose Eytinge, as the lovely but unfortunate Laura, [who] presented an exceedingly good picture of a young girl with genuine American pride and sense." The stock types, then becoming common, were well filled; no doubt a similar temperament from real life executed each role: "Miss Blanche Grey, as the brilliant but coquettish girl of society, was both brilliant and coquettish." Similar treatment was afforded "the cold-hearted woman of society," "the wicked

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Judae," "portraiture of a light-hearted free, spirited soldier lad,"
"the insolvent ruffian and hypocritical jail-bird," not to mention "the
girl who was never brought up" as played with "genuine wild humor."

The viewers' craving for local color was momentarily satisfied in
recognizing "Mr. Parsloe and his juvenile troupe of dock boys [, who]
were encored enthusiastically" together with "Mr. Rynar, as the Signal
Man." The mood of recognition is always pleasant, as William James has
said.

The part of "the fickle but good-hearted lover" was played by A. H.
Davenport. Although he was adjudged "earnest and eloquent" by this
Times critic, another noted that the actor, "the bills inform us, has
been away three years. One wishes his intonation did not suggest that
he had filled up that interval in presiding over Methodist camp meetings."
It will be observed, later in this investigation, that similar vocal
mannerisms plagued Alfred Ayres's enjoyment of dramatic interpretation.

In summary, then, the stage carpenter, musician, and machinist
ddictated the form taken by play-craft. Dialogue, plot, and characteriza-
tion were forced to conform to various theatrical effects, decided be-
forehand, just "as the poetry in the old annuals used to be [fitted] to
the plates, or just as Nicholas Nickleby's drama was adapted to bring
in the pump and two water tubs which Mr. Vincent Crummies had bought at
a bargain . . . Of the drama itself, however, nothing good can be said.45

An ebullient American theatre insisted on indulging its romantic taste for the novelty in sensational elements. But the higher drama had been expurgated of much former vitality and was seldom given a vocally effective production. As a result, such intellectual entertainment was forced to give place to a new burlesque and to a melodramatic treatment of familiar, as well as exotic, events in nature. The romantic yearnings of the time thus achieved a momentarily gratifying compromise with a current philosophy which valued realism of the commonplace.

Stock Company Training Replaced by Schools of Acting and Amateur Theatricals

As has been suggested, various influences helped to remove drama from its former function of providing intellectual stimulation. Many of these forces arose from weaknesses developing within the star system. When traveling stars started to depend on the services of actors who toured with them, there was little practical value in continuing to train local stock-company aspirants in the technique of supporting these stars. This situation destroyed a beginner's opportunity to gain valuable experience by performing with various visiting stars.

Reed Barton Cottrell has made a study of the 118 American-born actors who made a debut on the New York stage between the years of 1875

and 1890; Cottrell included actors who were born abroad but came to the United States before the age of six. He reports that, as the period progressed, evidence of previous training in stock was decreasing in favor of a more formal instruction elsewhere and a background in amateur theatricals.

But the earlier pattern of training was still operating, at least upon certain performers. Georgiana Drew, for instance, made her debut in 1876; her mother, the celebrated actress-manager Mrs. John Drew, had given her an introductory knowledge of acting technique which then developed within the companies of Edwin Booth, John McCullough, and Helena Modjeska. In a similar manner, a former actress Annie Adams tutored her daughter Maude for a New York debut even as late as 1889; one of the results was that Maude Adams became John Drew’s leading lady, in 1892, and began a long and successful career on the stage.

A performer’s having been born into a theatrical family was once almost the only way by which an aspiring novice had a chance to succeed as an actor. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, this pattern for success was becoming the exception. True, in 1879, Edward H. Sothern carried on the tradition of his father Edward A. Significantly though, of the twenty-eight actors making their New York debuts from 1880 through 1884, only three of the actors who reached stardom came from theatrical families.

Then too, whereas from the year 1875 through 1879, 98 per cent of the actors had had stock company experience before their debuts, this figure was reduced to 60 per cent for the period 1880-1884. Throughout the entire fifteen-year span, nevertheless, “every actor became a member
of a stock company at some time in his career." This belated membership often took place when the actor realized that "the financial return from a tour 'on the road' was greater than if he confined his activities to New York theatres."\(^6\)

The next period, 1885 to 1890, deviated even more widely from the influence of stock companies. It also witnessed a greater number of actors beginning on the New York stage than the immediately preceding five years had. Among these forty-three performers, however, the percentage of stars produced by this period [1885 to 1890] was not as high. A large number of actors who made their debuts in this period never progressed beyond the status of minor actor. . . .

\[\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\]

Thirteen actors received varying amounts of formal stage training, exclusive of the training they received in stock companies, and twenty actors appeared in amateur theatricals before they entered the stage professionally. . . . All successful actors appearing for the first time on the stage during this period had had stock company experience before they became stars, with the exception of one.\(^7\)

Many times a performer’s stock company experience not only had begun very early in life but was also varied in scope. Loie Fuller, for instance, did not make her New York debut until 1886. Yet while only a child, she had played extensively in stock companies and had appeared with Buffalo Bill’s show. Commonly, too, juvenile \textit{Pinafore} companies trained child stars who then matured to seek success as actors. Among the thirteen former child stars who made a bid for audience approval in the New York of 1875-1890, ten were successful. Effie Ellsler’s debut


\(^7\) \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 88 and 123.
in 1880 exemplified this tendency. Indeed Lillian Russell, whose debut took place in 1881, had earlier been persuaded to join the chorus of Edward E. Rice's Pinafore company in order to acquire experience on the stage. And the mature Richard Mansfield began his career in England in a provincial company under the management of D'Oyly Carte; Mansfield was cast in the role of Sir Joseph Porter. Then too, in America, the year 1879 saw a new performer William Collier make a regular appearance in a children's opera company which was producing H. M. S. Pinafore.

Incidentally, the power of the actor-manager remained firmly established. During the fifteen-year span, 1875-1890, Cottrell has found that "nine actors became managers, usually holding this position along with their acting duties in companies of their own. Only two of them ceased acting entirely to devote their full energies to managing." Ethel Barrymore made her debut, during the year 1894, in the city of Montreal. Her criticism of the stock company system, as she came to know it around that later date, provides a more complete picture of what was taking place and the results. Barrymore concludes:

Stock routine gives those who have stood it an enormous capacity for taking pains . . . . Now I'm well aware that much can be learned from the grind in stock company work, and that some of our most complete actresses have plenty of such experience in their pasts. But there are times when I feel that they've become artists

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48 *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 130, and 61


50 Cottrell, *op. cit.*., pp. 51 and 131.
in spite of, not because of, stock training. The constant rush from one play to another, before the first has been assimilated, is quite likely to make a person superficial, snatching only at the obvious, neglecting the subtleties of characterization. . . . But stock company work doesn’t necessarily make one superficial.
I merely point out one of its inherent dangers.

Admittedly though, a “large amount of bad direction” undermined the activities of the few stock companies remaining.

The average aspiring actor, then, was denied the benefits which successful performance with stock companies had once been able to bring him. Therefore, he had to look elsewhere for training and for experience. To supply his needs, numerous private theatre schools sprang up.

This increase in schools of acting was encouraged by the success of Steele MacKaye’s Lyceum Acting School, founded in 1884; this institution has survived under the title it took soon thereafter—American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Even as early as 1869, however, another New York enterprise, the Lawrence School of Acting, laid claim to training the beginner, then primarily in the ways of elocution. “In Boston, a School of Elocution and Dramatic Art was active as early as 1867. The endorsements of Edwin Booth, William Warren, and Joseph Jefferson were claimed for Rachel Noah’s Petersilea Academy (1871), and the Delsarte School of Oratory and Dramatic Art (1881) on Tremont Street offered ‘direct stage practice under professional management.’”


As the period progressed, the appeal of MacKaye's practical interpretation for the theories of François Delsarte increased. As a result, much less attention was given to vocal delivery. "The system finally became a routine mechanical system for the teaching of the expression of emotion largely through gesture and body position, accompanied by statue posing, tableaux, etc." A type of pseudo-Delsartism developed to serve tableaux mouvants and other art forms which are more properly in the domain of pantomime than in general drama. Treatment of scenes from the latter, however, generally followed the gestural pattern of the former. This procedure tended to neglect a drama's verbal content and, in so doing, to ignore the author's comprehensive purpose.

During the 1870's, moreover, Steele MacKaye appeared "at Princeton under the auspices of the Student Lecture Association. His subject was 'The Mystery of Emotion and its Expression in Art.' Incidentally, a lecture given by MacKaye before the Boston School of Oratory, in 1878, had at least one unexpected result. It won, "as a Delsarte convert," Franklin H. Sargent, a teacher who had been educated at Harvard and who had great administrative skill. Sargent joined with MacKaye in coaching new actors at the Madison Square Theatre, around the year 1882, "for the many road companies dispatched by that organization under MacKaye's management." When MacKaye was forced to abandon the management of the Lyceum Acting School after only a few months, during 1884, Sargent took


over its sole control.\textsuperscript{55}

Significantly, too, "the change in the attitude of the colleges toward the professional theatre in this period is most clearly shown by the appearance on the college lecture platform of professional theatre men." By the season 1884-1885, for example, Henry Irving was lecturing before the public at Harvard. In this connection, also, "a new phenomenon appeared in college theatricals shortly after the Civil War. For the first time, students banded together in organizations whose primary purpose was the presentation of plays. One of the earliest was the Thalian Dramatic Association, founded at Brown in 1866."

The professional actor exercised an influence upon students as they created theatrical organizations. "A performance by Lawrence Barrett of Hamlet in 1879 led to the formation of the Barrett Club at the University of Michigan in 1880." Sometimes influence also worked in the other direction, namely, from college classroom to professional stage. Witness Harvard’s lavish production of Oedipus Tyrannus in the original Greek during May of 1881. "George Riddle (Harvard A. E., 1874), an instructor in elocution at Harvard, played the leading role and later attempted it on the professional stage." Then too, "the leading spirit of the Tufts Dramatic Club in 1876 ..., was J. H. Bradbury, later a comedian on the professional stage."

Perhaps collegiate dramatic activities became "more respectable, academically speaking," when the various foreign language departments began to draw heavily upon drama written in French, German, Spanish, Latin, and Greek. Following a policy of the professional stage, colleges

\textsuperscript{55}Hodge, in Wallace, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 561.
often presented this drama in English adaptation. Moreover, in many colleges, elocution courses referred to dramatic literature for exercises in delivering the English language.  

Especially the skills which were gained in the latter training stood ready for transfer from Halls of Academe to professional boards. Granted that elocution was late to develop in America, still "it became a required study in most colleges, and remained so until late in the century, when it became generally elective. And although early elocution closely followed English writers of the eighteenth century, after 1827 James M'Whir became the dominant influence, and remained influential through the century."  

Elocution's pattern for dramatic delivery was realized on the stage. In the University of Wisconsin, for example, "Macbeth and Othello were used for class exercises in elocution beginning in 1884 by Professor David Frankenberger, head of the Department of Rhetoric and Oratory. In 1892 Frankenberger directed Othello when it was presented by the University Dramatic Club." In 1880, a production of Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer, by the Cascadilla Dramatic Association, was directed by Professor C. A. Corson at Cornell. He was assisted by his wife, "an excellent actress; her enthusiasm, knowledge of foreign theatres, and  

\[56^6\text{Clark, in Wallace, op. cit., pp. 545, 537, 541, 538, and 546; 551 n: "Professor Alfred Hennequin, who taught courses in the French drama at the University of Michigan, grew so much interested in the theatre that he gave up his teaching in order to devote himself entirely to professional playwriting and play 'doctoring.'"}

\[57^7\text{Marie Hochmuth and Richard Murphy, "Rhetorical and Elocutionary Training in Nineteenth-Century Colleges," in Wallace, op. cit., p. 163.}\]
general interest in dramatic art had an inspiring influence.\textsuperscript{58} This
production also suggests further interaction by collegiate and professional
theatrical practice.

Institutions of higher learning, moreover, were contributing to the
early training of various performers. Earlier, the period 1875-1879 had
boasted "three actresses, all of whom became stars, \[who\] were educated
in convents." Dorothy Dorr's New York debut, in 1887, climax ed not only
her training in the Lyceum Acting School but also her studying in
Wellesley College. Wilton Lackaye, who gained fame for his roles in \textbf{The
Pillars of Society} and in \textit{Francesca de Rimini}, originally trained for the
priesthood and, on his debut in 1883, held a master's degree from
Georgetown University.

With a decline in any apparent need for elocutionary training, the
beginning actor tried to fill this gap in his professional make-up by
cultivating a feeling for life and its natural modes of expression. In
this connection, when possible, he sought what a general liberal education
held in store. His application in the theatre of nature's ways, however,
usually followed acceptable theatric patterns.

A Delsarte-Mackaye-Sargent influence made for emphasis upon gesture
and movement within the ensemble of production. The New York of 1886
witnessed the debut of one of Franklin H. Sargent's star pupils—Robert
Tabor. Of course, numerous theatre schools provided training; some
taught courses in connection with a certain theatre where graduates were
permitted to gain experience.

\textsuperscript{58}Clark, in Wallace, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 543 and 544.
Sometimes though, a novice's only formal stage training consisted of a few singing lessons; for instance, consider the comedienne Marie Cahill. In such cases, however, perhaps skill in a type of elocution or voice-training was spilling over into a performer's vocal ability on the legitimate stage. Della Fox, who began a stage career in 1889, had earlier "joined the Bennett and Moulton Opera Company and later worked under Heinrich Conried. To him she is indebted for all the formal instruction in dramatics she received." During the middle seventies, after a successful run in the Boucicault company of Nanon, Sadie Martinot returned to Europe to cultivate her voice; later she became a noted actress with the manager M. B. Leavitt.

Then too, when some unforeseen event rendered an operatic voice unfit for singing, sometimes opera's loss was theatre's gain. This transition held true for Genevieve Ward, who was endorsed by Ayres and "considered one of the most capable actresses of the day." She had "studied voice in Paris and Italy and learned the Italian method of acting. . . . an attack of diphtheria completely destroyed her singing voice and brought her career to an end. For a few years she taught voice in New York. In 1873 she decided to become an actress and went to England for training"; she returned for her New York debut in 1878.\(^5^9\)

More direct interaction between the practice of the stage and the science of elocution is probable in the following. The British actress Mrs. Stirling (later Lady Gregory) "undertook to prepare aspirants to theatrical honours for their work, and was appointed Professor of Elocution

at the Royal Academy of Music." On the other hand, America's "F. F. Mackay was a professor of elocution in a Wisconsin college previously to going on the stage."  

One of Mackay's pupils in acting was William S. Hart, whose instruction was supplemented by experience gained in appearing with Modjeska in Shakespearean repertory. Even during this later period, soon or late some contact with stock company repertory commonly completed the education of a beginning actor. The New York debut of this eventual star of the motion picture industry, in 1889, intimates elocutionary influence even in the silent flickering of a new medium for dramatic expression.

The Stage Is Set

Although Hamilton Bell had made his debut in 1885 as an actor, he soon chose to seek fame in the newly expanding field of stage design. The advances in scenic investiture and especially in the control of stage lighting had effects upon acting and vocal delivery. A contemporary actor Richard Mansfield noted this relationship in suggesting how a change from the old to a new school of delivery came about. "When the old school actor stood in the darkness of the inadequately lit stage,

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60 "Mrs. Stirling" (Lady Gregory), under the rubric OBITUARY, The Times (London), December 31, 1895.
61 Ayres, Acting, p. 148.
63 Ibid., p. 88.
often the most applause went to the actor making the most noise. Here there was little opportunity for facial play and detailed movement, and loudness was necessary. 64

Methods of staging, as suggested earlier, have an effect on the style and the method of acting. During the period, plays were written and mounted in relation to the technical limitations of the theatre plant available for the production. In general, productions were rigged in terms of theatres with grooved floors and with bridge and slot cuts and traps. In some instances, so-called box scenes or box sets were alternated in the same play with traditional wing-and-drop settings, and sometimes elements of the box set were combined in the same setting with traditionally executed scenery. 65

Productions employed wings and borders, cloths or drops, plugs and cabinets between flat wings, transparencies, as well as set pieces, such


as cottages, towers, platforms, and the like. In this connection, furniture, gauze and canvas water, moving boats, thunder, snow, and even an avalanche were used. Then too, naturally, productions depended upon such sensational devices as fires and smoke, collapsing floors and walls, sinking towers, and general transformations.

A desire for pictorial effects led to experiments with color media and with gas and lime light and eventually, after the early eighteen-eighties, with electric stage lighting. Also, during the latter part of the period, the stage was darkened during scene-changing, especially when the operation of painted flats after the manner of the so-called ferme principle was in use. Moreover, a trend toward more realistic and motivated lighting effects can be detected in the play prompt books of the time.  

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66 cf., e.g., the lighting directions to be found in the following prompt books, microfilm copies of which reside in The Ohio State University Theatre Collection:

- Uncle Tom's Cabin (adapted by G. Aiken), John Moore, Prompter, Park Street Theatre, New York, 1852. Courtesy of Folger Shakespeare Library. OSU Film No. P. 35.
- William Shakespeare, The Tempest, John Moore, Prompter. "Cut and marked as played at various theatres in England and America. Original cut in red ink as played at Covent Garden 1839. Cut in Pencil for Burton's." Produced by William Burton at Burton's Chamber's Street Theatre,
In Transition

According to Ayres's devoted pupil Eliza Warren, "in 1870 he
removed to New York City where he lived continuously until his death, October 26, 1902. During Ayres's first year in the theatre capital of the United States, he could have attended a performance by a Mr. Leffingwell, the popular mimic. The latter's specialty was poking fun at the delivery of the actor whom Ayres revered above all others—Edwin Forrest.

Significantly, a review of the time observes: "It is needless to say that this is the best thing now offered at Wood's Museum, if, perhaps, we except the charming little woman who is the statue in 'Pygmalion.' And only a week later, even "Leffingwell wastes his

New York, in April and May of 1854. Courtesy of Folger Shakespeare Library. OSU Film No. P. 12.


"A prompt book is the copy of the play which was used by the prompter (who was a stage manager and a director combined) in his task of supervising each performance of a play. To accomplish this activity efficiently the prompter made hand-written notations either on the printed page and/or on inserted blank pages between the printed pages. Usually the script was completely interleaved with extra pages at the beginning (or elsewhere if desired) for prop lists, costuming details, scenic descriptions, gas light plots, and groove sequences." See John H. McDowell, "Research in Prompt Books," The OSU Theatre Collection Bulletin, I, No. 2 (Spring 1955), 5-10. See especially p. 6.


68Under the rubric MUSICAL AND THEATRICAL, The Spirit of the Times (New York), XXII, No. 12 (May 7, 1870), 192.
fragrance on the Museum air." The review continues, comparing the current season with the previous year's success:

Complaints are general of the amusement season. At this time last year matters were comparatively lively. Now they are stagnant. The departure of the circus, which is a fair indication of the close of the season, took place earlier than usual. Opera collapsed numerously at a much rapider rate, and Easter did not seem to bring back any comfort to managers. Nearly all the critics and managers and artists have formed themselves into a lotus-eating club and hired a palatial mansion in Irving place, where they are already dreaming in luxury of better days. 69

Then too, about the time that Ayres took up permanent residence in New York City, by coincidence, the long-term dramatic critic J. Banken Towse had just arrived in the United States, fresh from British playgoing. "It was in the middle of November, 1869, that I [Towse] first landed in New York, and accident ordained that on the evening of the same day I should go to the theater." Towse was looking back from the perspective gained by the passing of more than a quarter century. His summary of the theatrical scene, which beset the American stage at the beginning of the eighteen-seventies, follows:

As in the mother country, the old order of the stage was quickly passing away; the higher drama, both tragic and comic, was falling into deeper disrepute for lack of adequate interpreters, and the boards were more and more fully occupied by modern domestic or "social" farce or melodrama of no literary or dramatic consequence, even when entertaining; by pieces purely spectacular or sensational, by adaptations from the French, by burlesque—which, however, had not then sunk to its present depths of degradation—and by all kinds of freakish and acrobatic frivolity. Negro minstrelsy was still in its heyday . . . .

Burton, Blake, Murdoch, J. K. Hackett, J. E. Booth, G. V. Brooke, J. W. Wallack, and other players of the first rank were dead or in retirement. Edwin Forrest, diseased and enfeebled, though still potent in "Lear" and "Richelieu," was nearing his end. Charlotte Cushman was meditating her final farewell, Edwin Booth had

69Ibid., XXII, No. 13 (May 14, 1870), 208.
not reissued from temporary eclipse. A few stock companies still existed, notably those at Wallack's in New York, Mrs. John Drew's Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, and the Boston Museum. But these were in process of decay, unable to make head against the trend of the times and the changing principles of management. 70

In addition, consider briefly Barnard Hewitt's review of the period constituting the last three decades of the nineteenth century:

Significantly, the event of the 1869-1870 season was the unexpected success of a new company under a new manager . . . , which opened February 12, 1870, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, with an unknown actress in the leading role. Augustin Daly . . ., thus served notice that his enterprise, which had opened in the fall without attracting much attention, was no flash in the pan. . . ., it was to mold a new pattern for our theatre marked by a shift in power from the actor to the producer-director. An early sign of this shift was the abandonment in the seventies of the time-honored actor's benefit.

... by 1900 the single play and type casting were firmly established as the basis for actor employment.

Under the Syndicate, theatre was big business. Much like the moving-pictures industry of a later date, it was a purveyor of popular entertainment. Art was not excluded, but for admission it had to show a profit.

... As the twentieth century opened . . ., Voices in criticism of the theatre's commercialism began to be heard, but they went largely unheeded. Theatre people were, with a few exceptions, concerned not with reform but with the struggle for power between conflicting interests. 71

At the turn of the century, Towse had been lamenting that "one by one the stock companies--the only real schools of acting--were extirpated, until to-day (1900) there is scarcely one worthy of the name in existence


in this country.*72 True, a mushrooming growth of acting schools and amateur-group activities attempted to fill the gap created in an actor's professional development by his inability, and indeed disinclination, to gain instruction and experience within stock company performance.

Still the disappearance of stock repertory companies had disadvantages. A beginner in quest of stage experience commonly looked to burlesque-vaudeville for training while on the job. Performances in this area of show business catered obviously to popular tastes. Naturally then, such conditions encouraged a style of delivery somewhat different from that demanded in more legitimate circles.

These lesser breeds of theatrical entertainment were also in a position to offer rather tempting salaries. As a result, at one time or another, nearly all the stars who were claimed by the new school did a turn on vaudeville circuits. Even the previously mentioned Wilton Lackaye, whose early university study had been preparing him for the priesthood, made such an excursion. Actors could not ignore an opportunity to replenish their legitimate but slim purses.

A performer's contacts with burlesque-vaudeville, however, resulted in his adapting his delivery to popular entertainment. This situation speeded up a trend toward general commonplace utterance in the theatre. The new-school actor, therefore, became even less able to handle effectively the vocal demands of the higher drama. And already the art of drama had been undergoing devaluation as various other inroads, noted throughout this chapter, also began taking their toll.

So far, attention has been directed to a background of transatlantic and domestic factors which functioned in anticipating, establishing, maintaining, or changing the course of trends in acting style and vocal delivery on the American stage. It is hoped that, by this point in the development of the investigation, the stage is set for a better understanding of Ayres's relation to the theory and the practice of speech and theatre in late nineteenth-century America. Next, stage center is taken by the man himself.
CHAPTER IV

PERSONAL BACKGROUND FOR THE MAN

To round out the introduction, this investigation considers next Alfred Ayres himself. Probably Ayres was born February 26, 1834. The Library of Congress, though, endorses at least one source which places his birth in 1826, the year when James Rush, M. D., was completing the first edition of *The Philosophy of the Human Voice*. After a lifetime of contributions primarily within the general field of speech and theatre, Ayres died on October 26, 1902.

During December of 1902, Ayres's life was reviewed "in memoriam" in the final issue of *Werner's (Voice) Magazine*. This pioneer speech journal had been founded, in 1879, as simply *The Voice* to serve music and theatre in the art of expression. Edgar S. Werner's periodical was eclipsed, however, when the new century witnessed Arthur Hornblow editing *The Theatre Magazine*, which was aimed directly at the theatrical profession.

Only one month separated the death of Alfred Ayres from the demise of Werner's enterprise. An era in the American theatre was coming to a close. The voice was yielding emphasis to the production. Notwithstanding, Ayres's tireless efforts had been calculated to keep vocal delivery effective in the theatre. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce Alfred Ayres as a person living and working within the milieu detailed in the two previous chapters.
His Life in Brief

"The passing of Alfred Ayres will be deeply regretted by many persons who are familiar only with his writings, and by others even more deeply because they admired both the man and his work."¹ This keynote declaration introduced an editorial in the New York Dramatic Mirror. A more comprehensive account of the life of Alfred Ayres, however, was provided "by a devoted pupil" of "this eminent elocutionist and man of strong personality"² in the final issue of Werner's Magazine.³

In private as well as in public life, during approximately the last "20 years [of his life,] he had been known by the pen name Ayres, which was that of his mother."⁴ He was born Thomas Embley Osmun, the son of George Osmun and the former Mildred Washington Ayres. Probably the place was Montrose in Summit County, Ohio, near the city of Akron. "There he passed his childhood, dividing his time, so he once said, between studying his lessons in a log school-house and killing

¹[James A. Waldron], "Alfred Ayres," New York Dramatic Mirror, XLVIII, No. 1, 24-5 (November 1, 1902), 14. Waldron is identified as the author of this unsigned editorial in an article, cited infra, by Eliza Warren.

²"Death of Thomas Embley Osmun[sic]," Werner's Magazine, XXX, No. 3 (November, 1902), 21.

³Eliza Warren, "In Memoriam, Alfred Ayres: His Work as Orthoepist, Verbalist and Elocutionist," Werner's Magazine, XXX, No. 4 (December, 1902), 12-13. Except where otherwise indicated, the information in this chapter, concerning the life and personality of Ayres, has been gleaned from the article by Warren.

⁴"Death of Thomas Embley Osmun[sic]," loc. cit.
For even at the early age of four years, he had begun to attend the village school. Later, when his parents moved to Cleveland, he attended a private academy there.

When a mere lad Mr. Ayres began to study the works of Shakespeare, and so deeply was he impressed by the grandeur of the language, as written by the master-dramatist, that he resolved to devote himself to the cause of good English. From that time on he was an earnest and an aggressive disciple in the cause. His labor—which was largely a labor of love—was unceasing. He battled for the better use of words in every field that lay open to him.

Around mid-century, Ayres was living in Van Wert County, in western Ohio, when he decided to enter Oberlin College. "Thomas Emlley Osmun enrolled from Ohio City in the Preparatory Department for two years, 1852-53 and 1853-54 . . . but . . . there is absolutely no record of his work in the Registrar's Office and there is no additional information in the alumni records files in this office." Apparently, however, Ayres did not advance beyond the Preparatory Department to enter the College proper; perhaps he did not complete the requirements for admission.

He then immediately went abroad and reportedly spent seven years in the universities of Berlin, Strasburg, Leipzig, and Paris. "Upon several occasions [sic] Mr. Ayres appeared as an actor. In Germany, when a young man, he played Shylock, Richelieu and other important roles in

5 "The Death of Alfred Ayres," New York Dramatic Mirror, XLVIII, No. 1, 245 (November 1, 1902), 15. Hereinafter the article will be cited as "Death." See also Joseph, Thomas, "Alfred Ayres's Books," The Literary World (Boston), XIII, No. 12 (June 17, 1882), 203-204. See especially p. 203.

6 Ibid.

7 Personal letter from Donald M. Love, Secretary of Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, September 24, 1956.
the German tongue."\(^8\) Because he supposedly returned to America in 1859,\(^9\) there is some discrepancy in reports of the length of time Ayres remained in Europe.

Notwithstanding, Warren's account goes on to reveal:

In the Royal University of Berlin he studied Ophthalmology under the greatest oculist living, Professor von Graefe, and in 1859 brought the first Ophthalmoscope to this country, an instrument invented two years previous [sic] by one of his teachers, Professor Liebrich. In Berlin he met and won the friendship of Alexander von Humboldt; and judging from letters that the writer has seen, it is certain that the great German scientist had the highest regard and admiration for the young American student. While abroad he studied German, French, Italian and Spanish languages, and spoke at least two—German and French—with a correctness, fluency and elegance that rivaled his English.

In 1859 Mr. Ayres returned to America and after a tour of Canada and the West he settled in Philadelphia in January, 1860. Here he practiced Ophthalmology until 1862, when he abandoned the medical profession and during the remainder of his life devoted himself wholly to literature and the study of drama. In 1870 he removed to New York City where he lived continuously until his death.\(^10\)

However, before Ayres went to New York, according to one source, "we find him writing dramatic criticisms for the Philadelphia Times in 1865."\(^11\) But the Theatre Collection of the Free Library of Philadelphia, for example, does not contain any "information concerning his contributions

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\(^9\)See ibid.: "Death of Thomas Embley Osmund [sic]." loc. cit.; and Warren, op. cit., 12.


\(^11\)"Death of Thomas Embley Osmund [sic]." loc. cit.
to a Philadelphia newspaper.\textsuperscript{12}

After having taken up residence in New York, during the early eighteen-seventies, Ayres performed the roles of Shylock and Richelieu, in the German language, and in later years portrayed Hamlet and Shylock in English. Even as late as "May, 1891, he played Shylock, supported by Eliza Warren as Portia, in several New England towns, and his impersonation won considerable praise.\textsuperscript{13}


In addition to the changes in masthead, during this period in Ayres's life, the rubric appearing above the regular weekly drama column, in the Philadelphia Sunday Times, underwent such changes as the following: In 1865 and at least as late as 1868, the heading was DRAMATIC AND MUSICAL, "Musical and Dramatic feuilleton of the Philadelphia Sunday Times," BY OUR OWN CRITIC; by September 11, 1870, the column was called MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC, BY COLLEY CIBBER; beginning September 25, 1870, the heading was simply MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC; and starting October 16, 1870, the drama column took the title AMUSEMENTS. Cf. photostats of these columns, supplied by the Free Library of Philadelphia. Unfortunately, of course, the names of the newspaper's staff were not listed, nor are they now available from the usual sources. Moreover, dramatic criticisms have not been signed, except in the "Colley Cibber" fashion noted above.

\textsuperscript{13}"Death," loc. cit.
Early during Ayres's stay in New York, he resided in the home of Colonel T. Allston Brown, who wrote a voluminous history of the New York stage from the first performance in 1732 to 1901. Later, for nearly twenty years, Ayres lived on West Fifteenth Street. The street number 224 appeared in his advertisement, commonly on the back page of the *Dramatic Mirror*, in behalf of private "ELOCUTIORY AND DRAMATIC INSTRUCTION."  

His earliest friends in New York were Frederick Leypoldt, founder of *The Publishers' Weekly*, and the latter's wife. Then too, the managing editor of this periodical, A. Growoll, was a friend of thirty years standing at the time of Ayres's death. Incidentally, Mrs. Leypoldt sang a hymn both at the beginning and at the conclusion of the ceremony at Ayres's funeral. In addition to speeches by Growoll and Brown, Rossiter Johnson, an eminent scholar and author, delivered the final eulogy. Ayres was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, next to the grave of Frederick Leypoldt.  

To return to the time when Ayres first established these lifelong friendships, one finds Ayres busy turning out numerous play scripts. During 1873, he copyrighted two four-act plays: the comedy *Love Works Wonders* and *The Verrens; or, Marie and Marion*. In 1877, an historic drama in five acts entitled *Lady Jane Grey*, by Alfred Ayres, took the stage to become a vehicle in which Mrs. D. P. Bowers starred for many seasons. Two years after Ayres's death, in the autumn of 1904, Eliza Warren from Cleveland, Ohio, copyrighted three other dramas by Ayres.

14 Ibid.

15See, e.g., *New York Mirror*, XVII (December 25, 1886), 12.
namely: While He Was at Elba, a drama in five acts (131 typewritten pages); Mary Tudor, a drama in five acts (144 typewritten pages); and The Taming of Georgina, a comedy in four acts (109 typewritten pages). Ayres also translated and adapted plays, chiefly from the German; for example, he adapted the play Deborah for Madame Janauschek, to whom he had been teaching the English language as well as coaching in many of her great roles.

His most successful and best-known play, however, was a dramatization of Jane Eyre in which Charlotte Thompson appeared for many years. Beginning June 18, 1873, New York's Union Square Theatre, under the new management of Albert M. Palmer, witnessed "a performance that became a minor classic of the American theatre; in fact, Miss Thompson's fame is identified with the part."17

Starting with the year 1880, Ayres's six books began rolling from the printing presses of D. Appleton & Company, 1, 3, and 5 Bond Street, New York City. Below are listed the various editions of these volumes, together with the dates of some re-printings which have been sampled at random. Even though advertising copy of the period announced "five editions in five weeks" and the like, of course, these so-termed "editions" were


17Odell, Annals of the New York Stage, IX, 273.
only subsequent "printings" of what might have been a very meager number of copies from the first impression. Only some such designation as "New and Much Enlarged Edition," together with an additional Prefatory Note, indicates enlargement and/or revision. Included, also, are subtitles and, if particularly descriptive, a comment from periodicals which reviewed the works.

The Orthoepist. "A pronouncing manual, containing about three thousand five hundred words, including a considerable number of the names of foreign authors, artists, etc., that are often mispronounced": 1880 (201 pages), 1881 (Rev. and enl. ed., 208 pages), 1882, 1884 (12th ed.), 1886, 1889 (17th ed.), and 1894 (New and rev. ed., much enl. [added about one thousand words, "slowly collected during the last twelve years"], 292 pages).

The Verbalist. "A manual devoted to brief discussions of the right and the wrong use of words, and to some other matters of interest to those who would speak and write with propriety": 1881, 1882 (220 pages), 1883, 1885, 1888, 1896 (New and rev. ed., much enl., 337 pages), 1902, and 1907.

The Mentor. "A little book for the guidance of such men and boys as would appear to advantage in the society of persons of the better sort": 1884 (Funk & Wagnalls Company publisher, 211 pages), 1894 (D. Appleton and Company publisher), and 1898.

The Essentials of Elocution: 1886 (Funk & Wagnalls Company publisher, 89 pages) and 1897 (New and much enl. ed., 174 pages).

Acting and Acting, Elocution and Elocutionists. "A book about theater folk and theater art": 1894 (287 pages), 1894 (2d ed., with supplement [added only five and one-half pages], 293 pages), and 1903.

Some Ill-Used Words: 1901 (242 pages) and 1902.

In addition, Ayres edited a work which originally had been published from 1818 to 1833, namely,

The English Grammar of William Cobbett. "Grammar without a master": 1883 (Carefully revised and annotated, with index, 254 pages) and 1897. "It is grammar without a master and without tears, unless they are tears of laughter."

—New York Churchman.

Ayres also made contributions to A Standard Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1898). This dictionary,
"prepared by more than 200 Specialists and Other Scholars" under the date November 23, 1893, lists Alfred Ayres as "Special Literary Critic" beneath the heading "Other Departments." Then too, for this publication he served, along with some fifty others, as a member of the "Advisory Committee on Disputed Spelling and Pronunciation." Moreover, he reportedly revised many works for contemporary authors and "privately remonstrated with many editors here and elsewhere for permitting bad English in their publications."\(^{18}\)

Before giving private lessons in elocutionary and dramatic art and becoming, by the way, "perhaps the best known of the group in New York," Ayres had worked professionally with Steele MacKaye and later at the Lyceum School where he had come into conflict with Sargent over teaching methods. . . . Scarcely four months after the founding of the Lyceum School, [which opened its first session in October, 1881, Franklin E. Sargent dismissed such qualified instructors as . . . Professor Alfred Ayres on the charge that they were 'old-fashioned' in their methods. 'The Delsarte system was the foundation, and no departure will be recognized,' Sargent wrote in defense of the dismissals.\(^{19}\) Ayres turned to private instruction and received his pupils daily until the morning of September 29, 1902, when an apoplectic stroke paralyzed the entire left side of his body.

Moreover, even though he had not been in his usual good health since January of that year, Ayres continued to contribute regularly to journals.

\(^{18}\)"Death," loc. cit.


Ayres was also an avid correspondent and wrote numerous letters to the editor of, say, the Dramatic Mirror where he carried on a lengthy argument with the latter's drama critic concerning thought versus emotion in acting.

He carried his principles to the public by many curious paths. A few years ago, as an example, he observed that many merchants used the words "ladies" and "gents" in their advertisements. He immediately undertook the task of writing personal letters to all of the offending merchants, protesting against their use of the words. The result was that nearly every writer of advertisements in New York began to use the better words "men" and "women." . . .

He did yeoman service in bettering the practice of the art of elocution on our stage by calling the attention of players to their errors either by letter or in print, and it was rarely indeed that the criticism was unheeded. 20

The following observations are also presented without comment or conjecture:

It is as a critic of acting—and particularly as a critic of the delivery of actors—that Mr. Ayres was best known by the readers of THE MIRROR, for in the columns of this journal much or most of his writings in this field appeared before they were embalmed in books. Mr. Ayres first assailed erroneous pronunciation on the New York stage through these columns years ago, when the pronunciation of actors was remarkably slovenly and incorrect, and within a comparatively short time his work in this direction bore notable fruit. In fact, it soon became evident that he had inspired care and study in this matter on the part of every actor of note. Then

20 "Death," loc. cit.
Mr. AYRES took up the matter of reading, variously called "delivery," "elocution," and by other terms, and pointed out the errors of which many actors were guilty. Naturally the mentor could not reform this matter so easily, for elocution rests too much on the general intelligence as well as upon the studiousness of the actor, and only the greater of players ever have mastered it; but nevertheless, Mr. AYRES did a splendid work as to this, and happily much of his comment is preserved in such forms that it will continue to be valuable to the stage and its followers.

Aside from these special fields Mr. AYRES was alert as to and [was] sound upon the more general matters of acting, although on these matters he expressed himself more commonly in conversation than in print. He was erroneously regarded in some quarters as antiquated in his ideas on acting, but really he was a modern of the moderns in those ideas.

To those that knew him best, the comparatively modest works of Mr. AYRES bear little relation to the potentialities presumably possible of one of his force and information. He knew much of the literature of three tongues, his fund of exact knowledge on a remarkable variety of subjects was phenomenal and valuable, and in many ways he suggested achievements beyond his actual accomplishment. It may be that his long devotion to the peculiar and in a measure elemental lines of knowledge upon which he almost exclusively wrote unfitted him for larger aspiration and achievement. The work that he has left, however, is valuable.

The books that Mr. AYRES wrote long will have utility. Although mainly they were elemental in their usefulness, there can be no doubt as to their value to the actor and to the student of the English language, which thus far has practically defied perfect expression at any hand.

But no doubt, as was revealed in the preceding chapter, the need of the time demanded the oversimplification and frequent repetition of Ayres's, often emotional, appeals for reform. How Ayres used rhetoric to persuade others to action will be noted later. In a last analysis, then, "Ayres was, above all things, a student and a teacher and possibly in this modest domain his influence may prove farther reaching and more

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21 [Waldron], loc. cit. See also Thomas, op. cit., 203: In 1382, Ayres's books "are at present the best selling books on Appleton's miscellaneous list."
potent than it would have in a field of more brilliant personal achieve­ment.\textsuperscript{22}

Such was the life of Alfred Ayres. And if a man, beyond that, reaches out and up into great fields of scholarly endeavor and accomplishes works that aid his fellow men he is worthy of our highest admiration. Mr. Ayres did these things... the better part of him, the product of his brain, still lives and continues to benefit mankind.\textsuperscript{23}

\section*{His Education in Oberlin College}

Ayres enrolled in Oberlin College for the two years 1852-1853 and 1853-1854. Probably he did not advance beyond the Preparatory Department and soon left for Europe without having entered the College itself. Still this belief does not preclude Ayres's probable contact with the principles and practice of rhetoric and elocution, as well as language in general, while at Oberlin.

"In the academy, or preparatory department... rhetoric was also part of the curriculum. In the college, in the earliest days, Oberlin's young men were governed by this requirement: 'Compositions, and either Extempore Discussions or Declamations weekly throughout the whole course; and also public original declamations monthly.'" Usually Mondays were set aside for rhetorical exercises, which sometimes took on the form of interclass activities. "Commencement time, itself, was the final opportunity for rhetorical display. In the week prior to the final exercises the senior class of the preparatory department gave an

\textsuperscript{22}Warren, \textit{op. cit.}, 12.

Significant, too, is the opinion that there was an interchange of textbooks, as well as tutors, between the college and its academy or preparatory department. "When it is noted that much of the teaching in the academy was done by advanced college and theology students, and that occasionally academy tutors also taught college classes, this use of the same textbooks at both levels seems quite likely." Then, consider first the possible influence upon Ayres of The Rhetorical Reader, Consisting of Instructions for Regulating the Voice, with a Rhetorical Notation, Illustrating Inflection, Emphasis, and Modulation; and a Course of Rhetorical Exercises. This text, in use at Oberlin from around 1840 to 1860, had been prepared in 1831, by Ebenezer Porter, for high schools and academies.

Although there is no evidence of it, it is possible that Porter's reader may also have been used as a text in the flourishing preparatory department of Oberlin, since the author had originally designed it for the high school level. On the other hand, there were two texts known to have been used in the Oberlin academy at this time, and one of them was intended for college use. It is quite possible, therefore, that some few texts, such as those by Porter, McGuffey, and Mandeville, were used interchangeably. . . .

24 J. Jeffery Auer, "Speech Training at Oberlin College in the Nineteenth Century" (unpublished paper prepared for the course Speech 199, University of Wisconsin, 1946), pp. 7-8, quoting Robert Samuel Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College From Its Foundation Through the Civil War (2 vols.; Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1943), II, 738, 830-831, and 834-835; 709: "The emphasis on rhetoric in literary societies and in the curriculum was the strong point in the college training of those days." Cf. Auer, op. cit., p. 1: "Some form of training in speech has been an integral part of the curriculum since the founding of the college in 1833. More than that, speech training has also been a part of the extra-curricular program almost from the beginning. In 1834 the first of the literary societies was organized," as was the Oberlin Lyceum.

Porter adopted a set of notations that reminds one of the English elocutionists, though in his actual treatment of the system of vocal notations and of gesture, he seemed free from their worst vices. The rhetorical reading which was his concern, he said, "does not barely express the thoughts of an author, but expresses them with the force, variety and beauty, which feeling demands." This approach was developed in roughly one-third of the volume which covered articulation, inflection, accent, emphasis, modulation, and gesture. His notation system was then described, based upon four inflections and nine modulations, and the second section of the book was devoted to exercises, properly marked according to the system, which the student was to practice. The last, and longest, section of Porter's volume included unmarked selections for practice; now the student was to test his mastery of the basic theory. The book may well have been a popular one with Oberlin students; Porter's system was not too complex, and the selections for practice, by and large, while "suited to make a safe and useful impression on the young," were chosen from some of the more exciting bits of British and American eloquence.

The texts by McGuffey and Mandeville... were apparently adopted originally only for the preparatory department in the forties and fifties. The history of the publication dates of the famous McGuffey readers is somewhat confused, but it was apparently the 1844 McGuffey's Rhetorical Guide: or Fifth Reader of the Eclectic Series, that was used at Oberlin. This volume had originally been prepared by Alexander Hamilton McGuffey, younger brother of William Holmes, in 1841; the 1844 edition was revised with the assistance of Dr. Timothy Stone Pinneo. The textual portion of McGuffey's volume was built on rules governing articulation, inflection, accent, emphasis, voice, gesture, and verse reading. In general these directions on elocution followed the pattern established by John Walker and his followers. Perhaps the chief contribution of the re-dor, however, was the character of the several hundred selections for practice. They were obviously chosen not only as devices to teach the art of reading, but also to develop in the reader a love of good literature. ... The volume written by Henry Mandeville, onetime professor of moral science and belles-lettres at Hamilton College, and published in 1845, was The Elements of Reading and Oratory... The thesis of Mandeville's book was that the delivery of any given sentence must be controlled by its structure; thus it became known as the sentential system of delivery. In his preface Mandeville decires the teachings of Dr. Rush as rather "a system of vocal exercises than of elocution," and suggests that the sounder basis of sentential structure was discovered, but imperfectly developed, by Walker. In his work he proposes to carry forward Walker's idea, trusting that "we may reasonably hope that the time is not distant, when the elements of the English language will be expressed with Attic elegance." He devoted brief chapters to pronunciation, punctuation, modulation, and emphasis, and the major attention to a complete classification of sentences, together with instructions for the
manner of their delivery. It is difficult to imagine, however, that the average undergraduate, even before the Civil War, found it easy to master the technical vocabulary required by Mandeville. Before he could properly read Ruth's six word sentence, "Where thou goest, I will go," the student of Mandeville had to recognize it as a "compound declarative single compact of the second form."

Whately, Kames, and Porter, possibly supplemented by McGuffey and Mandeville, then, were the standard texts through the major portion of the period [1833–1837] of the [classical] rhetorical tradition.26

Although Archbishop Richard Whately's Elements of Rhetoric (1823) and the Elements of Criticism (1761), by Lord Henry Home of Kames, were used in Oberlin College from the eighteen-thirties to the seventies, they were not necessarily drawn upon by students in the academy or Preparatory Department. Porter's Rhetorical Reader, along with the McGuffey and the Mandeville texts which were adopted specifically for this department, therefore, was probably used in Ayres's classes, especially since Porter had already designed an earlier text27 for college and seminary use.

In his own writings, Ayres registered contempt for detailed and involved systems; he took pride in having given the public "the shortest

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27 Ebenezer Porter, Analysis of the Principles of Rhetorical Delivery as Applied in Reading and Speaking (Andover, Massachusetts: Mark Newman; New York: J. Leavitt; Boston: Hiliard, Gray & Co., 1827). Incidentally, according to Fletcher, op. cit., II, 702: Lord Kames's volume, a forerunner of George Campbell's The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1776) and Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783), provided "the springboard from which to dive into religious and moral disquisitions." Campbell's work, although adopted with Kames's book the year Oberlin College was founded, i.e., 1833, had been dropped as a text about the year 1838.
treatise on the Art of Reading that has ever been written in the English language; yet, short as it is, it is of more practical value than are all the others—which is not saying much in its praise, for all the others are of no practical value whatever." Ayres went on to point out:

The mode of procedure herein recommended, in order to become skilled in elocution, is wholly unlike anything that has hitherto found its way into print. Yet what is here is older than the oldest of the venerable "systems" that have come down to us from former generations, for what is here dates back to the time when men began to exchange ideas by means of a spoken language. Then, as ever, the sensible man—spoke he his own language or that of another—spoke naturally, and not as the elocution of the books, and of most teachers of the art, would have us speak, for that tends to make only bow-wowers and sing-souters.

Later, in commenting upon others' remarks that this particular "book owes its success to the exceeding modesty of its preface," Ayres maintained:

"it owes its success to the fact that it is just the sort of book its preface says it is."28

Perhaps, though, Ayres's position may be compared with that of Archbishop Whately in the latter's attacks upon the elocutionary teachings of his own time. Whately decried the artificial schemes championed by the Reverend Gilbert Austin, John Walker, and others of the so-termed mechanistic school. Looking to the needs of persuasion, too, Whately treated logic practically, rather than philosophically.

Whether or not Ayres was exposed to Whately's work in college, the imprint of Whately was upon his pages when, for example, Ayres pursued the following pattern of reasoning in trying to arrive at a satisfactory definition for the concept "elocution."

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28 Alfred Ayres [Thomas Embley Osmun], "Preface" (March, 1886) and "Note" (June, 1897) to The Essentials of Elocution (2d ed.; New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1897), pp. ii and 1. Hereinafter the
There is something that, for a hundred years, more or less, has been scissored and paraphrased from one book to another, and has been called Elocution.

It is elocution, too, if Webster is right when he says that elocution is "a mode of utterance accompanied with gesture"; but it is not good elocution, if Whately is right when he says that elocution, to be good, "must convey the meaning clearly, forcibly, and agreeably." 29

Then too, other forces had been at work in Oberlin College and were continuing, during Ayres's residence in the early fifties, to instil an evangelistic and reforming spirit. The students' fervor often spilled over into the championing of such controversial issues as antislavery and equal rights for women. As members of the Ladies' Literary Society, Antoinette Brown Blackwell and Lucy Stone, of the class of 1847, and Sallie Holley, of the class of 1852, had been taking advantage of speaking opportunities to prepare for future leadership in the Suffrage Movement.

Moreover, Oberlin's first Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, James Armstrong Thome, who served from 1833 to 1848 and later taught elocution in the College, was the "son of a Kentucky slaveholder who had been converted to the cause of abolition by Theodore Weld." (Oberlin had opened its doors to Negroes as early as 1835.) And Thome's successor James Monroe, whose tenure (1849-1865) included Ayres's period at Oberlin, "became an antislavery lecturer upon the persuasion of William Lloyd

Garrison, and won acclaim for his 'pure, beautiful & powerful eloquence.'』

Later elected to the Ohio legislature and to the national House of Representatives, Monroe was "described by one of his faculty colleagues as 'a fine scholar and one of the most splendid orators I ever heard speak.'" Significantly, because a chair of English was not established until some time after the Civil War, during Ayres's residence the Professor of Rhetoric was responsible for any instruction given in grammar, composition, and literature.

To sum up the type of education which was available to Ayres while he was attending Oberlin, specific texts are recorded below as they appear in the College Catalogue for the school year 1852-1853. The name of Ayres or, rather, his real name Osmun appears with the students enrolled in the Preparatory Department. Under the general heading "Preparatory Department," but without specification as to when during a student's program an individual subject was ordinarily taken, these textbooks and activities are listed:

- Bullion's English Grammar
- Mitchell's Geography, with Outline Maps
- Mitchell's Ancient Geography
- Taylor's General History
- Colburn's and Adams' Arithmetic
- Introductory Algebra
- Andrews and Stoddard's Latin Grammar
- Andrews' Latin Reader
- Jacob's Latin Reader
- Jacob's Greek Reader, second part
- Cicero's Select Orations
- Crosby's Greek Grammar
- The Four Gospels
- Mandeville's Reading and Oratory
- Bible recitations, Compositions, Discussions and Declamations, weekly.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{30}}\text{Auer, op. cit., pp. 2, 3, and 11. Cf. letter from John Morgan to Gerrit Smith, March 2, 1846 (Gerrit Smith MSS), in Fletcher, op. cit., II, 689; I, 390. See also James Monroe, Oberlin Thursday Lectures (Oberlin, Ohio: E. J. Goodrich, 1897); James H. Fairchild, Oberlin: The Colony and the College, 1833-1883 (Oberlin, Ohio: E. J. Goodrich, 1883), pp. 290-291.}\]
Ayres' blunt, dogmatic manner was not calculated to win him the admiration of those he criticized.

It is true that actors of mediocrity at times took lasting offense at Mr. Ayres because of his criticism of their shortcomings. Such actors are too ignorant and too conceited to profit by any suggestion, and in their littleness they are apt to lay the legitimate animadversions of the critic to a personal spite on the part of the critic. To any person well acquainted with Mr. Ayres it is not necessary to say that he had the instincts of the true critic in this—that he would tell a friend that friend's faults, and add no measure of emphasis to the telling of the faults of one to whom he was not a friend. He was absolutely without malice, and it was his misfortune that his natural brusqueness of personal manner and a positive style of writing were often without warrant misconstrued.

Still Ayres was successful in inspiring the intelligent actor to study along the line he suggested. With his full beard, Ayres was an unusual and an impressive man. . . . His bearing was dignified and his manner bespoke the gentleman of the old school. His habit of life was very methodical. His pupil Eliza Warren, who attended him devotedly during his last illness, found him a handsome man, with the manner, at once dignified and courteous, which bespeaks the true gentleman. He was almost quaint with his high ideals, his thorough culture and fine sense of honor. As a young man he had almost a morbid sense of honesty in life and expression and throughout life he adhered to his ideals to a degree seldom met with. Few would have supposed him to be a man of tender sentiments, but those who knew him well understood his gentle nature and tender heart. He was susceptible to all that was beautiful in the external world, yet he lived so wholly in his mental life that age did not touch him. Quietly and unostentatiously he continually performed acts of charity and at times systematically denied himself certain luxuries—to almost necessities—that he

31[Waldron], loc. cit.
32"Death," loc. cit.
might relieve the condition of a less fortunate acquaintance. \(^{33}\)

Characteristically, Ayres performed these charitable acts "in the quietest possible way." No doubt, then, he had been known better by the general public for his attempts "to see to it, so far as lay in his power, that the laws were enforced. Many times he caused the arrest of law-breakers and went to the pains of appearing against them in the courts, solely for the public good." Concerning this particular hobby, as it was designated, "it was often said that if the community had a hundred citizens as public-spirited as he the city would be bettered greatly in its government." \(^{34}\)

Ayres's strict sense of honesty and striving for perfection and precision carried over into his writing, especially into his criticisms of literature and acting. But although "merciless," he was "never unjust. And he was always as severe in criticising himself as in criticising others. His mind was open. He was a generous antagonist in a dispute and was ready to acknowledge himself wrong when proven to be so." \(^{35}\) In this connection, Ayres pointed out that his adding a critical analysis

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\(^{34}\) "Death," loc. cit.

\(^{35}\) Ibid. See also Thomas, op. cit., 203: Ayres "evinces, generally speaking, just and clear views. He may perhaps, here and there exhibit a tendency to what might strike some as hypercriticism; and his 'brief discussions' may occasionally be extended to an unnecessary, not to say a tedious length. . . . But whatever may be thought of some of his remarks and criticisms, probably few competent judges will be disposed to question the general correctness of his views, or deny the value and importance."
of Canon Fleming's reading of certain passages in Shakespeare, to a second edition, "will make the book much more instructive, provided the student take the trouble to decide how far I [Ayres] am right in criticizing the learned Canon." Moreover, on re-examining Shylock's speech "I am not bound to please thee with my answer," Ayres changed his own former interpretation to agree with that of Canon Fleming.

Our author marks no word in this speech for emphasis. I [Ayres] have always emphasized thee very strongly, and this, possibly, will be considered by most persons the more effective reading; but is it the more correct? That, I am inclined to think, is more than doubtful. Should I ever play the scene again, I think I shall adopt the Canon's reading, speaking the speech in a sneering rather than in an angry tone. Treated in this manner, I should not be surprised to see the speech gain in effectiveness.36

"The positive personality of Mr. Ayres enabled him to overcome much of the early opposition which the brusqueness of his criticisms engendered, and for forty years he had been a guiding force among actors and elocutionists."37 Solomon Henry Clark said, "I would rather take his reading of a paragraph, as far as emphasis is concerned, than that of any other elocutionary critic in America." Clark also observed Ayres's efforts to become identified as a precisionist and noted: "Precisionist ('one that would be absolutely correct,' he defines it) that he is, he fails utterly to see that before one can be precise he must know

36Essentials, pp. 1 and 115-116.
37warren, op. cit., 12.
Nonetheless, a student to the end, forever trying to perfect his mental discipline and to increase the precision with which he expressed ideas, Ayres drew upon an enviable background.

His wide knowledge and what seemed to be an inborn gift for using our language correctly, made him the acknowledged authority. Although he was a severe critic the rare combination of positiveness and accuracy make his criticisms of unusual value. As a grammarian and orthoquist he made rigid exactions; and amid the laxities of our age, in this regard, he seemed to belong rather to the times of Addison and Steele. 39

Then too, the products of Ayres's life were patterned after the belief that "he is the greatest that does the best work, though of his work there may be but very little. There is more glory and more money in playing one part superbly than in playing a hundred parts tolerably. 'Paint but little,' Lessing makes the prince say to the artist, Conti, 'but paint that little much.'" 40

Notwithstanding the value of Ayres's comments upon current theatrical behavior, some personal weaknesses in Ayres's make-up interfered, at times, with a balanced critical acumen. For example, no doubt there was a relationship between Ayres's vitriolic attacks upon the practices

38 S. U. Clark, 'The New Elocution Not Mechanical but Psychologic,' in "Empiricism vs. Science in Elocution," Kerner's Magazine, XVI (July, 1894), 239-248. See especially pp. 241 and 239. Incidentally, Ayres was "the only teacher to whom Clark ever acknowledged any indebtedness." Clark carried on Ayres's campaign to supplant mechanical, artificial, and exaggerated elocution with a more rational and restrained interpretation; Clark's labors helped to realize this goal in the twentieth century. Cf. Giles Wilkeson Gray, "Some Teachers and the Transition to Twentieth-Century Speech Education," in Wallace, op. cit., p. 430.


40 Ayres, Acting, p. 33.
of the new school and his dismissal from the teaching staff of Franklin H. Sargent's acting school. Ayres had been adjudged old fashioned in failing to adjust to a Delsarte-directed program of training.

Then too, some of the over-all effect of a stage production was lost to this critic whose overweening interest in vocal delivery counted it "fortunate as to be seated where it was light enough to enable me to see the text and to note the readings." Moreover, Ayres felt no shame in revealing:

Having been accustomed for these twenty years to sit in complimentary seats at the theaters, I was loath to pay to see even Miss Ward and her new comedy, so I attacked the box office through another, and on Saturday night I had, as it chanced, three seats at my disposal, and as it also chanced I had use for only one of them.

Had I known, however, what an exceptional treat it is to see The Queen's Favorite, as it is played by Miss Ward and her company, reluctant as I am to part with money for amusement of any sort, I should have been strongly tempted to break my custom and to pay my money.41

At least when he was revisiting the same production, Ayres attended the theatre "less, however, for amusement than for study." But Ayres's lack of balance, in the severe attitude with which he approached judgment of theatre activities, received some relief in his giving the devil his due. Ayres recognized, for example, the popular, money-making results achieved by dashing, vigorous, pleasing personalities in their pursuit of the acting trade. His devotion, nevertheless, to a performance which he adjudged charming "from beginning to end," although the stage business "was wretched," enlisted his sitting "it out three times in one week"

for no other reason, seemingly, than personal pleasure and satisfaction in witnessing effective delivery within well-conceived characterizations. 42 Ayres's view was limited, basically, by his belief that people should attend the theatre only to listen to the interpretative skill of various actors as the latter communicate the intellectual, including the emotional, content of a worthy drama. 43

This critical outlook gave off signs of Ayres's having developed in close proximity to the tenets of the old school. Ayres's attitude reflected the critic William Winter's persistence, at times, "in clinging to ideas and ideals which were no longer acceptable to his contemporaries." 44 His reaction may also be compared with the excessive adoration of the past evinced in the writings of H. J. Eldredge, that is, "Clement Scott (whose tastes had been formed in the Macready school)." 45 And, in truth, Ayres avowed "being a bit incredulous and rather slow to accept the new." 46 No doubt, then, such labels as "sorehead" and "crank" and "old fogey" probably came to rest upon him in his labors.

"Although Mr. Ayres had many intellectual antagonists his personal enemies were few indeed. He had a small circle of close friends, and nearly all of them were friends of many years' standing." 47 Ayres never

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42 Ibid., pp. 126, 231, and 199-200.
43 Ibid., p. 41.
46 Acting, p. 270.
47 "Death," loc. cit.
married. His great respect for womanhood, however, could be detected in
his chiding "some ungallant monster [who] has said that women have only
two passions, love and avarice." He cited, from Grégoire: "Consideration
for woman is the measure of a nation's progress in social life."48

At the time of Ayres's death, his only living relative was a niece,
who apparently had not been very close to this uncle. In March of 1914,
more than eleven years after his death, she renewed the copyright on
her uncle's Essentials of Elocution (1836). Her name was Miss Frances
Tremaine and, in 1914, she was living at 1516 Farwell Avenue in Chicago,
Illinois.49 "An investigation disclosed that the present owner of the
building has only been there 12 years, and no information is available
as to the present whereabouts of Miss Tremaine."50

Throughout his life, Ayres was motivated by the following principle:
"Laudable achievements will ever have quite as large a following as
plethoric purses. Lauds and goods are not the things we set the highest
value on, many as there are that seem to think so." Then too, his desire
for success was guided by a belief that "gratitude and recognition are
two of the sweetest things in life, and the lack of them makes more
misanthropes than everything else put together." He also applied this
belief in criticizing current behavior in the theatre.

48 Alfred Ayres [Thomas Embley Osburn], The Mentor (1st ed., 1884;

49 Personal letter from Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York, New York,
August 26, 1958.

50 Personal letter from Lester M. Barritt, Assistant Postmaster,
There are many men in this country—but not in Europe—that seem to think it beneath their dignity to applaud at a place of amusement. It is never beneath any man's dignity to recognize the obligation when another exerts himself to please him. . . . There is a selfish reason why the auditor should applaud: without this kind of encouragement no performer, no matter how great his experience, can do his best. . . .

You have no more right to disturb others at a place of amusement than you have to pick their pockets, for when you disturb them you rob them of a part of that for which they have paid their money. . . . none but snobs ever make remarks about a performance in a tone that can be heard by those in their neighborhood. We sometimes encounter a kind of snobbishness in play-houses and concert-halls that is much given to talking to its companions and at those sitting near.

Ayres's displeasure with the occasional thoughtlessness of the public also found expression in his column, for he was not one to hold his personal reaction in check; he regarded as his duty to inform others of their need to reform. Accordingly, for example, he referred to "the many letters I [Ayres] receive (quite as often without any stamp to pay the postage on my answer as with one)." And again: "If I haven't replied to Mr. [Sheridan] Block before, it has been because The Mirror's advertisers have left so little space for matters of this sort." His lack in tact and his general disregard for the practical problems of the business world were weaknesses, apparently, which he refused or was unwilling to acknowledge.

In this connection, Ayres introduced the article which constitutes the supplement to the second edition of his Acting book by noting: "The following article was written for Werner's Magazine, but, for some

reason that I have been unable to divine, Werner's Magazine refused to
print it." No doubt, Ayres's article criticizing two writers in the
Werner's Magazine for September, 1893, went against the editorial policy
of a periodical which preferred to "give the aspirant a chance to bask
in the sunlight of encouragement rather than criticism. . . . There is
room in Werner's Magazine for every word of help and cheer. There is
no space, even for sale, to the fault-finder." The latter view, of
course, sorted oddly with Ayres's avowed purpose: "I write less for
the purpose of teaching the art of reading than for the purpose of showing
the deficiency of the dramatic profession in a knowledge of the art." Incidentally, even when a stroke left his body helpless, Ayres's
mind remained clear and brilliant until a very few days before his death.

The critical habit clung to him to the very last. Three days before
his death a visitor remarked that a certain actor "merely played a
small part" in a production that was under discussion. Mr. Ayres
thought a moment and then said: "Do you mean, sir, that he 'merely
played a small part,' or that he played merely a small part?" Dur­
ing his illness, even when he seemed to be at the very door of death,
he called the attention of those about him several times to their
misuse of words.

Ayres's style in writing reflected his intense personal convictions,
and the presentation was often polemic. His frequent repetition of his
basic beliefs, with emotional appeals for their immediate application,

52 Acting, pp. 160-161, 205, and 277. An original source: Alfred

53 "The Elocutionist a Type," Werner's Magazine, XXX, No. 4
(December, 1902), 32.

54 Acting, p. 110.

55 "Death," loc. cit.
may appear to represent needless belaboring of elemental principles. But the need of the time called for such avid dedication from a conscientious critic. Ayres's pointed attacks upon status quo may be compared with the type which John Crosby, a television critic of today, advises the Parent-Teacher Magazine to level against pernicious tendencies at work in this modern-day medium of expression. Crosby suggests: "Don't simply say it once; say it again and again." Ayres, too, was guided by a demonstrated need for "a steady outcry" in support of reform.

His outspoken approach, whether or not it always furthered the cause he championed, was often irritating to those he criticized. Ayres wrote, for example: "Between Mr. Kelley and Mr. Shine there appears to me to be little to choose. Neither of them has learned enough of the actor's art to entitle him to respectful consideration. . . . Among the men in Miss Morris's company there are two or three playing important parts that if they had less merit they would have no merit at all." Apparently, though, no one was too insignificant or too important to escape his straightforward evaluation of merit. During the course of one argument, he expressed "the opinion that it would be hard to find any one anywhere who talks more pernicious nonsense than does Mr. Dion Boucicault!"

56John Crosby, "Calls TV a Crime Against Children" (New York syndicated column), Post-Dispatch (St. Louis), LXXXI, No. 235 (September 9, 1959), 2D.

57Acting, pp. 185, 183, and 149.
Also irritating to some readers, although reflecting a literary nicety of the time, may have been such self-conscious writing as the following: "All great actors have not only been great elocutionists, but they were schooled in elocutionary art by teachers of high or low degree, from Mr. William Shakespeare, of Stratford-on-the-Avon, to Miss Louisa A. Fanges, of New York on the Hudson." And again: "That elocution is an eminently intellectual art—an art the gymnastic side of which to the intellectual side is as one to many—is something the elocutionists make haste to say they know, while their doing says they know it not." Naturally, too, Ayres's writing was liberally sprinkled with literary allusions: "It is always safe to be direct and honest, subtle Iago to the contrary notwithstanding." Also Ayres did not ignore the emotional power residing in such common maxims as "whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well." Characteristically, he likened a certain actor to "the horse fresh from the desert—unbroken and unclipped."

This personality and manner in speaking and writing, moreover, helped to determine the nature of Ayres's experiences with various organizations which were being created to serve his profession. A consideration of his professional affiliations follows.

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58 Ayres, Essentials, pp. 63, 64-65, and 68.
59 Acting, pp. 184 and 160.
Ayres worked toward founding the influential National Association of Elocutionists, for instance, and spoke out enthusiastically in its first meetings. Eventually, though, his attitude became resigned to the following judgment of what took place at such conventions.

There are a good many persons who think, it would seem, that coming together and speaking some pieces to one another and clapping one another on the back and crying, Bravo, brother! and Well done, sister! whether the pieces are well spoken or not, will do something, or should do something, toward bringing elocution "into better repute with the world." This, perhaps, will do the business, but I'm skeptical; I'm afraid it won't; I don't see how it can. On the contrary, this sort of thing, it seems to me, is shaped to do harm rather than good. There is danger that it will send the tyro home distended like the pouter-pigeon, with a misconception of his own importance, in which event he is more than ever in danger of never knowing how little he knows. Chest out and chin ahigh, he says to himself: "Ha, ha! I read before an audience of experts, and they applauded! I thought I was, now I know that I am! Hallelujah! Glory to Art in the highest!" No good can come of thinking one's self a game-cock when one is only a bantam. Commonly, we profit more by being made to see our faults than by being blinded to them. Mutual admiration societies and air-castle building are very like in what they yield.

Ayres was referring, no doubt, to what he witnessed while attending the first national convention of Public Readers and Teachers of Elocution, held from June 27 through July 2, 1892, in Room 11 (capacity, 300 persons) of the Law Building of Columbia College. Even though Ayres was instrumental in having the name of the organization changed to the National Association of Elocutionists during the progress of this meeting, he did not make contributions to subsequent meetings of this group. Although the name underwent change, the original title significantly put Public

Ayres, Essentials, pp. 61-62.
before Teachers and thereby suggested an organization formed primarily for professional entertainers. In this connection, too, perhaps Ayres's criticism of convention proceedings may be compared with that of S. H. Clark, who "was at the organization meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists in 1892, gave two papers, and entered into the discussions with great interest. The following year he gave another paper; but his name soon disappeared from the roster of members. Perhaps he felt with Winans, that to the teacher of reading, as well as of public speaking, the Association had little to offer."  

Originally, however, Ayres had faith in this organization; he hoped that it would lift elocution from the disrepute into which the art of delivery had been falling. A brief history of the founding of the organization, together with the part Ayres played, may be helpful at this juncture. 

As early as the autumn of 1882, an interview between Miss Kate S. Hamlin and Edgar S. Werner resulted in the latter's publishing a letter, written by the former, in his periodical The Voice during November of that year. The letter, thus circulated among members of the profession, advocated a general meeting or even a national convention of elocutionists.

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62 Gray, in Wallace, op. cit., p. 430; cf. p. 435. Incidentally, although they did not contribute to the proceedings, Clark's name appears in the roster of membership through the year 1901, and Winans's name through the last listing in 1916. See Vols. X and XXV, respectively, of the Proceedings of the National Association of Elocutionists.
But not until February, 1892, almost ten years later, did Hannibal A. Williams of New York issue a "Preliminary Circular" relative to such a convention. "A meeting was held April 1 [, 1892], at 81 West 90th Street, New York, to which New York elocutionists were invited." 63

Of the fifty-two persons who were elected to serve on various committees, the signature of Alfred Ayres headed an alphabetized list of a select fifteen "Public Readers and Teachers of Elocution in New York City and Brooklyn" who had in their charge the drafting of a so-called "General Circular." This committee claimed that "many of the readers and teachers in New York and vicinity have been consulted." The survey revealed the latter's "enthusiasm at the prospect of a convention and their willingness to assist in every way toward its success."

Then too, Ayres and F. Townsend Southwick, both of whom subsequently resigned, were the original members of the Printing Committee; Werner functioned as its chairman. Ayres was also a member of the Committee of Invitation, along with seventeen others, which included such prominent persons as Edgar S. Werner, F. F. Mackay, Caroline B. LeRow, Nelson Wheatcroft, Mrs. Genevieve Stebbins, Hannibal A. Williams, and Franklin H. Sargent. Later the chairman for the group was Reverend Francis T. Russell, son of the William Russell who collaborated with James E. Murdoch in preparing Orthophony during 1845; incidentally, Russell was also chairman of the Literary Committee. 64

63 *Proceedings of the First National Convention of Public Readers and Teachers of Elocution*, I (1892), 138-139.

64 Ibid., I, 140 and 139
Ayres's participation in the first actual convention began at the nine o'clock meeting, called to order by President P. P. Mackay on the morning of Wednesday, June 29, 1892. The first paper, presented by Nelson Wheatcroft, was entitled "Elocution and Stage Art." After Wheatcroft's relatively brief presentation, the first speaker to gain recognition from the chair was Alfred Ayres. Ayres's uninterrupted remarks, during this discussion period, exceeded in length the speech upon which he was commenting.

It was not surprising, then, that the immediate reaction when Ayres sat down took the form of the following motion, which carried as proposed by T. J. McAvoy: "I move that the time of the regular discussers be limited to ten minutes." At this point, too, Thomas Clarkson Trueblood felt a need to bolster the morale of the group. He observed that "we have this splendid convention. In spite of the railing of those both in and out of the profession, elocution has grown to its present proportions . . ., how is it that all the colleges are employing teachers of elocution?—colleges that never employed them before to-day."

Ayres's criticism of what he later termed the workings of a mutual admiration society was even more completely overruled when, next, hearty applause greeted Mrs. Emma Dunning Banks and her recitation of Kellogg's "Holly. Then, the Reverend Dr. Thwing took the chair as President Mackay stepped down to read a paper on "Passion and Emotions."^65

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^65 *Ibid.*, I, 39-43. McAvoy gave his address as 56 Talbot Block, Indianapolis, Indiana. T. C. Trueblood, at that time, had just been made full professor and head of the new Department of Elocution and Oratory in the University of Michigan. He held this post until his retirement in 1926. According to Gray, in *Wallace, op. cit.*, pp. 425-27: Trueblood "was never able to understand why the seventeen founders of the present Speech Association of America could not have worked through
Ayres's theory had consistently denied a prominent place to the popular concept of emotion; Ayres analyzed emotion as a function of thought. Incidentally, most of what Ayres said on this occasion had already appeared, practically verbatim, in an August, 1888, issue of the New York Mirror where Ayres attacked the Palmer-Boucicault Theatre School. 66

Whereas in the original diatribe Ayres addressed his remarks to Mr. Boucicault, his convention presentation was leveled at "the anti-elocutionists," in common with whom "Mr. Wheatcroft, it seems, is of opinion that elocution is a fascinating pitfall for the student of stage art." No doubt, too, Ayres’s ire had been piqued by the seemingly flippant way in which his adversary had approached the problem, for Wheatcroft had begun:

I wish first, ladies and gentlemen, to express the sense of injury I feel at the hands of the Program Committee, first, in asking an actor to do anything original, and, secondly, for calling on me for a matinee at 9 o'clock in the morning. I do not think any self-respecting actor would undertake the task. I had hoped, with a lightness of heart, that the lateness of the hour at which most of us retired last night (thanks to the generosity, liberality and hospitality of Mr. Werner) would play havoc with the attendance,

the Speech Arts Association, in which he had been so active since its founding in 1892. Winans probably expressed the difficulty adequately when he said, "... it had little to offer to the teacher of public speaking, since its chief interest was entertainment." Despite the fact that there were in the older organization many members, including Trueblood, whose interests were academic, and who emphasized the educational rather than the entertainment aspects of speech, Winans' evaluation was, on the whole, probably just. The National Speech Arts Association, of course, did not take that title until 1906, having been founded as the National Association of Elocutionists at the First National Convention of Public Readers and Teachers of Elocution during the summer of 1892.

and I would read before only a few of my friends, with a chance of being let down easily. My hopes were in vain.

Were I to confine my remarks to the subject allotted me and follow my first impulse, I should say so little that I am afraid you would condemn me for treating the matter lightly or even jestingly. The subject is, I believe, the "Application of the Elements of Elocution to Stage Art," or something like that. Now, I would simply say, "Do not apply it"; but I suppose I must temper the boldness of such counsel by giving my reasons. 67

Perhaps the treatment which Ayres received, in this instance, was a factor responsible for his failure thereafter to contribute to discussions of his favorite topics. The following Friday morning, for example, no comment from Ayres was forthcoming when Mrs. Edna Chaffee Noble presented a paper concerning "Methods of Teaching Shakespeare." Strangely enough, too, "The Importance of Dictionary Study," by Mrs. Josephine H. Cutter of Massachusetts, 68 elicited no contribution from Ayres.

Notwithstanding his temporary removal from the lists of combat, Ayres could not refrain from responding to the question, asked by Miss Emma Stillwell, of Pennsylvania: "What is the relation of voice to respiration?" Ayres's simple statement, namely, "You should breathe deep and breathe often," was also calculated to evoke disagreement. In


this instance, F. Townsend Southwick rose to point out: "We cannot have a set rule that you should breathe deep or breathe high. It depends entirely upon the expression you want to produce."69

Then too, in another connection, Ayres was given an opportunity to counteract an increasing tendency to replace the term elocution with the word expression.

At the first meeting of the N. A. E. a very large proportion of the persons that formed that convention were decidedly opposed to using the name "elocution," in the name of the institution (if I may so call it). They wanted to call it the Association of Expressionists; they wanted to use the word "expression" in some way. There were but two or three who were not ashamed of the word "elocution."70

When L. R. Hamberlin moved to substitute of Expression for Elocution in the official title of the organization, Robert I. Fulton declared, "Let us show the world that we are not ashamed of our name"; Ayres's motion that the words of Elocutionists be added was carried.

A possible reason behind Ayres's failure to return to subsequent meetings of the National Association of Elocutionists, however, can be detected in the following resolution which S. H. Clark offered and whose adoption was one of the final orders of business.

Whereas, we believe that the dignity of the profession is lowered by the promiscuous use of the title of "professor,

Resolved that this Association deprecate such use, except in cases where the title is conferred by a college or a university.71

69Ibid., I, 127.
Apparently Ayres was particularly proud of the euphonious Professor Alfred Avres, to no one element of which he could pretend full claim. In addition, of course, there was the effect probably exercised by the man who had dismissed Ayres as an instructor in the Lyceum Theatre School. This administrator, Franklin H. Sargent, was a member of the N. A. E., even had been serving with distinction on the Committee of Invitation with Ayres. 

Although Ayres did not return to the regular meetings of this association, he spoke before other groups at every opportunity. For example, the American Society for the Improvement of Speech, meeting in Carnegie Music Hall, heard Ayres speak of the essentials of correct pronunciation.72

By November of 1896, a so-called Werner Society had sprung up to "help to solve the problem of sane elocution"73 through "sectional work in a professional way for the betterment of its members."74 For, with regard to the parent organization, "the N. A. E. must do better work in the future than it has in the past, indulge less in theory and more in


At the first meeting of The Werner Society, the chairman introduced Ayres as "probably the best student and the most careful student of language that we have in New York City,—probably the man who has made the most careful study of words, and knows most about their value." In his opening remarks, Ayres stated: "Nobody knows better than Mr. Werner, except myself, that I came here to listen, not to be listened to."

During the next five or six minutes, Ayres warmed quickly to the delivery of a harangue against many of the very persons seated before him. He told the group, among other things:

There has been a good deal of generalizing, but nobody has come down to the concrete...

... if elocution is having a hard time of it, I say it is not the fault of the art; it is the fault of the people who profess to cultivate it; of the alleged elocutionists. ... Someone intimated that we should receive with open arms everybody who comes. I say, no such thing. Keep your ignoramuses out. How can we expect to be respected as elocutionists if we use bad grammar and pronounce badly?

... I have heard here a good deal to-night about "voice-culture," "physical culture." I have heard a great deal about the gymnastic side of elocution; but I have heard nothing about the intellectual side. In order to read well the first step is to find out what the author says, what his thought was; not always an easy thing, by a long shot; sometimes a very difficult thing. Having found that out, the next thing is how to speak so as to make that thought appear. If you make that thought appear and make it forcible, you have done all that any elocutionist can do.

Letter from Miss Miriam Nelke, Public Reader and Teacher of Elocution, New Orleans, Louisiana, "Proceedings of The Werner Society," Werner's Magazine, XVIII (December, 1896), 1102. Nelke had attended three of the five annual meetings held by the N. A. E.
Ayres's remarks finally culminated in the following heated exchange of words:

[Mr. Ayres:] That congregation of elocutionists that came together in New York four or five years ago seemed to me to resolve themselves very quickly into a mutual admiration society. They all seemed to come there to show off. They all came with a lot of pieces to speak, and if they got a chance they spoke them; and it seemed to me, as a rule, the worse they spoke them the more they were applauded. That did not speak well for this congregation of experts. I remember distinctly there was a young lady got up and read something, as I thought, intelligently, naturally, without any fuss or fury, as far as she went--

Miss Bangs [interrupting the speaker]: Madame Chairman, I rise to a point of order. I think that we have expressed that our profession is a profession, and that it was not wise, not just, nor kind to speak ill of those in the profession.

Mr. Ayres: I believe in calling things by their right names. People go through the world pretending they are something they are not, and somebody ought to tell them they are not--

Miss Bangs [interrupting the speaker]: I again rise to a point of order.

The Chairman: I will say to this speaker, in response to that point of order, that my appreciation and my respect for the teachers of elocution have been much raised by my presence here this evening; that I am delighted to have heard the women here to-night, and those gentlemen who have addressed you, and that I go away with my feelings very much heightened, the feelings I have always had for the art of expression, that noble art which makes us acquainted with the finest literature in the world.

Mrs. Harriet Webb: As a member of that downtrodden race, I wish to thank the Chairman for the remarks she has kindly made in behalf of the profession.

The Chairman: I will add to that that I have never heard before so many women speak with so much correctness and clearness, not only without any hesitation, but their meaning so well expressed and altogether so free from faults which usually attach themselves to any form of statement, and this, not when speaking the words of others, but when you are simply expressing your own words. I think myself that not only were the words admirably chosen, but admirably spoken; and I have been impressed with the feeling that the average presented here to-night was above what I conceived it to be.

Mr. Ayres: This audience doesn't want any more of me.

The Chairman: Has anyone anything more to say? [No answer.]

The chairman then focused attention upon another topic which, just as had taken place during the 1892 meeting, stood in contrast to Ayres's view of emotion as merely a function of thought. The chair, who incidentally continued to favor the term expression in spite of Ayres's remarks about its use, left consideration of Ayres by reaffirming the belief that "it is the heart primarily, the heart finally, that you must appeal to, because it is not out of the head, it is out of the heart that are the issues of words."

But even this chairman could not avoid observing, along with Ayres and Clark and Winans, that "the future of elocution is not in the line of the entertainer. The future of elocution, and its highest mission, it seems to me, is in the line of teaching." Moreover, at this time, others were beginning to agree with Ayres concerning what took place at many meetings of the National Association of Elocutionists. An instructor of public speaking in the University of Pennsylvania, George E. Eynson, pointed out:

Most societies, educational and otherwise, are organized for the purpose of benefiting their members, but elocutionary societies seem to be an exception to the rule, inasmuch as the vanity of each person must be appealed to by giving each in turn a paper to read.

77 Cf. ibid., 1126 and 1124.


79 Loc. cit.
Notwithstanding Ayres's rejection of what the National Association of Elocutionists was offering its members, at his death the Association paid tribute to Ayres along with two other recently deceased leaders in the profession, namely: Professor William E. Chamberlain, who had written the influential Principles of Vocal Expression and Mental Technique and Literary Interpretation with Ayres's one-time pupil S. H. Clark, and F. Townsend Southwick, who helped to establish and become the president of the New York School of Expression. At the Denver meeting of 1903, the "Report of Committee on Necrology" cited Ayres as one of the pioneers of the art of public speaking in America. He was educated in elocution both here and abroad. In Philadelphia he was a student of Lemuel E. [?G.] White; abroad he studied with several of the actors and teachers of elocution. His teaching was done mostly in this country in private. He was an authority on English pronunciation; he was the terror of the actors of the New York stage, because he had determined to reform their pronunciation and nightly he would be found in the audience with his pencil and paper to take note of the inaccuracies in pronunciation, and the next day as critic would publish them in some of the papers. To him, as much as to any other of our teachers, is due the breaking down of artificiality in English pronunciation. He was one of the most trenchant correspondents of newspapers and dramatic magazines. . . . The profession loses in him one of the ablest and most helpful of the critics.

This tribute, then, may serve as a fitting summary of the way in which other persons, in his general field, evaluated the life and the contributions of Alfred Ayres.

Summary

During Ayres's lifetime, he performed duties in relation to his various professional functions: ophthalmologist, linguist and translator.

80 "Report of Committee on Necrology," Proceedings of the National Association of Elocutionists, XII (1903), 183.
orthopaedist, verbalist, actor, playwright and adapter, teacher and coach, author and editor, theatre critic and correspondent, public reader, and elocutionist.

His education and training provided a sound foundation for later achievements. Indeed, he preferred to remain primarily a student and a teacher and to forego any temptation to write for a select group of scholars. Ayres observed the need of the time for effective application of basic principles and elemental knowledge.

His style in presentation, then, looked to simplification and frequent repetition of what often became emotional appeals for reform. True, his blunt, dogmatic manner originally encountered opposition, especially from the performers he criticized without mercy. However, the devotedness of his positive personality and the sincerity of his conscientious expression of intense personal convictions soon overcame this obstacle. His suggestions were thereby put in a favorable position, which enabled them to work for the betterment of the individual actor and of the profession in general.

Ayres searched out every opportunity to place his ideas before the public, whether by means of personal letters and conversations or through the printed page and the prepared speech or by way of other teachers and speakers. Notwithstanding, Ayres early decided against continuing his active participation in the National Association of Elocutionists.

Granted, this move did not reflect the position of such a leader as Thomas C. Trueblood, who remained satisfied with this organization even when the Speech Association of America began taking definite form
more than twenty years later. Significantly, though, Ayres considered judgment antedated the view of S. H. Clark and of James Albert Winans. For the latter soon observed that the organization, founded in 1892, had been offering increasingly fewer benefits to serious students and teachers in the profession.

In this evaluation, as well as in relation to other areas to be noted throughout the investigation to follow, Ayres appeared as an authority speaking from a well-qualified background. But, even more important, herein Ayres appeared as an authority passing judgments and, in effect, anticipating developments for which, in many instances, others would receive credit in the annals of speech and theatre.
Alfred Ayres wrote authoritatively about the principles of acting. His interest in words and their expression led him to center his theory, for acting as an art, in the thought which a playwright intended to convey. The position Ayres upheld was challenged by A. C. Wheeler, a drama critic who wrote under the name Nym Crinkle. They carried on a lengthy dispute, during the late eighteen-eighties, in the pages of the New York Dramatic Mirror. Their numerous replies and rejoinders took up echoes of the Constant Coquelin-Henry Irving discussions of acting theory, which had been appearing in leading periodicals throughout the decade. Although the Irish-American Dion Boucicault had already stepped into this European discussion, the latter found a new American ramification in the comments exchanged by Ayres and Wheeler.

Since many of Ayres's ideas on theatre stemmed from his beliefs concerning the stage practice of Edwin Forrest (1806-1872) and Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876), this chapter also examines these two dramatic artists as a satisfactory base upon which to build acting theory and, as the next three chapters indicate, theatre criticism. Then too, because the period of theatre history in which Ayres served began to look to a different style of acting from that of Forrest and Cushman, the chapter concludes by differentiating these so-called old and new schools in acting. First, however, a presentation of the Coquelin-Irving discussion is needed to understand better how Ayres's contributions related to the acting theories of the time.
The age of Coquelin and Irving squirmed uneasily when it tried to resolve the following conflict in ideas: Even though theatre demands seeming reality and naturalness in its products, the means for bringing about such expression draw upon artificial technique and an unreal physical embodiment. Moreover, even a perfected product builds upon what are only selected and often magnified elements of the whole reality. Basically, though, a seeming truth of the unreal must gloss over technical machinations.

The theatrical world is divided into two opposing camps in regard to the question whether the actor should partake of the passions of his part,—weep himself in order to draw tears,—or whether he should remain master of himself throughout the most impassioned and violent action on the part of the character which he represents; in a word, remain unmoved himself, the more surely to move others, which forms the famous paradox of Diderot. 1

Paradoxically, on the stage, an emotion must seem real and yet its expression must be artificial. The problem is further complicated, of course, by the fact that the emotion, real though it must appear, is not the emotion of the actor, but rather that of the character he happens to be portraying.

Henry Irving believed that the value of the actor's art increases as the actor is able to make a character's feeling more and more real to himself. The theatrical situation should come nearer and nearer to

reality for the actor, as he begins to "feel the scene," to "live the part," to experience the emotions called for. Constant Coquelin, on the other hand, did not think that the actor should cut loose from his moorings, in real life, to such an extent that the latter's control over the media of meaningful expression would suffer. The actor should not sink his real self so far in the part that he loses his grip upon the reins commanding technique.

Generally speaking, Ayres endorsed Coquelin's position. He advised:

The average American actor should go back and make the acquaintance of the mortar and pestle of his profession. In France such art (!) as his would not be tolerated for an hour.

In France, the members of the profession would tell you that the best course to pursue to become an actor is to spend two or three years in the Paris Conservatoire. This is the course the most famous French players have pursued for at least several generations.

Some of the best acting ever seen," says Mr. Wheeler, "has been done in moments when the actors passed beyond the conditions of conscious volition." This fact was attested by Talma and others, he says. Here is what Talma said on the subject of volition:

"I calculate everything and my efforts are all premeditated and reasoned upon beforehand, and it is always when I am most completely master of myself that I receive the greatest applause."

Molière, another great French player, said: "The actor is master of the emotions of others in exact proportion as he controls his own."

Also in general, Ayres's intellectual opponent, A. C. Wheeler, upheld the doctrine championed by Henry Irving. Indeed Irving had provided an introduction for Talma's Reflections on the Actor's Art; he had been successful in having an English translation of Talma's essay appear in The Theatre during 1877. No doubt, too, an 1887 magazine article by Irving, criticizing Coquelin, was Wheeler's source for the Talma.

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2Ayres, Acting, pp. 21, 28, and 258; cf. 25-26. Italics are in the presentation by Ayres.
reference with which Ayres took issue.

But in accusing Ayres of grouping "the most unlike players under one sweeping generalization," strangely enough, Wheeler referred to "the studied formalism of an Irving." Still Wheeler supported what the popular mind associated with Irving's manner while on stage. On one occasion, for example, Wheeler drew upon a story being circulated about Ayres's own idol, Edwin Forrest, to bring home mercilessly the opposition's point of view.

When he [Forrest] crowned his eventful life with a performance of Lear that transcended everything that had ever been seen on our stage, what was his testimony to that performance? When some one said to him, "Mr. Forrest, you have acted Lear better than I ever saw it acted," did he reply, "Ah, yes! I have at last cut and dried it; I have grown to value that spontaneity which isn't spontaneity; I have been all my life in the clouds, feeling and suffering; now I am in the grass, thinking?"

Was this Mr. Forrest's answer?

Far from it. He said; "I act Othello, Spartacus, Macbeth, sir; but, by God, I am Lear!"

One of the cardinal tenets of Coquelin's theory was his belief in the duality of the actor's personality. As he expressed it, the critical and "ever-impassive first self" must be master of the self which creates or reproduces the character presented on stage.

This is true at all time, but especially during the actual performance of a play. In other words, the actor must remain master of himself even in those moments where the public, carried away by his acting, thinks him most absolutely distracted; he must see what he is doing, judge himself, and retain his self-possession. Briefly, he must not experience a shadow of the sentiments he is expressing—at that very moment when he is expressing them with the greatest truthfulness and power.

3Quoted by Ayres, Acting, pp. 264 and 265; see pp. 257-258 for Ayres's previous observation that "Mr. Wheeler likes to get into the clouds, while I like to keep down to the grass," thinking in terms of "measured-and-molded, cut-and-dried, prepared-beforehand spontaneity." Italics are in the original.
Reflecting Ayres's opinion that there is one and only one best way to deliver a given line, Coquelin pointed out:

The right interpretation once found, let it be maintained once and for all: it is for you to fix the means of recapturing it identically when and where you wish; the actor must never lose his head. It is false, it is ridiculous to think that the height of the actor’s art is to forget that he is before the public. If you so identify yourself with your part that in looking at the spectators you ask yourself, Who on earth are all those people? and no longer know where you are, you have ceased to be an actor: you are a lunatic. . . . Study your part, enter into the skin of your character but never abdicate, hold the reins.

A similarity to Ayres’s general point of view, which placed thought far above emotion, can be detected where Coquelin stated his position in the controversy with Irving.

I hold this [Diderot] paradox to be literal truth; and I am convinced that one can only be a great actor on condition of complete self-mastery and ability to express feelings which are not experienced, which may never be experienced, which from the very nature of things never can be experienced.

. . . . . . . . . . .

. . . the true actor is always ready for action. He can take up his part, no matter when, and instantly excite the desired effect.

. . . He needs not to wait until he experiences these emotions himself, or for grace from above to enlighten him.

. . . the artist’s brain must remain free, and all emotions, even his own, must expire on the threshold of his thought. These are two very different regions.

In reply, granting that “few things can be said about the stage at any time, which will not excite controversy,” Irving proceeded to point

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There is, of course, much in M. Coquelin's article that is true and that is admirably put— notwithstanding that he frequently upsets on one paragraph the proposition of another. . . .

When M. Coquelin maintains that an actor should never exhibit real emotion, he is treading old and disputed ground. It matters little whether the player shed tears or not, so long as he can make his audience shed them; but if tears can be summoned at his will and subject to his control, it is true art to utilise such a power, and happy is the actor whose sensibility has at once so great a delicacy and discipline. . . . Eloquence is all the more moving when it is animated and directed by a fine and subtle sympathy which affects the speaker though it does not master him. . . . Kean was not a player who left anything to hazard, and yet he had inspired moments, which anyone holding M. Coquelin's views might ascribe to insanity. Diderot and Talma pointed out—and M. Coquelin repeats the lesson—that an actor has a dual consciousness—the inspiring and directing self, and the executive self. Yet, it was also Talma who remarked that an actor will often leave the stage at the end of a scene, trying to remember what he has done, instead of thinking what he has still to do. This, at all events, is idealism in art, and my complaint of M. Coquelin is that he seems to allow to idealism only a very small place in his philosophy. 7

To round out a presentation of the Coquelin-Irving controversy, Dion Boucicault's penetrating analysis follows.

M. Coquelin is an accomplished comedian, whose great natural gifts were cultivated in the College of the Histrionic Art, the Comédie Française, where he graduated as a star.

Mr. Irving is a comedian who has had no collegiate training for the stage, as there is no school of art in England.

The Frenchman, therefore, acquired his principles before he acquired his experience. The Englishman acquired his practice from which he deduced his principles.

The dependence of the artist on mechanism, so eloquently and

truthfully laid down by M. Coquelin, may be accepted as applicable to comedy and to such parts of tragic plays as may contain an infusion of comedy; but—with great respect to him—no further.

The interdependence of the artist from mechanism, claimed per contra by Mr. Irving, is admirable so far as pure tragedy is concerned, and only in scenes where such effusion is indicated by the eruptive language of the poet, which, if given with mechanical deliberation, might appear beneath the level of the volcanic passion.\(^8\)

In replying to such comments, Coquelin expressed his appreciation for the interest and attention being directed toward the problems underlying this discussion of acting theory. Then too, Coquelin was not ignorant of the possibility that he and his opponents might be "of the same mind on more points than . . . [they] imagined."\(^9\) At times Irving read more into the doctrine of Coquelin than the Frenchman meant to be found there. Such interpolation was often contradicted by Coquelin's own statements, which a more careful reading by Irving could have unearthed.

In this connection, Coquelin's reply to Irving asked:

Did I express myself badly? It is to be feared I did, for in more than one case Mr. Irving seems to have represented me as saying either what I did not say or the contrary of what I said.

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\(^9\)Constant Coquelin, "A Reply to Mr. Dion Boucicault," *Harper's Weekly*, XXXI (November 12, 1887), 831-832, in Coquelin, Irving, and Boucicault, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-93. See especially p. 93. Cf. in the same issue, beginning on p. 829, the tenor of Coquelin's "A Reply to Mr. Henry Irving," also in Coquelin, Irving, and Boucicault, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-82. See especially pp. 80-81: "This sentence must have been passed in a moment of that divine inspiration which Mr. Irving makes out to be the privilege of superior artists, for he dispenses with mentioning human reasons in support of his verdict. It becomes me, therefore, to bow my head."
The only points on which he consents not to combat are the "truisms," of which, he observes, my essay "contains a comforting proportion." True, Constant Coquelin and Henry Irving did not differ so basically as a quick perusal of their discussion may suggest. Disparity, nevertheless, can be recognised in the comparative degrees of emphasis each places upon certain facets of acting theory.

Whereas Coquelin stressed conscious control by the actor over the technical means for achieving a seemingly natural effect, Irving looked to inspiration for so-called "divine fire" to enable the actor truly to experience the scene while he was before the audience.

Perhaps the poignancy of their dispute was heightened by such personal elements as Irving’s earlier association with, and encouraging of public recognition for, the contributions Talma had made to acting theory. Irving’s early profuse praising of Talma might have made embarrassing a later recognition, on his part, of the value of another French authority.

Moreover, the severity with which Coquelin carried on the argument might have gained incentive from Coquelin’s displeasure on viewing the low position in which French actors were confined, as opposed to the honorable rank to which other actors could attain. Then too, Coquelin watched actors in other countries achieving such distinction through their interpretation of French works. "Their actors may be made members of various orders, simply for the way in which they interpret our works, and this, while the French actor, the creator of those very works, is

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declared in France non 

diemae extrare! . . . we actors are entitled to 

hold honorable rank, not only in the art whose soldiers and followers 

we are, but also in the annals of our country."¹¹

There are dangers inherent in formulating hypotheses on the basis 
of popular, present-day, stereotyped conceptions of the British and the 

French temperaments. But Coquelin recognized that "the genius of the 
two races is very different."¹² So a possible explanation for Irving's 

and Coquelin's differing points of view may lie in each theorist's 
attempt to overcome the bulwark set up against effective acting by the 
nature of his own countrymen's temperamental extreme.

No doubt, Irving saw some advisability in suggesting that his 

fellow British actors cut loose from their moorings, in real life, and 

lose themselves in their roles. Instances of many British actors' 

basically reserved and inhibited manner have become legion in the annals 
of stage directors, who have tried to penetrate this protective covering 

so that a more natural display of emotion might come forth.

But with a typical Frenchman, there is seldom a need to intensify 

the portrayal of an emotional reaction. On the contrary, a racial or 
national tendency often yields uncontrolled gesticulation and volubility 

and exaggeration in expression. Such excess makes practicable the use 
of controls to hold in check emotional expression, which is accustomed 

to go beyond the limits of a universal concept of nature. It then

¹¹Coquelin, Art and the Actor, pp. 78 and 88.

¹²"Actors and Acting," in Coquelin, Irving, and Boucicault, on- 
cit., p. 37.
follows that, as practical theorists, whereas Coquelin was encouraged
to restrain outpourings of emotion, Irving found that a process of
dynamic stimulation was expedient for the British actor.13

With this general survey of the Coquelin-Irving discussion, including
some personal elements behind the dispute, the present chapter considers
next a new development, in acting theory, which the controversy took on
the American side of the Atlantic.

In America, for Ayres and Wheeler: Thought versus Emotion

Early in January of 1888, the drama critic A. C. Wheeler, one of
whose pseudonyms was Sym Crinkle, and Alfred Ayres began composing a
series of letters to the editor of the New York Dramatic Mirror. Each
week, for a number of weeks thereafter, this correspondence was published
for the benefit of the Mirror’s readers. The Ayres-Wheeler dispute,
concerning acting theory, reflected not only the manner but also the
matter of the then current Coquelin-Irving discussion. For, at the time,
a generally accepted interpretation regarded Coquelin’s conscious
technique as an application of thought and Irving’s living the role as
his preference for emotion in acting.

Recognizing that Ayres “writes authoritatively over his name on the
philosophy of acting,” Wheeler expressed a willingness “to discuss the

13Of course, what constitutes “nature” (indeed, what “is British”
and what “is French”) will differ, among other factors, according to the
time in history and the geographical and the cultural location of the
individual making the valued judgment. In fact, Coquelin observed, ibid.: “The English idea of ‘nature’ does not correspond with ours: that is
the whole truth of the matter.”
subject of thought and emotion with Mr. Alfred Ayres, who is quite able to enter such a discussion with knowledge and fairness." Wheeler identified the area of disagreement as follows: "The whole hallucination of Mr. Ayres's philosophy springs from the mistake of supposing that art exists only to express thought. Nothing can be more erroneous. It exists to transmit emotions."

Whereas Wheeler considered "emotion the primary condition and ultimate end of art," throughout the heated exchange of ideas, Ayres maintained the position that emotion is simply one of the means wherewith we heighten the effect of the thought. There is, there can be, no emotion without a thought behind it. Without the naturally attending emotion the thought is not fully expressed by the actor. "What is the thought in a wet eye?" asks Mr. Wheeler. If a wet eye did not suggest anything, did not suggest a thought, the only difference between a wet eye and a dry eye would be that the one has a little water in it and the other hasn't.

The thought is the beginning and the end of the whole business, and the emotion the actor evolves from the thought simply serves to make the thought more impressive. The emotion is only one of the means by which the thought is made effective—is made to produce emotion in the auditor.

Stage emotions without thoughts behind them are as unthinkable as are trees without roots beneath them.15

Wheeler believed that "what we really go to the theater for is emotion, not ideas. If we have to take the ideas it is because we can sometimes get the emotion in no other way."16 And Ayres was quick to admit:

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14 Quoted by Ayres, Acting, pp. 249, 245, 252, and 257.
15 Acting, pp. 259 and 244-245.
16 Quoted by Ayres, Acting, p. 243.
True, what we go to the theater for is emotion; or, as I would express it, to be moved. But, I say again, if the emotion is absent the thought is not fully brought out. The thought, I repeat, is the beginning and the end of the whole business. Do justice to that and you do justice to all!17

In this connection, too, Wheeler observed that Ayres's view "ignores while it confuses the distinction that exists between a thought and an emotion. A thousand feelings may exist that have no symbols in words and that do not get fixed in thought. What thought is there in a pang?"18 To this criticism Ayres replied in a manner that not only suggested current French practice but also anticipated the considered judgment of many English-speaking authorities on acting.

The actor has neither pangs, nor feelings, nor emotions; he simulates them. It is thought that enables him to simulate, and the more fully he masters the thought the happier the simulation that emphasizes the thought. The thought the actor finds in the language of the play, which he can not comprehend too thoroughly nor deliver too correctly. The more fully the actor comprehends the language the better he will deliver it, and the better he will simulate that emotion that must accompany, or be a part of, the delivery in order to produce the effect intended by the author.

Moreover, Ayres continued by presenting the belief:

The actor's task may be fully described with two words—see and present. The more clearly the actor sees the author's thought, as pictured in his words, and the more clearly and forcibly he presents that thought, the greater actor he is. With creating the actor has nothing to do; his art occupies itself solely with presenting. . . . The moment an actor improves upon, or adds to, what the author has imagined, he becomes his co-worker.

"Acting may," says Mr. Wheeler, "be the spontaneous exercise of faculties in the child."

Not so. Acting, simulation, pretense, can never be spontaneous. There can be no acting of whatever sort without an effort of the mind, and the more perfect the semblance of spontaneity, the greater the mental effort always will be.19

17 *Acting*, p. 245.
19 *Acting*, pp. 244 and 247-248. Italics are in the original.
Wheeler, though, found it difficult to ignore "the fact that comparatively uneducated women walk upon the stage and do with a natural and spontaneous function that which education and drill make hard, strenuous, and painful." Ayres, of course, did not hesitate to criticize these performers severely for their inferior products. Notwithstanding, Wheeler condemned Ayres for having "nothing to do with that mysterious gift so often born with the actor, of making emotions apparent without any effort of the reason."  

Just as Ayres preferred "measured-and-molded, cut-and-dried, prepared-beforehand spontaneity," that is, the spontaneity that is useful in art and for the stage, to "heart spontaneity, gizzard spontaneity, Wheeler spontaneity," Ayres also challenged Wheeler's definition of art itself.

"Art," Mr. Wheeler says, "is the conscious endeavor of the intellect to realize an ideal."

Now there can be no such thing as an unconscious endeavor; all efforts of the intellect are conscious endeavors, and all endeavors are more or less intellectual. Further, in an unsuccessful endeavor there is no art. This definition could certainly be greatly improved.

Mr. Wheeler's syllabus leaves me, Mr. Editor, in as much of a muddle as it found me.

Thus it becomes increasingly apparent that the parties to this discussion often found themselves "arguing on parallel lines, for want of clear definitions."  

One phase of this dispute, for example, developed from a distinction which Ayres made between the elements of

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21 *Acting*, pp. 258-259 and 248.

good acting as opposed to the requisites of good acting. Into the latter category Ayres transferred the "pre-ordained" elements on which Wheeler laid primal stress: a developing soul, vocal chords, affections and appetencies, and emotions. Yet even Wheeler believed that the latter "are not laid on afterward by an artificial process."23

Ayres agreed with this view and would have held out long against any new psychology suggesting that the actor could be taught methodically to develop his emotional nature, somewhat after the pattern which Stanislavski was to put to use. Standing in contrast to Ayres, even as early as the summer of 1893, Robert I. Fulton accepted the value in formal training for emotional development. While delivering a paper entitled "Harmony of the Bush and Delsarte Philosophies," before a meeting of the National Association of Elocutionists, Fulton gave the following practical illustration.

Here is a student who can never win an oratorical contest, because he has no emotion in his delivery. He has but little emotion in his nature. What must we do with such a student? We must cultivate his emotive nature. Can it be done? Yes, by exercising his sensibilities along the line of his emotive nature, and through the vocal and actional elements which express emotion, let him work one year, two years, yes four years; give his emotive nature time to grow, and that student may come out an orator. Why? Because he has opened up the channels of his emotive nature, and has developed the power to move an audience. And thus his powers may be cultivated in other directions.24

Ayres believed, however, in the power of teaching "such things as good elocution, good gesticulation, good facial expression, ease, repose,)

23Ibid., p. 270.

and the like, [which] seem to me to be the elements of good acting."

Effective instruction linked with eventual practice, guided in the right direction, would lift the student of acting from where his natural aptitude had left him, stranded, to a higher rung on the histrionic ladder. At all times, though, he must be under the control of his brain, ever developing its capacity to serve him. For the seat of genius was there, not housed in the nerve centers as Wheeler had stated. In comparison, Ayres regarded "that undefined thing we call genius . . . as being only a high order of understanding, and not as something that certain fortunate persons have the faculty to spool up on their nerve centers to be unwound at chosen times." 25

Ayres's intellectual opponent, Wheeler, countered with the following summary of Ayres's shortcomings.

The trouble with Mr. Ayres's theory and practice is that they forever wear the strained look of conscious effort. The trouble with Mr. Ayres himself is that he thinks this strain is an accomplishment. But the fact is, nothing is so disagreeable to the observer. Mr. Ayres's thought has emphasis perching all over it. The face of his histrionism is wrinkled with rules. The preciousness of his method is punctuation. His muse is neuralgic with the pains of delivery. He cares nothing for the soul of the Old Master he has restored; he is mainly proud of the varnish that has restored him. He cowers at the idea of spontaneity because he has set that up as a bugaboo that to others has proved a guardian angel.

In the above evaluation, Wheeler failed, for instance, to take note of Ayres's dislike for rules and for the mechanized systems into which the philosophies of, say, Delsarte and Bush had deteriorated. A similarly high order of poetic license apparently helped to dictate the composition of the following diatribe, by Wheeler, "respectfully dedicated to Alfred Ayres."

25 *Acting*, pp. 271 and 270. Italics are in the original.
Let us sing the new critic, the verbalist prim
Of etymological fame,
For the plot and the passion are nothing to him,
And he drops on the words in the game.

... the etymological critic is here
With his orthoepistical sting.
He cares not a whit for the spirit or sense,
For the action he never gives grounds,
For he sits like a critical fiend on the fence
And gathers the crumbs of the sounds.

Lester Wallack no longer can hold himself stiff,
John Gilbert is wringing his hands,
For while one spoils the sound of his 'ofs' and his 'ifs,'
The other's neglecting his 'ands.'

It's not for the thoughts or emotions that burn,
But the sounds of the air they're expressed in;
It isn't of feelings or heartbeats we learn,
But the empirical rags they are dressed in.

No genius can hope to excel at this day,
Let her boast the most powerful patron,
If she sticks to the old-fashioned sound of the a,
When she ought to say "mat" in her matron.

The art histrionic will crumble to dust
And our stars to the past will be back sent,
Unless they conform (as they certainly must)
To derivation and cadence and accent.

So sing the new critic who frees us from thought
And strikes off the old-fashioned fetters;
It isn't the meaning or motive that's sought,
But articulate sound of the letters.

In adding further insult to injury, Wheeler let even *argumentum ad
hominem* carry him so far as to declare that "if Mr. Ayres were called
upon to make love he would do it by putting a nickel of emphasis into
the slot of his elocution and expect a bundle of emotion to fall out
tied up with pink ribbons."26 Be this as it may or may not be, even so

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by Wheeler, who wrote under the name Nym Crinkle, appeared originally
in the *New York Mirror*, XVII, No. 421 (January 22, 1887), 6.
avid a supporter of Ayres as the Mirror's editor Fiske could not honestly refrain from pointing out:

If there be any lack in Mr. Ayres's equipment for the critic's task, it is found in the light esteem in which he holds those qualities in an actor that are not directly due to intellectual effort. It would seem that sometimes he overlooks or underestimates the gift of temperament that is often wedded to genius. That gift is accidental, to be sure, but none the less it forms a valuable contribution to the power of the theater and to the pleasure of the public.27

Ayres replied: "Earnestness, good looks, and the like, often hide from the great public a multitude of sins . . . . I know the money value of native advantages as well as another."

Significantly, though, Ayres did "not believe the man lives that can learn to speak the part of Hamlet really well in less than a year, no matter how assiduous he may be, or how accomplished he may be in the art of delivery when he sets about the task." In this connection, Ayres had

not the least doubt that Mr. Forrest gave to the treatment of the soliloquy To be or not to be? more thought than any actor playing Hamlet to-day in America has given to the handling of the text of the whole part. . . . he read the great monologue as well, probably, as it ever has been read by mortal man—a rich reward for an actor that has a real love for dramatic art, which Mr. Forrest undoubtedly had, for to the last he took a youthful pride in bettering his personations in every possible way.28

Considering the poignancy of the Ayres-Wheeler controversy, it is not surprising to find Wheeler expressing a different opinion.

Mr. Edwin Forrest's greatest triumphs were not the result of study, of mental application, or intellectual provision [sic, perhaps "provision"], or cut-and-dried, prepared-before-hand brain efforts.

28Acting, pp. 6 n. and 46.
They were marked by what Mr. Ayres elsewhere calls "slapdash, haphazard, chaotic spontaneity." But they caught hold of the hearts of his countrymen as no subsequent efforts have done. It was only during the later part of his career that he became a student.29

Of course, Ayres hastened to rejoin with his customary air of belligerency.

Nothing could be further from the facts than what Mr. Wheeler says about the great Forrest . . . .

Now the facts are these: Forrest was always one of the closest of students. Had he not been, would it have been possible for him ever to become the precisionist he was? It could almost be said of Forrest that he never mispronounced a word, never misplaced an emphasis, or made a wrong inflection. Herein he was quite unlike any present cisatlantic player of serious parts. I do not believe that a more intellectual or a more correct, a more scholarly player than Edwin Forrest was, has ever lived.30

The dispute between Ayres and Wheeler had begun as a general discussion of the comparative importance, for acting, of thought in relation to emotion. The controversy soon focused upon specific performers as examples of the various effects which resulted from these differing theories in operation. Wheeler was quick to challenge some of the opinions which Ayres held concerning the latter's favorite actor, namely, Edwin Forrest. Forrest, along with Charlotte Cushman, provided the standard by which Ayres judged other performers. For these reasons, attention now shifts to Forrest and Cushman, the first native American actor and actress to receive the acclaim of the English-speaking world.

29Quoted by Ayres, Acting, pp. 264-265.
30Acting, pp. 272-273.
Forrest and Cushman as a Basis for Ayres

Over against the low state into which acting and delivery had been permitted to slip during the late nineteenth century, Ayres set in comparison a standard of excellence which he associated with the theory and the practice of Edwin Forrest and Charlotte Cushman.

He [Ayres] was erroneously regarded in some quarters as antiquated in his ideas on acting, but really he was a modern of the moderns in those ideas. His enthusiasm for EDWIN FORREST and CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN, whose praises he never wearied of sounding, may have led to wrong conceptions of him as a critic. He no doubt was right when he asserted that those great actors of the past would enforce their greatness to-day in the new conditions of the stage if still alive.

Ayres's evaluation of these performers' contributions is compared with the judgment passed by other critics at the time, as well as with the general view of history. In addition, because Forrest and Cushman represent the so-called old school in acting, consideration is given to their acting style and to the forces which helped to shape the course taken by their developing histrionic skill.

Most historians and critics have characterized Forrest's lasting accomplishment in terms of a segment of his career, one which is limited to his early triumphs. Or he is remembered for these same physical roles as they continued to remain the favorite of popular taste throughout his varied performances.

Despite the weakness posed by his deficiency in imagination or poetic feeling, an examination of Forrest's progressively developing acting skill reveals selective imitation and intelligent analysis at work.

shaping his elocutionary technique. The latter culminated in an order of histrionic prowess which led Ayres to associate Forrest's methods and results with the old school at its best. Today, following in the wake of the generally accepted view of Forrest's manner while acting, John E. Marsocco endorses enrollment of Forrest, by the drama critic William Winter, in a school of physical force and personal magnetism.\footnote{John E. Marsocco, "Three Acting Portrayals of the Role of King Lear from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Catholic University of America, 1952), passim.}

One early twentieth-century evaluation said that "the impression left after reading the mass of intelligent discussion upon Forrest the tragedian is, that he excelled rather in delineating tumultuous passion than in the portrayal of intellectual subtleties and poetical grace."\footnote{Alfred Bates (editor), The Drama (20 vols.; London: Smart and Stanley, 1903), XX, 33.}

Garff B. Wilson has found that some critics heard in Forrest "a melodramatic ranter . . . . He was called everything from a 'bovine beller' to a 'bewildered animal with a little grain of genius.'"

No doubt, support for Wheeler's pronouncement, that Forrest became a student only later during his career, can be detected in the following account.

In his treatment of the details of stage business, Forrest seemed to change somewhat as he advanced in years. He eliminated many of the little naturalistic touches which at first had seemed effective to him. . . .

In his readings, too, Forrest improved by omitting certain vocal tricks of imitation. We are told that in the famous lament of Othello, "Farewell the tranquil mind," he was accustomed to use a kind of musical recitative and to imitate the sounds mentioned in the passage. He uttered the words "neighing steed" in equine tones. He reproduced the shrillness of "the shrill trumpet." He gave a deep boom to the phrase "spirit stirring drum." And he swelled and rattled his
throat to portray "the engines whose rude throats the immortal Jove's dread clamors counterfeit." Alger asserts that eventually he learned to see that however effective this might be as elocution, it was neither nature nor art, but an artificiality; and then he read the passage with consummate feeling and force, his voice broken with passionate emotion, but not moulded to any pedantic cadences or flourishes.34

In support of a contradictory opinion, Ayres noted one of the books which early had helped to shape Forrest's view: the highly analytic work of James Bush, M. D., The Philosophy of the Human Voice.35

Such a believer was Mr. Forrest in study that he did not admit that his wonderful voice was a gift of Nature. "The world thinks," said he to me, "that my voice is God-given. Not at all. It's the product of culture, of practice. When I went on the stage, I got Dr. Bush's book and I studied it, and when I didn't understand anything I went to Dr. Bush and got him to explain it. Then I practiced. That's the way I came by my voice."36

Perhaps Ayres's critique erred only in its insistence, at least during the argument, that from the first Forrest displayed an exceedingly high level of precision in delivery. Moreover, Ayres believed that Forrest, at that time, achieved such distinction in terms of Ayres's later nineteenth-century criterion. But the critic of the New York Courier and Enquirer, for example, did not feel that he was out of joint with the time when he declared, March 30, 1847:


36Ayres, Acting, p. 273.
Forrest now seems to us a "robustious," violent actor, with a musical voice, but wanting taste in the management of it . . . . In Othello he was a big black man, shouting, choking, gasping half the way through . . . .

His gentlemen are not such as Shakespeare drew; they are great roaring boys that cry like fat babies, and puff and blow like sledge men. How they die! It is to be hoped there has been seldom executed on the stage such a parting as that of his Gladiator.

. . . The actor staggers in all gory, breathing so that the gods may hear; he falls, gasps, the blood gets in his throat, he stangles—faugh!

Set in opposition to this report, Forrest's interpretative prowess was recognized, especially during the latter part of his career, even by the Philadelphia Dispatch, December 17, 1872. Although predominantly hostile to Forrest, on his demise this newspaper admitted that he could grasp the meaning of a passage in Shakespeare more firmly than any actor we have ever heard. So far as interpretation of the sense was concerned, he was the greatest reader on the stage . . . . His reading was like a mathematical demonstration. His recitation of Othello's address to the Senate was a masterpiece of elocution. . . . With unusual powers of comparison and analysis, he was deficient in imagination—a faculty essential to the actor of Shakespeare.

Whereas the age saw drama critics or "paragraphists too often echo each other's criticisms without observing for themselves," such an evaluation would not be accurate if applied to Ayres. Rightfully the latter was adjudged "original in his views and original in his language." Not surprising, then, is some differing from Ayres's opinion, concerning not only Forrest's early analytic powers but also his use of nature, when the American actor-eloquence James Edward Murdoch related:

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He [Forrest] threw himself heart and soul into the feelings and passions of the author he intended to illustrate, without, however, possessing either the inclination or ability perfectly to analyze his thoughts, but grasping the whole with fervor and independent will. Under such influences he achieved a success which brought him before the public as a rising genius at an early period of life. Then came the time in which, as I have already stated, he met and was strongly impressed with Edmund Kean, whose energized enunciations and startling transitions made him the sensation of the day. Forrest, like Macready, left the truer guide, untrammeled Nature and her precepts, for a school of art which proffered a distorted, if not a perverted, imitation. In this both Macready and Forrest followed the fashion of the times.

Consider, though, Garff B. Wilson's conclusion that ostensibly Forrest's impersonations exhibited the very traits which Murdoch deplored: fidelity to the crude realities of nature, and distortion by too much personality. In this light, no doubt, Murdoch's assertions must be tempered.

The traits which distinguished our then young actor [Forrest], were really more natural than the elaborate presentations and precise mannerisms of Macready. Hence the people followed Forrest, and loved him, while those who claimed to be the elite admired and applauded Macready, who came endorsed by a metropolis which in those days in matters of art assumed the direction of American judgment. Now, true dramatic excellence is believed to lie midway between Forrest and Macready.

Besides suggesting the early impulsive nature of America's first great tragedian and the influence that was then wielded by London criticism, upon the reputedly cultured segment of American society, the passage reveals Murdoch's qualified estimate of the dramatic worth in Forrest's energetic efforts. Concerning Forrest's meeting Ayres's all-important criterion of thinking ability, however, Murdoch admitted:

41 On. cit., p. 294.
42 Dissertation, p. 74.
Progressive intellectual improvement... steadily marked his course from year to year. Many who did not admire his earlier dramatic performances were greatly impressed with his manner in the later part of his career, his impersonation of Lear being generally considered the crowning-point of his excellence.

Mr. Longfellow, who did not admire Mr. Forrest in *Jack Cade* and *The Gladiator*, speaking of his Lear, said it was a noble performance, grand and pathetic, well worthy the admiration of the lovers of good acting.43

Further indication of the forces having operated upon the development of Edwin Forrest, as an actor, is forthcoming where Ayres reported the following.

When Mr. Forrest went on the stage he took lessons of one Lemuel G. White, who was a pupil of James Fennell, an Englishman that came to this country about 1785 and died in Philadelphia in 1815. Fennell was one of the most accomplished men of his time, and was a tragedian of very nearly the first rank. White, like Forrest, was a precisionist. In using the word precisionist I would be understood to mean one that is not satisfied with the approximative; one that would be absolutely correct; one that, for example, in reading is content to work at a passage just as long as any betterment in the delivery seems possible.44

Incidentally, the precisionist White was also a teacher of Alfred Ayres.45

Not only did both Forrest and Murdoch consult Rush for guidance, in person as well as through the latter's writings; as a young man, Murdoch had also placed himself regularly under the tuition of the late Lemuel G. White, an elocutionist who had previously taught another pupil destined to obtain great distinction—Edwin Forrest. Mr. White introduced Murdoch to the late Dr. James Rush, from whom he studied the science of the human voice and gathered many valuable principles depending on muscular action, *Jack Cade* and *The Gladiator*, like *Metamora*, drew the biggest houses and were, therefore, presented much more often than Forrest's Shakespearian ventures.

43 *Murdoch, op. cit.*, pp. 295 and 296. Italics are in the original.

44 *Acting*, pp. 273-274.

which aided largely in adding to the charm of his readings and recitations.\textsuperscript{46}

Later, himself a teacher of a system based on Rush's observations, Murdoch commented upon the earlier teacher whom he had also shared with Forrest. In White's "idea of delivery the principal thing was emphasis, and at this he labored and pounded with every kind and degree of pressure and force."

Emphasis as a basic element determining the effectiveness of vocal delivery was also a cardinal point, along with time-distribution and inflection, in Ayres's criteria for judging the worth of an actor. Notwithstanding Ayres's regard for White's concept of delivery as primarily a function of emphasis, Murdoch believed that the latter "quality did not adhere to Forrest's mode of reading after he had once tested the practical method of dramatic action."

Certain teachings of White did adhere, along with Kean's influence, for Forrest became identified with a distinct, energized articulation.

White's influence was, however, observable in his [Forrest's] articulation, which was always very distinct. He was a great admirer of Kean, whom he had met and acted with in Albany before he had won any commanding position on the stage. There was an almost ferocious intensity in Kean's articulative stress, and his deep guttural tones seemed to struggle in the grasp of the organs till they burst forth more like yells of demonic rage than human utterance; while to this were added the graces of a soft and almost womanly tenderness of voice whenever he chose to employ them as an offset to his vehement and rapid flights of passion.\textsuperscript{47}

Concerning the last cited trait of Kean, comparison may be made with a tribute offered by the American actor Lawrence Barrett: "Forrest's

\textsuperscript{46} J. Bunting, "Biographical Sketch of the Author," in Murdoch, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{47} Murdoch, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 281 and 281-282. Italics are in the original.
voice was powerful and musical, and he used it with marvelous effect. He never overexcited himself or tired his listener. His utterance was sometimes tender, almost to womanly sweetness.  

True, especially during the early years of his career, Forrest was eager to meet a public demand for novelty. Murdoch continued to point out, though, that assurance and dignity, gained from numerous successes, led Forrest later to draw upon the decorum in acting of a great predecessor.

These entirely new effects were too tempting to be disregarded by the young and ardent American actor in his efforts to keep pace with the public demand for novelty and improvement in dramatic art, especially as the most cultivated of the English actors were yearly becoming candidates for American recognition. Thus, Forrest was almost unconsciously led to the reception of other impressions than those which he had no doubt received in early life from Cooper, and gradually became a believer in Kean's method, at least so far as to adopt his deep and growling tones; and with these he combined much of the deliberate utterance of the old English school, until toward the close of his career it was his habit to make use of almost as many suggestive pauses as marked the style of the great classic tragedian, John Philip Kemble.

Relative to this latter point, even though a somewhat different type of pause is considered, "there is nothing that Mr. Ayres gives more attention to than to the rhetorical or sense pause."  

Concerning Forrest's effect both upon his own immediate listeners and eventually upon the general American public, Murdoch mentioned that

"the deep tones of Mr. Forrest's voice, mingled with the peculiar huskiness ____________Quoted by Ayres, Acting, p. 73.


which generally marked his utterance, gave great intensity to his expression of rage and scorn, and even in his ordinary conversation not infrequently suggested a degree of bitterness which he probably did not intend. Around the year 1848, a fellow tragedian, Thomas Hamblin, expressed his own belief that Forrest's "constant growling at people will cause him, in time, to growl at himself."

This sullen manner may be compared with the impression Forrest was capable of making, for example, on one social occasion around 1840-1842. He "was in excellent spirits, cheerful, and even gay . . ., gave his opinion of the character and condition of dramatic art among the French, Italians, Spanish, and Germans," and thereby induced the Honorable George S. Hillard, no doubt in accord with the opinions of the Harvard professors also present, to express later,

> great surprise not only at the fluency of his [Forrest's] language, but the variety and brilliance of his expressive powers. . . .
>
> Within the past few years [ca. 1880] I [Murdoch] have heard distinguished literary people, both ladies and gentlemen, speak in terms quite as complimentary of Mr. Forrest's manners and conversation. Mr. Hawthorne remarked that he was one of the most brilliant conversationalists he had ever met—that he heard him talk two hours at a sitting, and could have listened to him all night.

Junius Brutus Booth (1796-1852), in his own later life, pictured a representative young actor of that time as trying to imitate some favorite actor's "voice, in the lump, as it were, without understanding or appreciating the value of individual words." Then too, eventually some performers directed their natural bent for travesty along the line opened up by Forrest. For example, a Mr. Leffingwell, "a young man of much originality and a sui generis humor . . ., has been playing at

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Wood's Museum during the week, giving his well-known imitation of Forrest.  

Even as late as the year 1880, the Forrest style of acting was functioning as a standard referent for many people with theatrical aspirations; moreover, this influence did not confine itself within the world of the stage.

We refer to Mr. Forrest, whose peculiar intonations are duplicated all over the country—not only on the stage, but also in many individuals in private life, who have sacrificed their own vocal individuality to adopt the deep chest-tones of America's first distinguished tragedian.

In this connection, Garff B. Wilson notes "that the Columbia Orators and Readers of the 19th century, designed for use in the schools, cautioned against imitating the pronunciation of the stage as artificial and overdone and not suitable for either the ordinary citizen or the 'professional' public speaker."  

Walt Whitman, writing in the Brooklyn Eagle for December 26, 1846, had anticipated such imitation of Forrest and pointed out the evils attendant, especially considering the tenor of the age.

Mr. Forrest is a deserved favorite with the public—and has high talent in his profession. But the danger is, that as he has to a measure become identified with a sort of American style of acting, the crowd of vaoid imitators may spread quite all the faults of that style, with none of its excellencies. Indeed, too, in candor, all persons of thought will confess to no great fondness for acting which particularly seeks to "tickle the ears of the

52 Under the rubric MUSICAL AND THEATRICAL, The Spirit of the Times (New York), XII, No. 12 (May 7, 1870), 192.

53 Murdoch, op. cit., p. 46.

54 Dissertation, p. 63 n 4 pp. 19-20: In Wilson's classification of style, Forrest belonged to the "heroic, strenuous school." This style exhibited a "predominance of physical and vocal [sic] energy over the spiritual or ideal elements. Forrest's influence may be said to have extended, roughly, from 1830, when he was first attaining great popularity, until the 1870's."
groundlings." We allude to the loud mouthed ranting style—the tearing of everything to shivers—which is so much the ambition of some of our players, particularly the younger ones. . . . They take every occasion, in season and out of season, to try the extremist strength of their lungs. They never let a part of their dialogue which falls in the imperative mood—the mood for exhorting, commanding, or permitting—pass by without the loudest exhibition of sound, and the most distorted gesture. . . . It is a common fallacy to think that an exaggerated, noisy, and inflated style of acting—and no other—will produce the desired effect upon a promiscuous audience. . . . We have frequently seen rough boys in the pit, with an expression of sovereign contempt at performances of this sort.59

Wilson concludes: Edwin Forrest "represented a type of acting so vigorous that it created a host of imitators, yet so individual that the imitations were really caricatures and the style perished with its founder."56

Moreover, the era witnessed the coming of a theatrical period wherein "the public and critics," says Miss Prescott, "now go to see and not to hear, and they are not going to be shocked or offended by hearing too distinctly." Writing in 1892, Marie Prescott was expressing the belief that "Mr. Forrest would not dare to play Othello and Lear now, were he alive, as he did twenty years ago." In replying to this last remark, Ayres revealed doubtlessly some nostalgic preoccupation with the comparative excellence of elocution in the past. "Nonsense! Mr. Forrest's way of playing was the way for all time. If he could come back to us and play Lear as he did when he played it in New York twenty years ago, there is not a theater in the city that would be big enough to hold those that would want to see him.57


57Ayres, Acting, pp. 203 and 205.
Forrest himself reportedly "called [Edwin] Booth's production of *Julius Caesar* the 'scene painter's drama.' . . . [and] described the elaborate trappings as 'gaudy kickshaws by which modern dramatic art is swaddled and smothered.'"\(^{58}\) Looking with nostalgia upon the age which idolized Forrest, Ayres was unable or unwilling to recognize, as did Prescott, that spectacle had been supplanting vocal effectiveness in the appeal of late nineteenth-century theatre. "Tut! tut! and tut again! There is not a man, woman, or child that goes to the theater nowadays that is not just as desirous to hear, or rather to understand, as were the theatergoers of any other days."

Ayres saw a panacea for the current theatre's ills in a return to the actor typified in Forrest's happy fusion of efficacious vocal powers with earnestness in delivery, all deriving from perspicacity of intellect.

Mr. Forrest had a wonderful voice, the most wonderful I have ever heard, but it was not his wonderful voice that made him the great actor he was: it was his wonderful intelligence, his extraordinary scholarship—I mean that kind of scholarship that appears in the delivery. I do not believe that Mr. Forrest's superior as a reader of Shakespeare has ever lived. He was precision itself. There is never but one best way to utter a sentence. That best way Mr. Forrest seemed always to have found.\(^ {59}\)

Yet note the reaction of the general public to Forrest, during the year before his death, when he "was induced to give readings from Shakespeare in several large cities. The scheme failed, and was abandoned, to his deep mortification." But by this time in his life, Forrest's morbid seclusion, gruff manners, and long unsavory divorce proceedings,  


\(^{59}\)Ayres, *Acting*, pp. 203 and 204.
together with his part in the bloody Astor Place Riot of 1849, were
taking their toll: adding to his notoriety, weakening his fame, and
still further embittering his temper. More recently, too,
hereditary gout developed itself in a malignant form in 1865 . . .
the sciatic nerve was paralyzed, and he never regained the use
of his hand or his steady gait . . . . On the night of March 25,
1871, he appeared in Boston at the Globe Theater, as Lear, played
this part six times, and was announced for Richelieu and Virginius;
but on the intervening Sunday caught cold. He struggled through
the former role on Monday night, and rare bursts of eloquence
lighted the gloom, but he labored piteously against the disease
that was fast conquering him. 60

Ayres implied that since Forrest's Shakespearian readings followed
close upon his seeming recovery from this severe attack of pneumonia, the
project was predisposed to issue in failure. But Murdoch suggested
Forrest's basic weakness in the interpretative situation. As early as
around the year 1841, Forrest picked up a copy of Willis's poems lying
on a table in Murdoch's rooms and
began to read in a delineative manner, subdued but demonstrative
and impressive. As he proceeded I [Murdoch] could not but feel
how much of his own strong individuality colored his utterance of
the poetic thoughts, while his energized emphasis seemed to suggest
the idea that he was exhibiting his peculiar powers of elocution
rather than giving form and life to the language of the author.
There seemed to be too much display of the vehicle and too little
regard for its freightage. . . . I felt that he was acting his
subject, and not describing it. Indeed, so apparent did this become
that I was quite conscious of seeing and hearing more with the eye
and ear of an actor, than with the organs of one who was absorbed in
a poet's thoughts. 61

The perhaps unique and literally inimitable energized delivery,
characterizing the stage personality of Forrest, could not be, indeed did
not want to be, held in check as it tried to fathom the utmost intellectual
recesses of the material to be communicated. The star performer also
labored to furnish all discernible detail in his interpretation. He

60 Ibid., pp. 72 and 71-72.
thereby left little creative activity to the imagination of the auditor
and, in this extra effort, suggested this actor-reader's own lack in
imagination.

During Forrest's career, an artistically indelicate, but popularly
intriguing, muscular performance characterized the early Forrest as he
strenuously seized the role as a whole and interpreted practically
independent of precedent. This approach gave way later to an elocutionary
pattern growing out of selective imitation and intelligent analysis.
Gross nature was channeled after techniques stemming from possibly both
Kean and Kemble, as well as from the instructor in elocution whom Forrest
shared with both Murdoch and Ayres, namely, the precisionist Lemuel G.
White. Perhaps the latter was also influential in introducing Forrest,
as later White did introduce Murdoch, to the ideas expounded by Dr.
James Rush. Indeed Forrest acknowledged consulting Rush for guidance,
both through the latter's published writings and in person.

Soon Kean's influence could be seen in Forrest's energized
emphasis and articulation, startling transition, and a general ferocious
intensity. The thunder of Forrest's deep and growling tones was relieved,
at times, by a soft and almost womanly tenderness in delivery. Then too,
Forrest did not forego courting the favor of popular audiences by cater-
ing to the appeal of novelty and by employing vocal tricks of imitation
calculated to attract attention.

As the artist matured and began to feel secure in his position,
he looked to the more elevated style of the Kembles and geared at least
his Shakespearean interpretations in terms of a studied scheme for
deliberate utterance. This more conscious technique encouraged Forrest
to seek reasons for reading a line in a given way. Eventually he came
to feel that one and only one best manner in delivery was to be found for each speech he encountered; typically he then made a strenuous effort to achieve this perfection.

When Forrest's many suggestive pauses and distinct articulation began to burden the progress of the dialogue, not only did an all-embracing intellect appear to be wrestling with profound and excessive meaning; also, the vitality of his over-all performance was significantly lessened. For the function of poetic imagination, with its suggestion of various emotional gradations, was becoming subordinated to the mathematical precision dictated by an overweening interest in elocutionary technique.

What little poetic fire remained, proceeded from the actor's thoroughly ingrained sense of his own potent individuality. Even this saving grace, though, had been taking on shades of bitterness toward life and a peculiar huskiness in vocal delivery which adapted well only to the rage or scorn of King Lear, Richelieu, and the like.

True, Forrest's manner was based ultimately upon a rather skillful combination of acting elements severally identified with certain other performers. None the less, so thoroughly individualistic was his style that when its popular success engendered a host of imitators, Forrest's originally creative product underwent serious decline. Without his massive physique and organ-like larynx, but especially lacking the personal motivation which Forrest realized in his histrionic triumphs, the copyist had little chance for success.

In the inferior results of these stark imitators, together with a disfavoring spirit in the age, Forrest's reputation for effectiveness underwent decline. Eventually the entire pattern of elocutionary
technique, which he and his distinguished predecessors had espoused, experienced such pronounced deterioration that a radical change was effect
ed in the customary approach to problems involving delivery and acting. A similar situation obtained relative to the influence of Charlotte Cushman upon performers who ventured to transplant her imprint in their own acting, notwithstanding the changing philosophy of a new era. Indeed, not since the eighteenth century had a new performer's skill been judged almost exclusively by how closely he succeeded in imitating effectively his predecessor in a given role.

Along with Forrest, Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876) attracted Ayres's endorsement by reflecting a similar high level of intelligent analysis in the reading of dramatic dialogue. She can also be likened to Forrest in the later huskiness of his delivery, incidentally, and in his general lack of imagination. But of more significance, like her male counterpart, she developed artistic finish for an originally rough, heavy, laborious style. Cushman reportedly calmed a whirlwind-tendency in almost every act with skill derived from trying to emulate more polished performances, in this case, those of William Charles Macready.

In observing that "not a few of the greatest players the world has seen became players by accident, or say by the force of circumstances," Ayres pointed out that "Charlotte Cushman did not think of essaying tragedy till after she lost her [magnificent contralto] singing voice." Relative to this event, Murdoch recalled that her opera instructor, Mr. James G. Maeder, the celebrated professor and teacher of vocal music . . . had frequently warned her against the folly of attempting the accomplishment of what was not within the legitimate limits of her vocal powers; he had cautioned her against her tendency to

62 Acting, p. 35.
undue force of expression, as calculated to produce throaty tones injurious to the voice. "But," said Mr. Maeder, "she was almost insane on the subject of display and effect, and altogether too demonstrative in the way of commanding what is only to be obtained slowly and patiently—operatic success." Thus Miss Cushman . . . ruined a fine voice, destroying all hope of operatic honors, and was compelled to turn her attention to the drama.63

The time was the winter of 1836, and the place where this event occurred was the St. Charles Theatre, New Orleans, "one of the largest buildings of the kind in the United States, and [a theatre where] the powers of a speaker or singer were taxed to the utmost for the production of the best vocal effects." The stage manager there was one Mr. Barton, an actor of the old school, a gentleman of excellent qualities both as a scholar and tragedian . . . , well versed in the traditions of the stage, and an admirer of the Kemble style of acting. He was very much such an actor as Charles Young of the London stage, who was thought by some critics to occupy a middle place between Kemble and Kean, with much of the excellence of both these great performers, while others considered his style original, natural, and artistic, and in dramatic power equal to either of them.64

Cushman found an excellent instructor in this "stage-manager—a position for which he was peculiarly qualified by a familiar practical acquaintance with the business of acting, and consequently able to direct the action of those who carried on the plot of the play; an accomplishment, by the way, rarely to be met with in these later days." During the spring of 1836, on the occasion of Barton's benefit, Cushman triumphed as Lady Macbeth to Barton's Macbeth. Apparently she succeeded in this role as a result of the appropriate preparation instilled through "the histrionic ability of Mr. Barton, his familiar acquaintance with the stage-manners of many leading actresses, and particularly with

63 Dr. cit., pp. 234 and 236.
64 Ibid., pp. 235 and 236.
the readings and business-performance of Mrs. Siddons as the consort of the guilty thane."  

Murdoch, however, saw Cushman as an actress whose peculiar qualities of voice and of temperament also suited her particularly well for the portrayal of "what may be termed the materialism of Lady Macbeth, and the still more fierce personality of that dramatic nondescript, Meg Merrilies [in Sir Walter Scott's Guy Mannerling], neither of which characters was of 'imagination all compact,' but rather of imperious wilfulness." For Murdoch criticized Cushman's style of acting after the following manner:

While it lacked imagination, [it] possessed in a remarkable degree the elements of force; she grasped the intellectual body of the poet's conception without mastering its more subtle spirit; she caught the facts of a character, but its conceits were beyond her reach.

Whereas Ayres extolled the value in what Murdoch, too, recognized as "her understanding . . . never at fault . . . keen and penetrating," Murdoch expected more in an actor's performance. Murdoch also looked for evidence of "that glow of feeling which springs from the centre of emotional elements [and which] was not a prominent constituent of her organization."  

Moreover, Murdoch did not hesitate to point out that, in his opinion, perhaps Cushman's success was limited to roles of a sinister nature.

Her voice had become husky and hard from overstrained efforts in singing, and . . . had lost the pure quality of its tone. There

65 Ibid., pp. 237–238.
66 Ibid., p. 240.
was always in Miss Cushman's vocal effects a quality of aspiration and a woody or veiled tone more becoming the expression of wilful passion suppressed and restrained than that emotion which seeks a sympathetic recognition of outspoken vocality, pure, ringing, and elastic—the former being Nature's mode of utterance for the evil passions, while the latter speaks of the noble, pure, and bright.  

Similar in his criticism was George Vandenhoff, who acted with Cushman in 1842.  

I never admired her Lady Macbeth. It is too animal; it wants intellectual confidence, and relies too much on physical energy. Besides, she bullies Macbeth; gets him into a corner of the stage, and . . . she 'pitches into him'; in fact, as one sees her large clenched hand and muscular arm threatening him in alarming proximity, one feels that if other arguments fail with her husband, she will have recourse to blows.

But Ayres was content to cite such a quotation from the London Times as the following, which appeared during her English triumphs in 1845: "The great characteristics of Miss Cushman are her earnestness, her intensity, her quick apprehension of readings, and her power to dart from emotion to emotion." Reacting to Cushman's comic Rosalind, another British critic added: "Never have we heard language more perfectly enunciated. Not a syllable was lost, and each syllable was a note. The beauties of the author were as clear, as transparent, as though the thoughts themselves, instead of the words that are their vehicles, were transfused through the sense."  

Ayres also noted Cushman's numerous breeches parts, for which her husky voice and imperious manner while on the stage especially suited her.

67Ibid., p. 237. Italics are not in the original.  
69Acting, p. 169. Italics are in the presentation by Ayres.
In this connection, he cited a remark made by the British playwright James Sheridan Knowles (1784-1862).

At this time [1845] the distinguished author [i.e., Knowles] of Virginius, The Hunchback, and other standard plays, wrote of Miss Cushman: "... Romeo's scene with the Friar. ... It was a scene of topmost passion; not simulated passion—no such thing; real, palpably real; the genuine heart-storm was on—on in wildest fitfulness of fury; and I [Knowles] listened and gazed and held my breath, while my blood ran hot and cold. ... There is no trick in Miss Cushman's performance; no thought, no interest, no feeling seems to actuate her, except what might be looked for in Romeo himself were Romeo reality."

Besides Romeo, Miss Cushman played several other male characters, Hamlet, Cardinal Wolsey, and Claude Melnotte being the principal ones.

Such apparent "living the part," with the machinery of art well hidden, signals either Cushman's having no art to hide or her skillful control over techniques making for artful expression. Vandenhoff, in speaking of his professional contacts with Cushman in 1842, indicated the course taken by her developing histrionic skill.

She displayed at that day a rude, strong, uncultivated talent; it was not till after she had seen and acted with Mr. Macready—which she did the next season—that she really brought artistic study and finish to her performances. At this time she was frequently careless in the text, and negligent of rehearsals. ... substituting a weak word for a strong one, diluting the force, and destroying the rhythm of the verse.

Additional indication not only of the professional contacts which made possible Cushman's British debut, but also of Macready's refining influence upon her style of delivery, can be gleaned from the following account.

When Mr. Macready came to this country to perform his round of characters and take leave of the American stage [1843], Miss Cushman

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70Ibid., p. 170.

71Op. cit., p. 106.
supported him in many leading parts; and here was the turning-point of her theatrical fortunes, as well as the culmination of her dramatic studies, for the result of her professional relations with the tragedian led to her English engagements, as well as to a most determined imitation of his peculiar mode of acting. Both Mr. Macready and Mr. Barton were of the same school, as it is called, and Miss Cushman fell into the habits of articulation and enunciation of Mr. Macready with greater readiness because of her previous studies with Barton. Neither of these gentlemen was remarkable for clear vocality, but, on the contrary, spoke from the throat more frequently than, to use a figurative expression of questionable correctness, from the forward parts of the mouth.72

Garff B. Wilson accredits Cushman's particular vocal quality with enabling her to express "intense, sustained grief without loudness or sudden variations."73

Almost two years after Cushman's death, one critic compared Cushman with Madame Janauschek, the German tragedienne whom Ayres coached in many roles for her English-speaking performances. This critic concurred, in general, with Ayres's view of Cushman.

Charlotte Cushman was a progressive woman. She built herself up by slow degrees. She was not originally well educated, but she became very well informed. She read and studied incessantly . . . . To hear Charlotte Cushman read Macbeth was worthy of a journey across the ocean and back. It was a revelation of ability, to dissect character and to interpret the results of serious psychological cogitation.74

At least during the early part of her career, Cushman's performances reflected the bane of excessive imitation. For example, in her handling of the role of Lady Macbeth, the characterization had been "founded upon

72Murdoch, op. cit., p. 238.
75Towse, Sixty Years of the Theater, p. 198.
the pattern left by Mrs. Siddons—which, doubtless, has lost many of its true outlines in the course of several generations of stage reproduction.”

Later Cushman's crass imitation underwent refinement in the company of other actors who provided models for her selective imitation.

Cushman developed skill in accepting and rejecting from elements available for imitation. This procedure stemmed from her increasing tendency to rely upon the policy suggested by an intelligent analysis of a situation. Moreover, for Cushman, intelligent analysis helped to form a solid foundation of factual reference as a guide for selective imitation. In this manner, the actress became better equipped to express through elocutionary technique the true significance in a dramatist's dialogue.

Not many performers' imitations of other actors approached the level of success finally attained by Forrest and Cushman. Eventually the enfeebling influence of indiscriminate imitation rendered the practice of this so-termed old school so ineffective that a new approach was encouraged. As a result, a new school in acting was continuing to gain support during the period when Ayres began making contributions relative to theatre. Ayres compared the advantages and the disadvantages of these two schools. This evaluation resulted in a fundamental belief which, throughout Ayres's critical writing and his teaching, determined the best course to be taken by acting and delivery.

75Towse, Sixty Years of the Theater, p. 198.
The Old as Opposed to the New School in Acting

A former pattern does not find itself called old until a trend away from it, toward some other mode, is already under way. As the new approach takes hold of the popular mind, critics at the time are forced to examine the old carefully for possible weaknesses. Usually these faults can be found because with the passing of time, defects often become amplified. This situation obtains especially when imitation has been at work reducing an originally creative art to the level of a caricature of its former self.

Ayres did not make such a distinction as the good old school with its subsequent decline into a bad old school. Rather, he reserved "old" as a derogatory term for ineffectual technique in acting, wherever or whenever found. Such practices, unfortunately, were being passed on through unthinking imitation of the old school and through the influence of acting-school charlatans, whose ignorance of the true science of elocution misshaped their pupils' reading of dialogue. Moreover, the naturalness of the so-called new school was yielding the inaudible and the commonplace.

O. B. Collins and Robert Dolman are good examples of what from time immemorial, I [Ayres] fancy, has been called the "old school." Whenever an actor is preachy and ponderous; whenever he depends upon the sound he makes, rather than on the thought in the lines he speaks, for his effects, he is said to be of the "old school." . . . A much better, a much more correct, mode of characterizing this school would be to call it the easy school; for what is easier than for an actor to bellow through his lines after the manner of the so-called old-schoolers! It is the style of delivery that requires neither study nor brains. This school, however, is greatly to be preferred to the natural, the realistic school,
when the natural becomes inaudible and the realistic degenerates into the commonplace, which occurs not unfrequently.\textsuperscript{76}

Ayres believed, then, that some vestige of elocution, even when generally misused, was better than none at all.

Ayres did not apply the label \textit{old} to what he associated with the former pattern at its best. In approving such elocutionary prowess as the scheme for all time, nevertheless, Ayres observed that unthinking imitation, among other factors, had been undermining this former pattern. Its able proponents were being copied without discrimination.

Along with Ayres, various other critics and performers have noted, concerning that very period, certain weaknesses developing from an imitation which often builds, in turn, upon other imitations. Sir Frank E. Benson, although generally in favor of the results achieved by old-school methods, "granted that some of the diction and gesture had become the imitation of an imitation, meaningless mouthing and theatrical tricks which smacked rather of the circus than of real life."\textsuperscript{77} Then too, Percy Fitzgerald posed the query:

\begin{quote}
Is it possible to suppose that defects in acting are mainly owing to a want of initiative, and to a habit of following established precedents? We have copies of copies: old methods and devices are slavishly imitated, and the young actor thinks he can do nothing better than model himself on a graceful predecessor.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
76 Ayres, \textit{Acting}, p. 131. Italics are in the original.


\end{footnotesize}
Writing around the year 1880, Murdoch called attention to the pervading influence of imitation at that time.

One of the peculiar features of the stage is the almost universal custom of adopting, or striving to imitate, the personal traits of vocal quality or the articulative habits of some popular actor. Almost all the actors and readers of the present day have their unmistakable archetypes in Liston, Kemble, Mathews, and Kean, the Keeleys, Buckstone, the elder Booth, Fanny Kemble, and Ellen Tree. These performers, in turn, but copied the various manners of voice in vogue at the time in which they were taking their first steps in the profession.79

Murdoch also pointed out: "It is more difficult to imitate the natural qualities of an actor's voice than it is to reproduce his mere mannerisms; while to mimic his defects is within the reach of a very ordinary gift." To a performer, the appeal of imitation was enhanced by the apparent ease with which he could achieve a paying facsimile of acting. For these reasons, imitation prevailed and the copyist became "more likely to reproduce the faults than the perfections of his model."80

With such a procedure in operation, certain imperfections and peculiar mannerisms of a given performer, being easy to imitate, were handed down from one copyist to another until only a caricature of the original source remained. For, on the other hand, the latter's natural beauties in utterance, being difficult to emulate and requiring a delicate and intelligent perception for their reproduction, were progressively discarded as the evil in imitation took its toll.

In addition, since the time had been witnessing a general decline in histrionic ability, on occasion an actor was decidedly inferior in a

80Ibid., p. 51.
familiar role from standard repertory. No doubt, then, the professional mimic tended to court audience approval for himself by mocking ruthlessly the legitimate performer's weaknesses to the exclusion of any saving graces.

The popularity of such burlesque was encouraged by the satirical spirit of the age. Commonly an audience felt uncomfortable in the presence of sincere emotion and relished an opportunity to ridicule exhibitions of overly passionate reaction, especially where emotional delineation had been falling short of skilful interpretation. As such a satirical treatment gained momentum, the entire pattern of elocutionary technique, associated with the old school, was in danger of being laughed from the stage, no matter how high its coefficient of effective communication may have been on an isolated occasion.

One copyist developing out of the old school was the actor Lawrence Barrett.

Mr. Barrett fails to present that semblance of reality that he essayed to present, except in The Man o' Airlie. . . . He is master of stage technique, has a good voice, abundant physical strength, a clear articulation, and is not lacking in earnestness—a virtue that makes amends for a longer list of shortcomings than does any other. In fact, Mr. Barrett possesses all the requisites necessary to make him very acceptable as a player of great tragic parts except that faculty that enables an actor so to speak the language of his part as to make it sound as though thought and language came to him as he proceeds. Mr. Barrett's elocution is so bad that, with his voice and articulation, it could hardly be worse. He never gets anywhere near the natural; is always artificial in the extreme. He never seems to think; always speaks his lines like a lesson conned; always races ahead as does the average schoolboy when he comes forward to speak his piece."

\[81\] Ayres, Acting, pp. 87-83.
At times Barrett's performances exemplified the stultifying effect of unwise or careless imitation. And, of course, the products of his acting served, in turn, as models for future imitation. At least on paper, though, Barrett not only recognized the limited value of imitation; he was also aware of the benefits which result from a judiciously selective following of tradition.

At some time in his youth every actor is an imitator; but that habit is like a crutch, which he casts aside when he is able to walk by himself. That practice must not be understood as following tradition. Tradition, as applied to tragedy, means the physical lines in which old plays have been acted. Adopting these, the artist takes what serves the purpose of his own conception, and, if a great man, makes new ones for the next generation.82

Despite the high-minded theories which such performers might profess to endorse, the line of least intellectual resistance proved very tempting. In Barrett and in John McCullough and especially in a welter of lesser figures, such as Maggie Mitchell, Minnie Palmer, and Lotta Crabtree, could be witnessed "the slender professional capital with which popularity and fortune may be won before the footlights in a degenerate age." Crabtree, for example, imitated the manner of her first successful performance. She "appeared in many parts and played them all in exactly the same way."83

Moreover, Crabtree's policy bore witness to Barrett's sanction for the popular belief: "An actor can be great only in few parts. . . .


83 Towse, op. cit., p. 89.
greatness lie* for each man only in a certain groove. I am speaking
now of all artists and not especially of tragedians." Thus, the old
school's forte in versatility, which had been championed by James W.
Wallack, Sr., and later by Murdoch and Edwin Booth, was denied validity.
In truth, the entire pattern associated with the old school in acting was
being held in suspect. For the latter's progressive imitation resulted
in "grace of gesture, statuesqueness of pose, and perfection in oratory
[which] became of so great importance, that in the end they confined truth
in a strait-jacket of meaningless artificialities and traditions."

A new school sought a solution for this ineffectual situation
through "substituting real emotion for form, and common humanity for
the canons of art." A flaw appeared, however, in the form of a new excess:
the age rejected practically all aspects of production which could be
identified as having some relationship with the former pattern. The new
school was eager to overthrow not only the old school's weaknesses, en-
gendered by artless imitation, but the entire art form as well. As a
result, it spawned a brand of theatrical representation which would soon
impel critical judgment to acknowledge a new decadence and to think back,
with Ayres, upon the good old days with comparative favor.

Playgoers of an older generation, who remember Macready, Forrest,
the Keans, the Booths, Davenport and their contemporaries, will
readily assent to the degeneracy of the modern theater in all mat-
ters of sheer artistry and histrionism. It is only in scenic acces-
sories, and in the lighter and less permanent varieties of drama
that it has made any notable advance.

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84 "Success on the Stage," 592.
85 Strang, Players and Plays of the Last Quarter Century, I, 28 and 17.
86 Towse, op. cit., pp. ix-x.
The changing philosophy of the new school in acting judged the elocutionary techniques of certain recent performers, ostensibly of the old school, as unnatural by its standard. This observation became true, by most standards, as the old school's effectiveness underwent decline. Slavish imitation had continued to plague lesser histrionic ability than that culminating in the genius of Forrest and of Cushman.

The old school player, in adapting his delivery and acting to demands imposed by an old school dramatist, appeared to function naturally within the artistic medium of the production. Despite the basic artificiality of the latter, a seeming naturalness was effected in the unity of impression which had been achieved by performing in synchronization within such oneness of make-believe. That is to say, the artist-actor brought his delivery of finely wrought dialogue into harmony with the latter's inherent theatrical quality. In effect, from nature, he selected elements of expression and presented them in ways of art which had long yielded effective communication.

However, with elocutionary technique reputedly looking to intelligent analysis and following tradition to deliver an interpretation calculated to edify the listener, often the subtle emotional aspects of a drama were lost. But niceties of involved meaning began to burden performances. This tendency obliterated fine shades of poetic insight and emotional awareness. The personally charming and individually unique gave way to heroically hewed generalities of behavior.

In such a situation, even the sex of the performer was of little consequence. Possibly this condition encouraged the breeches parts for which Cushman became famous. True, in this instance, Cushman's masculine
manner and peculiar vocal quality readily adapted to the nature of such roles. But all leading roles, male and female, were couched in diction which was in harmony with a dramatic form and content that had been revered and perpetuated from Shakespeare's day (when actresses, perhaps significantly, did not appear in the female roles). The classic proportions of roles from standard repertory demanded a lofty style, in delivery, befitting the thought content and its poetic syntax. For to be natural was to adapt to this basically artificial medium for expression, rather than to indulge characterization in such finicking details of reality as might be expected within a feminine pattern of emotional behavior.

By denying a minutiae of detail a chance to weave some embellishment within the warp and woof of classic drama's austerity, the old school encouraged a reaction to take place in the other direction. Consequently, with the advent of the other extreme, commonplace trivia tended to smother the fundamental lines of plot and character, whose significance had been emphasized by the old school in acting. In the new school, meaningful communication of an author's intent was obstructed by a welter of pleasantly familial, and spectacularly intriguing, facets focused for popular appeal.

In order to underscore a drama's message or playwright's purpose, there was then an even greater need for effective delivery. Such a need was not felt, however, probably owing to the primal pungency of the reaction away from practically any vestige of the former approach to acting and delivery. As a result, the pattern of embellishment, including detailed emotional delineation, no longer served to enhance or heighten the
effect of a given drama, the function which gained Ayres's approval.
Rather, it left its purpose as a means to the author's end and made bids for acceptance at the expense of this end, which it was then supplanting.

Then too, with the coming of a new school, opportunities to gain valuable experience in local stock companies gradually disappeared. The beginning actor, unlike Forrest and Cushman, no longer had readily available certain exemplars of advanced skill with which to temper the rough edges of his own interpretation. This and other weaknesses in the star system had been lessening the value once associated with the starring performer as a source of inspiration and guidance.

An inbred imitation resulted, with the members and would-be members of the acting profession copying one another with frenzied promiscuity. Whereas formerly discrimination had dictated a performer's course in acting, developing for him a compatible elocutionary technique, currently a mass of reckless methods was fomenting in varied fervent bids for the coin of the spectator.

In summary, then, eventually a slavish imitation of old school models in acting resulted in decidedly inferior histrionic products. The latter stood in contrast with the old school prototype, for new patterns usually possessed such a large proportion of the original's defects, to the exclusion of many merits identified with this prototype, that merely a caricature remained. The later actor, moreover, generally lacked the creative understanding which had motivated his predecessor.

This perversion of the basic intent of both the old school and the dramatists it drew upon, when linked with the changing philosophy of the time, encouraged commonplace and momentarily inspired details to supplant
in appeal the calculated effects of the former pattern. True, the manner of this old school had lost some vitality in the pedantic precision of the influential actor-teacher-writer James E. Murdoch. Then too, novelty effects, in harmony with the developing interests of the period, were often erratically thrown into the resulting mixture. Fundamentally though, the blame lay in the stultifying practice of imitation building upon imitation.

Thus the old school in decline led to a general undermining of the former unity in dramatic impression, which had been gained by an integrated compound of cultured tradition artistically supplemented by individual creative interpretation. The bad in the old helped to encourage the coming of a new school for acting. The good in the old, often in the person of well-trained representatives from the former technique, strengthened the weaknesses of the new. This strength-giving combination could be observed especially at first: before the excesses of the new, in revolt against almost any vestige which could be identified as stemming from the old, overleaped the limits of improved naturalness to indulge, at times, in unintelligible vocal foundering and commonplace performances.

Summary

Even though Ayres stressed the communication of an author's thought on all occasions, his dislike for mechanical rules and systematized procedures led him, in general, to reject incorporation of the latter in his theory for acting. In this attitude and even in his endorsing an analysis which first got the sense of a passage and then let the tones in delivery
take care of themselves, Ayres approached in practice the original intent of some of the inspirational or impulsive or emotional schools of acting. Notwithstanding, in order to provide the profession with a specific program for reform, Ayres developed methods for teaching what he termed the elements, as opposed to the requisites, of good acting.

At the time, a generally accepted interpretation regarded Constant Coquelin’s conscious technique as an application of thought and Henry Irving’s living the role as the latter’s preference for emotion in acting. In effect, however, not only did Ayres coincide in basic theory with the technician Coquelin; paradoxically he was also coming close to Irving’s general belief. Ayres differed from the latter in his demand that a high order of prolonged intelligent analysis, rather than only an emotional feeling for the role, dictate nearly all aspects of acting. True, he favored spontaneity in acting, but not the type produced, as the drama critic A. C. Wheeler believed, by unconscious cerebration.

During the heat of arguing in favor of intelligent analysis for acting then and always, Ayres denied emotion, which he admitted was difficult to understand, a prominent position in his scheme. Of course, he laid himself open to censure, in the first place, for adhering to the implications in the dichotomy thought–emotion. Ayres also erred, no doubt, in attributing to his past idols, Forrest and Cushman, an almost life-long pursuit of his policy, with near-perfection resulting even during their very early careers.

Eventually the monotony in repeated doses of technically manipulated drama culled from austere tradition, as well as the lessened elocutionary effectiveness with which this cultural heritage was conveyed to progressively
diminishing audiences, set in motion an evolution from a so-called old school in acting to a pattern more in harmony with the temper of the time. A cause for this pernicious trend was found in the stultifying effects of imitation building in turn, upon imitation.

Fundamentally, a new school in acting drew inspiration from numerous individual actors' personal perceptions of various facets of commonplace nature, as the latter exist in erratic profusion. By comparison, the old school had put faith in patterned procedure which was governed by generalizations, relative to the typical in nature and the manner in which the past had best expressed such universal concepts of humanity in terms of conventionally acceptable stage behavior.

As a satisfactory standard for acting, Ayres endorsed the directness, simplicity, versatility, and dignity of the old school at its best. Ayres was unable, or unwilling, to envision any other art form capable of attaining such breadth of treatment and such perfection in semblance of spontaneity. Interpreted by this school of Forrest and Cushman, drama enchanted while its subject matter edified the listener. In this manner, the old school in acting met Ayres's requirement that a playwright's thought be communicated clearly, forcibly, and agreeably.
CHAPTER VI

THEATRE CRITIC OF VOCAL DELIVERY

Alfred Ayres formulated certain basic principles concerning language and its delivery, as well as acting. Without effective command over these elements, a performer can hope for little artistic success on the stage. A conscientious critic of theatrical performances, then, cannot fail to measure the professional stature of an actor in terms of how well the actor employs these fundamentals. Whereas the present chapter focuses upon vocal delivery, the next two chapters consider acting and actors along with a so-called new school in acting and delivery. The purpose of these chapters is to note how Ayres applied such basic principles, which develop a theory for acting and for the delivery of language, in shaping a workable method to guide his practice as a theatre critic.

Introduction

For many years the New York theatre saw Alfred Ayres sitting down front, notebook in hand, jotting down comments about a production.¹ This critic's method reflected a special interest in the vocal delivery of performers. Ayres, in effect, often emphasized speech to the extent of neglecting other facets of stage production. True, his approach was destined to yield place to other critics' enthusiasm for technical theatre.

¹Harrison Grey Fiske, "Preface" to Ayres, Acting, p. 7.
But for Ayres an emphasis on delivery was not merely a passing fad which characterizes theatre criticism for a given period.

Ayres, then, was one of the last critics to treat stage delivery as a function distinct from other production elements. If he failed to keep up with the time, for example, in his rejection of Delaarte, he justified his position by advocating a return to certain fundamental principles, which had passed the test of time. He did not believe in falling victim to the various novelties which periodically arise to tempt theatre practice.

Ayres listened to the slipshod handling of language which was taking place about him. He diagnosed the demonstrated need of the time and then geared an unrelenting campaign for better speech in relation to the seriousness and urgency of the immediate problem. "Mr. Ayres entered upon the seemingly hopeless task of reforming the evil single-handed."2

For the salvation of late nineteenth-century theatre in America, Alfred Ayres felt obligated to publicize a need for reviving the potent role once played by effective vocal delivery. He made fervent pleas for a return to the studied naturalness he associated with the Forrest-Cushman tradition in delivery, that is, with the so-called old school at its best. Accordingly, the year 1894 witnessed Ayres dedicating a book "to the Memory of the Two Greatest Players America Thus Far Has Produced—Edwin Forrest and Charlotte Cushman."

In performances by Forrest and by Cushman, Ayres had observed the prime criterion which he identified as fundamental to all successful

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2Ibid.
elocutionary practice. He, therefore, concluded:

There are not a few who seem to think that Mr. Forrest's and Miss Cushman's style of delivery would not be acceptable were they to come back to us now. Mr. Forrest's and Miss Cushman's style of delivery was the style for all time. As it should be with every actor, the sole question with them was, How can I best make clear the author's purpose? With them there was no unreasoned fuss and fury, no bellow and bow-wow, no sing-song, no damned tomfoolery with the tones of the voice. They were natural, pre-eminently natural, to be which one must study long and most carefully. 3

True, this same term natural had been commandeered into general service, by the then current new school in acting and delivery, for the purpose of distinguishing its own departure from Forrest's and Cushman's use of nature. But this new school was carrying naturalness so far as to warrant censure for haphazard indulgence in the commonplace. New-school performers had exchanged the classic dignity and rhetorical eloquence of their cloak-and-sword forebears for a teacup and saucer, a stage property which was more appropriate to the watered-down drama and delivery of the time.

In vocal delivery, basically the declamatory technique of the past could be heard giving place to natural utterance. The calculated method of the former school was yielding to an erratic, unpredictable approach which many times depended upon an inspiration of the moment. Whereas the former actor had surveyed his heritage and had sought communication through a pattern that had been adjudged appropriate perhaps for all time, his successor left tradition to seek an emotional motivation often within his own personality.

This new performer was adapting to new theatrical conditions: the

3Acting, pp. 3 and 46.
greater democracy in attendance and the predominant interest of the latter in sentiment plus realistic sensation. Nor could he ignore the contemporary playwright's avowed mission to talk over current social problems with this heterogeneous group. A colloquial mode in delivery, then, came forward to help bring about understanding for the various levels of intelligence and of cultural development in a typical audience.

This conversational pattern was exploited rather successfully to the limit of the lesser plays then in vogue. When attempts were made to let it serve the higher drama, though, its shortcomings became evident. The vigorous drama from classic and standard repertory demanded a more declamatory style, together with such other old-school attributes as simplicity, directness, dignity, spontaneity, versatility, and breadth of treatment. The old school's scope in delineating effectively the great and awe-inspiring in drama stood in contrast to the new emphasis upon finical details of reality, excessive facial play, and detailed hand and body movements. These stylistic minutiae burdened, or even obliterated, the structure of the drama itself. Then too, during this later period, plot development was eclipsed in significance by the demands of personal characterization. An actor frequently performed the same role, or others written especially for him and molded after its type, throughout his often long and profitable career.

In general, though, the new performer did not read well. Histrionic artistry in vocal interpretation had been subordinated to favor craftsmanship in behavior on stage. Ayres dedicated his life to tempering the excesses of this new school through returning to certain fundamental
principles, that he had come to associate with a former school championed by Edwin Forrest and Charlotte Cushman. His tireless efforts anticipated the advent of a revitalized elocution for the service of twentieth-century speech and theatre.

Ayres's theatre criticisms were published from week to week, most frequently in the New York Dramatic Mirror. 4 Constructive benefits often resulted for the performers whose strengths and weaknesses Ayres detailed

4This weekly newspaper took the title New York Mirror from its inception, January 4, 1879, through January 19, 1889, and became the New York Dramatic Mirror with the next week's issue until February 17, 1917, when the words New York were dropped from the name plate. The designation New York Dramatic Mirror has arbitrarily been selected for use throughout this study. According to one of the contributors to this periodical, under proprietor and editor Harrison Gray Fiske, its goal was "to instruct the true dramatist, incite the wise manager, and cheer on the worthy sons and daughters of the stage. . . . To one special bias this journal confidently refers as distinguishing it from all other issues of dramatic periodicals. It has steadily, faithfully, and with increasing power devoted itself to the elevation and advancement of legitimate dramatic sentiment, usages and influence." See Nestor, "Early Dramatic Journalism," New York Mirror, XVII, No. 425 (February 19, 1887), 6. (When specific citation is made, the appropriate title at the time is given.)

With the exception of the annual Christmas issue, most articles in this periodical are unsigned. This unknown authorship, however, did not extend to such regular contributors as Nestor, Hym Crinkle, Giddy Gusher, Gawain, and Alfred Ayres. Such pen names identified the writers who were responsible for what the tenth anniversary number termed "The Principal Departments" of this paper. Incidentally, the first sentence of a paragraph in this account credits Ayres with material appearing under the rubric "Orthoepy." See "The Principal Departments," New York Mirror, XX, No. 520 (December 15, 1888), 4. Especially during the late eighties, Ayres's column in this Saturday periodical appeared, on an average, twice a month. It was seldom able to claim space on the front page, as it did on January 29, 1887, (XVII, No. 422); "Hym Crinkle Feuilleton" occupied this prominent position and usually left little space for any other item. (The preceding chapter details the controversy over acting theory between Ayres and Hym Crinkle, the pen name of Andrew Carpenter Wheeler.) In this commonly twelve-page journal, Ayres's "Orthoepy" frequently appeared on page 6, together with the paper's masthead and several editorials, although no exact location obtained throughout.
in print.

The dread of public correction possessed the actors; they trembled when they knew that the man with the "orthoeptical sting" occupied an orchestra stall. This method of criticising was new to them, and there was no escape from it except by the exercise of vigilance. Dictionaries suddenly became unprecedentedly popular with members of the dramatic profession. It was not long before Mr. Ayres was obliged to relinquish the pursuit of this sort of game, owing to its comparative scarcity.5

The above remark, by the editor of the New York Dramatic Mirror, attests Ayres's success in making many actors aware of the importance of mastering language in general and, in particular, of having an acceptable pronunciation. But language is only one of the three areas which constitute the theory, or mental view, upon which Ayres based his own practice. As he undertook the duties of a theatre critic, Ayres also kept before him what he believed to be the essential principles of delivery and of acting.

This chapter, then, begins by comparing Ayres's statements about what makes for effective delivery, as enumerated in his Essentials of Elocution, with his critical evaluations of the delivery which he witnessed in New York theatres during the late nineteenth century. Significantly, the content of the first edition (1886) of Ayres's book on elocution appeared in two successive issues of the New York Dramatic Mirror.6 Moreover, Ayres intended that his "elocution stand with the stage and with the world as it deserves to stand. . . . The actor himself becomes a student of elocution the moment he asks himself how a single sentence

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5Fiske, "Preface" to Ayres, Acting, pp. 7-8.

should be spoken. . . . There can be no good acting without good elocution.\footnote{7}

In his book on elocution or delivery, Ayres tells the person who wishes to excel in the art of delivering language that not only must he keep studying and practicing, but he must make sure that he develops skills in the right direction. For this reason, Ayres lists a series of admonitions which the performer must always remember while practicing. These warnings, together with the effect each had on Ayres's own critical writings about theatre delivery, comprise the first seven of the remaining divisions of the current chapter. In addition, a section on pronunciation concludes consideration of Ayres as a theatre critic of vocal delivery.

\section*{Of Emphasis}

In analysing what he regarded as the three requisites of delivery, namely, emphasis, inflection, and the pause,\footnote{8} Ayres advised all performers seeking critical approval to apply, on stage, the lessons learned from long and careful study and practice. First of all, Ayres warned that while practicing, one should be sure to remember:

\begin{quote}
To be chary of emphasis. Never emphasize a word unless you think the sense demands it. Emphasis being only relative stress, over-emphasis defeats its object. Do nothing without a reason. Spare the \textit{if}s, and \textit{and}s, and the \textit{but}s. Do not come down on them as though you would annihilate them.
\end{quote}

\footnote{7}{Ayres, \textit{Essentials}, pp. 72 and 9.}

\footnote{8}{Cf. \textit{Acting}, pp. 228-229.}
Ayres confessed "being mindful of the fact that an ounce of example is worth a pound of theory." Accordingly, Ayres's discussions of false emphases interlaid his theatre criticisms of vocal delivery. For "where one word is mispronounced in our theaters, the emphasis in misplaced twenty times." Ayres's detailed treatment of this aspect of delivery stemmed from the conclusion: "Few things are more difficult than to make clear in writing the faults of a reader. With the inflections and pauses one can do nothing. It is only with the emphasis that one can deal at all successfully." Then too, Ayres observed many more instances of misplaced emphasis than the number of various other single faults in delivery, for false emphasis often resulted from influences developing out of these other slips in delivery.

Ayres noted the difficulty which the actor faced in handling emphasis correctly. Although he judged Viola Allen's delivery as excellent, Ayres qualified this rating with: "she does now and then misplace an emphasis." Accomplished as Minna K. Gale was, that is, in speaking "two languages besides English sufficiently well to play in either of them" and in carefully creating such roles as Julie and Portia, notwithstanding, her heedlessness in sounding the lines resulted in numerous false emphases. In excess, this tendency yielded, as in the case of Mabel Bert, "mere rant."

9 *Essentials*, pp. 15-16 and 76.

10 *Acting*, pp. 226 and 106.

In criticism, Ayres's avowed purpose was not to belittle the players, but to encourage would-be dramatic artists to think before delivering their lines. Ayres felt that all truly great actors believed with him "that there was one best way, and only one, to utter every line." Even his reverence for the general level of intelligence in delivery among the best of the old school did not, however, prevent him from challenging its correctness. He condemned such members of the new school as Mabel Bert and Mr. Burleigh and McKee Rankin for adhering slavishly to a traditional reading which deviated from the sense meant by the author. Ayres reasoned, for example, that stress should fall upon the principal verb be, rather than upon its auxiliary shalt as had been customary, in the speech: "Glamis thou art and Cawdor, and shalt be / What thou art promised." 12

In arriving at such suggestions as the above, Ayres did not employ any rules concerning, say, the syntax of the language to determine what words should be emphasized. He used, instead, what he termed gumption, that is, common sense. "It is safe to say that the average rule-user goes wrong more frequently than he goes right. The rule of gumption is the only rule that is worth a fig in determining what words should be emphasized." 13

A lack of intelligent interpretation, a characteristic trait of the new mode in vocal delivery, was no doubt ultimately responsible for the


13 Essentials, p. 148.
misreadings Ayres enumerated. When D. H. Harkins struggled with the reading: "Crowns got with blood must be with blood maintained." Ayres heard intelligence giving place to an emotional appeal. In order to arrive at the best way to deliver this line, Ayres pursued the following analysis:

Not the two bloods, but got and maintained are the most emphatic words in the line. Change got to obtained and we do not change the sense, yet with this change no one would think of reading otherwise than as I suggest.14

Often, Ayres observed, false emphasis took place because of the nature of the various sounds in a group of words. The capacity of certain sounds for prolongation in time and for increased volume or, incidentally, for a startling circumflex led the actor to pounce on vowels and on certain voiced consonants. Voiceless consonants, of course, abruptly cut off the vocalization in a syllable and offer little opportunity, to words dominated by them, for extended phonation or for extensive concrete movement of the voice upon such elements. This latter gliding movement characterizes vocal technique during the speech process, as opposed to the skipping or discrete progression which is commonly associated with the singing voice.15

Ayres heard, for example, a "Mr. Weaver come down on the word founded with all the voice he had at easy command... simply because the word was a good, sonorous mouthful." And again, Franklin H. Sargent's pupil "Miss Berold had a certain amount of breath to expend on the

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14 Acting, p. 104.
sentence, and unconsciously she dealt it out to the more open vowel sounds—to the vowels easiest to emphasize. This is the why; it can hardly be called a reason." Even though "Mr. Burleigh does not attack Macbeth without giving the reading of the part some thought," he could not resist a common temptation when he came to the speech:

For it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

The a that occurs in for, or, and nor is a very good vowel to make sound on, which accounts for its being so frequently "chewed up." Here, as is usually the case, for and or should be barely touched.  

In his book on delivery, Ayres also referred to this "species of reader known in stage parlance as the scene chewer."  

True, Ayres often registered a dissenting opinion about a star performer who was revered at the time. Eventually, though, when critics and scholars looked back from the perspective gained by the passing of time, frequently they tempered such earlier adulation along critical lines which Ayres had drawn years before. In Ayres's reckoning, not only did the comparatively unknown Mr. Forbes, a member of the Mansfield company, often misplace the emphasis; Richard Mansfield himself "misplaces the emphasis as frequently as do the ladies and gentlemen supporting him. In fact, Mr. Mansfield's reading, in several respects, falls a good deal short of what an actor's should be that would play in the higher drama." In support of Ayres's evaluation, Frank Taylor Dillon notes Mansfield's tendency to stress syllables that did not require weight in either the

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16 *Acting*, pp. 176, 173, 107, and 109-110. Italics are in the original.
17 *Essentials*, pp. 149-150.
18 *Acting*, pp. 222 and 223.
meter or the meaning," resulting in "sometimes a singsong attack and sometimes a staccato barking."  

When Mansfield read: "And no satisfaction, no revenge; nor no ill/ Luck stirring," Ayres noted not only a vocal pouncing upon a vowel capable of pronounced prolongation, as well as upon a sound with the capacity for such stress owing to the rhythm of the verse; he also observed an indiscriminate tendency to emphasize emotionally colored words. In commenting upon the unwarranted emphasis of so-called loaded language, Ayres cited Frederick Ward's leaving an intelligent approach to employ tactics which were "often better calculated to stir the groundlings, who can always be stirred, as we know, with a little exaggeration." Vivid adjectives attracted the power of Ward's voice, as in his Richelieu's objection to "wild debauch, / Turbulent riot."

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At times Mansfield's pattern of false emphasis may be traced to a rather deep-seated egotism, which even in sporting activities enabled his athletic prowess to excel as an individual participant but which would not permit him to subdue self in any teamwork. Perhaps it follows, then, that Ayres found Mansfield's delivery customarily sounding echoes of the following:

"He rails
On me my bargains and my well-won thrift.
What should I say to you? Should I not say, etc.
I say
To buy his favor, I extend this friendship."

See Ayres, Acting, p. 223. In fact, when questioned about certain passages in his production of Peer Gynt, Mansfield was reported to have responded as might have been expected: "The public that pays to see Mr. Mansfield, pays to see Mr. Mansfield . . . and there is not a theatre in this country which would not be crowded to the rafters if we should merely announce that Mr. Mansfield would appear upon the stage for one night only and recite backward the words which are listed in the Century Dictionary under the letter Q." Quoted by Clayton Hamilton, "Richard Mansfield," Stage, XIV (January, 1908), 109.
In this connection, the latent powers residing in the word rob could have led Mrs. D. P. Bowers to give it a sound whack. But because she appeared to change the emphasis from night to night, Ayres judged that a haphazard hit-and-miss method took precedence over any study of the meaning or emotion to be communicated. "She simply looks upon the words as so many targets to fire sound at."^20

Sometimes the verbs in a sentence received the emphasis doled out, after the manner of Giles Shine in the Clara Morris company. More commonly, though, the rhythmical beat of the verse-form helped to lead astray the emphases of those who were intelligent enough only to sense its arsis and thesis. Harkins unconsciously read: "Great men choose greater sins—ambition's mine. The rhythm puts the stress on men, but the sense certainly puts it on great, and there it should go."

Ayres observed that, in general, the new-school actor hit hard the first word appearing after his intake of a supply of air. Comparatively unfamiliar with the involutions of blank verse, he came to regard the first word in a line of verse, capitalized as it was in print, as the most important element in that line and often even as a signal to stop for breath and begin a new thought unit.

This conjecture may contribute to an explanation for the decided stress attracted by such particles as from and how in the delivery of poetry by, say, a Mr. Forrest, one of Mansfield's supporting players.

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Mr. Coghlan’s heavy emphasis upon the if’s beginning successive sentences may look in this direction, too, for explanation of the false emphases.

And again, Mrs. Bowers! "Let the guilty wretch beware!" can be explained in similar terms. Ayres felt the need of pointing out: "The word let gets more undeserved attention from automatic readers than any other word in the language."

Incidentally, with the new actor playing up the first element in a thought unit, an attentive playwright might well have detected some validity in transposing the word order of key sentences. Such a procedure is suggested where Ayres instructed an offender, in the ways of emphasis, to "transpose never are thus: Never are you sportmen to blame, and the correct reading becomes more apparent." For even Shakespeare’s language did not escape Ayres’s censure when he believed that it defeated the clarity and effectiveness of the ideas expressed.

Emphasis became, in Ayres’s analysis, a function of breath control. The word receiving the most stress, in a thought unit, commonly came at or near a fresh intake of breath by the performer. As the air supply was used up, the force of the voice on successive words gradually diminished. This practice usually resulted in the final word of a thought unit, which is the key element in a periodic sentence, becoming practically inaudible.

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21Ibid., pp. 185, 104, 223, 177, 122, and 128.

22Essentials, pp. 96-97.
Before turning to Ayres's observations of breath control on the stage, though, a consideration of the counterpart of emphasis is in order. This element, termed slurring, complements emphasis as the two factors help to determine a pattern of interpretation by varying vocal force.

Of Slurring

In his book on delivery, Ayres proceeded from a discussion of emphasis to consider a need for slurring. Again, as usual, his Essentials of Elocution was a source for ideas around which to build theatre criticisms. For policy led him to draw upon a mental view, or theory, of the subject. In general, his critical method worked out in practice, as follows: (1) The ideas were often repeated, sometimes almost verbatim, in the introductory paragraphs of a review. (2) The ideas found expression, often in forceful pleas for their acceptance, in the body of a review. (3) The ideas were exemplified by numerous instances, from current theatre practice, of the wrong and the right application of the principle involved.

In regarding emphasis as "relative stress," Ayres saw emphasis in relation to its counterpart, slurring.

It is often hard to decide, in marking emphasis, whether to italicize a word or not. In such cases, I usually leave the word unitalicized, lest the italicizing prove misleading. Over-emphasis is something the reader should be careful to avoid, as over-emphasis may easily be carried so far as to bar the effect of the emphases that are properly placed.23

Ayres cited an observation, made by a British writer, claiming "that he has never yet heard an American actor that did not over-emphasize the indefinite

83Ibid., pp. 15 and 83-84. In discussing various readings for a line, Ayres italicized, in print, the words which he considered emphatic.
Ayres's comment reveals a distinction in nomenclature which Ayres preferred: "What the writer probably means is that our actors do not sufficiently slur the indefinite article; that they come too near giving it its name sound."  

Ayres summed up, for the student of delivery, his ideas about slurring, in the following manner:

In slurring parenthetical clauses—clauses that tell how, when, where, etc.—we make a slight pause before and after them, and speak them somewhat more rapidly and less forcibly than the rest of the text. . . .

So, too, must the particles and the pronouns, as a rule, be touched lightly . . ., except when the sense requires them to be emphatic. Giving the name-sound to the particles and pronouns—which necessitates the distinct aspiration of the h's of the pronouns . . .—makes one's utterance stilted, pedantic and self-conscious. . . . The primary object of reading, of reciting, and of declaiming is not to make our listeners understand the words, but to make them comprehend the thoughts the words express. The reader that sets himself the task of sending every syllable to the uttermost corners of the house is sure to be stilted, automatic, unnatural, and consequently uninteresting. If every syllable reaches, so much the better, but they must be sent without apparent effort.

Compare the above with the following, which Ayres used to introduce an article in the New York Dramatic Mirror: "The giving of the name-sound to the pronouns and particles is one of the worst of elocutionary faults, as no other one thing does so much to make one's utterance stilted, unnatural, pedantic, and consequently to make the player appear to be self-conscious."

Naturally, Ayres took issue with Professor Virgil A. Pinkley's belief "that their or them, or any other word in the English language, . . ., Italics are not in the original.

25 Essentials, pp. 16-18.
has as clear a title to all its sounds when found in the by-ways of obscurity as the same word ever has though found in the highways of emphasis." His reaction was characteristic of Ayres: "Fine and flowery, but rank nonsense, nevertheless! . . . Reader, heed not Prof. Pinkley, unless you are ambitious to become the pedant of PEDANTS, or pedant OF pedants, as Prof. Pinkley would have it."

In noting how an adverbial phrase was mishandled in the vocal delivery of an actor, Mr. Meredith in Robert Downing’s production of Spartacus, Ayres suggested not only transposing the word order but also inserting two commas to set off the parenthetic element for easy slurring.

"For what is honor with empty pockets, in this thievish world?" One does not need to look at this sentence twice to see that honor and empty pockets were properly the most emphatic words in it, and that what is one of the less emphatic. In order to make the words in the sentence express the thought intended, with all the force possible, the adverbial clause in this thievish world should be placed after what and inclosed between two commas. This transposition would give the sentence an effective climax—if properly spoken.26

With respect to the aspiration of the h’s of pronouns, Ayres discovered a decided distinction between the practice of British actors and that of performers in this country. Although a typical British actor consistently slurred the pronoun he, even when the sense of his speech demanded an emphatic long-i sound, he had

an exasperating habit of giving you the name sound of he and his and him and her and you and them, and of such little words as to and from. . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Some of them will persist in aspirating the h in the pronouns, find the pronoun where they may . . . . This habit comes, doubtless,

26 Acting, pp. 164-165, 86, and 183.
of the fear that some one may take them for Cockneys. It makes
the utterance of some of our more prominent English actors sound
very like the utterance of school children when they are learn­
ing to read and are obeying the injunction, "Speak up loud and
clear!" It makes their utterance hard, wooden, inflexible, and
takes from the prominence that should be given to the important
words. The object of speaking is not to pronounce words but to
convey thoughts.

With the exception of the American actor's common failure to slur
the indefinite article, Ayres found that "this over­preciseness in the
utterance of the little words is a fault that is, comparatively, not
common with Americans." In fact, in Ayres's judgment, one of the few
virtues of the early­going delivery of the new school was a tendency to
slur unemphatic pronouns and particles and form words. Unfortunately,
in the delivery of many performers, such slurring was merely part of a
general indiscriminate "gim­e­glass­o'­beer style" which was employed
throughout. Ayres singled out for praise two members of the Clara
Morris company (1887): Mr. McDowell and Miss Vane, who even gave the
\( \text{my} \) its long­i sound before mother, husband, darling, and the like,
in order to "express respect or affection." 27

Ayres suggested an unlimited degree of slurring in order to play
up, for example, two key words near the end of Portia's pound­of­flesh
speech:

\[
\text{But in the cutting it, if thou dost shed} \\
\text{One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods} \\
\text{Are, by the laws of Venice, CONFISCATE}— \\
\text{Unto the \textbf{STATE} of Venice.} \\
\]

\ldots the two most emphatic words in the whole eight lines, the two
words that the skillful Portia specially depends on for her climax,
and for the round of applause that she is sure to get—\textit{confiscate}
and \textit{state}. \ldots The whole clause \cite{ibid., pp. 165, 175-176, 164, 165, 59, and 184-185.}

Obviously, without expert control over the production and the use of the breath stream, such skill in vocal interpretation would be difficult.

Already noted has been Ayres's analysis of emphasis and slurring as functioning in relation to breath control. The actor of the new school often let his use of vocal force be governed by an erratic gasping for gulps of air. The placement of a word or syllable with respect to the initial and terminal extremities of a given exhalation began to determine this element's relative stress: the closer it followed upon a performer's intake of air, the greater were its chances of being emphasized in vocal delivery. Breath control, then, deserves attention next.

Of Breath Control

Ayres admonished a person who should be practicing, in order to achieve artistic success on the stage:

To take breath often, very often, and to take it inaudibly. Leave gasping to "barn-stormers" and prayer-meeting exhorters. Never speak without having the lungs well filled. In taking breath and in speaking use the muscles of the chest as little as possible; make, if you can, the diaphragm and abdominal muscles—the belly—do all the work. Practice will make this easy, and will immensely increase the so-called lung power for both momentary and continued effort. If a speaker from nervousness loses his voice he has only "to pull himself together," take a deep, full breath, and speak from the abdomen, to find his voice instantly return to him. . . . It is not necessary to have much

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28Essentials, pp. 156-157. Ayres symbolized decided emphasis, in print, by employing capital letters throughout the word or group of words so stressed.
voice in order to read well. A fragile person with a weak voice, if it is under control, might be very artistic; but a strong voice and great strength are necessary in order to be effective, especially in dealing with pathos or passion.

... great care should be taken not to let the voice die out, as many readers and players do, at the end of sentences and as the breath leaves the lungs.29

Whereas the critics as a body overlooked, for example, Miss Wainwright's taking "breath so loud that she could be heard throughout the whole house," Ayres noted this fact and went on to chide his fellow critics:

What do you critics really know about it [the art of reading]? Do you ever call the attention of the players you write about to their mispronunciation— to the habit so many of them have of letting their voices run down at every breath until they become in many cases inaudible? Never! Do you critics ever call their attention to the habit some of them have of taking breath so that they can be heard throughout the whole auditorium? Never!

The above tendencies, moreover, undermined the vocal delivery of many of the best performers which the new school offered.

Ayres saw in Frederick B. Warde a typical representative of the new school's approach to breathing during vocal delivery. Ayres reported that Warde's breathing drew upon "the pectoral region of the trunk, quite to the exclusion of the abdominal, which, in vehement delivery, results in a tiresome raising of the shoulders at each inhalation, and is one of the causes of the camp-meeting gasp that many players seem to think adds to the effectiveness of their delivery." Speaking from breath propelled from the apex instead of from the base of his lungs, Horace Vinton executed "the useless and fatiguing labor of raising forty or fifty pounds of shoulder three or four inches at every inhalation. . . . , fullness of tone

29Ibid., pp. 23-24 and 18.
and the power to stay are rendered impossible." In addition, Warde was
warned that "this mode of using the voice-making apparatus is ruinous to
the voice."30

Often concomitant with inhalation in loud gasps was letting the
"voice run down before every inhalation." At times the words immediately
preceding each intake of air became scarcely audible. May Newnan, for
example, "gulps in a supply of air and then makes a dive for her words,
letting the tone decrease in quantity, as the supply of air decreases;
and this she continues to do, in speeches of any length, with monotonous,
pendulum-like regularity."

Ayres multiplied manifold examples of the performer who, like Fred
C. Mosley, would customarily howl out the first word of a line of verse,
or of a thought unit in prose, and then proceed "in a gradual diminuendo,
until he reaches the [last] word . . . . [which] frequently can not be
heard." Mosley's attack, especially on blank-verse lines, was echoed
in the recurring of a progressively dwindling volume in the reading of
Mr. Weaver, from Mrs. Langtry's company. "After filling the lungs, they
pounce down on the vowels they meet with with [sic] gradually diminishing
stress until the breath is expended. As for the demands of the thought,
it is no concern of theirs."31

Concerning this pernicious practice, involving faulty breath control,
Ayres stated: "No other one thing is so destructive to the sense, except
the old-fashioned practice of varying the tones in order to avoid being

31 Ibid., pp. 179, 135, 177, and 60.
monotonous—a reproach that will never be made an intelligent reader that is intent upon keeping his auditors occupied with the thought of his author."

**Of Modulation**

Ayres went on to advise performers to let the tones of the voice change spontaneously with a change in the thought of the author. In effect, then, one should think the thought and let modulation, or a change in tonal quality, take care of itself.

Cultivating the voice, moreover, after the fashion of the tonists is a dangerous thing to do. If cultivated after their fashion, it seldom, if ever, fails to lead to artificiality. Cultivating special tones for this sentiment and for that sentiment, for this passion and for that passion, is fatal. . . . Keeping track of the thought in the tones of a sing-singer is bothersome. . . . If the sentiment does not change them let them remain unchanged. If the reader allows himself to be occupied with the tones of his voice, the listener will do likewise, and will soon become wearied. 32

In the 1886 Christmas number of the New York Dramatic Mirror, Ayres's article "What Is Elocution?" inveighed against delivery which occupies itself with the tones in which the words are spoken.

This school of elocution talks to its disciples of, and would have them occupy themselves with, crotundus, sostenutos, whispers and half-whispers, monotonous, basilar tones and guttural tones, high pitches, middle pitches and low pitches, gentle tones, reverent tones, and all the rest of that old trumpery that has made many a noisy, stilted reader, but never an intelligent, agreeable one. Things that are old are commonly good, but we have here an exception to the rule. The teaching of this school of elocution can have but one result—that of producing readers occupied with the sound of their own voices.

Ayres chose this article to lead off the series which comprise his book on acting; the material on tones stands at the beginning of the article.

32Essentials, pp. 18, 68, and 19.
By 1893, Ayres was still telling his readers that modulation will come of itself. If it comes in any other way than of itself, it were better it stayed away. It is as necessary that the emotion be behind the modulation as it is that it be behind the gesture.

The toneist is a chanter, not a reader. He thinks of what his voice is doing, not of what his author is saying. He cultivates the gymnastic side, the easy side, of elocutionary art, which is the side that any one with a good voice-making apparatus, whether he have any brains or not, can cultivate successfully. The intellectual side, the important side, the hard side, is the side the toneist does not seem to get even a glimpse of.

The toneists delight in inditing long essays, in which they tell us, for example, that "the fires of an imagination that create the flashing earnestness of a living spirit must be present, if we would persuade, guide, and finally command the sympathetic oversoul"; that "motive power of voice is the breath of God"; and that we must "cultivate the ear, and train the voice, and cultivate the sense of rhythm and measure, if we would be a reader." This is a sample of the manner in which the toneists would teach us—as one of them poetizes it—"to express the truth of the world to our fellow-men."

Ayres criticized, for example, Mrs. D. P. Bowers whose "only care is to vary the tone with the view of avoiding monotony. If the reader occupies himself with the thought, the tone will commonly take care of itself." In this connection, also,

Mr. Whiting has an intoning, non-committal, non-virile, slide-along, snapless style of utterance that alone is sufficient to stick him so fast in the slough that he is in that all Barnum's elephants couldn't pull him out. Until Mr. Whiting effects a radical change in his manner of delivery, progress in his art is impossible. Nor is the manner of delivery of any one of the other five [i.e., Helen Dauvray, Miss Stanhope, Miss Vernon, Mr. Bodney, and E. H. Sothern, in The Love Chase] much less faulty than is Mr. Whiting's. Instead of being natural and intelligent, they are all artificial and automatic. Being wound up, they unreel now in this tone, now in that; now with more voice, now with less. They seem to use the words to exercise their voice-making muscles on, rather than to convey the thoughts of the author with.33

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33*Acting*, pp. 17, 229, 122, and 130. Italics are in the original.
Ayres drew upon his personal experience with theatre in Germany, during the mid-fifties, to note the almost complete dominance of this style in delivery there.

This sing-song manner of delivery pervades nearly the whole German stage. The German actor, find him where you will, never, by any chance, speaks a sentence in a natural tone, save when he plays low-comedy parts. No one could be more natural than he when he personates a comic tinker or a comic cobbler; but when he attempts the personation of a man of the better sort his delivery is artificial in the extreme. Nor need we hunt far to find, even in high places, on our own stage those that sin in this direction quite as grievously as the Germans do.34

In noting a similarity to certain American performers, even in high places, Ayres may have included the financially successful Richard Mansfield who, in the considered judgment of a later critic, let "obnoxious elocutionary faults" and "tyrannous mannerisms"35 shape his delivery.

Concerning vocal quality, or the general tone36 of the voice in delivering a specific passage, Mansfield stood in contrast to Ayres by advising the students of a school of acting:

Think of your voice as a color and as you paint your picture (the character you are painting, the scene you are portraying) mix your colors. You have on your palate (palette) a white voice, la voix blanche; a heavenly ethereal or blue voice, the voice of prayer; a disagreeable, jealous, or yellow voice; a steel-gray voice for quiet sarcasm; a brown voice for hopelessness; a lurid, red voice for hot anger; a cheery voice, the color of the green sea that a brisk breeze is crisping; and then there's a pretty little pink

34Essentials, p. 19.

35H. Vandmacher, "Was Mansfield a Genius?" Arena (Boston), XXIX (February, 1908), 166-176. See especially pp. 167 and 166.

36Cf. Ayres, Acting, p. 221; for Ayres's use of the term, see Essentials, pp. 105-106: "provided the reader employ a persuasive tone; if, however, the tone be strictly judicial."
voice, and the shades of violet— but the subject is endless.37

Indeed Mansfield told the critic William Winter "that it was part of his morning study, every day to practice with the voice, producing a series of tones and inflections, so as to develop and acquire complete control of it."38 By the way, Ayres granted that "one should not expect to have the muscles with which one produces it [the voice] well hardened and under proper control with less than at least two years' constant practice." But Ayres advised not to cultivate modulation, and "in exercising the voice with the view of strengthening it, it is not necessary to make much sound, but only to utter the words, or the vowels only, with intensity."39

No doubt it is becoming increasingly apparent that Ayres's analysis of vocal delivery failed to note the close relationship between inflection, which the performer was warned not to let come of itself, and modulation, that is, changes in tonal quality or timbre.40 In fact, other than the

37Quoted by Corbin, *op. cit.*, 288.


40Cf. S. H. Clark, 'The New Elocution Not Mechanical but Psychologic,' in "Empiricism vs. Science in Elocution," *Werner’s Magazine*, XVI (July, 1894), 239-248. See especially p. 241, where Clark criticizes Ayres's regard for inflection at the expense of quality, which Clark cites as significant to what Ayres identified as the proper rendering of the spirit or general tone of a speech. Here, as elsewhere, Ayres's lack of precision in terminology yields some quibbling.

In this connection, in the fervor of Ayres's attack upon "Les Amateurs," one can detect an apparent inconsistency in Ayres's view of effective modulation as uncultivated, that is, as coming of itself spontaneously. Ayres stated that in faulty delivery, "the modulation and emphasis are mere haphazard sing-song, bellow and bow-wow, fuss and fury; while in the former [good delivery], both are the natural product
frequent injunction "to inflect correctly." "Ayres's theatre criticisms gave little treatment to inflection or pitch change. He wrote obliquely, for instance, of "a peculiar and very strong emphasis on [the word] flash." A reason for Ayres's failure to detail the wrong and the right ways of inflection, even though he recognized their significance, can be found in the following confession of limitations inherent in his critical method.

The right placing of the emphasis is only one of several things that must be attended to to [sic] make a good reader, but it is the only thing that can be intelligently discussed on paper. It is quite as necessary that the inflections be correct, the time properly distributed, the pauses properly made, and the spirit properly rendered, as it is that the right words be made emphatic. But the importance of these things can be made apparent only by oral illustration.

Then too, as was often true with Ayres, his presentation reflected a zealous plea to uproot a pernicious practice from the field of delivery. "Commonly, we profit more by being made to see our faults than by being blinded to them. Mutual admiration societies and air-castle building are of carefully-considered delivery, of the exercise of that intelligence that so points the thought as to make it not only clear but effective." See Acting, p. 190. But cf. ibid., pp. 257-258: Ayres also recognized what he termed stage spontaneity, i.e., "measured-and-molded, cut-and-dried, prepared-beforehand spontaneity. It is the product of insight, native and acquired. . . . We don't mean real, genuine spontaneity; we mean the semblance only of spontaneity." (The influence of the Diderot paradox, the thesis that actors should not feel emotion but reproduce by conscious art its outward imitation, is discussed in the preceding chapter.)

41 Ayres, Acting, p. 228.
42 Essentials, p. 162. Italics are not in the original.
43 Acting, p. 101.
very like in what they yield. He felt that the time needed to be
shocked out of indifference toward faulty delivery. No doubt, then, he
justified his comparative neglect of inflection, while writing theatre
reviews, in terms of the seriousness and urgency to eradicate intonation
from the stage. For this sing-song pattern, which modulation usually
takes when at fault, serves as a strong deterrent to natural delivery.

Of Natural Delivery

Relative to tone, Ayres noted another barrier to natural delivery
and warned:

That untutored readers are almost certain to strike a higher
key in reading than that of their ordinary tone. This is
a fault that a little attention will, in most cases, readily correct.

As soon as the pupil begins to speak (or to read) in a high
tone or unnaturally he should be stopped, with the question: "What
did you say this is about?" which will bring him back to a natural
tone. Then, after he has extemporized a few sentences, he should
be directed to return to the language of the book. One hour of
this kind of drill will accomplish more than a whole term of wrestl­
ing with high pitches, low pitches, basillars, gutturals, orotundo,
and sostenutos.

Whereas the above suggestions were intended primarily for the teacher
or coach of acting, in this connection, Ayres continued his list of help­
ful hints by focusing attention again upon the student who was preparing
himself for a professional career on the stage.

Whatever is even akin to a drawling, a whining, an intoning, or a cant­
ing manner of speaking he cannot too studiously shun. Natural
tones are the tones of truth and honesty, of good sense and good
taste. It is with them only that the understanding is successfully
addressed; with them only that we can arouse and keep awake the

\textsuperscript{44}Ayres, Essentials, p. 62.
in endeavoring to be natural one must be careful not to
degenerate into the commonplace. Underdoing is always worse than
overdoing. The worst of faults is tameness. The happy mean between
the declamatory and the commonplace is often not easy to find.45

In the theatre, Ayres heard vocal delivery draw heavily upon the
conversationally natural speech of everyday life at that time. Ayres
tried to temper the excesses of this trend because such naturalness
would eventually develop a breed of actors incapable of handling the
so-called higher drama. Performers were becoming stultified in the
delivery of such artfully conceived dialogue as that of William
Shakespeare. But more important to Ayres's position, the movement was
giving off signs of passing below the level of colloquial delivery to
degenerate into the commonplace. Ayres's theatre criticisms bear witness
to his efforts to stem the tide of excessive naturalness, as well as to
hold in check excesses operating from the opposite extreme, namely,
overly declamatory delivery.

New playwrights were striving to establish meaningful communication
for social propaganda. As democracy invaded the formerly more exclusive
precinct of the theatre, in order to facilitate their understanding the
message of a play, a need arose for delivery in the words and manner with
which they were familiar in everyday life.

In theory, such naturalness might be assumed to represent a pursuit
of a "simple, direct, NATURAL" method, which Ayres repeatedly endorsed.
However, since artful naturalness is exceedingly difficult when delivering

the language of another, in Ayres's judgment, actors of the time commonly forewent such an arduous task, to employ an "artificiality [which] is within the easy reach of every one, dunderheads and all."  This tactic could be heard at work in the sing-song pattern of intonation, already mentioned, and in the inferior product resulting when a performer's sense of verse-rhythm led him unwisely to emphasize the elements receiving stress in the verse. Ayres provided numerous examples of this "non-natural, non-intelligent style of reading that is very prevalent. The art in it is on a level with the art in the sign of the way-side inn."  

Even more common than such artificial utterance, though, was the untrained actor's tendency to descend, in delivery, beneath the colloquial limits of the natural to indulge in the vulgate commonplace. During the year 1888, Ayres observed McKee Rankin's "nonchalant colloquialism when he should give us what let me call heroic realism . . . [or] realism colored with enough of the declamatory or oratorical to give the utterance a certain elevation." Rankin's commonplace delivery, in subjecting the poetic diction of Shakespeare to the colloquial level of everyday life, "can not be natural since it antagonizes the spirit that pervades the language."  

This was also a time when various amateur groups were supplying the on-the-job training received by thespians who felt professionally inclined.

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46 Ayres, Acting, pp. 131 and 133. Italics are in the original.
47 Essentials, pp. 119-120.
48 Acting, p. 111.
As the new school became established, few professional performers re­
mained to serve as satisfactory models for aspiring amateurs to try to
emulate in effective delivery. Soon the amateurs had only themselves,
and professional products stemming from their influence, as sources for
imitation. As a norm, they sought the natural or realistic in their own
everyday experiences. Commonplace patterns not only pervaded dramatic
activities in their own ranks but also began to spread to professional
levels. In effect, all actors became amateurs, and at a time when
amateurs were seldom praiseworthy.

Although the Amaranth Dramatic Society, in their amateur production
of *Masks and Faces*, avoided the common fault among novices of over­
gesticulation, their numerous rehearsals did not give adequate attention
to the vocal interpretation of dialogue. In this neglect of delivery,
the aforementioned amateur group was not alone among its fellows,
according to Ayres, nor was such underplaying of vocal effect foreign
to the professional theatre.

They knew nothing of the art of producing the effect with the
language that must be produced with it if one would raise a personation
above the colorless level of the commonplace. The elocution of
the Amaranths is of the noncommittal, spiritless, pointless, insipid
sort that is the distinctive characteristic of the ultra-realis­
ts. The ladies and gentlemen of the Amaranth make the great mistake—
a very common one—of supposing that being natural, realistic,
consists in putting little modulation and less emphasis into one's
elocution.

Incidentally, underplaying the interpretative delivery of lines was
often accompanied by excessive overacting with the hands, face, and other
parts of the body. Ayres found, for example, that A. S. Lipman "acts so
much that he acts all the nature out of every character he attempts to
personate." In this aspect of delivery, too, Ayres's advice to "copy
Nature in her best forms" was ignored. Whereas Ayres ordered "a heroic
dose of repression" to bring Lipman's superfluous action within the
limits of natural effectiveness, on the other hand, the vocal delivery
of a common actor of the time called for heightening beyond "the gim-
e-glass-o'-beer style," which militated against a satisfactory inter-
pretation of dramatic dialogue. The effect of the rich contralto voice
of Mary Anderson, whose popularity was well known, was undermined "in
her endeavor to be natural, colloquial, realistic, [when] she drops
away down into the commonplace."$^{49}$

But the average critic went to the theatre more to judge what he
saw than what he heard. He overlooked the fault in underplaying vocal
interpretation and reserved his most virulent attacks for the stilted
effect achieved by over-correctness. And indeed, in sympathy with this
critical abhorrence for the overly correct approach, Ayres "will give
his sanction to almost anything sooner than to pedantry." Ayres agreed,
in essence, with the following opinion expressed by one of his most
vitriolic detractors, A. C. Wheeler who wrote under the pseudonym Nym
Crinkle.

$^{49}$Ibid., pp. 189-190, 160, 84, 160, and 59. Augustus Pitou accredit-
ed Mary Anderson's subdued vocal delivery to her conscious imitation "of
the 'drawing-room school of acting,' then in vogue in London. . . . This
silly school of acting was copied by us and prevailed with us for a while." During her London debut, Anderson's speech "in the same conversational
key, emotionless as some beautiful statue," was interrupted by a request
from the audience. "A coster-monger, in his shirt sleeves, sitting in
the front row of the gallery, cried out, 'A little louder, Mary, a little
louder!' . . . she [then] let out her beautiful voice so that her every
word was heard in every part of the house. . . . Throwing off the yoke of
restraint that had been put upon her . . . . She gave full vent to her
emotions. Her audience was moved; she was acting." See Augustus Pitou,
97, 98, and 98-99.
An artiste who bristles all over like a porcupine with sharp correctness of speech has transferred the interest from her quality to her quills. Every time she touches you she draws blood. Her strain to get the soul quality [emotion] over into semicolons and aspirations is very much like the old woman who wouldn't have her photograph taken till she had got the cologne on her handkerchief.\(^{50}\)

Ayres endorsed, instead, "the snap, the movement, the earnestness— in a word . . . the naturalness—of the delivery, which always has been, and forevermore will be, the only legitimate thing to consider in making one's elocution effective. . . . as always, I aim only at what I think will heighten the effect. Nature is a niggard and does not expend her energies where she will not be rewarded."\(^{51}\) For Ayres, to be natural in delivery was to follow Richard Whately's injunction to speak clearly and forcibly and agreeably, while conforming to the author's purpose and escaping from the temptations to become mechanical, automatic, stilted, pedantic, self-conscious, and overly declamatory, or rather, commonplace and tame and, consequently, uninteresting and wearisome.

Ayres noted that not all actors who customarily employed the colloquial in delivery adhered strictly to this pattern. Often even in the same performer, Ayres observed an unpredictable vacillating between the two extremes of commonplace and of overly declamatory delivery. At times Mansfield "allowed himself the thundering voice and the freedom of expression of the old school."\(^{52}\) But usually Ayres could not approve such efforts by a new-schooled performer, untrained as the latter was in voice

\(^{50}\) Quoted by Ayres, *Acting*, pp. 86 and 243.

\(^{51}\) *Essentials*, pp. 156 and 145.

\(^{52}\) Dillon, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
management and in careful analysis of a role.

In displaying excessive vociferation, for example, no doubt some performers felt that they had captured the spirit in which the best actors from the former school created a powerful impression. In an article entitled "Voice," for an 1892 issue of the New York Dramatic Mirror, the actress-theorist Marie Prescott looked back upon Edwin Forrest as "the last man who was vulgar enough to lift up his great lungs and disturb the public ear." Ayres disagreed, though, with Prescott's argument that "all the great actors are those whose voices have thundered out great passions, and made insignificant the brilliant twinkle of the little stars, with the oceanlike roar of their majestic waves." Rather, Ayres maintained that a powerful voice is the product of brawn, not of brain, and preferred a performer such as Mr. Macdonald, of Rose Coghlan's company, "a fragile man" whose lack in vocal power did not interfere with his communicating the author's thought.

Feeling that often "the big voices we hear sound as though they came out of the top of the head!" Ayres severely criticized such vociferators as Edmund K. Collier and Thomas E. Garrick, who could be heard but seldom understood. Their pattern of blasting in delivery covered up both the beauties and the blemishes in their interpretation. A kinship with nature disappeared in a welter of physical exertion.

Ayres contrasted such labored tactics with the ease in delivery of Joseph Jefferson, Mrs. John Drew, and Clara Morris, whom Ayres singled out, along with a Mr. Couldock, as the most promising players of the time. Whereas Collier relied upon the startling effect of a powerful voice-potential, Jefferson, Drew, and Morris knew how to manage the voice.
Moreover, "Mrs. Drew and Miss Norris are two of the very few players that know how to be colloquial without degenerating into the commonplace."  

Joseph Jefferson's artistic finish consisted almost entirely in keeping one characterization, Rip Van Winkle, out of the doldrums of the commonplace.

In evaluating these three performers, Ayres drew upon a traditional criterion for judging greatness in acting, namely, the test of the performer's skill in drama from classic and standard repertory.

Mrs. Drew and Miss Norris are equally skilled in their respective lines. Miss Norris, however, is the greater actress of the two, because the line of parts she excels in is a line that requires, in order to play them satisfactorily, dramatic gifts of a higher order than is required to play Mrs. Drew's line, high comedy, satisfactorily. Each is great in her line, but neither, not even Miss Norris, is an actress of the first rank. There is not, indeed, at present an actor or an actress of the first rank on the English-speaking stage. Before Miss Norris can be ranked, in the history of the drama, among the first, she must play some of the great classic or standard parts so well that her performances shall compare favorably with the performances of those parts by her great predecessors.

Notwithstanding, in Jefferson, in Drew, and in Morris, Ayres noted an ease in the delivery of dialogue. Such ease resulted in a vocal distinctness which was lacking in the physical exertions of their less able colleagues. The former actors' training in managing the voice and in establishing audience rapport, in Ayres's opinion, accounted in large measure for the elevation of their art beyond the level attained by a typical player of the time. For the latter's use of a colloquially natural delivery often slipped into the commonplace. Then too, faulty

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54 Ibid., p. 198.
vocal expression resulted from a performer's egotistical pattern which had been calculated to reveal sensational individuality. A kinship with nature, then, disappeared in a confusion of forces operating from the two extremes of delivery: the overly declamatory approach and the commonplace style.

Ayres found that the new-school actor, in his eagerness to attract the favorable attention of a popular audience, commonly employed haphazard methods in striving for a unique individual characterization. Such an unthinking procedure met with a semblance of success where its weaknesses were veiled by the scenic splendor or distracting music of a typical spectacular production. However, when dialogue of the caliber in Shakespeare was presented, the limitations of such an approach were obvious.

Basically, for Ayres, being natural on stage meant adapting one's delivery to the nature of the dramatic script, that is, letting vocal style be natural to the general production style which the playwright's dialogue demanded. But Ayres saw the actor of the new school forego traditional training in versatility and, consequently, often lay himself open to the charge of antagonizing the spirit that pervades the language of a certain drama. He thereby undermined his chances for success in classic and standard repertory, the standard by which Ayres determined a performer's professional stature.
Concerning naturalness in vocal delivery, Ayres believed that "nothing else does more to make one's reading natural and realistic than the proper distribution of time." He went on to point out, to the ambitious performer, that critical approval would seek out the actor who had learned:

"To be deliberate, to take time. But let your deliberation appear in the time you consume with your pauses—which, remember, when of much length, must be between the thoughts—and not in any drawing or dwelling on the words, for they must come clean-cut and sharply defined. . . . In extemporising we pause instinctively; to give the listener time to comprehend, and to prepare our next thought for presentation."55

Mrs. John Drew and Clara Morris gained such approval from Ayres, who cited their way with a pause, in the interests of natural delivery, as a practice worthy emulation by others.

Instead, though, performers imitated the commonplace norm provided by everyday speech. "The thing that actors pay least attention to—less even than they pay to emphasis—is the proper distribution of time." Ayres cited, for example, the "rusher" Fred C. Mosley who raced ahead with no purpose motivating the general obscuration of meaning which resulted. "In speeches of an length he should take, at the least, one

half more time. He goes, hurry-skurry, over rhetorical and grammatical pauses alike, as though the very devil were after him.  

Incidentally, in the introduction to Ayres' book on acting, the editor of Varner's Magazine pointed out that "there is nothing that Mr. Ayres gives more attention to than to the rhetorical or sense pause." To the second edition (1897) of his Essentials of Elocution, in fact, Ayres added a section entitled "The Pause—Its Importance." Ayres recognized "the pause with which we always follow every strongly emphatic word." At times he even dispensed with emphasis because, in a line of verse, a rhythmic break to enhance the sense, that is, "the caesura, as is frequently the case, makes the word sufficiently prominent." Ayres also noted the following relationship between the pause to increase clarity and impressiveness and the pause to fill the lungs with necessary air.

It occasionally—not infrequently, perhaps—occurs that the reader pauses simply to take breath, when so far as the sense is concerned it is a matter of indifference whether a pause is made or not. If, however, the breath is well managed, this will occur very rarely. Breathing places, i.e. places where the sense demands a pause, are usually abundant. The unskilled reader commonly runs over a large percentage of them. In the interest of force and staying power, the reader should avail himself of every opportunity the construction affords to breathe. Sometimes he should breathe between every word. For example: "Bloody, bawdy villain! Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!" He should take breath five times in speaking these eight words.  

56 *Acting*, pp. 197, 101, and 136-137.  
58 *Essentials*, pp. 73-80, 79-80, 154, and 75-76.
Ayres kept reminding the actors of the time that "to point the
thought of an author that has any thought to point one must take time.
If ample time be not taken, no matter how admirable one's delivery may
be in other respects, naturalness is impossible." It was Ayres's thesis:

In reading, the proper distribution of time belongs more especially
to the domain of art than does anything else the reader has to
attend to. It is the thing last learned by Cleverness and one of
the things never learned by Mediocrity. With skill in the distribut­
ing of time comes deliberation, a thing without which no reader can
be really effective.

Many actors tended to "hasten for fear of becoming wearisome." In
this aim, as well as in their professed objective of seeming natural, Ayres
recorded their failure. For such hurrying ahead in delivery gave off
echoes of the vulgar utterance of commonplace trivia in everyday speech.

Ayres compared the speech of the then modern actor with that of one
of his great predecessors. Edwin Forest always took at least six
minutes to speak Hamlet's to-be-or-not-to-be soliloquy, while no other actor
I [Ayres] have ever seen took more than four, and some I have heard speak
it in less than three." Yet the time taken by Forest's artful delivery
seemed to pass much more quickly, for Ayres, than that wasted by the rapid,
though discomforting, tactics of the new school.

And significantly, Forest's intelligent use of pauses saw to it that
his "six minutes, be it remembered, were not consumed in drawling over
the words, big or little, after the fashion of so many whose chief
ambition would seem to be to stuff each and every word with as much sound
as possible."59 For remember also, Ayres warned, that such deliberation

59 Acting, pp. 107, 101, 107, 101, and 102.
must not "appear in anything but in the frequency and in the length of the pauses." 60 And it is a proper distribution of time, "more than any other one thing, that tends to make one's utterance natural and realistic—that puts into one's utterance that makes it sound as though one were speaking one's own words, uttering one's own thoughts." 61

Of Preparation for a Role

It followed, then, that Ayres's next suggestion was to remind his readers "that in speaking the language of others we should seem to be finding the thought and the language as we go along." As further aid to the performer as he sets about the task of preparing for a specific role, Ayres offered the following:

I may say here that no one, no matter who, can do himself full justice in speaking the language of another unless he is as familiar with it as he is with his A B C's. He must know the language so thoroughly that it costs him no effort whatever to recall it.

Concerning the process of memorising and its place in the sequence of events leading up to an acceptable command over the language of another, Ayres went on to warn:

Not to commit a selection to memory until, by going over it mentally, you are able to read it mentally to your satisfaction. To memorise a selection and then study the reading is "to put the cart before the horse." First decide upon the form of the utterance, then, as you memorise, you will memorise the form as well as the words. Salvini is said to have studied King Lear six years before

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60 *Essentials*, p. 74.
he made any effort to commit the part to memory.  

The age, though, took pride in cultivating actors capable of memorizing a new role in only a very few days. As soon as the lines were committed, the actor felt thoroughly prepared to place this role upon the boards. For example, one new tragedian boasted that he had mounted Shylock in a week and that he rode his characterization into the good graces of a typical audience. Ayres passed the following judgment: "If he had told me that, when he added the part to his repertory, he spent a week on each one of the longer speeches, I should have had some respect for his appreciation of what was necessary."

Ayres believed that verbal memory was the only requisite for reciting off the words of a role while letting pauses, and the like, fall where they may. But memorizing "is the last thing that should be attended to." Or as Ayres insisted: first how, then what. In this connection, Ayres rejected the current craze for learning to act while performing in a theatre, which was often operated in conjunction with a school of acting.

You may be an artist without ever seeing a stage, or a duffer and tread the stage, no matter how long. A student of dramatic art gains nothing by treading the stage until he has gone through a thorough course of preparatory training. Well-nigh everything he has to learn can be learned in a room ten feet square just as well as it can be learned anywhere else. The ill effects of playing until one has received proper and thorough rudimental instruction are, as a rule, very great. Not one actor in a hundred ever studies seriously after he begins to play. But few, in fact, study seriously before they begin to play. They talk a deal about studying, but commonly they study not at all. Memorizing is not study in the sense I am now using the word. Some of the greatest gamps memorize with marvelous ease. The actor's pursuit is hardly an intellectual pursuit when pursued as most actors pursue it.

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62Essentials, pp. 21-22.
A man might play Hamlet, and play him well, and never step foot on the stage until, say, ten days before he made the attempt.  

A performer seeking critical approval would, in Ayres's judgment, do well to follow closely the suggestions cited in Ayres's book on delivery or elocution. "Delivery, utterance, reading, elocution, call it what you will, is the thing with which the would-be actor should always begin, and the thing with which the oldest actor should always end." But Ayres assumed that even before starting to try to master the intricacies of delivery, an aspiring dramatic artist "knows his mother tongue sufficiently well to articulate it distinctly, and to pronounce it according to some recognized authority. Studies in articulation and pronunciation are properly preparatory to the study of elocution, as an art, rather than a part of it."  

Of Pronunciation  

For the above reason, along with the fact that the time recognized Ayres as a leading authority on pronunciation, any discussion of Ayres's practice as a theatre critic, of vocal delivery, cannot ignore his numerous reports concerning actors' pronunciation. Again, Ayres stated his thesis: "He must be a sorry dolt that can't learn in a short time to have an actorlike bearing on the stage and to use his voice properly;
and he whose memory is so treacherous that he can't learn to pronounce correctly has no business on the stage.\textsuperscript{66}

As has already been noted, especially in the section on slurring, Ayres observed that stage delivery was encouraged to approximate the speech of everyday life, with its energy-saving obscuration of the full value of certain sounds. Less in vowel quality, of course, took place more frequently where such sounds did not appear in a stressed position within a given context.

Ayres found that, in pronouncing the words of the various roles, most actors of the new school did not misplace primary and secondary accents within words and did not mangle accented vowel sounds appreciably. "Better, far, to misplace an accent occasionally than to mangle the vowel sounds."\textsuperscript{67} However, just as the end of a thought unit dwindled in audibility under their vocal technique, almost all suffixes and often any final syllables in longer words became obscured. The endings -\textsuperscript{ant}, -\textsuperscript{eat}, and -\textsuperscript{ed}, for example, were reduced to a pronunciation which Ayres represented orthographically by -\textsuperscript{unt}, -\textsuperscript{net}, and -\textsuperscript{ud}, respectively. That is to say, the vowels in these unaccented syllables began to lose full value and to approach, in effect, the schwa-vowel area in their formation.

\textit{Around the year 1886, in commenting upon the star-making tactics}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66} \textit{Acting}, p. 33.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Alfred Ayres, "Orthoepy," \textit{New York Mirror}, XVII, No. 422 (January 29, 1887), 1.
\end{itemize}
employed by theatrical syndicates, Ayres singled out one George Edgar, whose pronunciation was faulty at every breath. . . . His accents were generally correctly placed, but the vowel sounds were continually 'away off,' which gave his utterance an unschooled, vulgar ring that to better-schooled ears was most offensive. . . . All the syndicates in Christendom could not have made the public accept him.

The tendency evidently persevered, for in viewing Richard Mansfield as Shylock during November, 1893, Ayres cringed when he detected that final unaccented vowels continued to suffer in the delivery of this leading actor, as well as in the vocalisations of such members of his company as Mr. Torrence and Beatrice Cameron. 68

This obscuration reflected, of course, a natural tendency by unaccented elements in the conversational speech at that time. It therefore pleased the populace in their quest for realism on the stage. To Ayres, though, annihilation of a vowel's full value was another instance of degrading influence, from a currently commonplace procedure, upon the formerly artful standard set up by tradition.

Notwithstanding, Ayres did approve of partial obscuration in many instances; in fact, he derided the use of the full name-sound for vowels in unstressed positions. Perhaps his concept of lessened vowel-value anticipated, after a fashion, the reasoning of Claude E. Kentner and Robert West in their book Kinesiologic Phonetics. 69 The latter use a dot beneath a phonetic symbol to indicate partial obscuration, but not to the extent of the phoneme's ultimate destruction by entering the schwa-vowel

68Acting, pp. 57 and 224.

Devoid of such terminology and such a system of symbolisation, Ayres used the long-hand of English verbiage to explain that stage usage should permit certain unaccented vowel sounds to depart from their namesound and to approach the sound that terminal y has in any and only. Ayres sanctioned such a pronunciation, for the American actor, not only in the pronoun me but also in you and your and the like. For example, Ayres took the following sentence:

"Why did you not come to me when I called you?"

Though the name sound of you and of me are you and me respectively, their proper sounds in the sentence above, where they are unemphatic, is ye and me, the e in both cases having the sound that terminal y has in any, only, etc.

In addition to the Briticisms noted above, on the whole, the British actor surpassed his American colleague in satisfying Ayres with a less obscured pronunciation for unaccented vowels in longer words. Then too, "we never hear an Englishman of any culture pronounce perfect, for example, as though it were written perfect, or world as though it were written world, or bird as though it were written burd, and so on . . . . This tends to make their utterance much more pleasing to the cultivated ear than is that of the average— even cultivated— American." However, to Ayres's dismay, British actors carried over this practice, of maintaining phonemic distinction, to their pronunciation of unemphatic pronouns, particles, and such grammatical form words as to and from. In this connection, too, Ayres noted these actors' "exasperating habit of giving you the name-sound of he and his and him and her and you and them."

This over-precision, whether or not it was true of all British actors, troubled Ayres because it was a common practice among the British
who were performing in America and who were thereby in a position to exercise close influence upon this country's native crop of thespians. Indeed, the American actor was fast gaining a reputation, even abroad, for hitting hard the indefinite article a. In surveying the situation around the year 1887, Ayres denounced a uniform treatment of vowel-value as making for a "delivery stilted, pedantic, unnatural, and [calculated] to make them [its advocates] appear self-conscious."

By the way, some actors in the cast of *The White Slave* were apparently careful to avoid lessening the value of certain vowel sounds in polysyllabic words. This practice was in accord with many of Ayres's pronouncements. Yet Ayres criticised them for making "more of the vowel sound in the third syllable of circumstance and of interesting than accords with the best usage, but the pronouncing of these vowels short [rather than partially obscured] is not unsanctioned." Ayres tried to lead others to the high level of precision in pronunciation which he had attained by having compared various authorities' views with the best current American usage.

As has been suggested, Ayres felt that obscuring a phoneme to the extent of sounding the schwa, instead of pronouncing the unaccented vowel designated, "does far more to vulgarise one's utterance than the occasional misplacing of an accent [within a word]. It awakens suspicions of uncultured early associations." Ayres brought this belief to focus upon an actor's handling of final syllables in polysyllabic words. The average American performer, none the less, continued to say "munt instead

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70 *Acting*, pp. 165, 175, 165, 175-176, 164, 175, and 179.
of *ment, *unge instead of *enge, *ate instead of *at, and so one."\textsuperscript{71}

Perhaps since many British actors were accustomed to trying to make words audible in such vast amphitheatre-like structures as Drury Lane and Covent Garden, they usually satisfied Ayres by not obscuring word endings. But the English language, unlike Latin and Russian and German, does not require a distinct utterance of grammatical endings in order to communicate the function of the various words in a sentence. In highly inflectional languages, on the other hand, it is common to find stage practice guided by the injunction that an actor speak all his endings loud and clear. No doubt Ayres was familiar with this belief in Goethe's rules for German players. But its urgency need not apply to the analytic syntax of English. Just as grammarians had been foisting systems from the Latin language into English, at times Ayres seemed to be advocating a style of English pronunciation more appropriate to, and indeed necessary in, the rhetorical delivery of Latin periods.

Then too, consider Ayres's conception of the workings of language, especially his rejection of the sound which is now termed the schwa. His belief was out of joint with the then current practice of obscuration in everyday speech and by extension, considering the theatrical philosophy of the time, obscuration in stage delivery. But even today some authorities, who are far from deserving the title "purist," advocate less use of the schwa sound in some unstressed positions, especially by members of professions involving impressive communication of material to large groups of listeners.

\textsuperscript{71}Ibid., p. 201.
Similarly, Ayres stood stanch against the decided obscuring of speech sounds: against the "ud's, un's, and ualt's." He saw this practice engulfing the once dignified delivery of the theatre world. Ayres could never bring himself to endorse the actor Horace Vinton who, typically, was entrusted with a leading role long before he could handle it adequately. "The word woman Mr. Vinton pronounces as though it were spelled woman"; likewise separated became separated, palace palus, because went to becos, and so on and on."

In addition to a common American tendency to obscure decidedly the unaccented syllables in polysyllabic words, a few accents continued to be misplaced within individual words and, generally speaking, certain vowel sounds seemed to be made "too much in the throat." The misplacement of primary and secondary accents within a word, though, was becoming exceedingly rare. True, around the year 1887, Ayres cringed on hearing the word inquiry "accented differently by different members of the [same] company," and he helped its members to make a choice, for consistency, by suggesting that "the accenting of the first syllable is said to be a Scotticism, and is not authorised by any orthoepist." In Ayres's opinion, however, severe censure was warranted when a shifting of accent changed the meaning which the author meant to convey through his interpreter, the actor. For example, during 1886, Frederick B. Ward's "Richelieu accuses De Mauprat of being gallant in steeds, not of being gallant in steeds--words of a very different meaning; besides, by using the wrong word, Mr. Warde spoils the measure."

Ibid., pp. 195, 200, 201, and 99. That Ayres perceived the product of speech delivery as a smooth-flowing whole made up of elements,
In comparison, though, with the earlier rampant mispronunciation of the new school, by the year 1887, an improved situation forced even the overly critical Ayres to concede:

It begins to look as though my occupation is fast going.

The other evening I went down to Hilo's to witness a representation of the Ivy Leaf by Mr. Power's travelling company, expecting to gather a goodly crop of mispronunciations; but lo! not one in the first two acts, which so discouraged me that I pocketed my pencil and went my way. True, most of the language was spoken in the Irish brogue, which may, and no doubt did, contribute to my disappointment; but when I learned at the door, from the advance man of the company, that not only all the principals of the company, plus the advance man himself, had copies of [Ayres's book] 'The Orthoepist,' I began to suspect the evening's yield would be meagre. Indeed, go where I may, I already find that the mispronunciations are very far from being as frequent as they were a few months ago. The time was, it is said, when it was safe to take the stage as authority in orthoepy. Will it ever be so again? It certainly looks so now.73

Even as late as a few months before, however, Ayres was admonishing Mattie Wood of Frederick B. Warde's Richelieu company, who, in the role of Marlon De Lorme, must learn to pronounce English better than she does now before she will be acceptable in even as small a part as that of Marion.74 Indeed, of course, Ayres found it necessary to continue waging his campaign against mispronunciation after the date in March, 1887, cited above. For example, he could not refrain from noting, with characteristic vividness, that 'Mr. Burlew's pronunciation of English modified according to their relative positions in the over-all context, can be inferred from the following, pp. 85-86: 'The bare position of a particle in a sentence often changes the vowel sound. Take, for example, this simple sentence: 'From whom did you get it?' Now transpose from to the end of the sentence and we find that the obscure-u sound of the a becomes a full short-o sound.'


74 Acting, p. 96.
conjures up visions of the Florida swamps. . . . If Mr. Burlew would become an actor, let him begin by learning to pronounce English." Ayres could not overlook the actor's failure to possess even a command of language, which is fundamental to any further work on delivery for the stage.

Moreover, in Ayres's judgment, to "America's greatest actress" at that time, to Clara Morris, "still cling some of her early crudities of utterance, and her pronunciation of certain words is quite the reverse of good—nervous, virtue, world, and earth are examples." Significantly, though, Ayres had enough perspective, concerning the relative importance of various elements contributing to the over-all effect in delivery, to admit:

These mispronunciations do not, however, lessen the effectiveness of Miss Morris's personations, or even render them less pleasing to the million. Indeed, Miss Morris's elocution is so admirable, she is so thoroughly successful in fixing the attention of the auditor on the matter in hand, that it is possible her inelegancies of utterance are not noticed by any but those that listen with the special view of judging the manner.

Among Morris's company could be noted one Walter C. Kelley who, despite his good stage bearing and deportment, "has no idea of delivery beyond the calling over of the words, which he frequently pronounces in a manner that is absolutely execrable." Even intra-word accent departed from the authorized pattern of the time, for Ayres found him "guilty of saying despicable, hospitable, absolutely, existence, and so on, and on and on! We often hear actors mispronounce, but we do not often hear

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mispronunciations so barbarous as despicable. Character is not worse.  

True, Franklin H. Sargent's students, in the New York School of Acting classes from 1884 through 1886, 

rarely misplace accents . . . . [Still] They mangle the vowel sounds, which gives the utterance a boorish ring most offensive to the better-schooled ear. Then another serious fault, in the case of several, was a tendency to roll the letter £. This was most noticeable in the utterance of Misses Lombard, Swanston, and Berold, and in that of Mr. Canfield. This rolling of the £ is not English, and always sounds affected. The pronunciation of f-r-i-e-a-d is not fr-r-r-r-end.??

Ayres compared the rolling of £ in this position with "the total absence of the £ in Mabel Millett's utterance of" the word paper. However, as might have been expected, Millett had been playing in this country as a member of the company of the British actress Miss Vokes. In this connection, too, Ayres commented: "The mode that prevails in England of pronouncing this word [feur], and of pronouncing here, is, so far as I can discover, wholly without dictionary authority; yet there are some Americans that have the bad taste to affect it—Miss Dauvray, for example."78

Despite the British actor's failure "always [to] pronounce in

76 Actinr, pp. 196, 197, and 183-184. Just how thoroughly Richard Mansfield dismissed from serious consideration the niceties in verbal utterance can be inferred from his reply to William Winter's suggestion that Mansfield had been committing an error in placing the accent upon the first syllable of the word character. Representative of the attitude of such personality performers was Mansfield's reply: "I said character last evening, and there was much commotion in the audience—two women screamed and a man fainted!" Quoted by Winter, op. cit., I, 301.

77 Ibid., p. 172.

78 Ibid., p. 200.
accordance with what in this country is considered the best authorities," 

on the whole, a typical British company's "pronunciation is more in con-
formity with what in all English-speaking countries is considered the 
best usage than would be that of any like number of American players, 
select them where you would."

Ayres also heard a comparative correctness on the part of the 
British performer in the latter's less guttural sounding of certain 
vowels:

The so-called intermediate a, for example, which appears in such 
words as answer, dance, meet, cattle, etc.; the short and obtuse e, as 
in perfect, term, mercy, prefer, etc.; the i of such words as birth, 
first, bird, birth, etc., and the a of such words as world, work, 
worth, worthy, etc. Our tendency is to make these sounds too much 
in the throat. 79

No doubt, in all but the first four examples above, can be detected the 
influence in America of an excessive retroflexion of vowelised z, the 
so-called burred y which is associated today with Middle Western speech 
and is often regarded by others as an unpleasant sound.

Then too, after the manner of his British colleagues, Ayres en-
dorsed for stage use the sounding of an a intermediate between the so-
called broad and flat a's. Probably this vowel was presented as a com-
promise between the excesses of its two neighbors, which had been vying 
for supremacy in the pronunciation of certain words. For, at different 
times in their respective histories, society had hurled at both a's the 
cursed label "affectation" as well as its counterpart, the ban "vulgarism." 80

79 Ibid., pp. 199 and 199-200.

80 See C. H. Grandgent, "Fashion and the Broad A," in Old and New, 
Sundry Papers (Cambridge, [Massachusetts]: Harvard University Press, 
But, as a rule, the American actor opened his mouth wider during delivery and articulated more distinctly than the British. True, though, such efforts often became an obvious straining after preciseness. Ayres noted a resulting self-consciousness, which detracted from the performer's seeming ease in execution and his calm self-assurance, in Mr. Tearle, Herbert Kelcey, and Tyrle Bellow of The Hypocrite cast. 81

Relative to the word figure, however, Courtenay Thorpe, who seemed to Ayres "to be one of the most correct of the Vokes [British] company, pronounced it, as it is generally heard in this country, fir-tur, with the y obscure." This more precise utterance won Ayres's favor over the form voiced by the same company's "Miss Dacre [who], like the majority of her countrymen, pronounces this word figer, though the pronunciation is sanctioned only by Perry, whose dictionary was published more than a hundred years ago."82

With the decided decline in pronunciations which deviated radically from the then acceptable dictionary rendering, naturally the treatment given a few refinements continued to fall short of pleasing Ayres's critically attuned ear.

The y of industry is not the first, but the second y of sulphur—i.e., it is not a short but an obscure y.

Miss Hastings, whose utterance in the main is charming, seems to have forgotten that y preceded by g or the sound of gh in the same syllable is generally sounded like long oo, else she would not pronounce it in truth like the y of duty.

81 Ayres, Acting, pp. 165 and 187.
82 Ibid., p. 200.
During the whole evening, to my surprise, I noticed but one mispronunciation. Mr. Tighe sounded the a in transaction like a, which is contrary to all authority. 83

Such minor deviations did not depreciate noticeably the over-all effect in a pattern of vocal delivery. Ayres readily granted this fact, especially where an intelligent interpretation did not permit a basic structure of commonplace utterance and false emphasis.

Summary

Theatre critics in the period generally ignored a demonstrated need for better speech on the American stage. Even when an individual critic recognized this need, he seldom had any specific suggestions for improving vocal delivery. Still the conversationally natural speech of everyday life at that time continued to serve as the model for a colloquial pattern of stage delivery which, unfortunately, came to rest usually in commonplace doldrums.

In contrast to the methods of his colleagues and, incidentally, at the risk of having his approach disregarded as old fashioned, Ayres built up an influential critical practice. Basically, he followed a traditional procedure of observing and then evaluating the vocal delivery of performers in relation to fundamental principles concerning language and its delivery. Ayres's theatre criticisms relate to his belief, for instance, that modulation or tones of the voice, that is, vocal control for emotional delineation, should be allowed to come forth spontaneously in response to the ideas being expressed but that such elocutionary elements

83 Ibid., pp. 201 and 179.
as emphasis, inflection, and pause should be calculated carefully to satisfy the requirements of these ideas, or the thought of a passage.

Ayres’s comparative neglect of inflection, for example, in favor of a detailed treatment of emphasis, stemmed from confessed limitations in his critical method. Recognizing the difficulty in writing about speech faults, Ayres found emphasis particularly suited to discussion on paper and left to oral illustration any comparable treatment of the other elements in vocal delivery. Again, the printed page was an asset when Ayres tried to lead others to the high level of precision in pronunciation which he had attained by having compared various authorities’ views with the best current American usage.

His tireless efforts began to influence stage pronunciation at that time. Most natural-schooled performers eventually came to place primary and secondary accents within words appropriately and to avoid a mangling of vowel-quality, at least in accented sounds. But Ayres saw the actor of the new school forego traditional training in versatility and, consequently, often lay himself open to the charge of antagonizing the spirit that pervades the language of a certain drama. This actor thereby undermined his chances for success in classic and standard repertory, the standard by which Ayres determined a performer’s professional stature.

The current chapter has related Ayres’s practice as a theatre critic to his theory, or mental view, for the delivery of language. Because vocal delivery was selected as the province of this chapter, attention focused upon Ayres’s pronouncements concerning delivery but could not
ignore language. For to Ayres, a command of language, especially of its articulation and pronunciation, was prerequisite to any work on delivery for the stage. The next chapter continues to detail Ayres's application of basic principles. The material to follow relates, in general, his theory for acting to his theatre criticisms concerning an individual performer as a function of the complete dramatic production.
This chapter refers primarily to Ayres's theory for acting as a base upon which he built theatre criticisms. Whereas the preceding chapter considered vocal delivery, that is, the *proemuniantio* division in the fifth canon of classical rhetoric, it follows that attention should turn to Ayres's critical application of the *actio* or action aspects of delivery. Bodily action, including gesture and facial expression, complements the vocal interpretation and intellectual and emotional motivation of an actor in movement on a stage.

But with the advent in America of Delsarte's decided emphasis on bodily movement, Ayres observed performers turning away from the tenets of elocution to indulge their potentialities for great acting in the by-play of this new system. Accordingly, Ayres's critique of the immediate followers in the Forrest-Cushman tradition can be related, for example, to John McCullough's endorsing Delsarte and to Lawrence Barrett's denying elocution any value in training for the theatre. Then too, even the reputedly great actor Edwin Booth, noted for his eloquence of movement and his control of facial expression, did not gain Ayres's approval.

This chapter, then, also attempts to determine whether Ayres's reviews of acting and actors can, in fairness, be attributed to an aging critic who became disgruntled with the current theatre scene on viewing.
it, so to speak, with nostalgia-rimmed spectacles whose lenses had been ground in adjustment with the past.

**Of Bodily Action**

Concerning a judicious use of bodily action, primarily movement related to gesturing, Alfred Ayres observed that "there are ten actors and public speakers that gesticulate too much to one that gesticulates too little." As a result, Ayres warned the performer who would gain approval from a conscientious critic:

1. Never forget, when you have nothing to do with your hands, to do nothing with them.
2. Never forget, when you have nothing to do with your hands, to let them fall where gravitation will take them.
3. Never put only one hand behind your back; either both or neither.
4. Never put your hands behind your back, unless you would assume a nonchalant air.
5. Never put your hands in your pockets or anywhere else simply to get them out of your way, unless you would appear self-conscious.
6. Never stand with your arms akimbo, unless you would express something by doing so.
7. Never put your thumbs in your belt.
8. Never clutch the hilt of your sword.
9. Never toy with your drapery.
10. Never bend the elbow so as to bring the hand up on the abdomen.
11. Never forget that few, very few, gesticulate too little.
12. Never forget that a tendency to gesticulate over much is a characteristic of impotency.
13. Never forget that repose is worth more to the actor than are all the cardinal virtues — prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

In his critical writing, however, Ayres gave little space to stage deportment. For he believed: "Any gump can learn stage technique and the

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Ayres divided the means for communication with a theatre audience into "natural language (signs, dumb show) and artificial language (oral speech)." Even though he recognized the importance of so-called natural language, that is, pantomime and gesticulation, Ayres stressed the value of effective vocal delivery for the actor in order "to make the thoughts intrusted to him clear and impressive." 3 Ayres's emphasis on intelligent analysis of a playwright's dialogue, as supplying a cure for the current ills of the American theatre, left little consideration for the gymnastic side of a performance. Ayres compared the skill attained by Edwin Forrest and by Charlotte Cushman with the manner commonly displayed by contemporary performers. Customarily, his criticism of the latter drew upon such a remark as the following: "About as much brains is required as to excel in gymnastics." 4

Therefore, Ayres had little patience or constructive advice for any performer who had not mastered control of the body while on stage. Still, for Ayres, an effective vocal delivery could outweigh the disadvantages in misusing bodily action: "Let an actor have a good voice and read really well, and though he be as awkward and ungainly as [Henry] Irving, he will be accepted. In Irving's case we have not even a good voice." 5

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3Ibid., pp. 145, 147, and 144.


5Ayres, Acting, p. 145.
Ayres's "word, and only a word, with regard to deportment," in his book on delivery, centered upon learning the value of doing nothing with the body, in keeping still, "until the demands of the occasion necessitate a change. It should never be changed simply for the sake of change. Yet it is the position least in favor with the tyro."  

Accordingly, Ayres concluded a theatre review by observing: "Yet all this is less disturbing than it is to see Mr. [Kyrle] Bellew and Mr. [Herbert] Kelcey hunt places in which to hide their hands." And again: "It is possible for him [Robert Downing] with less physical exertion to be much more effective in the part" of Spartacus.

Ayres saw these new actors frequently changing the position of the feet, dropping in the hips, and the like.

No other one thing so quickly betrays the novice as fidgeting, and fumbling, and trying to hide the hands; and no other one thing does so much to make one appear to be master of the situation, and to make one's bearing dignified and pleasing to the eye as—repose.

If you would learn what not to do observe our younger actors—especially those that come to us from England. They—some of them, at least—would make a better figure if their arms were amputated at the shoulder.

Be sparing with your gestures. Make but few. The tyro generally makes fully six times too many. Let those you do make be made from the shoulder. Little gestures made from the elbow are meaningless.

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6 Ayres, Essentials, p. 64.


8 Alfred Ayres, "Orthoepy," New York Mirror, XVII, No. 424 (February 12, 1887), 3. Incidentally, further insight into Ayres's general practice as a theatre critic can be gleaned from the introduction he provided for this particular column: "A part only of the last article I prepared for THE MIRROR, owing to lack of space, was printed. Here is the rest of it."
Gesture, if spontaneous, always precedes the word. Gestures that are not spontaneous are better not made.9

The two-part presentation of the content of the first edition (1886) of Ayres's book on delivery, by the New York Dramatic Mirror during mid-July of 1888, ended on this consideration of gesture for the stage. But, even though the time was enthusiastic about the philosophy of Delsarte which centered in bodily movement, Ayres refused to adapt or to compromise his own principles to satisfy this craze of the period. When Franklin H. Sargent took over the management of Steele MacKaye's Lyceum Theatre School, early in 1885, he dismissed Ayres from the staff for ignoring the Delsarte system and continuing to use old-fashioned methods. Ayres was then forced to give private lessons in elocutionary and dramatic art. Moreover, Ayres's most prolific writing followed close upon this dismissal by the Delsartian Sargent.

Ayres published tirades directed against such theatre schools of the new era as the short-lived Palmer-Boucicault School. Because the current theatre and its training schools gave little or no attention to vocal delivery, Ayres lashed out at his opponents in no uncertain terms: "A candidate for the stage might profit quite as much by being a member of an amateur dramatic association as by being a pupil of any one of these so-called schools, a good half of which are mere confidence schemes."10

The activities of the aforementioned school particularly irked Ayres, for Dion Boucicault had discarded his own earlier teaching of elocution

9 *Essentials, pp. 45-46.
10 *Acting, p. 149 n.
during rehearsals to follow in the wake of the mechanically inclined Delsarte system. Boucicault declared as fundamental to the success of his later ventures: "The action, the movement, is the most important part of the art". With him stage technique and stage 'business' is everything. 11

Ayres felt that Sargent's New York School of Acting, which soon became the American Academy of the Dramatic Arts, "would be more appropriately named if it were called a school of pantomime and aesthetic gymnastics. The pupils of the school have not yet even attacked the intellectual side of the actor's art. Of the art of handling the words they knew nothing." 12 By comparison, others criticized Sargent not only for his own lack of executive ability but also for the "utter lack of system" in his school; one writer denounced him to the degree of warning students not to mention having attended this school for fear of losing "all chance of even a hearing by most managers or agencies." 13

However, Ayres overlooked his personal feelings for the man and, in effect, gave the devil his due.

The thing most worthy of commendation in Mr. Sargent's pupils is their bearing, which was thoroughly actor-like. They can all keep still, and their hands never seem to be in their way. I did not notice one of the young men trying to hide his hands, either.

11 Ibid., cf. p. 27 (1886) and pp. 146 and 143 (August, 1888).
12 Ibid., p. 174.
in his pockets or behind his back; which is evidence, as far as it
goesto, that they have not been frequent visitors at a certain up-
town theater.  

Incidentally, the reputedly brilliant elocutionist Georgia Cayvan
took some years to get rid of her somewhat mechanical gestures and a
rather pedantic way of delivering her lines. 15 She had been thoroughly
trained in Delsartian method, as well as in elocution by Professor
Monroe of Boston, and had been a public reader before enacting Dolly
Dutton in Steele MacKaye's Hazel Kirk. 16 Eventually she attained
status as a successful actress, however; along with Clara Morris, Julia
Marlowe, and the foreign Helena Modjeska, she was chosen to speak at
the World's Congress at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in
1893. 17 With the publishing of Ayres's Essentials of Elocution, in 1886,
Georgia Cayvan's endorsement of the work appeared with Ayres's professional
card in the New York Dramatic Mirror: "You have put some golden truths
into your little Elocution book. I am glad that such common-sense views
on so abused a subject are in the reach of all." 18

Ayres found support for subordinating the need for bodily action to
the pressing demands of vocal delivery in such pronouncements as that by

14 Acting, pp. 174-175.

15 Austin Brereton, Dramatic Notes 1883-1884, No. 3 (London, 1885).

16 Percy MacKaye, Epoch (2 vols.; New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927),
I, 356.

17 Forrest Isard, Heroines of the Modern Stage (New York: Sturgis

18 E.g., New York Mirror, XVII, No. 417 (December 25, 1886), 12.
John R. Stockton, whom Ayres cited: "In the noblest dramas the thought is more important than the action and produces greater effects." Ayres observed a dramatist's thought eclipsed by the frenzied antics of Delsartians who, though courting popular favor, were drastically dwindling their skill in acting. In response to the need of the time, Ayres called for a return to certain fundamental principles, which had motivated the success of Forrest and Cushman. His plea took on urgency even when he noted the treatment which the so-called old school's tradition had received from Forrest's most immediate follower, who later turned toward Delsarte, namely, the actor John McCullough.

Of the Immediate Followers in the Forrest-Cushman Tradition

Edwin Forrest (1806-1872) lived in Philadelphia after 1855 and, in order to escape paying alimony to his wife, had generally avoided New York during a period when Alfred Ayres was also living in Philadelphia. Ayres arrived, from Philadelphia, to make his permanent home in New York City reportedly during the year 1870. Forrest played his last New York engagement in February, 1871; thereafter he gave a few generally unsuccessful Shakespearian readings in several large cities. In this connection, too, Charlotte Cushman (1816-1876) began an intensive program of readings about December, 1871; however, she did not formally take leave

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19 *Acting*, p. 142.
of the stage, as an actress, until 1875.\(^2^1\) In addition to viewing
these exemplars of the so-called old school at its best, among other
performers Ayres observed the popular appeal, but critical weakness
in acting and delivery, of Forrest's one-time disciple John McCullough
\((1832-1885)\).

McCullough was closely associated with Forrest from 1861 to 1866.
From 1866, he managed the California Theatre in San Francisco. There
he added "one by one to his repertory the great parts to which he so
long played 'seconds' under Forrest, Virginius being perhaps his most
signal success." He made his first appearance in New York City as a
star on May 4, 1874, and thereafter he toured the western and southern
circuits before returning to San Francisco to serve as actor-manager
until the autumn of 1875.\(^2^2\) "McCullough continued the Forrest tradition
as much as it could possibly be continued, so dependent was it upon
Forrest's personal characteristics."\(^2^3\)

After Forrest's death, McCullough apparently changed masters.
On April 2, 1877, McCullough made another bid for acceptance by New York
audiences. About this time Steele MacKaye was launching a School of
Expression on Union Square and, as the sole teacher, was basing instruction
on his conception of Delsarte's system.

\(^2^1\) George Freedley and John A. Reeves, *A History of the Theatre*

In March of 1875, incidentally, McCullough played with Edwin Booth at the
California Theatre.

\(^2^3\) Garff B. Wilson, *Dissertation*, p. 63, citing Moses, *The Fabulous
Forrest, the Record of An American Actor*, p. 315.
Of the several students actively engaged on the stage who sought MacKaye's help at this time, the best known was John McCullough who declared that MacKaye "has taught me more in three months, than I could have learned otherwise in twenty years, and I don't care who knows it." 24

Perhaps only in order to help MacKaye in the project or to further his own career in acting, but no matter what the reason, McCullough endorsed the Delsarte system and thereby could hardly avoid antagonizing Ayres.

Concerning the role that a theatrical tradition should play in shaping an actor's course in the pursuit of his profession, McCullough himself stated the following:

The "traditions of the stage" are a body of rules containing much that is true and artistic, and not a little that is false and artificial. . . . It is the prerogative of greatness in all walks of life to break down traditions often, to show by daring departure from them wherein the old ideals were false, and to create the new and true. But it must not be therefore assumed that merely to depart from tradition is always to be great.

Just how far McCullough departed from the philosophy of Forrest, in the use of stage technique, may be detected in McCullough's belief that when an actor's "nerves are wrongly strung, from any cause, his training in the technique of his art will save him from failure."

This recognition of the personal moods of a performer, while on stage, suggested the stress on inspiration which characterized the new school in acting. Then too, McCullough noted "that the beginner should first lay broad and deep the foundations of general intellectual culture." 25

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Thus, also after the manner of the new school, he attached a higher value to general knowledge than to specific training for the stage.

Notwithstanding the topicality of his acting theories, in the theatre McCullough built up his own practice out of elements he was able to remember from Forrest's performances. Especially at first, the Forrest influence was obvious. How well he profited from this master's voice, however, became a controversy into which Ayres was eager to enter.

Ayres accredited John McCullough with having "had early in his career the advantage of playing, for a season or two, under the guidance and direction of Mr. Forrest." However, believing that McCullough, "like many others, was greatly overrated by the mass of playgoers, whose opinions are what printers' ink has made them," Ayres was quick to point out that this actor had been "praised by certain critics that he dined and wined." Ayres found McCullough "hardly worthy of a place among actors of the second class." 26

Compare this evaluation with the judgment passed by J. Ranken Towse, long-term drama critic for the New York Evening Post. Looking back from the vantage point of the early twentieth century, Towse did not identify McCullough as "an intellectual, imaginative, or analytical performer. In great parts he was only second-rate." His handling of the role Coriolanus, for example, yielded "an unequal performance, often marred by an exaggeration in which passion became rant, and sarcasm vituperation."

Notwithstanding, Towse recognised in McCullough a good actor, within restricted limits, of heroic parts... with bold Roman features and a voice that had in it the ring of the

26 Act, p. 56.
trumpet. A disciple of Forrest, he emulated the methods of his
exemplar with considerable success, and in stormy bursts of passion
he exhibited vast power. Moreover, he could assume a lofty dignity
in which Forrest was lacking.

In such parts as Spartacus, Jack Cade, and Metamora he de-
lighted the galleries with his vocal and bodily vigor; but mere
brutum fulmen is not acting. He stood shoulder high above most
of his associates, but he was a giant only when among pignies.  

The roles most in demand by the general public for performance,
early by Forrest and later by McCullough, were similar in nature, if
not identical. However, whereas Ayres related Forrest's numerous repeated
performances in these physical parts to managers' interest in filling
the house, Ayres regarded McCullough as incapable of any role more
difficult, if indeed this much. McCullough "had not sufficient talent
for the actor's art to profit, to any extent, by his master's teaching."  

Considering the lessened excellence of theatrical performances at the
time, Towse demonstrated that "it is even possible for an actor with a
notable personality but very little creative power to play a great
character greatly, as in the case, for instance, of McCullough and [the
role] Virginius."  

Also basically in agreement with Ayres, Lewis C. Strang admitted
that McCullough's

friends were so numerous and so loyal that critical judgment re-
garding his intrinsic worth as an actor was in a measure swayed
by the affection felt for the man. A fair estimate of his histrionic
ability would place McCullough decidedly in the second class, but
still not disgracefully so. He was essentially an "heroic" actor. Hamlet was beyond him. Richelieu was too subtle for him. The deviltry of Iago he could not understand. McCullough was at his best in the closing scene of Payne's "Brutus," the forum scene of "Virginius," and the scaffold scene of "Damon and Pythias."

In a final analysis, Strang compared what McCullough was with what he came to be and found this self-educated immigrant standing forth as "one of the most remarkable figures that the American theatre has produced."

Significantly, Strang noted that McCullough "studied elocution with Lemuel G. White," a teacher who had guided Murdoch and Ayres as well as Forrest.

To Ayres, the career of Lawrence Patrick Barrett (1838–1891) furnished additional evidence of a perverted course taken by acting. Ayres identified McCullough and Barrett as representative of the so-called old school in decline. He heard them give off distressing signals of a dearth in the philosophies upon which creative efforts of former artists in acting had been based. In contrast, current performers' erratic imitation of methods, often associated with great exemplars from the past, had been resulting in a greatly lessened dramatic effect.

Next to Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett has been generally regarded as "the leading actor of serious roles in the second half of the century." Even though Barrett was "known for the purity of his elocution," as well as for his contribution to the success of Booth's triumphant tours during 1887–1889, Ayres dubbed Barrett "a sing-songer of the most pronounced type. His example has done, and is doing, very great harm. . . .

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30 *op. cit.*, I, 125, 121, and 122.

31 *Freedley and Reeves, op. cit.*, pp. 327 and 316.
Mr. Barrett's elocution is so bad that, with his voice and articulation, it could hardly be worse."

Ayres's judgment, then, took into consideration Barrett's "good voice, abundant physical strength, a clear articulation, and . . . earnestness." Unfortunately, however, Barrett did not possess that faculty that enables an actor so to speak the language of his part as to make it sound as though thought and language came to him as he proceeds. . . . He never gets anywhere near the natural; is always artificial in the extreme. He never seems to think; always speaks his lines like a lesson conned; always races ahead as does the average schoolboy when he comes forward to "speak his piece." He has often been charged with being sing-songy and preacher-like, and so he is.  

Ayres credited "Mr. Barrett's unnatural, chanting, sing-song, brainless delivery" to this performer's "misfortune to begin his career in a bad school, and the bad habits that he fell into in the beginning he has never been able to rid himself of. . . . He began his art career with barn-stormers, into whose inartistic ways he naturally fell and in which he remained."  

Ayres's impatience with Barrett's shortcomings may be explained in terms of the attitude motivating the release of such statements, by Barrett, as the following:

The best school for the young actor is to put him at the hard work of the theater. His training must be essentially practical. No school of elocution, no training outside the theater can I regard as at all valuable. All teachers of elocution come to the theater for their models; why should the pupil go out of it for

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32 *Acting*, pp. 55, 87, and 87-88.

The theater is the school of the actor. This attitude challenged Ayres' belief that "a man might play Hamlet, and play him well, and never step foot on the stage until, say, ten days before he made the attempt." In the latter connection, Ayres took pride in advertising: "No stage with which to amuse the pupil and squander his time. Begin with rehearsals when trees begin to grow at the top; when architects begin with the house and follow with the foundation." Barrett's opposition to schools of elocution affronted Ayres' mission in life.

Then too, Ayres remembered a statement made by Helena Crumpett-Lee, in *Werner's Magazine*, February, 1894: "No pupil is permitted to act in either drama or opera while he is studying in the Paris Conservatoire." Ayres valued this educational procedure and warned against "the ill effects of playing until one has received proper and thorough rudimental instruction." To support his position, Ayres likened Barrett to "Marie Prescott, a clever woman, that was a very much better actress ten years ago than she was at the end of her career. Practice emphasized her leaning toward the artificial."

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35 *Acting*, p. 37.


Specifically, Ayres enumerated the following as Barrett's faults:

The audible manner in which he takes breath—with a gasp and a movement of the shoulders... Mr. Barrett's breath-taking is somewhat like this:

Irreverent ribald (gasp),
If so (gasp) beware the falling ruins (gasp). Hark (gasp),
I tell thee, scornor (gasp) of these whitening hairs (gasp),
When this snow melteth (gasp) there shall come a flood (gasp);
Ayunt (gasp), my name is (gasp) Richelieu—I defy thee (gasp).
Walk blindfold on (gasp), behind thee (gasp) stalks the headsman (gasp);
Ha, ha, how pale he is (gasp).

This gasping in taking breath is the old barn-storming, camp-meeting mode of "slinging in" the passion or the pathos. It is an affectation, a faker's trick—it's anything but art.

Then Mr. Barrett never pauses. Of the value of the judicious pause he seems to be wholly ignorant. No other one thing does more to make one's delivery natural and impressive than the proper distribution of time. Who has ever heard an extemporizer race ahead as Mr. Barrett does?...

He misplaces the emphasis very often...

... He misplaces the emphasis very often...

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You bear it bravely.

Of course bravely, not you, should receive the emphasis. There is no question of the manner in which any one else bears it.

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Finally, I do not think that Mr. Barrett is always correct in his conception of the spirit in which the individual speeches should be spoken—a matter in which instinct guides rather than study.

Believing that "the gasping, chanting, galloping actor never has and never will achieve excellence," Ayres concluded:

The actor that gets into the elocutionary slough Mr. Barrett is in is irretrievably lost. The more industrious he is in his vocation, the more his faults become emphasized, the farther he gets away from Nature.38

Ayres reported that Barrett "once told me [Ayres] that if he was the chanter the New York critics said he was, he was not aware of it." Whereas decided adulation might continue to greet a performer's efforts "the country over,"39 New York City and other metropolitan audiences often

38 Ibid., pp. 88-90 and 91.
39 Ibid., pp. 234 and 87.
evidenced a type of critical disapproval seldom levied by the rest of the nation.

Noting that Barrett's "force and earnestness made him highly acceptable to the 'general' in many parts of the country," Ayres explained the distinction:

Mr. Barrett's following was found among the "general," rather than among the "judicious." In the large cities, where the theater-going public is hardest to please, Mr. Barrett was least successful. In New York, Mr. Barrett never had a following sufficiently large to make it profitable for him to play here.

Even though Barrett "was a supreme master . . . of vocal pyrotechnics . . . his peculiar style of delivery is not liked."#40

Furthermore, relative to the details of delivery, Ayres was fair enough to recognize that Barrett's "slips in the placing of the emphasis are not noticed by one person in a thousand, but—if the emphasis is always intelligently placed, every one of the thousand is more deeply impressed, because he more fully comprehends."#41 Ayres believed, therefore, that whether or not such a critically attuned ear as his own was present to detect specific instances of faulty interpretation and to note the exact manner in which a deviation took place, a sophisticated audience sensed the over-all effect of an actor's work and judged the performer accordingly.

Comparison may be made with Strang's report concerning the limited reception given another performer who tried to follow in the heroic pattern of Edwin Forrest. The American actor Thomas W. Keene (born Thomas

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#40Ibid., pp. 234, 233, 234, and 87.
#41Ibid., p. 90.
H. Eagleston, 1840-1898) made his English debut in July 1871 and, significantly, "toured the Provinces successfully."

During his eighteen years as a star, Keene was never well known in the larger cities; but on the minor theatrical circuits he had a large and loyal following. Although his reputation was thus entirely provincial, he nevertheless made money, and died a comparatively rich man. As an actor, Keene was inferior to McCullough. Keene's lack even of superficial finish was noticeable. His style was without flexibility, and his method without authority. Stilted, artificial, and unconvincing, still Keene was never wholly un­interesting, for he was the last representative of the Forrest school, the last "tragedian" on the American stage. 42

Strang's summary of the Forrest influence, moreover, substantiates Ayres's survey of the decline and fall of this acting technique.

Edwin Forrest, less individual than Charlotte Cushman, was the founder in a limited sense of a school; and, principally through the work of two "heroic" actors, John McCullough and Thomas W. Keene, the Forrest traditions remained on the stage for twenty-five years after the American tragedian's death. McCullough was almost Forrest's pupil; Keene pursued what he regarded as the most effective form of acting. Neither possessed Forrest's native force, his scholarliness, nor his originality,—Keene to a far less degree than McCullough.

With the Forrest-Cushman tradition eclipsed by a new school, Strang, like Ayres, looked hopefully for the coming of a theatrical age "when the present excess of 'natural' acting shall have become toned with the right infusion of the imaginative and the idealistic, and when, moreover, the modern actor comes to comprehend something of the value of the voice as a means of expression." 43

To conclude: just as Ayres's sometimes carping criticism of McCullough may be related to the latter's turning toward Delsarte, so

42 Strang, op. cit., I, 126 and 127-128.
43 Ibid., I, 120-121 and 31.
Barrett's denning elocution any value, in training for the theatre, no doubt antagonised Ayres. For the most part, though, critics have endorsed Ayres's observations of the lessened skill with which such performers followed in the wake of the Forrest–Cushman tradition. In contrast, however, Ayres cast a generally dissenting vote when he passed judgment upon Edwin Booth, the foremost tragedian of the time.

Of the Reputedly Great Actor Edwin Booth

In Edwin Booth's acting, Ayres found much which fell far short of the latter's critical standards. Notwithstanding, Ayres recognised the public's right, since the death of Edwin Forrest, to acclaim Booth (1833–1893) the foremost tragedian on the late nineteenth-century American stage.

From his father Junius Brutus Booth (1796–1852) and from the old school of acting in general, Edwin Booth drew inspiration and guidance in elocutionary technique. Usually, however, Booth did not calculate delivery carefully in relation to pauses, emphases, and inflections. This neglect combined, at times, with an undignified indulgence in natural effects to detract from the classic decorum of the so-called higher drama. Weaknesses, as well as strengths, from both schools of acting influenced the over-all effect of Edwin Booth's theatre productions.

Even though on occasion a carping attitude seems to pervade Ayres's generally dissenting view of Booth's accomplishments, some such recognition of an actor's weak points is of value, if only as a foil to help focus his real worth.
Jaults emphasise virtues, and, therefore, one is better able to estimate the real value of an actor's work from an adverse criticism than from a favourable one. Of course, the criticism must really be a criticism, and not merely a tirade of abuse, which is as valueless as excessive praise.\textsuperscript{44}

Believing that Edwin Booth "was always a student of theatric effects, rather than of dramatic art," Ayres made the following comparison: "Mr. Booth was far, very far, from being the greatest tragedian America has produced. He was, probably, not the peer, by a good deal, of Cooper, of Augustus Adams, or of Scott; and he certainly fell a long way short of being the peer of Edwin Forrest." Then too, during an 1886 interview for the New York \textit{Dramatic Mirror}. Ayres reportedly "expressed himself very pointedly concerning the leading members of the profession and their stage work." He acknowledged Booth as "by a good deal our best tragedian... nevertheless not a great tragedian, many as there are who seem to think he is." Even in the role of Iago, which Ayres felt was within the limits of this actor's capacity,

Mr. Booth does things in speaking it that are surprising. He rarely speaks the lines as though he had any special reason for speaking them as he does. Whether he speaks them so as to make it easy for the listeners to seize the thought, or whether he does not, seems to be a matter that does not concern him. He misplaces the emphasis continually—a thing that clearly no one can do and read really well; and without reading really well there can be no really good playing.\textsuperscript{45}

In contrast, John B. Scott believed that Booth's emphasis "was nearly always on the right word, with just the touch of stress and inflection that gives its exact value. His reading of blank verse was high perfection."

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., I, 112.

\textsuperscript{45}Ayres, \textit{Acting}, pp. 235, 54-55, 45, and 55.
Take him for all in all, he was by far the finest reader of whom our
stage can boast. Undaunted Ayres replied, in *Emera's Magazine* for
January of 1894, by citing a remark which "the most distinguished actor
in America," Joseph Jefferson, had recently made to Ayres concerning
Booth's having been a poor reader. Ayres remained confident that "Mr.
Booth put the emphasis on the wrong word more frequently . . . than any
other actor who has ever lived that approached him in reputation."

Together with other critics, however, Ayres noted that "Booth had,
as Mr. Scott says, a remarkably clean-cut utterance. His facility in
articulating was truly extraordinary." Whereas this facet of Booth's
delivery may be compared with Edwin Forrest's distinct articulation,
the following seems to call up echoes of Charlotte Cushman's "quality of
aspiration and a woody or veiled tone more becoming the expression of
wilful passion suppressed and restrained . . . being Nature's mode of
utterance for the evil passions."  

In part, Scott's analysis reads:

In quality, the prevailing character of Mr. Booth's voice was
baritone, a light orotund, with a leaning to nasality. It took
on easily the somber shades of aspiration, pectoral and guttural.
What we call nasal twang is a deformity, a vice; but without nasality
such passions as hate, scorn, sneer, contempt, fierce indignation,
and resolution can not be vocally expressed. To his command over

\[^{46}\text{Quoted by Ayres, *Acting*, p. 236.}\]

\[^{47}\text{Acting, p. 236.}\]

\[^{48}\text{Murdoch, *The Stage*, p. 237.}\]
nasality Edwin Booth largely owes his supremacy in such characters as Bertuccio, Iago, Shylock, and Richard III. In Hamlet, the melancholy temperament of the Prince is vocally embodied by a subdued nasality.49

Ayres's comment on the above was conditioned by his lack of sympathy for the various mechanical systems of elocution: "Largely owe supremacy in a character to nasality! Oh! Oh! The more we have of analytical estimates by Mr. John R. Scott, the more we shall not know."50

Even Scott, however, tempered his praise of Booth by agreeing, as Ayres observed, with certain "persons of fine critical judgment [who] deny genius to Edwin Booth." For Scott noted: "In that phase of magnetism that thrills and dominates the emotions he [Booth] seemed lacking, except at rare intervals."51 Then too, in essence, Scott referred to Booth as "a mere copyist...,

In this connection, too, observations recorded by the British critic Dutton Cook stood in support of Ayres's critical displeasure with Edwin


50Quoted by Ayres, Acting, p. 235.

52Ayres, Acting, p. 236.
Booth's performances. For example, while viewing Booth's Hamlet, Cook found himself "reminded of the Hamlet of Mr. Charles Kean"; Cook declared, moreover, that Booth's "great scene with Ophelia was more forcible than tender, and suffered also from the old-fashioned habits of constant action, of tossing up the arms and striding to and fro, which, I believe, Edmund Kean first imported into the representation of 'Hamlet.'" Cook also noted that reverence for tradition has affected injuriously Mr. Booth's Othello. For the stage Othello, even though he comes to us from the other side of the Atlantic, has not yet obtained complete emancipation from the traditions, the prints, it may even be said the tricks, of Edmund Kean.

On the other hand, during February of 1881, "as Iago, Mr. Edwin Booth obtains far more favour than was accorded to his earlier Shakespearean assumptions in London, Hamlet and Othello." In this instance, Cook was unable to detect obvious traditional influence, which would have yielded either one of two formerly common interpretations of the role: either "a patent villain" or "a gay light-hearted monster, careless, cordial, comfortable—the Iago indeed, of Edmund Kean, according to Hazlitt's account of his performance." Nevertheless, relative to Edwin Booth, the considered judgment of Cook remained: "Born and trained in America, the son of the English actor Junius Brutus Booth—[who, in turn, had been] the copyist [of], so the critics wrote: the rival, and even the superior, so his admirers maintained, of Edmund Kean—Mr. Edwin Booth is clearly an actor of the Kean school."53

53Cook, Nights at the Play, pp. 425, 442, 445-446, and 424.
Also in this connection, when "Booth's Othello did not satisfy expectation" during January of 1881, British critics had compared Booth with currently popular apostles of reserved force, for example, with the actor Charles Coghlan, and found that "Haskell's charge against Edmund Kean is applicable to Mr. Edwin Booth; he is too constantly on the rack, too uniformly on the verge of extravagance." Cook noted with dismay that Booth's first outburst of passion was not surpassed by the fury of the later and more desperate scenes. It may be objected, indeed, that the performance presented too sustained a monotone of rage, and that the actor insufficiently reserved his force for the crowning moments of the tragedy. . . . speeches of pure pathos, thought, and feeling he treats too much as expressions of passion venting itself in violence of action, tone, and gesture. Moreover, Mr. Booth is apt to interpret overmuch; desirous that no word should lose its value, he seems to surcharge the text with meaning, to oppress it with superfluous comment of emphasis, action, and facial expression. Watching him, one longs sometimes for a simpler histrionic method, the completer subjection of the player to the poet. But this defect is not peculiar to Mr. Booth.  

Another critic found that Booth's Hamlet "shows an almost slavish respect for the letter and treats, as formal and significant utterances, what are, in fact, mere expressions of temporary and transitory feeling." A cardinal principle with Ayres was, of course, "be chary of emphasis. Never emphasize a word unless you think the sense demands it. Emphasis being only relative stress, over-emphasis defeats its object." Ayres condemned any stage reading that tries to get an effect out of every word. . . . Anyone can pound over words in a trip-hammer sort of way, whereas to go lightly over the unimportant and to dwell on the important words with that  

54 Ibid., pp. 442 and 444-445.  
appreciative discrimination that makes the thought clear and forcible; that causes the listener to be occupied with the matter rather than with the manner, is never an easy thing to do. The thought, and not the sound, is what enlists and holds the attention of the listener. In the thought there is never any sameness, whereas tones continually recur, hence they quickly pall. The time consumed by the two styles differs but little, but they distribute the time very differently. The one is the style of the brawn elocutionist, the other of the brain elocutionist; the one, of the reader that merely apprehends his author; the other, of the reader that fully comprehends his author.

Ayres criticised severely these performers who "in their endeavor to be nicely correct . . . simply succeed in being pedantically wrong." 56

H. J. Eldredge, better known by the nom de plume of Clement Scott, saw Booth's Hamlet as

an actor's Hamlet, a Hamlet of point, a Hamlet built upon the teaching of old schools. The clear and measured delivery of Mr. Booth was academical and correct to a fault. Not a word of the text escaped anybody or was lost. If we require nothing but the soft and moving delivery of the text of Hamlet, no one can do it better than Mr. Booth; but to modern ideas something more is wanted than a reading of Hamlet on the stage. 57

This striving after "giving all possible point and effect to the speeches he delivers" 58 led J. Bankey Towse, writing in the United States, to recall that Booth's Hamlet "absolutely bristled with points, each of which seemed in itself absolutely sound and full of illumination as it was presented, but which could not, when assembled, be made to harmonize." 59

Incidentally, Booth's own sister has cited remarks made by the philosopher Friedrich Schlegel concerning the debilitating effect of

56 Essentials, pp. 15, 91-92, and 38.
58 Cook, op. cit., p. 424.
acting, so to speak, in borrowed robes.

Mere imitation is always fruitless; even what we borrow from others, to assume a true, practical shape, must, as it were, be born again within us. Of what avail is all foreign imitation? Art cannot exist without nature, and man can give nothing to his fellow-man but himself. 60

Various forces impinged upon Booth, as an embryonic performer, to shape his natural endowments into a form more appropriate for theatrical presentation. In this regard, his illustrious father and other potent predecessors in the profession gave the impressionable young Edwin various cues to the how of acting, just as the later popular craze for natural or realistic effects was to lead him under its influence.

Concerning theatrical tradition, Walter Prichard Eaton has observed that "the elder Booth, receiving it with Kean, passed it to his son."61 About the year 1885, Edwin Booth himself wrote to Horace H. Furness: "I made an effort to get at him [the role of Shylock] through G. F. Cooke's notes on his own acting of the part, and was surprised to find how he was influenced by tradition."62 Then too, Thomas C. Trueblood has pointed out that "on the Elder Booth's advice, he [James E. Murdoch] was the trainer

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61 Eaton, *The Actor's Heritage*, p. 163. See also Murdoch, *op. cit.*, p. 273, for the latter's understanding of "a proneness in human beings to imitate not only the sounds of Nature . . . but also to reproduce the quality of voice and kind of utterance peculiar to others which may have attracted their attention as being more pleasing, or more showy perhaps, than their own modes of speech."

of Edwin Booth." In Ayres's opinion, though, "the Murdoch school of elocution has done infinite harm. The late Mr. Murdoch was not a reader; he was a chanter."  

The influence of an older actor upon a younger, in acting and delivery, generally prevailed during that time, when having been born into an acting family was one of the few means through which a person could acquire the training and the opportunity necessary to enter the acting field. Walt Whitman, for one, viewed both the father and his son Edwin in performance. Writing during the eighteen-seventies, Whitman looked back some fifty years to Junius Brutus Booth's enactment of Richard III and compared its magnificence with the lesser skill displayed by Edwin Booth. "Walt Whitman was not a [-n Edwin] Booth enthusiast. He said that Booth 'never made me forget everything else and follow him, as the greatest fellows, when they let themselves go, always do.'"

Also significant in their basic agreement with Ayres's judgment are certain notations penciled by Doctor William Everett of Quincy, Massachusetts, in the margins of his copy of The Variorum Shakespeare. Everett

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63 Thomas C. Trueblood, "A Chapter on the Organization of College Courses in Public Speaking," The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education, XIII (1926), 1-11. See especially p. 2. Cf. Murdoch, op. cit., pp. 275-276 and 278-280, for the latter's endorsement of the results achieved by the elder Booth, who also had elicited the praise of Murdoch's mentor Dr. James Rush. See p. 275: "Dr. Rush . . . referred to Mrs. Siddons and the elder Booth as having exhibited that perfection in speech attainable by the application of principles and natural expression to reading and dramatic and oratorical delivery."

64 Essentials, p. 68.

65 Cf. Freedley and Beeves, op. cit., p. 306.

66 Garff B. Wilson, "Versatile Tragedians," 32 n.
was headmaster of Adams Academy, a member of Congress, a scholar, and an orator. The personal comments showing his reaction to Booth’s performances have been unearthed by Walter Prichard Eaton who found, for example, interesting marginal remarks following almost every reference to Booth’s acting directions for the play Macbeth. “Every successive piece of business of Booth is more rapid than the last” is typical of Everett’s criticism. Then too, note his reaction to a glowing account of Booth’s Richard in King Henry Sixth, appearing in the appendix of one volume. Whereas the publication commended especially Booth’s handling of the speech “What, will the aspiring blood of Lancaster / sink in the ground?” Everett pointed out: “But he called it Lann-cass-terr….” Still another instance of Everett’s negative evaluation for Booth’s work is his blunt invective, following a note which says that Booth omitted the ghost of Banquo: “This is enough to prove it ought to appear.”

Much of the printed commentary detailing Edwin Booth’s way with Shakespearean dialogue had been provided by Horace H. Furness, Jr., already mentioned as an editor with whom Booth corresponded. But Everett, like Ayres, had no vested interest in Booth’s activities. This disinterest, perhaps, contributed to their stern criticisms of the actor.

Some scholars, no doubt believing that Booth was making practical application on stage of their research, were quick to praise his efforts: his studying his parts well, his continual search for deeper meanings and more effective ways to express them, and his tireless testing of every possible interpretation of the lines. For, reportedly, Booth scrutinized

67Quoted by Eaton, op. cit., pp. 239, 248-249, 246, and 250.
the texts of Shakespeare even to the extent of personally consulting the best Shakespearian scholars. 68

Although, in the main, Strang disagreed with Everett's and Ayres's judgments regarding Booth, nonetheless, he did admit that Booth did not like rehearsals and the methodical business of an actor and that Booth never found it easy to concentrate for long upon one idea or one subject. 69

In this connection, the actor-manager Augustus Pitou remembered acting with an Edwin Booth who, while on stage waiting for his next cue to speak, would point out to a fellow player a business partner in a stage box or would discuss the founding of Booth's Theatre or the like. "In a second he was Hamlet again. He crossed me— paused for a moment— while his face and whole being denoted the keenest agony and uttered those words— 'The fair Ophelia,' with more feeling and expression than he gave to them at any other performance during that long run of 'Hamlet.'" 70

Strang remained steadfast in his belief, however, that Booth read Shakespearian blank verse with excellence and that "the single dissenter" to this contention was Ayres, whose consistent criticism had been that Booth was careless in emphasis. Strang cited Henry Austin Clapp who also recognized in Booth no "serious difficulty in putting into practice the theory to which all the great actors and critics before his day had subscribed,— that in Shakespeare's blank verse sound and sense are as a rule


69 Or. cit. I., 181.

so united that what adds to the effect of the one adds to the effect of the other."71

Reed Barton Cottrell has concluded that, during the period from 1875 to 1890, "the supreme test of an actor's right to be called a star [was] to appear on the London stage and submit his talent to the discriminating London audiences."72 Of value, then, is the reaction of the British press when Edwin Booth appeared in London, England. Moreover, "for those who wish to get a good idea of the past generation of great actors, Mr. Dutton Cook will be found to be the best possible guide." Thus wrote a reviewer for the periodical Era; the Illustrated London News praised Cook as a critic "never led away into undue praise or panegyric, and he can compress what others convey in ten or twenty lines into a single adjective. . . . he comes the nearest of his time to such scholarly critics as George Henry Lewes."73 Because Cook's critical assessments do not reflect a great nationalistic bias either for or against the American thespians whom he viewed, a comparatively true-to-Booth image may result from examining Cook's accounts of the trans-Atlantic performances of Edwin Booth.

As already demonstrated, Cook's judgment of Booth's acting agreed, in general, with Ayres's evaluation. The view of Booth "as an old-fashioned actor,"74 moreover, was fairly representative of British critical

71 Strang, op. cit., I, 179-180.
73 Quoted, as advertisement, in front of Cook, op. cit.
74 Cook, op. cit., p. 427.
reaction. Another reviewer, for example, attacked Booth for being "several
generations behind the time. . . . [His] rolling the eyes, elevating the
eyebrows (but not the audience), and twitching the fingers . . . along
with growlings, gruntins, and upheavings of the breast . . . [should
have disappeared] with the Macready tradition." Surveying the London
stage of 1870 to 1890, E. J. West has found that "criticism in general
agreed that Booth was, for better or worse, definitely of the old school":
usually for worse, however, because "throughout our period, we find the
old school actor damned for being too busy as an actor to become a
psychologist." Whereas the so-called new school of acting demanded a new type of
drama fashioned after the realistic manner of the playwright Tom W.
Robertson, Booth's "knowledge of the modern drama is so very meagre that
I [Booth] never permit my wife or daughter to witness a play without
previously ascertaining its character." Add to these scores against a
favorable British reception, for Booth's histrionic method, further
observation of the local scene: "As the every-day speech of the new
school gained ascendancy, increasingly critics noted a tendency toward
over-emphasis and excessive articulativeness in the old. . . . already
by 1880 the old school was beginning to be regarded only from the point

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75 "Christopher Sly at the Princess's," *Punch*, LXXX (April 2, 1881),
149.

76 West, Dissertation, pp. 35 and 38.

77 Edwin Booth, under the rubric EN PASSANT, *The Theatre* (London),
II (February, 1879), 45. (Originally from a note written to the editor
of the Christian Union, in reply to his request that Booth furnish an
article on the drama.)
of view of its faults."^®

With this background, then consider Cook's appraisal of Booth in

Richelieu at the Princess's Theatre, November, 1880.

There is something that reminds one of Mr. [Samuel] Phelps's strongly-limned rendering of Lord Ogleby—a performance Mr. Booth can scarcely have witnessed—in this new impersonation of Richelieu by the American actor. ... [The Cardinal's] weakness of health is shown by ... the quavering of certain of his tones, by his "hacking" cough ... A tendency to excessive play of face and gesticulation seems habitual to him [Booth]; he delights in strong and sudden effects; and sometimes, it must be said, his zeal and his energy urge him too near the confines of extravagance. A trained elocutionist, and gifted with a voice of rare power and compass, he is always audible; his sagacity as an actor enabling him to give keen point and singular significance to his speeches, if he now and then inclines to over-emphasis, or to that staccato system of delivery—detaching syllables and even dislocating words for the sake of exceeding distinctness—which was so much affected by players of the last generation.

Cook saw Booth's traditional artifices as being particularly at home in such stagy plays as Bulwer-Lytton's Richelieu; or, The Conspiracy (1839).^®

In addition, Cook criticized Booth's failure to reserve his natural powers sufficiently to carry him through a performance. "Booth's chief success was won in the first act, when his voice was at its freshest and firmest—its strength waned and its tones flattened, unfortunately, as the play proceeded." In this production of Hamlet, too, Booth's "certain drawling emphasis ... here and there" may have been characteristic of an actor who, caught in the conflict of techniques, tried to make concessions both to the new manner and to what had come to be regarded as the way of the old school in acting and delivery. For compare Booth with

^®West, Dissertation, pp. 29 and 31.

^®Or. cit., pp. 428-429.
Henry Irving. The latter eventually achieved what West's dissertation labels *The Compromise of Genius*, but at least during the early part of Irving's career, "at times . . . in his anxiety to avoid the inarticulateness of rant, the actor fell into the opposite error of drawling."\textsuperscript{80}

At least on one occasion, Booth "considered revising his style toward greater 'colloquialism.'"\textsuperscript{81} Some hint of this trend could have been detected as early as 1864-1865, during the run of Booth's one hundred consecutive performances of *Hamlet*.

The talk with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern [II, ii] is charming—indeed, nothing in Booth's acting is more admirable than the naturalness of his colloquies. To his college friends the elegant prince talks airily, a little sadly, and with a purpose. But he talks. They make speeches to him. Even the unmanageable oration, "I have of late, but wherefore I know not"—he gives with such unexpected and delicate intonation, with such an air of thinking his sad thoughts aloud, that we quite forget it is set down in a book.

But Lucia Gilbert Calhoun also noted that "when Laertes [V, 1] says 'A ministering angel shall my sister be,' Hamlet starts back, muffles his face in his mantle, and falls on Horatio's neck with a despairing cry, in which all words are lost."\textsuperscript{82} This business was apparently altered along the line of more communicable naturalness, in later performances, for Asia Booth Clarke recalled: "Booth also introduced sitting on the tomb in the graveyard when, with his face half buried on Horatio's shoulder, he speaks, as if to his own heart, the words, 'What! the fair

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., pp. 424-425 and 463.

\textsuperscript{81}Garff B. Wilson, Dissertation, p. 217.

\textsuperscript{82}Calhoun, "Edwin Booth," 82. Italics are in the original.
Ophelia? His resting previously on the tomb is most natural and graceful.⁸³

Representative of Booth's technique in action is, no doubt, his delivery of

the "To be, or not to be" . . . uttered in a voice almost inaudible . . . . Sweetness fills his tones as he addresses her [Ophelia] . . . .

... The whole scene [(III, i), after her deceiving him knowingly about the presence of her father,] he plays like one distracted. He is never still. He strides up and down the stage, in and out at the door, speaking outside with the same rapidity and vehemence. The speech "I have heard of your paintings, too, well enough," he begins in the outer room, and the contemptuous words hiss as they fall.

"It hath made me mad," was uttered with a flutter of the hand about the head more expressive than the words. As he turned toward Ophelia for the last time, all the bitterness, all the reckless violence seemed to die out of him; his voice was full of unspeakable love, of appealing tenderness, or irrevocable doom, as he uttered the last "To a nunnery go, go, go!" and tottered from the room as one who could not see for tears.

In Act I, scene ii, however, Booth's delivery of "O, that this too solid [or 'sullied' or 'sallied'] flesh would melt," etc., failed to obtain the same critic's wholehearted approval.

⁸³O f t * cit., p. 154. That Booth was open to suggestion concerning how he might modify his delivery, from the following of tradition toward the time's current interest in naturally motivated innovation, is indicated, pp.153-154: "In a discussion with Henry Tuckerman of New York . . , that gentleman, who had witnessed many of the old actors, observed to Booth that they all stood during the soliloquies, and inquired if it were not possible to alter this. On the next representation of 'Hamlet,' Booth, seated, began the soliloquy [(III, i)] 'To be, or not to be.' Mr. Tuckerman, watching the play, could not conceive how Hamlet could rise from that chair with propriety and grace. When at the words, 'to sleep, perchance to dream,' after an instant of reflection, during which the mind of Hamlet had penetrated the eternal darkness vivid with dreams, he rese with the horror of that terrible 'perchance' stamped upon his features, continuing, 'Ay, there's the rub!' His friend was satisfied that the actor had caught the inspiration of the lines in that reflective pause."
This he gave, moving from side to side of the stage, or half flung down upon his chair in an attitude of utter abandonment. But this soliloquy was most unequal. Sometimes it seemed the merest repetition of words to him. Sometimes it seemed to shake his being, and sometimes the lines,

O God, O God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world,
moaned themselves forth in tones so bitter and so hopeless, that one looked to see him end the scene with his bare bodkin.  

Notwithstanding, Lewis C. Strang maintained: "Probably Booth did not read blank verse as Mr. Ayres would read it, but there is ample evidence that Mr. Booth's reading was wonderfully effective as an interpretative agent, wholly natural yet without a hint of the commonplace, and eminently satisfactory to those best acquainted with the Shakespearian text." Today Garff B. Wilson claims that "the critics as a whole agreed that Booth excelled in voice and delivery." Standing in opposition to Ayres's view by ranking Edwin Booth as "the greatest of the versatile tragedians," as well as "the finest artist... Among the great players of the 19th century," Wilson believes that Booth realized that his physique was limited but that his voice was richly expressive and that his poetic temperament was capable of illuminating many roles. He built his technique upon his strength, and was able to act a wide variety of parts with great distinction.

Even Wilson has to admit, however, that "Booth was, to some extent, a temperamental actor and at times depended too much on thinking himself into the proper mood of his role... If he could not summon the necessary emotion, his acting could be cold and formal... In the final years of Booth's life, he was criticized with increasing frequency.

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\(^{84}\) Calhoun, op. cit., 80-81 and 78.

\(^{85}\) ibid., I, 179-180.
for carelessness and coldness." His effect in acting began to depend upon the traits for which he became noted, namely, "the eloquence of his movements" and "his control of facial expression [which] was remarkable." Significantly, Wilson reports that critics at the time heard "superb quality, range, and carrying power" in Booth's voice.

Henry Austin Clapp describes his [Booth's] delivery in these words: "A faultless pronunciation, an enunciation distinct, clean, and clear, without formalism or apparent effort, an exquisite feeling for the sweetness of words, and a delicate [ Rather, for the word delicate read perfect.] sense of their relation to one [one another, write [-d] to give] his delivery exemplary distinction, and to make it a model and a standard."

Wilson concludes that Booth "was careful of the mechanics of speech and elocution. He never became allied to a 'system' of voice cultivation, nor did he adopt a mechanical approach to good reading." In addition, Wilson asserts:

The revelation of mood and meaning which Booth could achieve through the tone of his voice alone is shown by the success of his acting in Germany. In 1883, he fulfilled a sensationaly successful engagement at the Residenz Theater in Berlin. He spoke his lines in English while the supporting cast used their native German. In spite of this, Oscar Welten in the Tagliche Berliner Bundschau wrote: "Booth is the best Hamlet I have ever seen. . . . You can understand . . . perfectly, although you may not know a single word that he utters."
In contrast, Towse approached agreement with Ayres by stating that Booth was a great but not, I think, a very great actor, and a most accomplished artist, expert in all stage technique and artifice. Aware that in Booth's "early days he was somewhat addicted to the vice of 'mouthing,'" Towse pointed out, however, that Booth conquered this, and afterward his execution was singularly clear, crisp, and significant, trumpet-like in passionate declamation, soft, mellow, and flexible in moments of pathos. His voice had not the organ-like volume of Salvini's, but was a rich and beautiful instrument upon which he played with great skill.

True, Towse credited Booth with a voice "sonorous and melodious," but "in characters of heroic proportions, such as Macbeth, Othello, and Lear, Edwin Booth was barred from the supreme heights of illusion by physical limitations. . . . in the great crises of emotion [he] lacked massiveness and grandeur. In these respects he was not the equal of Forrest, E. L. Davenport, or John McCullough, although superior to them in many others. . . . The actor's perception was seldom, if ever, at fault, but he was unable to give full expression to his own ideal."  

But Wilson states emphatically:

The art of Edwin Booth can be summarized as follows: Acting, to him, was not entertainment. It was the revelation of the beauty and wisdom contained in great dramatic poems. To interpret these masterpieces worthily, he tirelessly cultivated his talents.

From an opposite polarity, Ayres expressed the opinion:

With Betterton, Garrick, Talma, Kemble, Kean, Cook, Macready, Forrest, Bossi, Salvini, and the like, he [Booth] does not rank. He is an exceedingly clever actor, and a marvelously successful entertainer.


\[92\] "Versatile Tragedians," 33.
but a great dramatic artist—not, that he is not! ... Had he been a student, a veritable student, a student that looked upon nothing, no matter how trifling, as being unworthy of attention—a student, for example, of the Edwin Forrest type—there are some parts of the first rate, Iago and Richelieu, for instance, that he would have played in a manner that would have been well-nigh satisfying to the thinking playgoer; but had he given to such parts as Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lear, for instance, the closest study, they would still have been beyond him. It requires a greater, a subtler intellect than any to-day on the English-speaking stage to wrestle successfully, from an art point of view, with any one of the three.93

Ayres persisted in reiterating the pronouncement: "There is not a first-class player of the serious drama, man or woman, to-day in America—not one." But the Atlanta Constitution, for one, attributed such an attitude to the nostalgic hase which, especially relative to an elderly critic, has been wont to color his perception of the present in reference to achievements remembered from the past.

That these writers believe all this I have no doubt. If an actor obtains a hold upon the people, their regard and their admiration grow with the increasing years. This, I imagine, accounts in a great measure for the adulation of the old-time actors, and for the constant harpings on the "good old times." Still the majority of us will continue to believe that Edwin Booth is more than a clever entertainer.94

The lack in diplomacy with which Ayres approached criticism of actors usually provoked a counterattack from loyal supporters of the criticized performer or, for that matter, even from champions of an underdog. For example, Ayres had accredited Booth's having "drifted on the stage as a consequence of being the son of an actor."95

Despite the weaknesses which Ayres, among others, noted, eventually

93 *Acting*, p. 45. Italics are not in the original.
94 Quoted by Ayres, *Acting*, pp. 53-54.
95 *Acting*, p. 35.
Booth succeeded in achieving for himself in his own time a working compromise with both the old school, which had engendered him, and the new school whose philosophy was beginning to pervade the world of the theatre. The latter contention finds additional support in the following opinion of Augustus Pitou, who had worked with Booth and had even appeared as Friar Laurence on the opening night of Booth's Theatre, February 3, 1869.

It was Pitou's considered judgment that Edwin Booth's school was the natural school of to-day, for it was he who introduced it; he was neither "declamatory" nor "strident." . . . In his advice to the players, in his scene with the grave digger in "Hamlet" and in numerous quiet scenes of other plays, his delivery was conversational, but always earnest. And E. H. Sothern, who is of to-day, treats these scenes in "Hamlet" in the same way.96

Strang identified Booth as "the connecting link between the old and the new in the theatre. He began on a stage where the actor was supreme in the formulation and presentation of his character. He ended in a theatre where the dramatist and the stage-manager were the real creative agents, and the actor but the mouthpiece of their thought and the expression of their study and drill."97 Eaton, too, noted "a break, threatening to

96 Augustus Pitou, Masters of the Stage As Seen in Retrospection by One Who Has Been Associated with the American Stage for Nearly Fifty Years (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1914), p. 66. Moreover, ibid., Booth's "school of acting and Mr. Irving's were identical, but Mr. Irving had mannerisms and Mr. Booth had none. These mannerisms of Mr. Irving's were constitutional, and they had nothing to do with his art, nor with his school of acting."

97 On. cit., I, 180-181. Cf. West, "From a Player's to a Playwright's Theatre; The London Stage, 1870-1890," 436: "Since the last decade of the nineteenth century, the integral relationship of the histrionic and the dramatic arts has been forgotten. Dramatic criticism thrives, histrionic criticism practically disappeared with the old school. The disappearance of the old school actor, with the concurrent development of the new school non-actor, mainly between the years from 1870 to 1890, made possible, nay, inevitable, the so-called 'dramatic renaissance' of the nineties, which was not a sudden efflorescence of dramatic genius, but rather a floral wreath
become complete." And Tewse furnished a rather purple-patched leave-taking from the protagonist Edwin Booth, who "left no disciples, no successor to take up his mantle when he discarded it. When he made his final bow the curtain—as far as the American stage was concerned—fell also upon the legitimate drama. Whether it is to be raised again time will show." 99

With the eclectic actor Edwin Booth's retirement, the tide of the new theatrical era could not be stemmed for long. The latter's policies had been threatening to engulf the multifaceted histrionic forte constructed through many years of traditional acting. Now a time was becoming imminent, moreover, when "what is written of one actor may be written in precisely the same way and with equal accuracy, truth and just comprehension, of another actor." 100

The latter situation has influenced the type of treatment afforded Ayres's criticism of this new school, which is to follow. For despite a typical new actor's feverish personal efforts to stand out from among his fellows, his methods and results reflected tendencies common to this lesser breed of performers. While indulging his potentialities within the seemingly easy ways of the new, in exchange, he not only sold his actor's

upon the grave of histrionic genius." See also Richard Lockridge, *Darling of Misfortune*, Edwin Booth: 1833-1893 (New York: The Century Co., 1932), passim. Note especially p. 342, where Lockridge goes so far as to detect an apparently revealing injunction to actors: "'Play down!' commands Booth [ca. 1886-1888], as earnestly as any modern director of the quietest modern tragedy."


right to individual recognition but indeed frittered away the higher
drama which had been capable of bringing about his rebirth as a histrionic
artist.

Summary

For bodily action on stage, Ayres recognized a need for only a few
simple rules, easy to learn and to apply, which he believed to function
throughout all artful expression. He refused, however, to condone the
excess to which typical Delsartians eventually codified their gestures
and movements into an artificial system of poses. Such unnaturalness led
Ayres to advise actors to let bodily movements, like tones of the voice,
take care of themselves at the moment of delivery.

In general, other critics and scholars have agreed with Ayres's
observations of the lessened histrionic skill of most players following
in the wake of the Forrest-Cushman tradition. Edwin Booth's achievements,
however, have been imprinted deep in the annals of world theatre. Booth
delighted his countrymen by clothing his productions in spectacular and
realistic effects. He cultivated a poetically refined sensitivity to
emotional feeling and often directed his physical and mental endowments
in a satisfactory expression for the general spirit of a passage to be
interpreted. He professed intellectual curiosity concerning meanings
intended by Shakespeare in his dialogue. But Booth's use of intelligent
analysis usually stopped there.

Granting that Booth was an exceedingly clever actor and a marvelously
successful entertainer, nevertheless, Ayres was not impressed by the fore­
most tragedian of the time. For Ayres concluded that Booth was not a
great dramatic artist. Pauses, emphases, and inflections seemed to wait
upon Booth's poetic insight. Emotion, rather than thought, derived a
greater share of his attention. Booth's progressive leaning toward a so-
called new school's value in inspiration, then, encouraged him to underrate
the power of elocution. This attitude combined, at times, with an un-
dignified indulgence in natural effects to detract from the classic
decorum of the so-termed higher drama.

Today Garff E. Wilson, for one, concludes that critics of the time
agreed concerning Booth's overall excellence, even in vocal delivery.
In this connection, Wilson quotes Lewis G. Strang who, in turn, quoted
Henry Austin Clapp. Strang, incidentally, cited Ayres as the single
dissembler from the critical consensus that Booth's reading of Shakes-
pearian blank verse was eminently effective. But even Strang, among
others, tempered praise for Edwin Booth by noting weaknesses. Doctor
William Everett was more vitriolic than Ayres in attacking Booth's per-
formances, whereas J. Ranken Towse, along with Dutton Cook representing
British criticism, judged Booth less severely than did Ayres.

True, the teacher-critic Ayres persisted in sticking by his guns
and condemning most newcomers for falling far short of the elocutionary
perfection which he had come to associate with the old school's Forrest
and Cushman. But Ayres's work cannot be evaluated fairly only in terms
of a nostalgia for the past: his reviews of acting and actors reflect
an exemplary critical acumen based upon his fundamentally sound theory
for acting.
Ayres felt impelled to make a fervent plea for a return to the intellectual in acting and delivery, that is, a plea for histrionic prowess developing from an intelligent analysis of the drama under interpretation. This reaction followed upon Ayres's survey of the products resulting from a so-called new school's tendency to underplay vocal delivery while over-acting for a typical audience in search of spectacle.

Basically, Ayres observed a decline in intelligent interpretation to favor emotional motivation for a performer trying to gain recognition as an individual genius. Pursuing stardom, each aspirant directed the largest proportion of his energy toward arriving at a unique characterization calculated to evoke audience approval. Whereas formerly an actor knew that he would be judged favorably according to the degree of skill with which he handled traditional procedure, new school performers cut loose so completely from moorings in the past that a multiplicity of different interpretations sprang up in erratic profusion.

In the new school's attempt at meticulous imitation of commonplace models from the current scene, the new actor began to find himself equipped to interpret only characters whose speech and manner reflected the trivia of everyday life. Eventually, then, the critical public could hardly avoid noting, with Ayres, that this actor had been progressively disqualifying himself for roles from classic and standard repertory.
By the early eighteen-eighties, such a money-making star as Mary Anderson stood in the limelight both here and abroad. The general public seemed satisfied with an amalgam of this popular performer's individuality and her commonplace delivery. Ayres, however, was not satisfied:

Miss Anderson has some physical beauty—many people think a great deal—a very fine voice, and genuine dramatic instinct; but her reading is far from being what it should be, what it must be, if she would ever approach excellence as a player. The fact that she attracts large audiences, is popular with the million, proves nothing, except that she makes money. The million! What do the million know about the art of reading? What do you critics really know about it? . . . The great fault I [Ayres] have to find with her is that in her endeavor to be natural, colloquial, realistic, she drops away down into the commonplace. Sheridan Knowles, when he wrote The Hunchback, surely never dreamed that anybody would ever speak the part of Julia in the gim-e-glass-o'-beer style that Miss Anderson speaks it in.¹

Ayres's observation of the inferior results stemming from this actress's cultivation of individuality, to the exclusion of any saving grace in elocutionary precision, found support in a British critic's judgment of Anderson's performance, this time in W. S. Gilbert's one-act play Comedy and Tragedy on Saturday, January 26, 1884.

Attacking the subject with tremendous energy, she never lost her individuality in the illusion. It was always Miss Mary Anderson, and never Clarice. It is here, indeed, where Miss Anderson falls short of the highest expression of her art. Beautiful as she may be as Parthenia, as Pauline, as Galatea, and as Clarice, she is always Miss Anderson in different costumes.²

Ayres identified Mary Anderson with a great many other performers who

¹ Ayres, Acting, pp. 58-59.
² "Comedy and Tragedy," under the rubric OUR PLAY-BOX, The Theatre, III (New Series: March, 1884), 143-144.
were falling into line, in one way or another, with a trend of the time.

Anderson may be compared, at least in part, with the stage manner of Lydia Thompson, whose success in burlesque plays had been encouraging many so-called legitimate actresses to draw upon elements from Thompson's popular appeal. Lydia Thompson, like Mary Anderson,

changes her costumes but not her characters. In the stage presentation of her lovely self lies all of her extraordinary power to please. She can't sing much, but then she has such pretty babyish ways. And why shouldn't she? Would not her crowd of highly intelligent and tasteful admirers like to pat her on the cheek, to tap her under the chin, to kiss her little "footy tootles," and to dandle her generally?³

In this connection, too, an apparently more modest Rose Eytinge, as Cleopatra, was adjudged "entirely successful" even though she "was so annoyed because she was compelled to make a more voluptuous display of her person than was originally intended, that she forgot some of her most important lines. The fault lay with the dressmaker, who probably thought that the Serpent of the old Nile should have nothing on but its skin."⁴

Not uncommonly the success for a performer's individuality resulted primarily from attractiveness. Miss Wainwright "has only one thing to recommend her in Desdemona--her appearance."⁵ Good looks, inborn cleverness, graceful motion, and the dash and vigor of an impulsive personality


⁵ Ayres, Acting, p. 58.
attracted audience worship. Around the year 1879, as Adonis in *Babes in
the Woods*, Henry E. Dixey had set the pattern for future male stars to
draw upon in their bids for audience approval. As a result of his
physical attraction, "overnight he became a national idol, besieged by
love-struck feminine fans and plagued with offers to endorse many pro-
ducts."  

Sometimes personal attractiveness combined with a degree of natural
aptitude for acting. In this relation, Ayres cited Bose Coghlan, "the
best all-round actress in the country . . . . Never has an actress
achieved more than she has achieved with the same amount of mental labor.
She is wholly indebted for her position to her good looks and her inborn
cleverness. She never has a reason for anything she does. She always
looks well, is always graceful, is always dashing and vigorous; but her
handling of the lines is generally worse than bad."  

Coghlan's versatility in characterization helped to distract attention from her faulty inter-
pretation of dialogue. 

This trait of versatility, which had developed under the egis of the
old school's James W. Wallack, Sr., and James E. Murdoch and which came
to fruition in Edwin Booth, was to receive at times an excessive, though
often perverted, attention in the hands of the new school. Ayres believed,
however, that "it is better to do a little well than to do much indiffer-
ently; excellence in one is better than mediocrity in all. He that can

6Cottrell, *An Introductory Study of the Training and Background of
the American Actor from 1875-1890,* p. 42.

7Acting, p. 59. Incidentally, at the time of Ayres's death, some
sixteen years later, Bose Coghlan was reported as having been one of his
students.
do the greatest thing is the greatest man. Versatility never yet has made
greatness."8

An age which delighted in successive scenic transformations en­
couraged the actor to undergo decided changes in physical appearance and
manner throughout a given play, as well as in the several plays comprising
his repertory. The Scottish William H. Thompson, despite his bad acting,
was able to dominate the stage through his accomplishments in a type of
versatility which bordered on legerdemain.

The difference he makes in his appearance and manner between the
first act—when he is a Rocky Mountain "tough"—and the others,
which present him as the gentlemanly head of a band of criminals
in London, is a gap so wide as to seem scarcely capable of being
spanned by the versatility of any one man.9

That similar skill continued to satisfy an audience's sense of the
dramatic could have been witnessed in the much later success of Lionel
Barrymore in The Copperhead.

Most new performers in the period, nevertheless, did not apply them­
selves diligently enough in the art of acting to gain the scope in char­
acterization which comes from a versatile background. In 1887, Wilson
"Barrett is never, for an instant, anything but Mr. Barrett speaking the
lines of Hamlet; and Mr. Barrett speaking them badly, too." Not infrequent­
ly the individuality of the performer drew upon only a limited and often
commonplace background in the ways of acting and delivery. "Mr. Barrett
would be more profitably employed in studying old readings than in
arranging new versions. Not even Mr. Barrett's pantomime is intelligent,

8Ibid., p. 37.
9Munsey's Magazine. XIII (May, 1895), 191.
and as for facial expression, he has none.\textsuperscript{10}

The inspirational nature of the new school encouraged the performer to rely upon what A. C. Wheeler, known as Nym Crinkle, dubbed "the uncertain impulses of a [John] Wilkes Booth."\textsuperscript{11} Even though an individual performer's feeling for the part often resulted in decided overacting with the hands and body and face, such vigorous, self-sufficient crudity in physical execution was often accompanied by underplaying the vocal interpretation. The demands of delivery were repressed according to the dictates of a newly established convention making for colloquialism on stage.

Especially amateurs, in pursuit of the natural or realistic by means of their own everyday experiences with the commonplace, became so haphazard in delivery that "they mispronounce more words in one evening than one hears mispronounced by any one of the better professional companies in six evenings."\textsuperscript{12} Such carelessness, in Ayres's opinion, was not unrelated to the premium placed upon individuality by one of the most

\textsuperscript{10}Ayres, Acting, p. 193. Cf. columns by Alfred Ayres and by Nym Crinkle (a pseudonym for Andrew Carpenter Wheeler), New York Mirror, XVII, No. 432 (April 9, 1887), 1. Whereas Wheeler evaluated Wilson Barrett in terms of the latter's being a "good fellow," Ayres attacked Barrett by employing a unique tactic. He praised Barrett's manager John Cobb, as follows: "Mr. Cobb is truly a wonder, for of nothing he has made something; or at the least, of nothing he has made what, it would seem, in the public eye, has the semblance of being something. . . . If he can do what he has done with only the outside form of the thing, what could he not do if some of the flesh and some of the blood as well as the form of the thing were given him to handle? There is about as much flesh and blood in Wilson Barrett's Hamlet as there is in a plaster cast."

\textsuperscript{11}Quoted by Ayres, Acting, p. 264.

\textsuperscript{12}Ayres, Acting, p. 191.
financially successful performers of the time, namely, Richard Mansfield. Although the latter endorsed in theory "the ideal of Protean versatility ... in practice he shrewdly capitalized upon a strongly individualized acting style."

Mansfield followed the times in depending "upon his personality to attract audiences and included many of his personal eccentricities and mannerisms in each of his characterizations." In an address delivered at the University of Chicago, Mansfield explained the current theatrical situation which demanded such individuality in characterization, although the ultimate result reduced the professional stature of the performer.

There is much at the present time which militates against the education of the actor. It has become largely the custom of theatrical companies to rely upon one play each season, or for as long a period as any play will hold the public favor. This means a few weeks of rehearsal and idleness the rest of the time. A society play, for instance, is purchased in London, a cast is engaged in New York in which each individual player peculiarly suits the character he or she has to interpret ... It is only necessary for the interpreter [the actor] to speak the words, but there is no call for great acting and the actor is simply floated for a while upon the tide of the author's temporary notoriety.

Yet E. J. West has noted, at least in theory, "the new school insistence that intelligence was far more important in an actor than a knowledge of technique." Ayres observed:

The average actor, when you put him into the higher walks of the drama, is an example of ignorance in love with the sound of

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13Dillon, "Richard Mansfield's Theories of Acting Compared with Critical Opinion of His Performances," "Abstract."

14Quoted by Winter, The Life and Art of Richard Mansfield, I, 295-296. Italics are in the original.

15West, Dissertation, p. 38.
his own voice. Yet he goes about railing at the elocutionist—no, he rails at elocution, not being aware that elocution can be anything else than the old bow-wow, sing-song, chanting monstrosity that the ignoramuses have been teaching for generations. The elocutionists, according to The New York Mirror, he calls fools, fools, or frauds; while himself he calls an artist.

An artist! Heaven help us! Well, yes, he is an artist; but his art is the fakir's art, not the actor's art. He stands in the same relation to the artists of his profession that the bricklayer and the hod-carrier stand to the architect. Not one in six of the rank and file knows the A B C of his business.

Because most "elocution teachers are as bad as the actors say they are" and, too, because "the elocution of the actors, as a class, is as bad as that of the elocutionists," Ayres formulated "A Plea for the Intellectual in Elocution." True, for Ayres, intelligence was not everything. Even such an influential old-schooler as the reputable James E. Murdoch had championed, according to Ayres, a brand of elocutionary technique whose pedantically elaborate precision, in practice, dulled the imaginative charm of effective delivery. Then too, although Ayres admired the intelligence and the ambition of Minna K. Gale, from the new school, he noted that "a lack of dramatic instinct . . . , and a lack of native winsomeness" barred her from the favor of the public. This attitude may be compared with that expressed by Mrs. Adeline Stanhope Wheatcroft, director of the Stanhope-Wheatcroft Dramatic School: "I like best a nervous temperament in a student. One may be ever so painstaking, but if he or she has not

16 *Acting*, pp. 20 and 19. Italics are in the original.


18 *Acting*, p. 91.
temperament, there is seldom a chance of rising above mediocrity."

Granted, a painstaking earnestness, along with intelligence, "is not everything." Its application especially in interpreting dialogue, nonetheless, had become so frequently absent from the practice of the new school that Ayres felt justified in launching an overzealous campaign for the return of intelligence to acting and delivery. For a typical player of the period failed to capitalize upon the potential power residing in a good voice or upon an apparently high level of dramatic instinct; instead, he pursued a policy which abhorred study and encouraged repeated practice usually in the wrong direction. This actor's commonly high regard for such an unreasoning procedure linked with a seemingly ingrained self-satisfaction to provide little hope for any helpful change in status quo.

Ayres cited numerous representatives of such subordination of intelligent interpretation to the popular effect of scintillating individuality. For example, Ayres observed "haphazard, unthoughtful methods" at work shaping the characterizations of Eugenia Blair. Even though "Miss Blair has the necessary intelligence," being "one of the most intelligent readers in the company of which she is a member. . . .

Instead of using it, she blunders forward, leaving correctness to chance." "But," as Ayres often said, "assertion is not criticism; merely to say this would benefit no one. [Therefore,] To particularize:" As Neodamia, in Galba, *The Gladiator*, Eugenia Blair's

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19*Werner's Magazine*, XX (January, 1898), 525.

whole art consists in looking pretty, dressing properly, being in the proper places, using action more or less appropriate, and in pronouncing the words of her part, now with more voice, now with less, in the order in which the author has placed them. As for exhibiting any intelligence in the speaking of her lines in Neodamia—no, that she does not.  

Then too, Ayres lamented the actor-manager of this company: Frederick B. Warde, who "achieves so little with all his advantages."

Significantly, Warde often "misconceives the spirit in which the individual speeches should be spoken." Along with the importance of dramatic instinct and natural aptitude, Ayres recognized the necessity for this preliminary task in order to arrive at effective and intelligent delivery.

"The first thing to be attended to in deciding how language should be spoken is to determine what spirit, or general tone, it should be spoken in... no one can be a really good reader unless he have a natural aptitude for the art; but no matter how great the natural aptitude, without much study—and that, too, of the right sort—no one can possibly read really well." Moreover, unless study is channeled in the right direction, the performer will find himself progressively diminishing in effectiveness. "How often do we see players get worse from year to year!"  

But mental labor of almost any kind seemed especially irksome to the personality player of the new era. Believing with Ayres that acting could be taught, David Belasco blamed America's lack of a national academy, similar to the Paris Conservatoire, upon the apparent fact

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21 Ibid., pp. 59, 95-96, 95, and 139.  
22 Ibid., pp. 27, 98, 221, 119, and 35.
"that most young American actors are hopelessly ignorant." Although granting that "so many persons . . . have more muscle than they have brains to tax," Ayres accredited the decline in intelligent acting and delivery not so much to a general lessening of intelligence as to a failure to use, or to know how to use, latent mental powers. With no adequate training school to educate the novice and with little professional integrity guiding theatrical behavior, "there are comparatively few persons that are not more willing to tax their muscles than they are to tax their brains."

Ayres advocated "the exercise of that intelligence that so points the thought as to make it not only clear but effective." Moreover, Ayres believed that "if the mind goes right the action is pretty sure not to be far wrong" and that "the brain, not the muscles, is the seat of emotion . . . . The gesture or the tone that is not spontaneous is better not made, and it will not be spontaneous unless it is the expression of an emotion." Writing in 1887, Ayres concluded:

The art of speaking properly the words of his part, as I have again and again contended, is the thing of things that should receive the actor's attention. Yet there is nothing else that pertains to his art that receives so little of the attention of the great majority of English-speaking actors. The reason for this we find in the fact that the art of making language

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24 Acting, pp. 119, 190, 39, and 37-38. See Rush, The Philosophy of the Human Voice, passim. Cf. Lester L. Hale, "Dr. James Rush," in Wallace, A History of Speech Education in America, pp. 215-237. See especially pp. 234-235: "As a medical scientist who was led to explore the entity called mind and as a 'voice scientist' who rigorously studied vocal behavior, James Rush was probably the first investigator to see that mind is inseparable from the physical phenomena of self-expression."
effective in the utterance makes a greater demand on the intelligence than does anything else the actor is called upon to do.  

Percy Fitzgerald, writing in 1892, noted not only a decline in the use of formal elocution but also various theatrical crutches which the actor had come to substitute for his support.

We have actually in these days false noses worn in serious characters, which formerly were confined to pantomimes and burlesques. . . . there is a curious Nemesis to come: for the actors who lean on these methods will find their intellectual powers dwindle, and grow more and more enfeebled. It is like swimming with bladders.  

In addition to the cultivation of attention-attracting tricks in make-up and gesture, Ayres found that individualistic traits in delivery gave the new actor pegs on which to hang the character of his role. In thus summoning up substitutes for skillful interpretation, the new school encouraged the development of progressively enfeebled intelligent artistry.

Nor was Ayres the only one to champion proper pronunciation for words. In 1880, for example, the periodical The Voice had been asked to enlarge its scope as a journal concerned with stuttering to include errors committed through general carelessness. Witness the apostrophizing of one C. W. Sykes: "Dear Voice, behold your mission enlarged! Turn from the stutterers occasionally to the many others whose offences are many and monstrous through carelessness; so shall you be great in the eyes of the good." Moreover, on June 18, 1885, The American Society

25Ibid., p. 119.  
26Fitzgerald, The Art of Acting, p. 34.  
27C. W. Sykes, "Pronunciation of Words," The Voice, II (March, 1880), 44.
for the Improvement of Speech had been organized to maintain standards in pronunciation. With Ayres's concentrated attack on faults in pronunciation, not only did actors mind their manner of delivery but also "pronouncing-matches" began taking place throughout the country and, by 1900, were being held annually, with spelling matches, during Chautauqua.

Despite the progress in refining this tool of delivery, namely, pronunciation, the end-product continued to give off signals of weakness in communication. During the year of Ayres's death, 1902, Ayres was still enlisting forces to battle "Pedantic Utterance":

I went a few evenings ago to see "The Honorable John Grigsby". . . . All seemed possessed with the delusion that they were doing quite the proper thing in giving to the pronouns, find them where they might, their full name sound. The articles, the prepositions, the conjunctions, the auxiliary verbs, and the pronouns—the demonstrative excepted—are, all of them, slurred, when not emphatic.

A disregard for intelligent interpretation, either through excessive pedantry or haphazard carelessness, continued to characterize the last decade of the nineteenth century. Julia Marlowe's knowledge of the difficult art of elocution is very limited. . . . her continual failure to do anything like justice to the text tended to alienate the thoughtful critic. . . . Her mind is more occupied with the tones of voice she makes than with the thought expressed by the language she utters. Ada Behan has a more than ordinarily good voice and a more


than ordinarily clear articulation, but this said all is said that
can honestly be said in praise of her delivery, which is unnatural,
drawling, noncommittal, pointless. 31

As late as the year 1896, Ayres recognized a need in continuing to
remind actors in terms of Macaulay's admonition: "To learn to read well
is the business of half a life." Regarding "music . . . the least
intellectual of all the arts, if we consider only the making of sweet
sounds," Ayres disapproved of performers' musical intonations which were
sounded at the expense of meaningful delivery. He remained steadfast in
his belief:

The sense determined, there cannot be two equally good ways to
read [a line]. . . .

There are few persons—even on the stage, in the pulpit, or on
the rostrum—that have any apprehension of the field that the art
of reading offers for the exercise of the intelligence. 32

What elocutionary skill had been transmitted into the province of
the new school, through one channel or another, was rapidly giving way
to such thrilling assaults on the eye as that provided by the lumbering
of real lions in the Rome-burning scenes of Claudius Nero, October 22 to
December 13, 1890. For Daly's Theatre, which had replaced Wallack's in
the favor of cultured playgoers, lest the "elegance and finish of style"
of Charles Fisher and of Harry Edwards on their demise during June, 1891,
as well as the skill of John Gilbert who had died a year or more before.
Then too, a new function for the theatrical performer had been suggested

31 Ibid., p. 212.

32 Alfred Ayres [Thomas Embley Osmun], "Studies in Emphasis,"
Werner's Magazine, XVIII (September, 1896), 880-881. See especially
in the action of New York's society leaders, during 1890, in "copying the magnificent costumes of [Raban's role] the Baroness—the soft red velvet and fur of the first, the black and silver beauty of the second, and the black and yellow street costume of later scenes."33

Spectacular melodrama had been coming into its own, with shrewd playwrights marking "their plays for box-office success by creating roles for gymnastic heroines, muscular pugilists, professional knife throwers, singing Indians, or trained dogs—or, better still, for all at the same time." In this relation, September of 1890 witnessed the debut of the world's heavyweight champion John L. Sullivan as an actor in Honest Hearts and Willing Hands. Incidentally, along with the enfeebling of intelligence which had been taking place, Gentleman Jim Corbett's prowess in the ring was reported to have been weakened by his play-fighting in 1894's Gentleman Jack; nonetheless, "Corbett continued to tour and star in the melodrama even after he lost his title to Jeffries."34

True, Ayres failed to stem the rising tide of popular melodrama, with its visually sensational appeal to the exclusion of practically all vestiges of intellectual stimulation. But his tireless efforts were not expended in a theatrical scene which was entirely devoid of interest in the higher drama. A critical segment of society began to detect some value in his pronouncements concerning the indispensable function of intelligent interpretation, especially in the rarer atmosphere of

33 Odell, Annals of the New York Stage, XIV (1945), 563, 503, and 499.

Shakespearian diction. The appeal of the intellect refused to be subordinated completely to the sensations of the eye and of the ear.

No doubt, too, through Ayres’s efforts a so-called new elocution, which began establishing itself during the nineties, was conceived and encouraged to fruition. One of its early proponents, S. H. Clark, stated the debt that this new elocution owed to Ayres "for drawing it from externals to internals." Whereas Clark had hoped that Murdoch’s Analytic Elocution would provide the key to effective delivery, a chance contact with one of Ayres’s criticisms encouraged Clark to endorse, rather, the get-the-sense approach of Ayres.

When Murdoch’s "Analytic Elocution" was announced, I felt sure it would contain the magic word which would open for me the treasure-house of vocal expression. Carefully, conscientiously, I burrowed through this work, and when I reached the end found my magic word was a will-o’-the-wisp in whose pursuit I found myself now neck-deep in the bog of artificiality. Night after night I would lie awake discussing with myself the advisability of abandoning altogether a profession for which evidently I had neither gift nor brains. Of what use, thought I, to try to be a teacher of elocution, when you cannot make an indirect wave of the third, and use a prevailing low pitch, whenever the author tells you to do so in this or that selection? At this moment I chanced upon a criticism by Alfred Ayres; it was a revelation to me: "Throw away your rules of emphasis; never mind your inflections; the melody and transitions will take care of themselves; get the sense." It was just the advice I needed. I continued along the lines laid down by Mr. Ayres, looking for new meanings where I had sought new inflections, new melodies, new qualities of voice. I cite this experience because I think it a typical case.

Mr. Murdoch’s book is the work of a scholar. It is replete with suggestiveness for him who knows how to use it; but as a textbook on elocution it is a colossal failure. I cite this particular book because it stands for a school of elocution to-day,—a school against which Mr. Ayres never tires of pouring forth his wrath. Mr. Murdoch contends that the great lack of elocutionists is voice; Mr. Ayres, that it is brains; and I [Clark] think Mr. Ayres is right.35

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A letter written to *The Voice* (Werner's Magazine), by Clark, yields further influence of Ayres's stress on communicating meaning.

I want to acknowledge . . . the vast amount of benefit I have received through the media of the personal and published criticisms of Mr. Alfred Ayres.

. . . of all the works extant on elocution there are none which lay the amount of stress on the thought and its interpretation that does Mr. Ayres . . . .

Mr. Ayres deserved the thanks of the profession . . . for his struggle to obtain a thoroughly natural style in pronunciation and delivery.

I think that Prof. Roberts, of Philadelphia, is the only prominent teacher of elocution who has publicly acknowledged the value of Mr. Ayres's work; but one cannot have followed closely the train of thought in several recent contributions to your paper without noting the unacknowledged tribute to the work of Mr. Ayres.

. . . no one has been so bold and uncompromising in his endeavors to root out of elocution anything which would tend to its deterioration.  

Despite Ayres's ever-increasing influence upon correctness in stage delivery, the seemingly excessive effort required for an intelligent interpretation of an author's meaning usually resulted in the new-school actor's choosing an easier path to stardom. When a typical personality player of the time, while courting a reputation for genius through scintillating individuality, happened to interpret effectively on occasion, his success often proved accidental when compared with his other less fortunate utterances. For example, in judging Mansfield's Richard III, Shaw noted that "several times he made fine music for a moment, only to shew in the next line that he had made it haphazard."  

Ayres related this slapdash approach to a current theatrical craze.

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to hold up a mirror to the colloquial speech and manner of everyday life. Soon the latter tendency began to yield only commonplace acting and delivery. Ayres was quick to observe that an average performer, from the new school, no longer possessed the skills required for interpreting effectively the so-called higher drama, associated with classic and standard repertory.

Of Shakespearean Drama under the New Regime

A knowing application of the art of delivery, despite the ill repute into which its misusers had channeled the very name elocution, held out a key to improvement for acting and delivery. The London Saturday Review, for example, passed judgment upon Mary Anderson's performance, as Perdita in The Winter's Tale, by reporting that it "would be tolerable if she possessed an elementary knowledge of elocution." This lack was especially noticeable when the higher drama was being presented. The above British periodical, reflecting Ayres's view, noted "that she has done all in her power to bring Shakespeare into disrepute."\(^{38}\)

In response to the question "Does Shakespeare Pay?" Ayres wrote, in part:

We often hear it said that what the great public demands is the wild-cat drama. Nothing is further from the truth. If, however, it is to any extent true that the wild-cat drama yields better returns than the higher drama, then it is for the same reason that a muslin gown neatly made is more pleasing to the eye than a botched satin.

The fact is, if we could so cast, say, one of Shakespeare's popular tragedies as to do justice to it throughout, there is not a theater in the country large enough to hold the people that would flock to see the presentation.

\(^{38}\) Quoted by Ayres, Acting, p. 119. Italics are in the presentation by Ayres.
But such a cast is impossible, for there is not a first-class player of the serious drama, man or woman, to-day in America—not one.\textsuperscript{39}

Ayres was guided, of course, by the belief: "As in social life it is of far greater importance how people speak than how they dress, so—to my [Ayres's] thinking—in dramatic representations it is of far greater importance how dramas are spoken than how they are staged. . . . I, unlike Mr. [McKee] Rankin, would never use a drama merely to hang accessories on; I would use accessories merely to heighten the effect of the drama. I would saddle the burden of the entertainment on the author and the actors."\textsuperscript{40}

Accordingly, writing in 1892, Ayres criticized the stagecraftsmanship of Augustin Daly for subordinating "the more important, the more intellectual matter, the playing . . . . There are those, and I am one of them, that think the playing done by Mr. Daly's company last winter in the classic and the standard dramas—in The Hunchback and in As You Like It, for example—fell much short of what we could reasonably expect from any company that would venture to present them to a metropolitan audience." However, Ayres recognized Daly as "quite competent to direct his carpenter, his scene painter, and his costumer, but he is clearly not competent to direct the personators of the characters in our classic and standard drama." Significantly too, Ayres would never "saddle the burden of the entertainment on the carpenter, the painter, the costumer, and the fiddler."\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39}Acting, pp. 44–45.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 105.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., pp. 218, 220, and 105.
Typifying the control gained by the new office of stage director, Daly's policy included "doing a large share of the thinking for every member of his company." In Ayres's opinion, however, Daly's responsibility did not include changing "the pronunciation of Rosalind, insisting on the e and the i being sounded long instead of short—a change that is not wise because it is displeasing to the universal ear, which has always heard the name pronounced with these two vowels sounded short."

In support, besides calling Daly's attention to the basic principle: "It is never wise to do anything that takes, even for an instant, the attention of the auditor from the thought," Ayres pointed out numerous instances of mispronunciation and of false emphasis, by Daly's company, which were much more in need of the director's supervision. And if Ada Rehan, Daly's Rosalind, "will but take the trouble to learn to suit the word to the action as deftly as she long ago learned to suit the action to the word, she will be a player for America to be proud of."

In this connection, too, Ayres cited the general principle:

Action to be effective must not be very abundant. . . . I should be better pleased with Miss Rehan's Rosalind if the effort to be effective were less apparent. . . . signally wanting in dignity. . . . Rosalind in Miss Rehan's hands is hardly a high-comedy character; she drags it down well-nigh into the domain of the soubrette. Imagine, who can, a Charlotte Cushman, a Fanny Kemble, a Helen Faucit, or even a Lily Langtry, capering about the stage and kicking up her heels in Rosalind as Miss Rehan does! Miss Rehan's action is always graceful, but graceful as it is, I would have her use less of it. It is seldom that we wish for more action in a player, but we often wish for less.42

Moreover, then, Ayres was led to conclude:

Mr. Daly might very profitably have given some attention to the

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42Ibid., pp. 218-219, 214, and 211.
domain of character conception. For example, why did he allow the melancholy Jaques to be so played that there was no whit of melancholy apparent in him, and the imperial Rosalind to be so played that there was no whit of the grande dame, the princess, apparent in her?

In this drama, John Drew played the role of Orlando "trooperlike, rather than leverlike, throughout." To challenge this interpretation, Ayres cited remarks made about Orlando by another character in the play. Although Ayres had little patience with Daly's failure to present As You Like It "with tolerably clear notions of what the author intended when he drew the principal characters," Ayres sympathized with the individual performer's difficulty in perfecting the delivery of a certain part.

It would be unreasonable to demand of an actor in Mr. Drew's position, good as it is, absolute mastery of the art of delivery; but it is not too much to demand that he should not fail as often as he does in his conception of the spirit in which Orlando's speeches should be spoken, and that he should not misplace his emphasis as often as he does.

Basic to the problem, according to Ayres, was performers' ignorance of the following:

If they would play the higher drama satisfactorily they must begin by learning the most difficult and the most important thing an actor is expected to know—how to read. It does not suffice in the higher drama—nor in any other drama, for that matter—simply to memorize the words and then to fire sound at them. He that reads really well utters the words with the care that the musician exercises in playing or singing. There is never but one best way to read a sentence, and that way every reader should try to find.

... the major part of the younger members of the dramatic profession in America do not know enough of the art of acting to know how little of it they know.

For example, "Miss Rehan has no idea what a difficult task it is to play Julia well. Charlotte Cushman, with all her genius, probably put ten times the study on the part that Miss Rehan has put on it. ... Where he [Arthur Bourchier] should speak to his sweetheart as though his heart were
breaking, he berates her as a drill sergeant might berate a stupid
recruit. . . . If the average actor would take half as much pains to
learn to act as the average shoemaker takes to learn to make a shoe, he
would be a much better actor than he is.  #3

In November of 1893, Ayres greeted Richard Mansfield's production
of The Merchant of Venice with a less severe criticism than that accorded
Daly's efforts. Ayres admitted that "the scenery, the dresses, and the
properties are all that could be desired; and then whenever and wherever
the presence of a super is in the least desirable, we find one. No
matter what Mr. Mansfield does he always does his best, and his best
seldom, if ever, falls short of being quite as good as any one else
could have done in like circumstances." Yet the production could not
escape the fundamental weakness which had been undermining the success,
artistic and financial, of recent stagings for the so-called higher
drama.

The thing Mr. Mansfield has not done in his production of The
Merchant it would be impossible for any one nowadays to do in
America. The most lavish expenditure could not nowadays get to­
gether a company of players that would be satisfactory in a repre­
sentation of any one of the great plays. Nor is this all; so long
as the present mushroom mode of making actors and alleged actors
exists it will be as difficult to find competent players as it is
now.  #4

In this relation, Mary Morris regards the American theatre in the
middle of the twentieth century, after many years of realistic and
naturalistic prose plays, as still giving off such distress signals.

#3 Ibid., pp. 219, 210, 209, 216, 214–215, 20, 216, 217, and 23.  
#4 Ibid., p. 220.
An increasing paucity in acting talent has made difficult the achieving of an effective interpretation for the poetry in plays of Shakespearian caliber.

The nature of the plays and the structural requirements of the auditoriums are making demands which many actors, experienced and inexperienced, are not prepared to meet. The largeness of style, the amount of projection, the use of the voice, all the many problems of speech and the reading of poetry, of movement on large outdoor stages in classical costumes, and above all, the approach to acting in plays other than the modern realistic play—all these things call for a kind of training and experience which a great many actors do not have. To be compared with Morris's admonition, after the manner of Ayres, is the following comment by one of Ayres's contemporaries, the British critic Dutton Cook: "Our younger players have been afforded few opportunities of appearing in Shakespeare [sic]; and this fact has to be taken into account when the rawness and poverty of the representation at the Princess's are considered."  

Then too, a belief similar to that of Ayres can also be detected in George Bernard Shaw's criticism of the acting profession in late nineteenth-century England. Shaw identified current actors as victims of the playwright Tom W. Robertson, "who, by changing the costume and the form of dialogue, and taking the Du Maurieresque, or garden party, plane, introduced a style of execution which effectually broke the tradition of stagey acting, and has left us at the present moment [around the turn of the century] with a rising generation of actors who do not know their

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46 Cook, Nights at the Play, p. 451.
In this connection, Morris refers to a passage in *The Actor's Way and Means*, by Michael Redgrave, concerning "the Protean actor, as contrasted with the kind of actor who plays only parts which are close to himself. This latter kind of actor has flourished in our modern realistic plays. He is often a very fine artist, but he is like the novelist who has written only one great book, autobiographical in nature." In addition, Morris disapproves of "the often heard remark from some young actor about to play in Shakespeare, or any other poetic play: 'Of course I'm trying to make it not sound like poetry—people just don't talk that way!'" For, in concurrence with the considered judgment of nineteenth-century America's Alfred Ayres, Morris believes that

great acting in a large style with sweep and color, passion and fire . . . is what the immense dramas of Shakespeare demand. Too often this is feared nowadays by the young actor who calls it overacting. It is only when style, any style, ceases to express its content that it becomes hollow and meaningless. From the best of these traditional players we all have a great deal to learn.  

However, despite Ayres's observation of histrionic weakness in Edwin Booth, the latter transitional figure partook enough of the manner of the older, traditional school to gain a reputation for "a voice capable of the last nuance of meaning and interpretation of the poetry."\(^49\) Booth's skill, no doubt, was magnified for later generations by comparison with the general lessening in vocal effectiveness which the new school ushered in.


\(^48\)Op. cit., 89 and 66. Italics are in the original.

\(^49\)Ibid., 66.
Notwithstanding, certain elements making for skill in delivery adhered to the practice of some members of the new school although, again, there was usually some relation to the old traditional pattern. At least in theory, Richard "Mansfield opposed the restraint the new school of acting imposed upon the actor . . . . He allowed himself the thundering voice and the freedom of expression of the old school," but only when such delivery suited his individual interpretation of a given role.

According to Ayres, Mansfield significantly avoided such demanding test-pieces as Hamlet and Romeo. Mansfield's general method differed from that of his great predecessors in his foregoing a set of traditional characters to be performed in comparison with the manner of other leading actors. In this aspect of professional behavior, Mansfield rejected a cardinal tenet of the former acting pattern and identified himself with the approach of the new school.

Dillon regards Mansfield as "one of the last of the titans, though perhaps of second rank, Mansfield was one of the links between the old school of acting and the new, and with the 'links' disappeared real acting." In moments of potent vocal control, his calculated precision gave off echoes of the histrionic titans who preceded him. But his frequent inefficacy, especially when breathing the rare atmosphere of Shakespearian proportions, lessened his place in the scale of lasting value as a dramatic interpreter. In Ayres' words, Mansfield's craftsmanship could not overleap the confines of the acting trade to establish

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50 Dillon, op. cit., pp. 40, 41, and 69.
him as an artist capable of handling the higher drama effectively.

Then too, standing historically in a Janus-like position between the old and the new patterns of delivery, Edwin Booth evoked Ayres's critical displeasure. Booth had been encouraged to experiment with the new school's colloquial mode, which was becoming increasingly popular on both sides of the Atlantic. On occasion, he went as far as to employ the commonplace in interpreting within the elevated realm of Shakespearean tragedy. Even when a heroic drama of the stature of Hamlet came under his interpretation, Booth departs from the old stage traditions in assuming occasionally a familiar manner in passages that have often been pompously declaimed, the while he sits, lounges, or reclines, with an air the elder players would have judged to be too unheroic, if not absolutely indecorous.51

This procedure, of course, shows an influence of the new school in acting with its stress upon a semblance of reality, according to late nineteenth-century standards. And it would seem to follow that at least in England where, by this year 1880, the novelty of natural effects had thoroughly captured the imagination of theatregoers, such a courting of naturalness would meet with universal critical approval. A discerning critic of the caliber of Dutton Cook, however, was not to be hoodwinked and again reflected Ayres's view. Looking especially to Booth's physical nimbleness and to his occasionally familiar manner in delivery, Cook found Booth's Hamlet "not princely; his liveliness comes too near to flippancy; and his conduct during the play-scene seemed deficient in earnestness, as though the King's enforced betrayal of his

51 Cook, op. cit., p. 424.
guilt had really something comical about it.\textsuperscript{52}

But a different situation challenges the actor's art when drama of lesser stature is performed. For example, witness a revival of Tom Taylor's \textit{The Fool's Revenge} (first produced in 1859), in January of 1881, with Booth in the role of Bertuccio: "a creature of melodrama, albeit he speaks blank verse." In this relation, it was adjudged only fitting that

Mr. Booth's passion departs from heroic bounds, descends to a familiar level, is grotesque and almost comic in certain of its manifestations, its colloquiality of tone, its homeliness of pose and gesture; yet I [Cook] think the actor's desire to be real and true did not transgress artistic limits, and assuredly the effect of his performance upon his auditors was very great indeed. . . . His every utterance gains point and accent from the appropriate glance and action accompanying it, his ever-varying expression, his restlessness of movement; while his noble voice and his fine elocutionary system prove of signal advantage in the more declamatory scenes.\textsuperscript{53}

In plays of the tragic genre of \textit{Othello}, however, the \textit{Men} utterances cannot be reduced to a conversational level. He is grandiloquent of speech, as he is stately of bearing. He must declaim; he cannot simply talk; and when his moments of frenzy arrive, when he is required to exclaim, "Whip me, ye devils!" "Boast me in sulphur!" and so on, I think his listeners must prepare to hear from him something very like ranting.

Some suggestion of the newly placed regard for natural motivation seems to influence Cook's justification of even such ranting, for Cook demonstrated: "\textit{Othello} is fairly mad, at last: should he not rave? I have little doubt that Edmund Kean's \textit{Othello} raved and ranted very freely indeed."\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., pp. 424-425.
\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., pp. 434 and 435.
\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., p. 457.
True, **rant** is often "a term which is merely relative and is usually saved for the generation immediately preceding the critic." Still rant after the best manner of Edmund Kean was preferred to, say, the manner of Henry Irving when, during May of 1881, in the character of Othello,

in his anxiety to avoid the inarticulateness of rant, the actor fell into the opposite error of drawling, adopted an artificial system of speech, and doled out his words with a sort of sepulchral monotony of effect, as though he were striving to imitate a pulpit manner of the worst kind.*

Because, in Cook's judgment, "'Othello' is hardly to be played as, for instance, a comedy by the late Mr. Robertson is treated upon the stage . . . a further difficulty in the way of representing 'Othello' has arisen from the modern demand for what is known as naturalness of manner upon the stage." 57

Cognizant of different types of drama and aware that a given style of acting remains inherent as the best means of expressing a certain content, Cook endorsed Ayres's general belief that actors of the new school had, as E. J. West concludes, "disqualified themselves as interpreters of the traditional repertory of Elizabethan tragedy and comedy, eighteenth century comedy, and [even of] nineteenth century romance and melodrama." 58

The players are required to be easy, colloquial, and familiar, even to the verge of vulgarity; Polonius's counsels to the contrary notwithstanding. The ear of our playgoers is unaccustomed to oratory; the stage of to-day knows little of the torrent, tempest,

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56 *ibid.*, p. 457.
57 *ibid.*, p. 457.
and whirlwind of tragic passion... [Significantly though,] the poetic drama of the past can only be revived upon the understanding that the actors are permitted a certain heroic or exalted manner, both of bearing and locution, which would clearly be unsuited to a play of modern date. In Shakespeare's [sic] tragedies, as in classical statuary, humanity is sublimated; the modern drama does not work in marble, but rather in terra-cotta, in clay, or even putty: it employs very inferior materials.59

Ayres examined an additional force at work undermining the artistic success of Shakespearian production, namely, the typical supporting player at that time. In this connection, also, Cook excused Edwin Booth's "feeble coadjutors," in a King Lear production during 1881, by observing that "the days of strong casts are over, especially in relation to what is known as the 'legitimate drama.'" However, in the melodrama The Fool's Revenge, produced during the same year, 'Mr. Booth's success, indeed, was most complete... The actor obtains better support in this than in the other plays produced on his account.' Compare, too, Booth's Iago when performed at the Lyceum Theatre with the same role on the boards of the Princess's. At the latter, Booth suffers much from the feebleness of his playfellows... [e.g., as Othello, Mr. Forrester] can only depict the frenzy of Othello by a mechanical swaying of the arms and by clamorous employment of a rather flat-toned voice. Iago's poisonous insinuations might as well have been poured into the ears of a carved figure on a ship's prow, or addressed to a tavern signboard of the Saracen's Head. Mr. Booth appeared to be labouring to lay and light a train of gunpowder which all his efforts could only induce to fizz, never to flame.

In May of 1881, though, Booth and Irving were alternating in the playing of the two roles Iago and Othello. Playing to Irving's Othello and Ellen Terry's Desdemona, "assuredly the actor [Booth] gains by the superior

59Cook, op. cit., p. 457.
conditions under which he performs at the Lyceum; he is supported by skilled players.*^0

Naturally a similar situation prevailed in America. J. Ranken Towse attended a production of Richard II and found Edwin Booth playing in a miserably mangled version of the piece with the support of Augustin Daly's company, which was hopelessly inadequate to the task. Scarcely enough of the text was left to make the chronicle even decently coherent or intelligible, the necessary personages being reduced to the condition of mere "feeders" to Mr. Booth, who was the whole show.61

Moreover, since not much earlier, audiences had listened attentively to this type of drama in order to hear how a given actor would render the established "points," revered by the past, "here and there . . ., may be noted a certain indefensible system of culling effective lines from the suppressed scenes to enrich the preserved portions of the play."

Cook had noted in Richard III, as produced during February of 1877, that the Lyceum company includes several very inefficient performers [which] may be accepted as a sufficient reason for the excision of much matter which otherwise might well have been retained. If, for instance, we are to have a ranting Duke of Clarence, it seems but prudent to limit his opportunities of speech; and so, considering the monotonous violence of Miss Bateman's Margaret of Anjou, there is sound judgment manifested in the elimination of that vociferous character from the later acts of the tragedy. In truth, the adequate representation of one of Shakespeare's [sic] histories demands the combination of more performers of the first class than can now be readily assembled in a London theatre.62

Ayres answered, of course, by repeating the latter judgment in relation to the American theatre and by adding: "As for the art of delivery—the difficult and most important part of the actor's art—if it were

60 Ibid., pp. 451, 435, 447-448, and 461.
61 Towse, Sixty Years of the Theater, p. 188.
62 Cook, op. cit., pp. 37, 326, and 326-327.
cultivated less by the rank and file of the profession, it would not be cultivated at all."

The histrionic scarecrows who had come to serve as supporting players were infiltrating the ranks of the leading actors, in influence if not in person, to such an extent that Ayres felt justified in declaring the roles of Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lear as off limits to current actors. "It requires a greater, a subtler intellect than any to-day on the English-speaking stage to wrestle successfully, from an art point of view, with any one of the three." Towse concluded in a similar vein:

So long as the supply of well-equipped actors, trained after the ancient method, lasted it was possible to find leading performers who without any very gross flattery might be described as stars when compared with their associates. But this source was exhausted long ago. . . . None of them has had a successor. There is not on the American stage to-day [ca. 1900] one solitary performer, male or female, of native origin, who is capable of first-class work in either the tragic or comic department of the literary imaginative drama. In modern drama we have some excellent performers, but even in this no great one. Why is this? It is because the wells of histrionic talent have been choked.

Also after the manner of Ayres, Percy Fitzgerald condemned "the common practice . . . that every one is given license to make the most of his own character, without regard to the interests of the piece" and noted the blemish which had been foisted upon Shakespearean productions and the like by the faults in delivery of the new school. Even when the new actor seemed to sense the need of a passage for heightened delivery, in his handling such dramatic crises, he would often fall back upon what

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63 Acting, p. 230.
64 Ibid., p. 45.
he erroneously associated with the best of the traditional pattern. Whereas a generally inarticulate speed characterized this performer's recitation in natural delivery, "in critical situations, instead of showing hurry and agitation, our players become solemnly slow and measured— even at the most agonising moment." Despite the new actor's professed naturalness, then, a common undercurrent of seemingly enforced artificiality, lacking in spontaneity, obtained in effect.

In often following nature only when he should not have and, when doing so, in usually drawing on nature to excess, the new-school actor achieved in Shakespearian performance a "glaring contrast between the high and noble thoughts, and exquisite poetical conceits, and the frivolous, idle tone in which they are delivered." Such misuse of intelligence was discussed by Ayres in developing a relationship between the success of great drama and the vocal skill associated with truly great acting.

"The better the play," Ayres said, "the better it will pay." "A good play," in his opinion, has "interest of story, strength of parts, and purity and elevation of diction."

Moreover, Ayres believed that "we go to the theater to witness an exhibition of the player's art, and so long as the classic and the standard

drama offer the best opportunities for the actor to exhibit his art, so long will the classic and the standard drama, when in competent hands, prove more attractive than any other sort of drama." It then follows that he regarded "the plays of Shakespeare . . . [as being] more re-
munerative than are the plays of any other writer. . . . And this I
[Ayres] confidently believe will be the case until some one gives us
new plays of at least as much merit as the old ones have." In the
latter connection, the Boston Post cited Ayres's "admirable article" and
added: "And that contingency does not appear to be immediate."

Then too, in concurring with Ayres's article in the New York
Dramatic Mirror, the Boston Herald employed several metaphors to enhance the poignancy of the critic's presentation.

Do you look for a superb ocean steamship on a petty pond, or for an eagle apart from the wide expanse of the sky for him to soar in? . . . Your Booths or Rachels demand the ocean and the heavens for their own development.

What, in point of fact, is an imperial dramatic genius like Shakespeare but a vast ocean of intellectual depths and heights, of tempestuous passion and halcyon breathings of calm, that sum-
mons out the last resources of a highly endowed actor to cope in any degree with his demands? . . .

Of course, it is entertaining enough to witness the performance of the pleasant little plays the public is nowadays treated to by managers who measure the capacity of the public—perhaps very correctly—by their own little tape measures. But it is . . .

idle to expect to develop a class of great actors out of such provision for working on their sensibilities and range of intellect.

As a teacher, then, Ayres also recognized the implication for education in the effect which the cultural-appreciation level of an audience can have on the rise or the decline of great drama and its corollary great acting. Again, commentary supplied by the Boston Herald

\[67\] Acting, pp. 45, 41, and 40.
supplemented the expression of Ayres's idea.

The public . . . helps to make the player as well as the dramatist helps to make him. In the long run, unless the public cares for Shakespeare, Racine, or Molière, it will not care for Booth, Rachel, or Coquelin . . . Will, then, the enlightened public long care for Shakespeare—a large enough portion of it, at any rate, to keep alive a few great actors? All this depends on the kind of education in vogue. Are young people enough getting a training in the appreciation of what is really great to furnish the audience which will keep alive a breed of great actors? Otherwise great actors will have to go. For as well think to keep up a race of mountain climbers without the Alps, as a race of grand players without the counterpart of the Alps in dramatic literature.68

Moreover, just as many directors of American educational theatre in the middle of the twentieth century advocate giving students of acting the better plays of classic proportions in which to perform, in preference to those of usually only immediate popular appeal, similarly Ayres believed that "no actor can show what he is able to do unless he have a chance. The higher drama gives him the chance; and the chief reason why the higher drama is the higher drama is because it gives the actor of great ability a better chance than does any other sort of drama to show what he is able to do."69 In this relation, too, Fitzgerald's view of acting as "the accurate presentation of character" disapproved of a typical recent play because it offered the new actor "few opportunities, being of a thin, cardboarded texture, and based on mere superficial peculiarities."70

Im summary, compare Ayres's position with Lewis C. Strang's

68 Quoted by Ayres, Acting, pp. 51 and 49-51.
69 Acting, p. 42.
presentation of a case for elocution, especially where an actor is
surrounded by the potent atmosphere of Shakespearean heroic verse.

It is quite probable that in the mechanics of acting,—in
gesture, facial expression, detail of movement, and more especi­
ally (and this applies particularly to Forrest) in the ability to
be forceful and emphatic without being noisy,—there are actors
on the stage to-day plainly the equals and possibly the superiors
of Forrest and perhaps of Miss Cushman. But in one important
requisite,—indeed, in the acting of Shakespeare, the really
important requisite,—they were both unquestionably the immeasur­
able superiors of any of the modern players. This point of superiority
was their elocution; and elocution comprehends not only reading
the lines so that every word can be heard,—though there are modern
actors who do not accomplish even that much,—but reading them
so that the most subtle meanings are uncovered, the full beauty
of the rhythm and balance is felt, and still the marring element of
pedantry is entirely absent. Such reading as that is an art in
itself, and it is, unfortunately, an art which the modern stage
has largely lost.71

By the year 1903, when the above was written, death had stilled the pro­
lific pen of Alfred Ayres. Ayres’s last article appeared in the December,
1902, issue of The Theatre.

Granted, "since the day after its beginning, the theatre and its
actors have been praised for their past, condemned for their present,
and commiserated for their future."72 By the time of Ayres’s death,
however, the effects of weakness in the new order for acting and delivery
were coming into clear perspective with the strengths of the pattern
which had been supplanted. Early in his career as a theatre critic, Ayres
had detected a need for reform, and he continued to believe that a re-
turn in the direction of the old school was mandatory in order to save

71 Strang, Players and Plays of the Last Quarter Century, I, 115-116.
72 Ibid., I, 11.
the higher drama and, in addition, to reactivate the latter's capacity for developing histrionic artistry.

**Summary**

Concerning the acting and delivery of a so-called new school, Ayres's theatre criticisms reported a general decline in skilled histrionic intelligence to favor an individual performer's emotional inspiration at the moment of delivery. In practice, the value of effective vocal delivery was eclipsed by overacting and by slapdash or haphazard conception and execution of a role.

In the excesses of the new school, Ayres noted that a colloquial pattern of delivery readily gave way to commonplace inarticulateness. This condition tended to lessen the effectiveness of delivery, especially in communicating the meaning of heroic verse. The actor became a function of the new drama then in vogue; he was reduced in histrionic stature and his capabilities beyond the confines of the new drama were noticeably limited. A new breed of actor gradually came forth, ignorant of the demands of the so-termed higher drama and unskilled to meet them.

As a result, the adequate casting of a Shakespearean production became almost impossible. With such a low level in talent available, especially among supporting players, the production was often reworked theatrically, in various ways, to try to circumvent audience displeasure with flaws in the delivery of lines. Not only was a dramatist's basic intent subordinated to scenic splendor and to decided embellishment for even a minor passage, which often called forth interpolated scenic
effects; lines of dialogue were excised and rearranged to suit the individual abilities of various performers.

Along with the retirement of actors who reflected in some way the best principles of the old school, and with the concomitant excesses of the new school in seeking after individuality at the expense of intelligent interpretation, the histrionic caliber of even popular starring performers began to take on the bane of elocutionary deficiency. The resulting harmful effect upon the artful communication of Shakespeare's plays laid open to suspicion the commonplace manner then being engendered by the new school in acting.

The new school's frequently misplaced naturalness, which often descended into the commonplace, rendered an effective interpretation for heroic verse extremely difficult. Under such limitations, not only was the potential power of higher drama undermined in its presentation to an audience; the histrionic stature of a performer who succumbed to the new method was dwarfed and passed on, even in weaker form, to his imitators. During Alfred Ayres's tenure as a theatre critic, then, this man of many professional interests and capacities observed an increasing incompetency, becoming an inability, to realize the art of acting and delivery.
CHAPTER IX

ADDITIONAL CAPACITIES

In addition to Ayres' function in certain periodicals as a theatre critic and an authority on acting, as well as on language and its delivery, he wrote and edited a number of books concerned with theatre and with language, its pronunciation and grammar and its delivery, along with a book of social etiquette. Ayres' first book, on pronunciation, has been selected for detailed analysis in order to supplement his critical reviews relative to the delivery of language, already discussed, and to provide an insight into the serious writer at work.

When Ayres turned to creating imaginative literature, again the theatre drew his talents into service. Not only did he use his working knowledge of foreign languages, chiefly of German, to translate and adapt European plays for production before English audiences; he also prepared several original scripts. The stage-history of his best known and most successful play, a dramatization of Jane Eyre which became a starring vehicle for the actress Charlotte Thompson, suggests a focal point for examining the critical reaction afforded Ayres' own literary output.

Then too, how well did Ayres practice what he preached when he left the classroom and the critic's chair to function as an actor and a reader before the public? And in what ways did Ayres' manner of teaching
speech and dramatic art coincide with and differ from the methods employed by his contemporaries and by certain great predecessors in the field? In this relation also, did Ayres hand down a legacy to future generations? What was its value and through what means, if any, has its influence been channeled? Answers to such questions as these will also help to determine the final worth of Alfred Ayres in terms not only of his theatre criticisms but of all his contributions to the profession which he served during, and possibly beyond, his lifetime.

Author and Editor

Relative to Alfred Ayres's published books concerning the English language and its delivery, consider first the sources for Ayres and then his own handling and contribution within this general area of knowledge. Ayres believed that "studies in articulation and pronunciation are properly preparatory to the study of elocution, as an art, rather than a part of it." Accordingly, perhaps, Ayres's first book, *The Orthoepist*, appeared in October of 1880; the next year *The Verbalist* was published, but not until 1886 did *The Essentials of Elocution* come forth. Ayres was recognized, even by many who tried to detract from his ability as a theatre critic, as a language authority.

1 Ayres, Essentials, p. 13 n. Italics are in the original.

2 E.g., A. C. Wheeler, who wrote in the New York Dramatic Mirror under the pseudonym of Nym Crinkle and who served as a long-term antagonist of Ayres's theories for acting, acknowledged Ayres as "a professor of words. . . . so able an etymologist as Alfred Ayres . . . . verbalist," and the like. Quoted by Ayres, Acting, pp. 261, 242, and 260.
In working with students of delivery and of acting, at the outset Ayres hoped that each student "knows his mother tongue sufficiently well to articulate it distinctly, and to pronounce it according to some recognized authority."3 Ayres set as his own task: examining numerous authoritative sources, comparing the latter's pronouncements with contemporary usage, and then suggesting a preferable pronunciation for a certain word in terms not only of the foregoing but of ease in utterance, of euphony, of analogy, and of general linguistic trends apparently at work modifying individual words for future use. Ayres's method in operation can be detected, for example, in the following comments, which stand in introduction to the 1881 supplement to his book on pronunciation.

One of the objects I have in view in adding to this manual is to make an opportunity to say something about the pronunciation of conversant, exemplary, obligatory, and peremptory. All the dictionaries in general use accent these four words on the first syllable, and all the English-speaking world, except the few that chance to know how the modern orthoepists mark them, accent them on the second. The dictionary accentuation is as difficult as it is unnatural, the case of conversant excepted, and ought, in my judgment, to be abandoned, not only because it is difficult, unnatural, and unpopular, but also because, if we go back to the dictionaries published a hundred years ago, we find that the weight of authority was then decidedly on the side of the second-syllable accent. I have recently consulted twelve dictionaries published between the years 1730 and 1799, with the following result: conversant is accented in ten of them on the second syllable; exemplary in all of them on the second; obligatory in eight on the second; and peremptory in seven on the second. Walker, whose dictionary appeared in 1791, accented all four words on the first syllable, and the later orthoepists appear to have been

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3 *Essentials*, p. 13 n.
content to follow his example. If Walker's accentuation was ill-advised, as the result, it seems to me, clearly proves, then we shall do well to allow usage, seconded as we see by ample authority, to be the umpire. 4

This 1881 edition of The Orthoepist, which represents an increase of only seven pages over the first edition of the work, has been selected for a detailed analysis of Ayres's use of source materials. True, in the 1894 edition of The Orthoepist, pagination increased from 208 to 292 pages, adding "about one thousand words, slowly collected during the last twelve years." But, as the preface to this last revised edition indicates, Ayres confessed having been "much indebted to Mr. Francis A. Teall, the accomplished English scholar, for his kindly assistance in making the changes and emendations necessary to have the book conform to the latest and most approved usage."

The following tabulation, then, cites the number of times that Ayres himself made specific reference, either in support of or in opposition to his own position, relative to authorities in the general field of pronunciation. Supplementary data will detail Ayres's drawing upon

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4 Alfred Ayres [Thomas Embley Osmun], The Orthoepist (2d ed., with supplement; 1st ed., 1880; new and revised ed., much enlarged, 1894; New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1881), pp. 201-202. Italics are in the original. Cf. J[-oseph] Thomas, "Alfred Ayres's Books," The Literary World (Boston), XIII, No. 12 (June 17, 1882), 203-204: "We think the author, in the treatment of this very difficult and intricate subject, English pronunciation, gives proof not only of an unusual degree of orthoepical knowledge, but also, for the most part, of rare judgment and taste. We find, however, a few, a very few errors, or at least, what we deem to be such . . . . To represent ombre by awng'br, strikes us as very awkward as well as incorrect. . . . But what are half a dozen mistakes, some of these perhaps doubtful, in a vocabulary of three thousand five hundred words? To conclude, we rejoice to see so excellent a work of this kind in a form so convenient and attractive."
secondary sources, for instance, his use of direct quotations from John Walker which, in turn, exemplify Walker's indebtedness to other authorities. Incidentally, because Ayres referred to all his sources of fact and of quotation by citing only the last name of the author of the work, some conjecture enters into identifying the specific authority intended and, even more, into pointing to the exact work or works, by this author, which Ayres may have had in mind.

Ayres's primary sources for the 1881 edition of The Orthoepist include the following authorities:

Sixty references to John Walker, A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language, 1791; see also A General Idea of a Pronouncing Dictionary, 1774; noted for synthesis of methods, prescriptive, most influential in America, more arbitrary than the more objective and so-called natural approach of Thomas Sheridan.

Fifty-two references to Noah Webster (1758-1843), An American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828; championed spelling reform and the Italian a in such words as ask; "Walker's Key to the classical pronunciation of Greek, Latin, and Scripture proper names" added to the 1830 edition; later editions revised and enlarged by Chauncey A. Goodrich (1790-1860) and by Noah Porter (1811-1892); in 1846 and 1847, Goodrich revised both the unabridged and the abridged editions; to his 1856 revision of the University edition, Goodrich added an exhaustive treatise on the principles of pronunciation.

Fifty-one references to Benjamin H. Smart, cited by Ayres (on page 135) specifically in relation to Smart's Principles, 1836, but suggesting also another (?) work: possibly A Practical Grammar of English Pronunciation on Plain and Recognized Principles [cf. supra], Calculated to Assist in Removing Every Objectionable Peculiarity of Utterance, Arising Either from Foreign, Provincial, or Vulgar Habits, 1810; in 1836, advocated intermediate a (between a of father and a of bad) in such words as ask.

Fifty references to Joseph E. Worcester, A Universal Critical and Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language: Including Scientific Terms, Compiled from the Materials of Noah Webster, 1849; London edition, 1860; see also A Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, 1871, published in Boston, Cleveland, and Philadelphia, [1860]; in 1830 (1829?), advocated intermediate a in such words as ask, which, according to the
Dictionary of American Biography, "was Worcester's one permanent contribution to lexicography and the English language in America."

Five references to Thomas Wright, et al., The Universal Pronouncing Dictionary and General Expositor of the English Language, 1852-1856; but cf. James Wright, The Philosophy of Eloquence, 1818, based on Thomas Sheridan's principles and John Walker's system of notation.

Three references to John Craig, A New Universal Etymological, Technical and Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language, Embracing All the Terms Used in Art, Science and Literature, 1848-1849; two volumes, 1852; new edition, 1861-1864.

Three references to Richard Cull, Gerrick's Mode of Reading the Liturgy of the Church of England, 1840.

Three references to R. S. Jameson, A Dictionary of the English Language by Samuel Johnson and John Walker. With the Pronunciation Greatly Simplified and on an Entirely New Plan: And with the Addition of Several Thousand Words, seventh edition, 1850.

Two references to Hyde Clarke, Dictionary of the English Language, 1851, revised 1865.

Two references to George Crabb, Universal Historical Dictionary; or, Explanation of the Names of Persons and Places in the Departments of Biblical, Political and Ecclesiastical History, Mythology, Heraldry, Biography, Bibliography, Geography, and Numismatics, 1825; see also Universal Technical Dictionary; or, Familiar Explanations of the Terms Used in All Arts and Sciences, 1823; cf. English Synonymes Explained, in Alphabetical Order, with Copious Illustrations and Examples Drawn from the Best Writers, first American edition, in 1819, from second London Edition.

Two references to James Knowles, Critical Pronouncing Dictionary of the English Language, seventh edition, 1850; see also A Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language, 1845.

Two references to Thomas Sheridan, A General Dictionary of the English Language: One Main Object of Which, Is, to establish a Plain and Permanent standard of Pronunciation, 1780; see also Elements of English: Being a New Method of Teaching the Whole Art of Reading, Both with Regard to Pronunciation and Spelling, Part I, 1786, 1789; employed no new methods but produced the first great pronouncing dictionary with a descriptive (cf. Walker's prescriptive) tendency.

One reference to [David Bryce], *Pearl English Dictionary*, Comprising
Besides the Ordinary and Newest Words in the Language, Short Explanations
of a Large Number of Scientific, Philosophical, Literary and Technical
Terms. [1884]; cf. Archibald Hamilton Bryce, *First Latin Book*, sixth
edition, 1867.

One reference to Arnold J. Cooley, *A Dictionary of the English
Language, Exhibiting the Orthography, Pronunciation and Definition of
Words According to the Prevailing Usage of Correct Writers and Speakers*,
1861.

One reference to Christopher Earnshaw, *Orthoepy Simplified: Being
a New and Comprehensive Explanatory and Pronouncing Dictionary of the
English Language: Selected from the Works of Dr. Johnson, Mr. Walker
and Others; Improved by the Addition of Many Modern Words*, revised edition,
1816.

One reference to George Fulton and George Knight, *A General Pronounc­
ing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language; To Which Is Added
a Complete Vocabulary of Scripture Proper Names*, 1802; advocated inter­
mediate *a* in such words as *ask*, at least by the time of their fourth
edition, in 1814; had school together, ca. 1817; Fulton, *The Orthoepy
of the English Language Simplified*, 1811, 1817, and *A Pronouncing Vocabu­
larv, with Lessons in Phrase and Verbs*, 1826; Knight, *The Self-Instructor
in the Proper Pronunciation of the English Language as Displayed in the

One reference to William Perry, *The Royal Standard English Diction­
ary: In Which the Words Are Not Only Rationally Divided into Syllables ... But Likewise ... Denoted by Typographical Characters*, 1775, first
American edition from fourth British edition, 1788; see also *The Only
Sure Guide to the English Tongue, or, New Pronouncing Spelling Book*,
eleventh edition, 1798; and *A General Dictionary of the English Language*,
1795; in 1775, introduced grave, as well as acute, accent marks and
advocated the so-called Italian *a*. (Thomas Dyche had used accents in
1723; by 1740, Nathan Bailey was using accent marks to show short and
long vowels.)

One reference to Alex Reid, *A Dictionary of the English Language,
Containing the Pronunciation, Etymology, and Explanation of All Words
Authorized by Eminent Writers*, 1844.

One reference to Charles Richardson, *A New Dictionary of the English
Language*, two volumes, 1844; revised 1860.

edition, 1846; with James E. Murdoch, *Orthophony*, 1845; followed the
Sheridan-Walker orthoepic, ca. 1841.

One reference to Isaac Watts, *The Art of Reading and Writing English, or, The Chief Principles and Rules of Pronouncing Our Mother Tongue, Both in Prose and Verse, with a Variety of Instructions for True Spelling*, 1721; second edition, 1722; sixth edition, 1740.


In addition to the two dozen authorities, listed above, to whom Ayres made direct reference throughout the 1881 edition of *The Orthoepist*, Ayres's use of direct quotations originally cited by John Walker yielded another thirteen authorities, in whose debt Walker stood. In this connection, Walker also referred to two more authorities already drawn upon by Ayres, and mentioned above. That is, Ayres quoted Walker in relation to the latter's eight references to William Perry and thirteen references to Thomas Sheridan, as well as in relation to Walker's own pronunciations and to the use Walker made of the following additional authorities:

Eight references to Archdeacon Robert那次, *Elements of Orthoepy*, 1784; see also *General Rules for the Pronunciation of the English Language: With Complete Lists of the Exceptions*, 1792.

Seven references to William Johnston, *A Pronouncing and Spelling Dictionary*, 1764; introduced diacritics and type variations to indicate pronunciation.
Seven references to William Scott, *A New Spelling, Pronouncing, and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language; in Which Is Prefixed an Introductory Essay on the Elements of English Pronunciation*, 1786; see also *New Spelling and Pronouncing Dictionary*, 1810; introduced pronunciation key-line on vocabulary pages. (Cf. Ayres’s practice of placing at the bottom of each page: "See Key to Pronunciation, p. 6.")

Six references to Dr. William Kenrick, *A New Dictionary of the English Language . . . to Which Is Prefixed a Rhetorical Grammar*, 1773; introduced vowels marked by numbers and indicated syllables.

Six references to William Smith, *An Attempt to Render the Pronunciation of the English Language More Easy to Foreigners; Being the Abridgment of a Larger Work*, 1795; cf. Sir Thomas Smith, of 1568, whose writings show a much earlier interest in phonetic analysis, spelling reform, and phonetic innovation.

Five references to James Elphinston, *Propriety Ascertained in Every Picture: or, English [sic] Speech and Spelling Rendered Mutual Guides*, two volumes, 1787; tried respelling without new symbols in 1765.

Five references to Dr. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which the Words Are Reduced from Their Originals and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers*, two volumes folio, 1755; championed spelling; see also *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language. Addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield*, 1747.

Three references to James Buchanan, *An Essay Towards Establishing a Standard for an Elegant and Uniform Pronunciation of the English Language Throughout the British Dominions*, 1766; introduced complete diacritic respelling, with omission of silent letters; in 1757, Buchanan had introduced occasional diacritic respelling; cf. Buchanan’s (anonymous) *British Grammar* of 1762.


One reference to Dr. [John] Jones, "who wrote a spelling dictionary in Queen Anne's time," *Practical Phonography: or, The New Art of Rightly Spelling [sic] and Writing Words by the Sound Thereof,* 1701; *The New Art of Spelling,* 1704; cf. [Stephen Jones], *A General Pronouncing and Explanatory Dictionary of the English Language,* ca. 1790-1796, which in its second edition, 1797, prefixed *Sheridan Improved* and which, at least by the year 1828, advocated the intermediate a in such words as *ask.*


Incidentally, because only five or six of the authorities to whom Ayres made direct reference can be placed within the period from 1730 through 1799, dating from which Ayres consulted twelve dictionaries, and because...

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at least twelve of the dictionaries which have been cited immediately
above, as sources for John Walker, fall within the time-span Ayres
designated, no doubt Ayres drew upon some of these works in person as
well as through Walker’s writings.

Walker’s influence upon the American scene, in terms of the
arbitrary, prescriptive dicta which his synthesis of methods produced,
cannot be denied. Even one of Ayres’s early teachers in Philadelphia,
the elocutionist Lemuel G. White, himself a pupil of the “highly educat­
ed English tragedian”7 James Fennell, had published a book of 156 pages,
in 1823, directly related to Walker’s pronouncements.8 The far-reaching
influence of Walker’s dictionary in 1791 takes on even more meaning
when examining the following statements from the mid-twentieth century:

“By the end of the 10th century the diacritical system for indicating
the pronunciation had been developed almost to the stage now current in
commercial dictionaries.”9

Modern speech education is in debt to English eighteenth-century
orthographical or diacritical phonetics; any general dictionary
or elementary school language text will illustrate this indebtedness.

7Ayres, Acting, p. 31.

8Lemuel G. White, A Selection from Walker’s Pronouncing Dictionary
(Philadelphia: Printed by Wm. Brown, 1823). White’s influence, for
example, also spread through such other students of his as Edwin Forrest,
James E. Murdoch, and John McCullough; White also knew Dr. James Rush,
author of The Philosophy of the Human Voice, and introduced to the
Doctor his pupil Murdoch, who eventually helped to train the actor Edwin
Booth.

9Esther K. Sheldon, “Pronouncing Systems in 18th Century
Dictionaries,” Language, XXII (January-March, 1946), 27. See also
PMLA, LXII (March, 1947), 130-146.
The orthoepists conscientiously described the pronunciation of their time; Walker especially influenced American phonetic thinking.  

Notwithstanding, Ayres was neither awed into agreement with Walker nor "content to follow his example" in a given instance; for example, when "Walker's accentuation was ill-advised . . . , then we shall do well to allow usage, [often] seconded as we see by ample authority, to be the umpire." However, when "the weight of authority is in favor of" a pronunciation which does not conform with "usage--in this country at least," Ayres endorsed authority over the common long-\(a\) sound in the word *obedience*, for example, and in his support cited Walker's "reason that \(a\) when under the accent is most frequently pronounced like long \(a\), and the corresponding \(ay\) always, except in *key*."  

As already noted earlier in this study, in general, Ayres preferred the basic pattern of British pronunciation to its American counterpart. True, he disapproved of "the total absence of the \(\_\) finally and preconsonantly after many vowel sounds, when the spelling of a word called for an \(\_\) and pointed out: "The mode that prevails in England . . . is, so far as I can discover, wholly without dictionary authority; yet there are some Americans that have the bad taste to affect it."

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13 *Supra*, chap. vi, "Theatre Critic of Vocal Delivery," section 'Of Pronunciation.'
Ayres observed, however, a general American tendency to make certain "sounds too much in the throat." He was referring, no doubt, to what is associated today with Middle Western speech and is often explained in relation to an excessive retroflexion of vowelized \( r \) in final and preconsonantal positions—the so-called "burred \( r \)." Ayres's dislike for this guttural quality led him to advocate a type of so-called drawling or, more precisely, an intrusive "yot" \( [j] \) as a corrective measure. When certain sounds of the letters \( a \) and \( i \), according to Ayres, are preceded in the same syllable by the sound of \( e \) or \( k \), many speakers, especially in England and our Southern States, introduce a slight sound of \( e \) as in car, card, kind, garden, guard, guide, girl, sky, etc. If not carried too far, this can hardly be considered objectionable, as it effectually corrects a certain guttural utterance of these words that the best usage is careful to avoid.

14 Ayres, Acting, p. 200.

15 The Orthoepist, p. 96. \([j]\) is the present-day phonetic symbol for a frictionless, voiced palatal consonant in the sound system of the English language. The term "yot" has been used to identify this concept, and the name semi-vowel has traditionally been given, perhaps erroneously, to \([j]\) because the sound can be related to the vowel \([i]\), the long-\( e \) sound to which Ayres referred in this connection. The distinction between intrusive \([j]\) and the Southern drawl relates, fundamentally, to the placement of the \([j]\) element, as a function either before or after the key vowel in a syllable as treated. Intrusive \([j]\) functions, then, as an on-glide, whereas the Southern drawl employs an off-glide \([j]\). See especially Claude Merton Wise, Applied Phonetics (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1957); cf. Ayres's account and p. 215: \("[j]\) intrudes between \([k]\) or \([g]\). Thus car \([ka]\) becomes \([kja]\), guard \([ga:d]\) becomes \([gja:d]\).... The insertion of \([j]\) before back vowels is a custom particularly noticeable in Virginia." This deviation from standard Southern American speech can also be compared with the Southern drawl, as defined by Wise on 213: "The southerner goes further than the speakers of many other regions in the process of diphthongizing and otherwise multiplying sounds. Without retarding his speech to a slowness in excess of other regional speech, he manages within the duration of a given vowel to produce two, three, or four perceptible sounds. . . . When the vowels are thus broken into several sounds, it may be observed that \([j]\) develops medially after front vowels, and \([w]\) after back vowels."
Notwithstanding, Ayres's preference for one pronunciation over another was not guided by partisanship. Concerning the word *nephew*, for example, Ayres endorsed the British sounding of the *ph* as *v* although he noted the *f* which was common in the United States and recognized by "the latest editions of Webster." The sound of *v* in *nephew*, according to Ayres, made for "the most euphonious pronunciation of the word." Moreover, he supported his claim by citing the use which America's own Worcester had made of the British orthoepist Smart: "Smart remarks that 'p with *h*, in almost all cases, is pronounced *l*. In *Stephen*, this sound is vocalized, that is, converted into *v*; and likewise in *nephew.*"  

Ayres's analyses, too, were not made less valid by confusing orthographical letters, in the spelling of a word, with the true sound of the letters when pronounced as a part of a thought unit.

In words in which *d* precedes a letter having or embodying the sound of *v* in an unaccented syllable, the sound of *j* is often substituted for the combined sounds of *d* and *v*—as *soldier* instead of *soldiver*, and *med'lar* instead of *med'ur-lar*—just as *ch* is substituted for the combined sounds of *t* and *k* in *question*, *nature*, etc. It is doubtless possible to preserve the pure sounds of *d* and *v* where they appear in these connections, but it is well-nigh certain that the most careful speakers generally fail to do it.  

The above, of course, represents Ayres's use of the long-hand of English verbiage to express his beginning grasp of the concept of a voiced and a voiceless affricate, each regarded phonemically as a single sound.

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Ayres's sense of the running kinesiology of speech sounds, where a sound is determined in part by the sounds which precede and follow it, was evinced in his treatment of the letter a and its "compound, as in thank, banquet, anxious, pronounced thank, benz'quet, anck'shun. The sound of ng is really a distinct and simple alphabetical element, unlike that of either constituent of the digraph."\(^{18}\)

At times Ayres's straightforward expression of his own considered judgment was qualified in relation to that of other authorities. Concerning the word orthoepy itself, although Wright, Clarke, Knowles, and Fulton and Knight supported Ayres's personal recommendation that the second syllable receive the accent, Ayres listed his preference second and gave first place to a form accented on the first syllable. He claimed that he would have reversed the order of preference "if he had the courage to do so in the face of such weighty authorities as Walker, Worcester, Webster, and Smart."\(^{19}\) Ayres did not hesitate, however, to try to arrest the influence of antiquated authorities, especially when their pronouncements sorted oddly with popular usage. For example, relative to the long-e sound which "some of the older orthoepists" approved in tenet, "now the weight of authority is decidedly in favor of the marking we have given."\(^{20}\) And again, for tassel, "the authority

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\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 121.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 177.
for saying *sxl is very slight and antiquated*; \(^{21}\) he merely declared the long-i sound in *juvenil* as antiquated. \(^{22}\) Not infrequently, too, he pointed out changes in pronunciation among the various editions of Noah Webster's *American Dictionary*: "Webster marked this word *fron-ter*, but this accentuation has been abandoned in the new editions." \(^{23}\) On at least one occasion, Ayres lined up four possible pronunciations for a word (*eeyv*) and advised the student: "Good authority for every one of them. Choose!" \(^{24}\)

Believing that "it is always well to make one's pronunciation, when speaking English, as English as permissible," Ayres admonished speakers of such a word as *bas-blyu* "who do not know the French pronunciation well . . . to use the English word *blue-stocking*, as good English is always better than bad French." \(^{25}\) Accordingly, too, he Anglicized such words as *cicerone* and especially condemned such so-called "mongrel" pronunciations as the half French and half English utterance of *New Orleans, placard, envelope*, and the like. \(^{26}\) "Few things are more unpleasant

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 176.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 95.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 72.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 68.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., pp. 36 and 24.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., pp. 114, 128-129, and 62. Cf. Alfred Ayres, "Orthoepy," *New York Mirror*, XVII, No. 427 (March 5, 1887), 1: "The unnecessary introduction of foreign sounds in speaking always affects the cultured ear unpleasantly. The retention of *fra-k* for *fracas* by the English seems to me absurd. In America this pronunciation is almost unknown."
to a cultured ear than the unnecessary mixing of languages." 27

Ayres's own knowledge of foreign languages, from extended use especially in Germany and in France, was reflected by many entries in his Orthoepist:

In pronouncing French, it is of the first importance to bear in mind that it is a comparatively unaccented language; that the difference in the quantity of the syllables is due rather to a prolongation of the vowel-sounds of the long syllables than to their receiving a greater stress of voice.

The French talk about their aspirated h's, but they never aspirate any.

In German the effect of h in many cases is simply to prolong the sound of the preceding vowel; and in all the continental languages it has no effect after t. 28

For example, too, relative to the vowel o, "in the languages of continental Europe it generally has the sound of a in fate or e in met, according to position. In French, when unmarked, it is silent in many positions, and in many others has a peculiar and unrepresentable sound, which when

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27 Ibid., p. 103. See also ibid., p. 60, under harlequin: "Nearly all the orthoepists pronounce the last syllable of this word kin. Why? Because the word comes to us through the French, in which the u is silent? Inasmuch as in every other respect the word has been thoroughly Anglicized, it would seem that the pronunciation of this syllable should be Anglicized also."

28 Ibid., pp. 18 and 79. Italics are in the original. Cf. Alfred Ayres, "Orthoepy," New York Mirror, XVII, No. 427 (March 5, 1887), 1; A discussion of the "soft-g" (i.e., z-sound) in Italian, compared with Spanish use, and of the same sound in North Germany, compared with usage in South Germany, supplemented Ayres's stand concerning the g-z controversy. "Following the example of Walker, Smart and Worcester, I [Ayres] give the preference to the z-sound of the g in disable, disarm, disaster . . . . I do this in the hope that the z-sound in these words will finally prevail, as it is far more agreeable to the ear than the hissing sound; yet I cannot deny that the popular tendency is in the other direction. Hissing sounds always lessen the melody of a language."
distinct approaches that of short u in gum, and when slurred that of obscure g in over."  

Then too, in Ayres's "Key to the Pronunciation" of The Orthoepist, the letter g, when used in representing the pronunciation of French words, simply indicates that the preceding consonant has a nasal utterance. When Ayres distinguished between the common mongrel pronunciation of envelope as a noun and the true French enveloppe, for example, in addition to his usual diacritical marks to indicate vowel quality, Ayres made use of the g as explained above (ong've-lup'), but he did not go further to suggest any effect which the preceding consonant when nasalized may have on the vowel sound which, in turn, precedes this consonant.

At this juncture it is appropriate to compare the terms Ayres used, to identify the various sounds of human speech, with the nomenclature employed in the second edition of the Merriam-Webster New International Dictionary of the English Language. In each instance, Ayres's terminology is followed, when possible, by the twentieth-century analogue in the so-called Webster Key; Ayres's key words for each sound follow the Webster-Key analogue, the latter being enclosed within parentheses, for greater understanding of the specific sound referred to. As already noted, Ayres used diacritics with the standard orthographical symbols to represent the various changes in sound that a letter of the alphabet undergoes in relation to the contexts in which it may appear.

Ibid., p. 58. Cf. p. 192, German von: "This German monosyllable is pronounced precisely like the English word fun, except that its utterance is somewhat shorter or more abrupt. Hence we should say fun (not von) Arnim, etc."
Accordingly, Ayres recognized seven variations of the letter a: long (long), as in hail, gray, fate; short (short), pad, fat, have, ran; long before i (circumflex), fare, pair, bear; Italian (two-dot), far, father, calm; intermediate (one-dot), fast, grasp, branch; broad (similar to circumflex a), fall, walk, haul; obscure (italic short a and italic one-dot a), war, hesitancy.

The letter e yielded the following six varieties: long (long), mete, seal, egg; short (short), men, met, sell, ferry; like long a before r, heir, there, where; like long e, obey, prey, eight; [only a diacritical mark over the e, i.e., no term] (tilde e), her, herd, fern, verge; obscure (italic short e), brier, fuel, celery.

Ayres identified five types of i: long (long), pine, ice, fire, file; short (short), miss, pin, fill, mirror; like long e, mien, machine, police; short and obtuse (related to tilde e), sir, fix, thirsty, bird; obscure (italic short i), ruin, elixir, ability.

Seven kinds of o plus two forms of double-o received treatment: long (long), note, fool, old; short (short), not, add, resolve; like short u, now, done, other, won; like long oo, move, prove, do; like short oo, beam, wolf, woman; broad, like broad a (circumflex o and short-circumflex o), mor, form, sort, stark; obscure (italic short o), major, confess, felony; long oo (long double o), moon, food, boot; short oo (short double o), wool, foot, good.

Six forms of u gained Ayres's attention: long (long), tube, tune, use, lute; short (short), tub, but, us, hurry; like long oo, rule, true, rumor; like short oo, bull, push, put; short and obtuse (circumflex u),
In addition, Ayres introduced $y$ as a symbol with three distinctive markings: long, style, lyre, fly; short, sylvan, cyst, lyric; short and obtuse, myrrh, myrtle. Two diphthongs were cited: $oi$ or $oy$, oil, join moist, oyster; $ou$ or $ow$, out, bound, owl. Moreover, the following consonantal sounds gained special recognition in Ayres’s “Key to the Pronunciation”: soft $g$, like $g$ sharp, cede, cite, mercy; hard $c$, like $k$, call, concur, success; soft $ch$, like $gh$, chaise, marchioness; hard $ch$, like $k$, chorus, echo, distich; hard $g$, got, tiger, begin; soft $g$, like $j$, gem, engine, elegy; soft $s$, like $z$, has, amuse, roseate; soft, flat, or vocal $th$ (barred $t$-$h$: voiced), this, the, smooth; and a form of $x$, like $gx$, exist, exact, auxiliary.  

The preceding tabulation indicates Ayres’s preference, when at all feasible, for keeping the correct spelling of an English word before the student even in a pronunciation entry. In championing spelling after the manner of such illustrious predecessors as Samuel Johnson, Ayres rejected the method of marking the several variations for a given vowel according to a numerical sequence, introduced by William Kenrick in 1773, and elected instead to use diacritics, the general procedure first associated with William Johnston in 1764. Incidentally, Ayres’s specific system of diacritics not only differed in detail from the Webster Key.  

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30. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. Incidentally, on the page following, Ayres summarized “Vowels Alike in Sound.” Cf. p. 150: “Here the first $y$ is unaccented and sounded like obscure $i$ or obscure $g$, which are hardly distinguishable.” See also Alfred Ayres, “Orthoepy,” *New York Mirror*, XVII, No. 430 (March 26, 1887), 3: “There are but seven words—bath, cloth, lath, mouth, path, oath, wreath—that, having the terminal $th$ sound in the singular, change to $th$ sonant in the plural.”
basically an eighteenth-century achievement though still serving in
the twentieth century; also, his symbolization for sounds differed al­
most completely from the "Key to Pronunciation" used by Isaac K. Funk,
editor-in-chief of the dictionary on whose "Advisory Committee on
Disputed Spelling and Pronunciation" Ayres served during the eighteen­
nineties and for which publication Ayres functioned in the capacity of
"Special Literary Critic."³¹

Unlike Funk in 1893-1894, Ayres was not influenced in his system
of symbolization by the efforts of such phonotypic reformers and phoneti­
cians as A. J. Ellis, Isaac and Benn Pitman, Elias Longley and his

indicating the pronunciation of words, was prepared and promulgated by
THE AMERICAN PHILOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, and has been adopted and recommend­
ed by THE AMERICAN SPELLING REFORM ASSOCIATION. An approved phonetic
spelling is thus presented. The diacritical marks below vowels are
added in this work to indicate varying pronunciation." I.e., a special
mark was used to indicate "that the colloquial weakening is toward a in
but," and the same mark turned upside down, becoming then similar to a
breve in form but placed under a vowel, "indicates that the colloquial
weakening is toward i in pity." Incidentally, Funk also recognized the
preferences of other dictionaries, viz., "Century, Hunter's Encyclopedic
Dictionary, Foster's Medical Dictionary, Imperial, Johnson, Murray (A
New English Dictionary), Smart, Storrmouth, Walker, Webster's International,
Worcester. . . . The spelling and pronunciation preferred by each of the
Advisory Committee of fifty will be found in the Appendix." Then too,
perhaps significantly, the first consulting editor beneath the editor-in­
chief was Francis A. March, LL. D., L. H. D., Professor English Language
and Comparative Philology at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania,
and President of the American Spelling Reform Association. In the latter
connection, cf. Ayres, "A Plea for Cultivating the English Language,"
267: "Only a few days ago I heard a learned man, an LL. D., a dictionary­
maker, an expert in English, say that he was anxious to finish the moving
of his belongings from one room into another. 'No, you are not,' said
I [Ayres]. 'Yes, I am. How do you know?' 'I know you are not.' 'Why,
what do you mean?' 'There is no anxiety about it. You are simply desirous.'
He thought a minute. 'That's true, that's true,' said he. 'You are
right. Nobody ever called my attention to that before.'"
brothers, Nathaniel Storr, Dan S. Smalley, Edwin Leigh, James Stone, and Andrew Comstock; nor did the Visible Speech of Alexander Melville Bell exercise noticeable influence. Even though Ayres’s The Orthoepist followed a period “marked by a phonetic or phonotypic revolution, short lived, but amazingly successful,”32 Ayres compromised with the past by indicating the sounds in words while trying to preserve the orthography. He wished to place only the correct spelling before the eyes of a student and, of course, rejected such phonetic respelling as evinced in Elias Longley’s First Phonetic Redor of 1850.

No doubt by coincidence, however, Ayres symbolized partial obscuration of a given vowel’s distinctive quality by placing a single dot beneath the alphabetical element to designate what he termed the obscure form of the letter; more than a half-century later, to serve the same purpose in their book Kinesiologic Phonetics, Claude E. Kantner and Robert West employ a single dot beneath a phonetic symbol to indicate partial obscuration, but not obscuring to the point where the phoneme

32 Emsley, Thomas, and Sifritt, in Wallace, op. cit., pp. 322 et seq.: “Orthography was branded heterography. Hardly a diacritic remained. The cleavage was complete. It began when Pitman and Ellis got together, at first by phonographic correspondence, and decided to develop shorthand into phonetic type.” Cf. Emsley, “Progress in Pronouncing Dictionaries,” pp. 57-58 and n. 6. See also Cj Stevens, “Early American Phonology” (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1954); and Albert Donald George, “The Longleys of Cincinnati, Mid-Nineteenth Century Phonetic Printers and Publishers” (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1955). Note especially Comstock’s Phonology of 1846 and his use of international phonetic symbols in his Phonetic Magazine of 1846-1848, as well as his precursors: Benjamin Franklin, 1768; Thornton, 1793; Ewing, 1798; Pelham, 1808; Embree, 1813; Kneeland, 1825; and the journals of M. H. Barton, Something New (Boston and Harvard, 1831), and of William Beardsley, Literary Reformer (St. Louis, 1841).
becomes unidentifiable on entering the so-called schwa-vowel area. In the latter connection, too, Ayres was wont to cite mercy, for example: "Mar does not spell mur. This a is rarely sounded correctly in this country, though it occurs in a long list of words. The throaty utterance of it that prevails with us is not sanctioned by any authority, foreign or domestic."

In general, Ayres's use of the numerous authorities at his disposal involved comparing these authorities with each other and with contemporary usage, noting especially any traces of certain authorities having become antiquated. In his suggestions concerning combat, for instance, his observations of linguistic forces at work in the language of the people, albeit not in the delivery of the stage, found immediate application.

The question here is whether the a shall have the sound of o in come or of a in from. Walker, Worcester, Smart, and others prefer the o in come; Webster and others, and popular usage, the a in from. The stage has always followed Walker, making the o very short; but, though this may perhaps be considered the more elegant mode of pronouncing the word at present, the longer a will doubtless eventually prevail.

In the latter relation, too, ease of utterance helped to determine for Ayres the acceptability of a given pronunciation. In combativeness, "ease of utterance has put the accent on the second syllable of this

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33 Kantner and West, Phonetics, pp. 14, 86, 199, and 200.
35 The Orthoepist, pp. 38-39. Italics are in the original.
word, where, despite the dictionaries, it is pretty sure to remain."\textsuperscript{36}

Ayres pursued this belief as far as to recommend: "That pronunciation
which makes the smaller number of syllables of such words as \textit{plagiary},
\textit{coral}, \textit{cordial}, \textit{bestial}, \textit{ameliorate}, etc., is the easier of utterance,
and for that reason is generally—and the writer thinks justly—considered
the more desirable."\textsuperscript{37} Even though Ayres felt obligated to cite the
disyllable forms of \textit{lien}, recognized by current authorities, he added:
"In the early editions of Webster's dictionary this word was marked \textit{lem}.\textsuperscript{38}
Not infrequently, also Ayres drew upon a verse of poetry to illustrate
a word's syllabication and/or accentuation and noted the word's syllables
in relation to the metrical feet of the verse and to the rhythmical
pattern of stress in the line.\textsuperscript{39}

As suggested earlier, euphony was another criterion that Ayres
used in evaluating various pronunciations for the same word: "Besides
harmonizing with the spirit of the English language, it is easier of
utterance and more euphonious." And again:

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 39.

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., p. 129.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. 100.

\textsuperscript{39}E.g., \textit{ibid.}, pp. 34, 39, 40, 42, 131, 148, 186 (\textit{Hamlet}); 133;
83 (\textit{Gray}); 123 (\textit{Cowley}); 123 (\textit{Akenside}); 145 (\textit{Cowper}); 143 (\textit{Watts});
108, 146, 164 (\textit{Dryden}); 128, 164, 188 (\textit{Milton}); 116, 152 (\textit{Pope}); 81
(\textit{Goldsmith}); 132 (\textit{Congreve}); 149 (\textit{Young}); 149 (\textit{Prior}); and 142 (\textit{Philips}).
E.g., "Some of the older writers accented this substantive on the
second syllable, as we see in the lines of \textit{Watts}: 'Our nation reads the
written word,/ That book of life, that sure \textit{record}."
For the pronunciation \textit{vaz}, in imitation of the French sound—more frequently heard in England than with us—there is no authority whatever; nor is there authority for \textit{vaz}, which was only permitted by Jameson. The pronunciation to which we give the first place is unquestionably the most rational and most euphonious, especially in the plural.

"I have a pretty fancy for bric-a-brac and antique \textit{vases};
Know how to carve a cabinet and make books on the races."\textsuperscript{40}

In this connection, concerning the same long-\textit{e} sound in both syllables of the word \textit{species}, Ayres pointed out that "a tautophonic objection" will probably result in an obscuring of the vowel in the second or unaccented syllable as the "generally preferred" form.\textsuperscript{41} Moreover, forced analogy had to yield place to euphony, especially when contemporary usage and authority had long stood in support of the Anglicized pronunciation of such a word as \textit{arbutor}.

In the last edition of Webster's dictionary the accentuation of this word, to make it accord with the Latin, is changed from that recommended here to \textit{ar}buit\textit{us}. Usage and authority, however, not only in English but also in German, decidedly favor placing the accent on the penult, which is certainly the more euphonious accentuation to the English ear, and the one that undoubtedly will prevail.\textsuperscript{42}

Analogy, then, was another factor Ayres considered in determining one pronunciation's claim over another pronunciation for the same word. In \textit{sapphire}, for example, despite "a great preponderance of authority" in favor of an obscure-\textit{i} sounding in the second syllable, Ayres placed

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{40}Ibid., pp. 114 and 188-189. Italics are in the original.
  \item \textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 170. Cf. John Samuel Kenyon and Thomas Albert Knott (eds.), \textit{A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English} (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, c. 1944), under \textit{species}: The form with a long-\textit{e} in both syllables is in second (last) place.
  \item \textsuperscript{42}Ibid., p. 204.
\end{itemize}
first the long-i variant, preferred by Webster, which "is both more analogical and more euphonious." Then too, he explained his reason for rejecting *sā'le-tē* as an acceptable pronunciation for *satiety* in the following way:

The pronunciation of this word seems anomalous, from the fact that it is the only one in the language having the syllable *ti* under an accent followed by a vowel; but this syllable regularly takes the accent, in analogy with *society, variety,* and all other words of similar formation.

Whereas Walker tried to maintain the same distinction between the noun and the verb in *rise,* as in *use, excuse,* and the like, by noting that "the pure *a* . . . is more agreeable to analogy, and ought to be scrupulously preserved . . . by all correct speakers," Ayres's commentary reads: "Walker's recommendation is little heeded nowadays by even the most fastidious." 43

Of all faults to be avoided in pronunciation, as well as in elocution, Ayres placed first the "sound" of pedantry. An Italian-sounding of the second syllable in *volcano,* "although etymologically correct, is so seldom heard as to sound pedantic." Concerning *restaurant,* "in speaking English, to pronounce this word *à la française* is in questionable taste; it smacks of pedantry." Ayres's position takes on more definition in the following expression of opinion:

Some of the orthoepists caution us not to let unaccented *a* in such words as *opinion, observe, oppose, command, conceal, condition,* *contain, content, possess, police,* etc., degenerate into short or

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44 *Ibid.,* p. 149. On at least one occasion, incidentally, Ayres no longer had to decide between two rival pronunciations: "By act of the State Legislature, the legal pronunciation" of *Arkansas* had recently been determined. See *Ibid.,* p. 204.
obscure u. While it is well to heed their advice, it is also well to remember that to make these a's too long is, perhaps, more objectionable than to make them too short. How unpleasant, for example, to hear pedantic ignorance say pö-löse and pö-sess! An endeavor to avoid sounding the a like short or obscure u should be made with nice discrimination, as by making it too long one's utterance becomes pedantic, which of all elocutionary faults is the worst. 45

Significantly perhaps, Ayres ended his supplement for the 1881 edition of The Orthoepist with an analysis which terminated in the following comment: "pedantic ignorance to the contrary notwithstanding." 46

Not only did Ayres's regard for the niceties of the English language, as detailed above, also determine the treatment afforded the content of the "new and revised edition, much enlarged," 47 of The


46 Ibid., p. 208.

47 Cf. review of The Orthoepist, 1894 edition, under the rubric LITERARY NOTICES, The Popular Science Monthly, XLVI (December, 1894), 272: "We are told to avoid saying ol'wug for al ways, sparrowgrass for as-mar-a-cub, and be-coa for be-cause. Educated people may pass by the ranks where these vulgarisms are enrolled and meet foreign recruits of doubtful address... massage, which in the International is English massage, appears here only as mas-sah'. Chemical terms are variously marked. The author favors gui-pine, and ways of iocaing, 'My impression is that long i will ultimately prevail.' Bromide and chloride are marked both short and long, from which it may be judged that Mr. Ayres is unfamiliar with the late decree of chemists making the i short, and even dropping the final e in spelling. Among English words boatswain is given as bogg, a colloquialism according to the International... In regard to his own profession, he tells us that any pronunciation but or-tho-e-py and or-tho-e-pist sounds inelegant to him. Unhappily, we know the Greek progenitor of the word... But probably the whole trouble is with us; we are asking that the orthoepist should verify his decisions in a scientific manner by some rule of consistency or etymology, whereas his art is in an inchoate state, and this little book helps us to realize its struggle for development." It follows that Ayres, sometimes misunderstood, continued to give off intimations of having anticipated developments which future generations would appreciate. Incidentally, concerning a preference for primary accent on the second syllable of orthoepy, the form endorsed by the reviewer above, this very pronunciation
Orthoeplst in 1894; in 1881 Ayres's linguistic prowess realized further ramification when D. Appleton and Company published The Verbalist, "a manual devoted to brief discussions of the right and the wrong use of words, and to some other matters of interest to those who would speak and write with propriety." Even in The Orthoeplst at times Ayres noted, for example, that the word *proven*, "incorrectly used for *proved*, is said to be a Scotticism." In The Verbalist he focused full attention upon the grammatical aspects of English usage.

Again Ayres provided an alphabetical listing of troublesome words and distinguished among almost synonymous entries in a manner analogous with the procedure employed today by most dictionaries in so-called synonym lists. As usual, he selected and rejected from the pronouncements of other authorities; he observed, for instance, that "though the dictionaries recognize the verb *to culture*, we [Ayres] do not use it." Customarily, too, this publication functioned as a sounding board for editorial comments which criticized the use of English by such diverse elements in society as the following: young ladies who overuse *very* in expressing emotional responses; rural members of the Arkansas Legislature, especially in their use of *effectuate*, *ratiocinate*, and

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48 *The Orthoeplst*, p. 136. Incidentally, in the latter connection, cf. Ayres, *Acting*, p. 201: "The accenting of the first syllable [of *inquiry*] is said to be a Scotticism, and is not authorized by any orthoeplst."

49 *The Verbalist*, p. 59.
eventuate; Dr. L. T. Townsend, Professor of Sacred Rhetoric in Boston University and author of The Art of Speech, who "mistakes a verbal flux he is afflicted with for literary aptitude"; the Reverend Dr. Timothy Dwight, Professor of Divinity in Yale College; the grammarian Chandler in abolishing the subjunctive mood for verbs; Richard Grant White for "noun construction"; and practically all newspapers, including St. James Gazette, although on occasion Ayres endorsed the New York Morning Sun while condemning the same city's Evening Sun. 50

Trying to counteract "the rule now [which] is to speak as verbosely as possible," Ayres repeatedly reduced such constructions as the observation of the to observing the and cited favorably, for example, Godfrey Turner and "Dr. Angus on The English Tongue." 51 Concerning Ayres's


51Ibid., pp. 309 and 264. For critical evaluation of The Verbalist, see Thomas, op. cit., 203: "The author evinces, generally speaking, just and clear views. He may perhaps, here and there exhibit a tendency to what might strike some as hypercriticism; and his 'brief discussions' may occasionally be extended to an unnecessary, not to say a tedious length; witness, for example, the more than twenty pages devoted to such phrases as 'Is being built.' But whatever may be thought of some of his remarks and criticisms, probably few competent judges will be disposed to question the general correctness of his views, or to deny the value and importance of the manual as an aid."
insistence that the salutation Dearest Maria implies that the writer knows several Marias of which the one addressed is the most dear, but only in comparison with the other Marias, Ayres cited a remark made by the editor of the Brooklyn Daily News which identified Ayres as being "at his best when maddest." Then too, Ayres attacked "the vanity of the players" in reworking a playwright's script, as when Rose Eytinge created a part in 1873 and when Dion Boucicault directed rehearsals "daily, for a month or more," with creative production foremost in mind. The personality of the man came forth to enliven the mechanical following of one entry by another; his personal beliefs supplemented the alphabetical scheme of the work.

Ayres's pronounced interest in keeping inviolate the acceptable pattern of English usage yielded not only a 242-page book of Some Ill-Used Words, published (1901) during the year before Ayres's death, but also his edition of The English Grammar of William Cobbett in 1883. The latter represents a 254-page revision, "carefully annotated, with index," of a work originally conceived after the manner of Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son, by William Cobbett (1763-1835), "in a series of letters. Intended for the use of schools and of young persons in general; but, more especially for the use of soldiers, sailors, apprentices, and plough-boys. To which are added, six lessons, intended to prevent statesmen from using false grammar, and from writing in an awkward

52 Ibid., p. 60.
53 Ibid., p. 58.
manner." Known by the title *Grammar of the English Language*, Cobbett's book was printed in New York for the author by Clayton and Kingsland, in 1818 (184 pages), and by J. Doyle, in 1833 (213 pages); Ayres's version, under the date of February in 1883, appeared the same year as another edition "with notes by Robert Waters."  

In addition to his books on the pronunciation and the grammatical use of the English language, Ayres reportedly revised many works for contemporary writers and authored three other books which have already received attention throughout this investigation. In 1884 Funk and Wagnalls Company and in 1894 D. Appleton and Company published his 211-page book of etiquette, namely, *The Mentor*, "a little book for the guidance of such men and boys as would appear to advantage in the society of persons of the better sort."  

The years 1886 and 1894 witnessed, respectively, the publication of *The Essentials of Eloquence* and of *Acting and Acting*. *Essentials of Elocution* and of *Acting and Acting*. 

Although Ayres apparently took pride in proclaiming that Edwin "Forrest prepared himself for his profession by studying voice management under Dr. Bush (this he told me himself)," he derided the systematized and often mechanized works following in the wake of Bush's *Philosophy of *.

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[^55]: See supra, chap. iv, "Personal Background for the Man," section 'His Personality and His Style in Writing.'

[^56]: *Acting*, p. 31.
the Human Voice; he objected especially to contributions by James E. Murdoch and to "a treatise recently published entitled 'Philosophic Elocution'" with such chapter headings as "Qualities of Voice." For personal, as well as professional, reasons Ayres abjured Franklin H. Sargent's use of Delsarte's theories, as explained earlier. Rather, Ayres's position approached that of, say, Henry N. Day whose "whole tendency, in trying to systematize Bush in textbook style, was away from the mechanical school, abolishing altogether the complicated systems of notations, and stressing the development of the student's ability to express intelligently what he understood well."  

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57 Ayres, Essentials, pp. 68 and 7-3. Cf. Giles Wilkeson Gray, "What Was Elocution?" The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLVI (1960), 1-7. See especially pp. 6-7: "James Bush, peculiarly, never started out to write a work on elocution at all. He was simply attempting to analyze the movements of the voice as one of the five external manifestations of human intellect. As he developed his analysis he thought he saw how it might be useful in the study and teaching of elocution . . . . Elocution fell from grace not because of the original theorists . . . , elocution became in some way associated essentially with reading, rather than remaining a matter of the delivery of all forms of spoken discourse. In so doing, it became divorced from content . . . . People became not readers, but elocutionists—practitioners of the art of delivery with nothing to deliver. . . . Many who would not delve into the philosophies of the early writers on elocution, or who could not grasp their principles, turned to the mysticism that developed in this country from the theories of Delsarte. One result was that much of the elocution of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries degenerated into statue-posing, bird-calls, and imitations of children—probably not all of which was imitation."

Then too, Ayres's approach may be compared with that of another writer who also influenced the teaching of speech in Oberlin College, an institution Ayres attended from 1852 to 1854. From the year 1879 William Benton Chamberlain, before becoming the second president of the National Association of Elocutionists and taking a permanent position with The Chicago Theological Seminary in 1894, had been a lecturer and an instructor in acoustics and vocal physiology in the conservatory department of Oberlin College and had become Professor of Elocution and Rhetoric in the college department.

His influence upon the speech curriculum at Oberlin began with the notion that too long had the physical, rather than the mental, dominated elocution; tone and action, he argued, were but the tools of elocution, not the materials. The teacher must start, he wrote, with the principles of analysis and expression, but so stated that his chief business remains the indoctrination of students with principles which will provide a rational basis for criticism.59

In 1897, Chamberlain revised his Rhetoric of Vocal Expression and, to these 206 pages, added 265 pages on "Mental Technique and Literary Interpretation" by Solomon Henry Clark. "The only teacher to whom he [Clark] ever acknowledged any indebtedness was Alfred Ayres, with whom he studied during the summer of 1888 (he was born in 1861)."60 In the

59 I b i d . , p. 13. See Wm. B. Chamberlain, Guide to Rhetorical Delivery: A Study of the Properties of Thought as Related to Utterance (Oberlin, Ohio: Printed for the Author, 1888); and its revision as Rhetoric of Vocal Expression (Oberlin, Ohio: E. J. Goodrich, 1892).

60 Gray, in Wallace, op. cit., p. 430; p. 431: "The thought is paramount. . . . The 'first requirement to artistic reading' is the intellectual and imaginative ability to understand a good play or poem in its entirety. . . . Clark himself relied almost entirely on his voice."
one-page preface to his section in the Chamberlain volume, namely, Part II. Clark wished

only to acknowledge a debt of which for many years I have desired to make public acknowledgment.

To Mr. Alfred Ayres, whose bold attacks upon affectation and artificiality have accomplished more good than, I fear, he will ever receive credit for, I wish to express the deepest gratitude. His writings came to me at a time when I needed them most; and while we may differ in some details, I yet feel that to him I can look as to the source of my artistic inspiration.61

Richard Hanna Hadley has noted an influence by Ayres upon the tone-drill or paraphrase associated with Arthur Edward Phillips and even upon Charles Henry Woolbert's treatment of bodily action and in the latter's use of what Hadley terms as Ayres's "pet" words.62 Moreover, not only did Ayres sound intimations of another later development which was to be known as the think-the-thought method, identified with Samuel Silas Curry; 63 Francis Hodge also associates Curry and Ayres in their insistence that actors train rigorously after the manner of the Paris


Conservatoire: "Curry did not stand alone in this point of view. Professor Ayres of New York might well have been bred in the same school . . . . If Curry and Ayres frowned on the trappings of the stage, other school directors certainly did not." Incidentally, compare also with Ayres’s considered judgment the following: "The Delsarte System, Curry characterized as too artificial and speculative . . . . Whereas Murdoch held that pantomime should be in the background so that the voice could predominate, Curry states that Delsarte gave pantomime the most important place. 'Neither is right,' says Curry. 'The great center of consciousness must be upon thought and action of the mind, and these two natural languages voice and action having a great element of spontaneity, must not be brought too much into the foreground of consciousness.' "

A critic of the book *Acting and Actors, Elocution and Elocutionists* pointed out that "on the subject of elocution itself, Mr. Ayres has a great deal to say, but most of his observations are only repetitions, in modified form, of very ancient axioms." Ayres’s purpose, of course, was to try to effect a return to such long established and proved principles. Even though on occasion he labored "writing upon the truth

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64 Hodge, in Wallace, *op. cit.*, p. 567.


of propositions which scarcely anybody would dream of disputing,” 67
Ayres wrote "less for the purpose of teaching the art of reading than
for the purpose of showing the deficiency of the dramatic profession
in a knowledge of the art." 68 In this connection, moreover, Ayres
sought the attention of such a performer as Richard Mansfield, whose
mannerisms in delivery often rendered his words indistinct, notwith­
standing the actor's protestations, at least in print and on the lecture
platform, that voice-training was receiving little attention by his
contemporaries in the theatre and that "the words, no matter what the
voice may be, must be comprehensible. That is the first duty the actor
owes the author, at least." 69 Not the least of the faults which Ayres
was striving to correct lay in the actor who wished to gain a reputation
for having applied himself diligently to cultivate his art even if a
dislike for the rigors of elocutionary training, a dominant attitude of
the period, had prompted him to pursue an easier course.

The critic commended Ayres for being "certainly right when he
denounces the methods employed by some professing teachers of that com­
prehensive, delicate and baffling art [elocution], . . . Orthoepy,
which is Mr. Ayres's particular diversion, is a nice test of scholarship,
but it is not necessarily the essence of great acting. It is possible

67Ibid.
68Acting, p. 110.
to be over-precise and over-finical in such matters . . . absolute perfection of utterance is not so indispensable as Mr. Ayres . . ., seems to think. In the latter relation, however, besides condemning obvious pedantry throughout his publications, Ayres spoke before the American Society for the Improvement of Speech, for instance, "and concluded by warning his hearers not to draw their fine pronunciations too fine. There was no use in astonishing one's auditors by pedantic self-consciousness. To be approximately correct and still keep within the range of one's auditors was preferable to surprising them."

Then too, Ayres's long-term detractor A. C. Wheeler, who wrote under the pseudonym of Nym Crinkle in the pages of the New York Dramatic Mirror, believed that "it is the unknown quantity in art that always comes the nearest to the creative" and, accordingly, with such men of the theatre as Richard Mansfield and Henry Irving, championed the so-called emotional theory of acting. Not only Ayres's work fell under

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70 Review of Acting and Actors, loc. cit.

71 "Speech Improvement," New York Dramatic Mirror, XXXIV, No. 883 (November 30, 1895), 2. Cf. Francine Merritt, "Werner's Magazine: Pioneer Speech Journal" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1953), pp. 135-136: "The American Society for the Improvement of Speech, organized on June 18, 1885 ([See Werner's Magazine], XVII, 535-536), was actively engaged in maintaining standards of pronunciation (XVII, 957)." See also pp. 200 and 133: "The June and July, 1894, issues of Werner's Magazine gave eleven pages to the criticism of Ayres' new book [Acting]. . . . Ayres' contributions on pronunciation were most heavily concentrated in two years, 1891 and 1892, at the end of which period the magazine's editorial progress report (XIV, 373) pointed out: 'We have awakened an interest in orthoepy, and have the satisfaction of seeing pronouncing-matches . . . taking place in various parts of the country, and of knowing that in nearly every instance the prizes were taken by those who had studied the columns of our magazine.'"
his ban; a distinguished volume by George Henry Lewes received similar
treatment by Wheeler, and for basically the same reason.

Mr. G. H. Lewes not long ago wrote the most analytical, the
woodenest and the most exhaustively materialistic book on Actors
and Acting . . . .

. . . He measured acting as he measured "foot-pounds." He went
one degree farther than Maudsley—who found all psychic disturb­
ances in the bowels—for he found all great acting in the cerebrum.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

I believe my friend Mr. F. F. Mackay follows in the same grave­
yard. If there is a place where agnosticism looks like barbarism,
it is in aesthetics.72

Another facet of Ayres's writing career remains to supplement his
books and periodical articles on the theatre and on the English language,
it's pronunciation and grammar and its delivery, as well as his author­
itative pronouncements concerning etiquette and languages other than
English. Ayres's knowledge especially of German and of French enabled
him to translate and to adapt many foreign plays for production before
English audiences. Nor did his working with the book of a play begin
and end with scripts originally conceived by some other writer.

At least through his influence upon others, Ayres has been rememb­
ered not for his editing the work of other authors but, rather, for his
own critical writings. However, when this Special Literary Critic, for

72 "Nym Crinkle Feuilleton," New York Mirror, XVII, No. 429 (March
19, 1887), 1. Cf. George Henry Lewes, On Actors and the Art of Acting
(London: Smith Elder & Co., 1875); see Paul Kozelka, "Theatrical and
Dramatic Criticism, and Commentaries on Acting," in McDowell, A Selected
Bibliography and Critical Comment on the Art, Theory, and Technique of
Acting, p. 24: "Criticisms and suggestions on the art and craft of
acting which are amazingly contemporary [1948]. The chapters on
'Shakespeare as actor and critic,' and 'On natural acting' are especially
helpful to the student of acting."
the Standard Dictionary of 1893, had tried writing plays during the eighteen-seventies, Ayres failed to gain lasting recognition for his own imaginative literature.

**Playwright and Adapter**

Ayres’s literary output includes six copyrighted plays: a comedy in four acts, *Love Works Wonders*, 1873; the four acts of *The Verrena; or, Marie and Marion*, 1873; in 1877, a historic drama in five acts, *Lady Jane Grey*; along with three typewritten manuscripts which were copyrighted by Eliza Warren, in 1904, after Ayres’s death, namely, a 131-page drama in five acts, *While He Was at Elba*; a 144-page drama in five acts,

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73 See playbill for "Bowers-Thompson Combination" production of *Lady Jane Grey*, by Alfred Ayres, Opera House, Atlanta, Georgia, 1879-1880 season, in Elizabeth Crocker (Mrs. D[-avid]. P.) Bowers, Portfolio in the Players' Collection, Theatre Collection, The New York Public Library. Miss Charlotte Thompson in the role of Lady Jane Grey and Mrs. D. P. Bowers as Mary Tudor were supported by Mr. J. C. McCollum (John Dudley) and their manager W. H. Power (Guilford Dudley), as well as by the following "carefully selected company": W. S. Schmitt (Earl of Arundel), Robt. G. Wilson (Earl of Suffolk), John F. Ward (Cornelius Agrippa), John L. Wooderson (King Edward VI), E. C. Spangler (Fairfax), H. E. Wilson (Lennox), E. P. Nagle (Baker), A. H. Brooke (Hastings), and W. H. Norman (Lord High Chancellor). Cf. "Obituary" for Mrs. D. P. Bowers, *New York Dramatic Mirror*, XXXIV, No. 881 (November 16, 1895), 15: "Mrs. D. P. Bowers, the well-known member of A. M. Palmer’s late stock company... occupied a conspicuous position on the American stage. She belonged to the old school, and was at times intimately associated professionally with all the great players of the last half century—Murdoch, Davenport, Cushman, James Anderson, Julia Dean, Mr. and Mrs. John Drew, Eliza Logan, and Edwin Forrest... About 1865 she created the role of Lady Audley in Lady Audley’s Secret which John Brougham dramatized expressly for her. In 1871 she formed a combination with Charlotte Thompson and they played Court and Stage for some time."
and a 109-page comedy in four acts, *The Taming of Georgina*, apparently after the manner of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. Besides translating and adapting plays from foreign languages, for example, his adaptation of the German drama *Deborah* for Madame Janauschek's use before English audiences, Ayres dramatized the novel *Jane Eyre* for performance on a stage. The latter play, *Jane Eyre* by Alfred Ayres, took the stage on June 18, 1873, at the Union Square Theatre in New York, and "became a minor classic of the American theatre; in fact, Miss Thompson's fame is identified with the part." The discussion to follow focuses upon critical commentary relative to this dramatization.

A critic writing for *The Spirit of the Times*, a New York "Chronicle of the Turf, Field Sports, and the Stage," granted that Ayres's *Jane Eyre* was "necessarily somewhat sombre from the nature of its plan and the materials used"; still

the drama is neither lugubrious nor even saddening in its effect. . . . This drama is an unusually good "dramatization" of a novel, in this, namely: that the representation tells a complete story and makes known distinctly the sufferings and triumph of the heroine, and their causes. Furthermore, the play is altogether clean, pure, and wholesome; contains no sickly and enervating

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74*Cf. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, I, 123: Victor Hugo's *Marie Tudor*, apparently adapted by Steele MacKaye as *Queen and Woman* (in which MacKaye appeared as Sir Simon Renard), was mounted lavishly and cast strongly by Sheridan Shook and A. M. Palmer during February of 1876.


76*Odell, op. cit.*, IX, 273.
sentimentality; makes no sophistical and specious pleas for things which sap the very foundations of society and the public well-being; presents nothing vulgar, or base, or infamous under a fascinating guise."

In dwelling upon the wholesome theatric fare which Ayres had provided, this critic was comparing Charlotte Thompson's choice of Ayres's play with her recent "misfortune to be hampered and weighted down by a wretched and indecent play, 'adapted from the French,'" called One Wife.

Whereas in the French adaptation Thompson's "merits were obscured or seen at great disadvantage," in Ayres's play Thompson found that "the audience, an excellent one in point of intelligence as well as in numbers, applauded the performance liberally, and, what is better, judiciously. . . . a large portion of the assembly was very agreeably disappointed. . . . No one who saw her then [in One Wife] could hope for the pleasure derived from her very excellent embodiment of Jane Eyre . . . . a well-defined, consistent, and harmonious character, certainly very like that of Jane Eyre, as delineated in Miss Bronte's novel. . . . Miss Thompson was called before the curtain several times during the evening, and it is probable that this representation will be

77"Union Square Theatre," under the rubric MUSIC AND THE DRAMA, The Spirit of the Times, XXVIII, No. 19 (June 21, 1873), 314.

78Ibid. Cf. Odell, op. cit., IX, 153: Concerning the July 29, 1872, opening, at the Olympic Theatre, of the "malodorous" One Wife, founded on Dumas's La Princesse Georges and including Augustus Pitou in the cast, "the Herald called the play 'detestable,' but Miss Thompson, who was a clever actress, showed herself also a clever business woman, by advertising in the Herald some of the most provocative strictures from that very journal itself; doubtless the prurient were attracted. One Wife ran two weeks," to return for another week beginning August 16, 1872.
repeated many times.*79 One week later, moreover, praise for the pro-
duction identified the "popularity" of Jane Eyre as "one of the en-
couraging signs of the times." The critic developed this idea and
noted implications for theatre managers in the financial success of
Ayres's play as

confirmation of the manifest fact that, as a rule, our citizens
can appreciate what is good in art, and that artistic excellence
is a guaranty of pecuniary success. Not that our public, as a
whole, is yet cultivated to that nicety of judgment and taste
which it is most desirable for the public good and for the honor
of the country that they should reach. But their instincts are
all right, their dispositions ready, and their quickness to learn
heretofore unequalled. These facts, these signs of the times,
clearly discerned by the thoughtful, are well worthy the attentive
consideration of our managers, especially when making their plans
and arrangements for the next season.80

Apparently, Ayres's creative products applied his critical acumen to
adventure.

This recognition of Ayres's potential for elevating the drama of
his time, through the educating influence of his own plays, may be
compared with the run of performances which the general public made
possible. At least in the case of Jane Eyre, repeated performances
and additional productions far exceeded the original expectations of
the first-night audience, who filled the theatre "even though an
excellent performance were not expected."81 The latter's pleasant
surprise took up echoes, for instance, in the Times of August 20, 1874:

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., XXVIII, No. 20 (June 28, 1873), 340.
81 Ibid., XXVIII, No. 19 (June 21, 1873), 314.
"In brief, 'Jane Eyre' is the best play and the best acted play that the public have had an opportunity of enjoying for a long time."  

A catalogue of the play's production-history includes performances at the Union Square Theatre, from June 18 through July 9, 1873, with the following cast, as listed in a Herald advertisement and compared with T. Allston Brown's record: Charlotte Thompson (Jane Eyre), Melinda Jones (Mrs. Reed), Marie Wilkins (Mrs. Fairfax), Edith Challis (Lady Georgiana), Kate Holland (Lady Clawdon), Josephine Laurens (Bessie), Hattie Thorpe (Grace Poole), Miss Jennie de Lacy (Maniac), Lillie Thorpe (Adele), Charlotte Cave (Rose), D. H. Harkins (Rochester), F. F. Mackay (Brocklehurst), Banfield (Lord Clawdon), J. W. Thorpe (Colonel Dent), Claude Burroughs (Frederick Lynn), H. W. Montgomery (Jacob Buttercup), Frank Lamb (John Reed), and W. S. Quigley.  

Mr. D. H. Harkins personated Lord Rochester exceptionally well. The character is well suited to this gentleman's somewhat blunt, earnest, and not over suave style of acting. Mr. F. F. Mackay in the prologue gave an admirable sketch of Mr. Brocklehurst. Mr. J. W. Thorpe played the part of Colonel Dent quietly and well. Mr. Claude Burroughs was notably good as Frederick Lynn, and Mr. H. W. Montgomery very amusing as Jacob Buttercup.  

A preliminary season began at the Union Square on August 19, 1874, with a return of Charlotte Thompson in Jane Eyre, seen at this theatre in the summer of 1873. In the new production Fanny Morant made her first appearance here as Mrs. Reed, Maude Granger  

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82 Quoted by Odell, *op. cit.*, IX, 543.  

84 "Union Square Theatre," *loc. cit.*
undertook the part of Georgiana, Augusta Raymond was Lady Clawdon, Marie Wilkins Mrs. Fairfax, Frederic[-k] Robinson ["an actor of manifest intelligence and judgment," according to the Times] was Rochester, A. D. Bradley Brocklehurst, Willie Seymour John Reed, and T. E. Morris Colonel Dent. [This production ran until September 21, 1874.]. . . .

. . . on Nov. 16th [1874], Charlotte Thompson again enacted Jane Eyre . . . but McKee Rankin was now Lord Rochester, F. F. Mackay Brocklehurst, and John Parselle Colonel Dent. Three more weeks were piled to the credit of Miss Thompson's moving impersonation. The Union Square Theatre, indeed, had been lucky ever since Palmer assumed the management.

The latter series of performances "ran till the production of The Two Orphans on Dec. 7, 1874. Miss Thompson after that made various starring tours throughout the country in Jane Eyre." 86

Thompson's starring tours in Jane Eyre began on December 7, 1874, when she opened at the theatre managed by the sister of Mrs. D. P. Bowers, that is, at Mrs. Conway's in Brooklyn. "Jane Eyre ran two weeks, and temporarily ended the invasion of the stars" primarily, as in Thompson's case, from New York's Union Square Theatre, notwithstanding "one of the cast being little Mabel Leonard, of Wallack's." During the 1875-1876 season at the Academy of Music in Brooklyn, for instance, from February 7 through 12, "Frederic Robinson went to the Brooklyn Theatre to support Charlotte Thompson in Jane Eyre." And again, on October 30, 1876: "Charlotte Thompson began as Jane Eyre, with W. E. Sheridan as Rochester," having also enacted this role the preceding

450dell, op. cit., IX, 543 and 544.
46"Death of Charlotte Thompson," loc. cit.
May fifth "for the benefit of the Young Men's Catholic Union."87 True, Thompson played other parts during the rest of her acting career, but not uncommonly the failure of such ventures resulted in her returning to star in Jane Eyre, "the charming domestic drama, in prologue and three acts,"88 which had been "dramatized for Miss Thompson by Alfred Ayres."89 On May 8, 1876, for example, she went into rehearsals for the title role in another adaptation, by Philip Stoner, Maud Muller; however, the play failed.90 On Aug. 21, 1882, she appeared at the Windsor Theatre, New York, as Edith Gray in The Planter's Wife. On Sept. 24, 1883, she appeared as Princess Etelka, in The Romanoff, at the Twenty-third Street Theatre, New York. After that she resumed her starring tours in Jane Eyre.91 The following commentary not only reveals critical reaction to Thompson's efforts in the play The Romanoff, another adaptation not written by Ayres, but also encourages comparison of this play's author with Ayres.

Under the nom de plume of Harry Marshall was Harry St. Maur, who plays the comedy part in his own piece. Being an actor, he could not resist the temptation of attempting to write a star part for himself, as well as for Miss Charlotte Thompson... We do not think that The Romanoff will keep the stage long enough to be criticised. By next Monday Miss Thompson will probably revive Jane Eyre.

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87 Odell, op. cit., IX, 622 and X, 22, 313, and 136.
88 "Union Square Theatre," loc. cit.
89 "Death of Charlotte Thompson," loc. cit.
90 Odell, op. cit., X, 125.
91 "Death of Charlotte Thompson," loc. cit.
• • An established favorite for many years—Miss Thompson was a star in 1862—her reputation is not to be compromised by this week's flirtation with The Bomanoff. Out of respect for her past successes, this failure will be forgiven and forgotten by the critics and the public. But she must not do so any more—we mean that she must not do The Bomanoff any more. • • Better to star about the provinces for the benefit of fire-engine companies and militia organizations than to make such a fiasco of an appearance in New York. We write more in sorrow than in anger; for, indeed, we are very sorry to see Miss Thompson involved in this Bomanoff affair. • • Thompson has a position which she had won by hard work and which it was reckless to risk in such a speculation. However, the speculation has failed so quickly and decidedly that very little time has been wasted and nobody will be much hurt. 92

It is only conjecture, of course, to suggest that Ayres as teacher and critic influenced Thompson's delivery of the lines which he provided as playwright. But aforementioned actor-manager-playwright Harry St. Maur "drilled the company so anxiously that they are too precise, like the man who stood so erect that he fell over backward." 93 Just as

92Review of The Bomanoff, by Harry Marshall [Harry St. Maur], The Spirit of the Times (New York), September 29, 1883. For Thompson's early career, cf. "Arch Street Theatre," under the rubric DRAMATIC AND MUSICAL, Sunday Morning Times (Philadelphia), April 16, 1865, p. 6: "It is scarcely necessary to do more than announce the appearance of this admirable performer, in order to secure a crowded audience. Her thorough education and her natural refinement of feeling, shine through all her impersonations. In serious or comic parts she appears equally at home, though she may be considered to excel in such simple and touching characters as 'Fanchon,' and 'Amri,' in 'Little Barefoot;' in them she stands without a rival. Her acting is always delightful, because it is so free from affectation and stage tricks; and those who can recall the manner in which she played 'Jeannette,' while a member of Mrs. Drew's stock company, possess a souvenir of unequalled value in an artistic point of view. To those of our readers who have not seen Miss Thompson, we commend her as deserving their constant attendance at her performances."

The only identification for the source of the above remarks is "by our own critic"; incidentally, even though the above does not reflect Ayres's writing style, according to the article "Death of Thomas Embley Osmond [sic]," loc. cit.: Ayres himself was "writing dramatic criticisms for the Philadelphia Times in 1865."

93Ibid.
Ayres abjured the pedantry in such overpreciseness, the following comments also call up echoes of Ayres’s elocutionary emphasis: “Thompson is in danger of exaggerating the pauses in her part of the dialogue, of sometimes prolonging too much the hesitation before she speaks. . . . Possibly this character was made by Miss Thompson to appear too constantly upon the same plane [,] to find expression too much in the monotone.”

Even this critic justified such an interpretation, however, and a critic for the Times went further in his praise: “Thompson is the very Jane Eyre of Charlotte Brontë’s imagination, or, mayhap, experience. She has caught all the traits of the character with wonderful fidelity. . . . She produces effects without any semblance of striving after them; and when the deeper feelings of her nature come into play, their action is spontaneous and real.”

One critic waxed poetical in the praise he heaped upon Jane Eyre:

From the novel the dramatist [Ayres] has constructed a play of absorbing interest. Pure, honest, and genuine in its tone and moral, it affects one as gratefully as basking in the early rays of the morning sun, when nature is all smiles and freshness. The interest is sustained throughout, and when we leave the theatre we feel a hundred nobler impulses manifesting themselves. Jane

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94 “Union Square Theatre,” loc. cit. For Thompson’s only recent appearance before a New York audience, a little less than a year before, in the play One Wife, see “Olympic Theatre,” under the rubric MUSICAL AND THEATRICAL, The Spirit of the Times, XXVI, No. 25 (August 3, 1872), 400: “She manifested the possession of uncommon talents, and at the same time the lack of a complete artistic method. Once or twice her powers got beyond her control and she ranted a little—just a little. In certain portions of her part she was deficient in suppleness and mobility, in archness and the buoyant grace of playfulness—affectionate playfulness.”

95 Quoted by Odell, op. cit., IX, 543.
Eyre is a wholesome and enjoyable play . . .

... If the preliminary season which Miss Charlotte Thompson inaugurated so artistically on Wednesday evening bears the same relation to the regular season that the overture generally does to the succeeding opera, Mr. Shook's winter campaign will be marked by bright and cheering dramatic episodes. The production of Jane Eyre, and the acceptable manner of its presentation, cuts through the barren and arid sands of summer like the cool and refreshing atmosphere which surrounds an oasis vernal with joyous vegetation, and fanned by zephyrs as light and fragrant as the breezes which stirred the scented roses of Sharon. . . .

... The first representation of Jane Eyre was so perfect that we cannot refrain from again reverting to the great care and time given to rehearsals at this theatre. . . . The audience, which was large and noticeably elegant, gave many hearty expressions of their gratification. . . . Jane Eyre is certainly the strongest attraction at present before the public, and the acting throughout is so admirable and even that halcyon memories of the diamond morning of long ago are untombed. Wallack's Theatre, in its palmiest days, never presented a play better.96

Critical consensus, however, did pass the following judgment upon the initial production of Ayres's play: "The management deserves the hearty thanks of all theatre-loving strangers in the city, for providing an entertainment of the best class at a time when other theatres are closed, or given over to the abomination of desolation, or, more properly perhaps, of desecration." Moreover, Jane Eyre with Charlotte Thompson (1843-1898) continued on the stage, at least on tour, into the eighteen-nineties. Then too, in the title role of Ayres's dramatization, the late seventies had witnessed an actress whose name was destined to

96"Union-Square Theatre—Jane Eyre," The Spirit of the Times, August 22, 1874.

97Review of Jane Eyre, a dramatization by Alfred Ayres, under the rubric MUSIC AND THE DRAMA, The Spirit of the Times, XXVIII, No. 21 (July 5, 1873), 355.
live longer than Thompson's in the annals of American theatre, namely, Clara Morris. Morris, on occasion compared in elocutionary technique and stage deportment with Thompson, was organizing a benefit for the Custer Monument [Fund]. She will appear as Jane Eyre for the first time. The benefit will take place at Wallack's Theatre next week. Mr. Wallack will enact the role of Rochester.  

True, much of the approval gained by *Jane Eyre* related to the play's wholesomeness and morality, which stood in contrast to much contemporary theatrical fare and led certain critics to encourage its influence at the time. Still a critical consensus could not overlook the general excellence and masterful restraint in Ayres's adaptation: its structure and delineation of character and freedom from sentimentality. In addition, the dramatization achieved for Charlotte Thompson a stage vehicle upon which her success as an actress continued to depend. Although Ayres's dramatic reworking of the novel and his translation and adaptation of foreign plays served the period for which they were written, his original plays met with less financial success. A first-night audience for *Jane Eyre* was practically assured by general interest already instilled by the Brontë novel; accordingly, no doubt, Ayres created play scripts concerning such well-known historical personages as Mary Tudor, Lady Jane Grey, and Napoleon Bonaparte. Notwithstanding, no one of his works of imaginative literature stood the test of

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99 Under the rubric *Music and the Drama*, *The Spirit of the Times*, XCIV, No. 10 (October 13, 1877), 290.
time by having been produced long after the initial performance.

By comparison, however, with the abortive literary effort of the voice scientist James Bush, entitled *Hamlet, A Dramatic Prelude in Five Acts* and published in 1834, Ayres's creative products not only reflected his critical acumen but also, at least some of them, received the plaudits of so-called judicious audiences. For Ayres's plays were not written in a vacuum, and fortunate to be dubbed even closet drama; comparable with no less a dramatist than William Shakespeare, on occasion Ayres was a performing artist on the stage as well as on the reading platform.

**Actor and Public Reader**

Just as the above demonstrated a similarity between Ayres’s capacities as a critic and as a creative writer, the following may well note whether Ayres practiced what he preached when he left the classroom and the critic's chair to function as an actor and a reader before the public. Throughout the analysis to follow, of course, it must be remembered that such a severe critic of others as was Alfred Ayres will often find other critics expecting perfection from him, or at least conformity with his own standards.100

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100 Cf. "Arch Street Theatre," *loc. cit.*: Relative to another playwright, a Madame de Marguerittes, "we certainly should not have given so much space to 'Enoch Arden,' nor have taken the trouble to indicate the want of taste and judgment shown in the version, had not the dramatist been so strict in her criticisms upon 'The Test of Love,' and 'Under the Palm.' We were led to expect from her pen something superior to both, instead of which we have a play as faultily constructed as the first, and immeasurably inferior to the second as a dramatic production. This
In the latter connection, consider first Ayres’s vituperative
criticism of a reading recital given a play in which Ayres had appeared
as Shylock, not only in the German tongue during his education abroad
in the mid-fifties but also in the English language as late as May of
1891, in several New England towns, with his pupil Eliza Warren as
Portia. Ayres’s evaluation follows without comment:

The sorriest exhibition in the way of a reading I [Ayres]
have ever witnessed, I witnessed on the afternoon of Friday,
February 7th, A. D., 1896. The reader was Mr. Sidney Woollett;
the thing read was "The Merchant of Venice," a comedy by
Mr. Woollett has a voice that is powerful enough, an articula-
tion that is clear enough, and a personality that is attractive
enough, but there an end. He has not another one of the gifts
or qualifications necessary to make a reader. He hasn’t even
the necessary industry or honesty. He pretends to memorize what
he reads, but it is only pretense. . . . Woollett assuredly is
not one of those that think it sacrilege to meddle with the
Shakespeare text. But, perhaps, Mr. Woollett gives the great
William the shaking-up he does, in the spirit of the emendator.
A man that possesses no more intelligence than Mr. Woollett
exhibits in his reading, if he chanced to be a monomaniac on the
subject of self, might have the vanity to think himself equal
to the task of bettering Shakespeare’s diction.
. . . He set to work and learned by heart a batch of poems and plays,
and since then he has been firing them at audiences this country
over, and this world around, for aught I know. Read these poems
and plays he has not, for read he cannot.
. . . If he had any dramatic instinct at all, he would have some
idea of the spirit in which individual speeches should be spoken,
which now he has not. If he is ever right with his emphases,
his inflections or his pauses, it is by accident. Such readers
as Mr. Woollett never read anything twice alike, because they
have no fixed ideas how anything should be read.
Nor is this all. Mr. Woollett’s bearing on the platform is as
bad as his elocution. He never makes a gesture that has any meaning,
and when he is not using his hands they are in his way. . . .
Let a musician go before an audience knowing no more about music than Mr. Woollett knows about reading and within ten minutes he would not have a soul in the house.

He that among the bad seeks the worst, having found Sidney Woollett need not seek further.101

The above criticism, based upon Ayres's theories of elocution and stage deportment, reveals indirectly the qualities which Ayres identified as most characteristic of an effective reader.

Granting that "Mr. Ayres courts criticism," one critic accredited Ayres with faultless pronunciation, distinct articulation, a strong and sonorous voice, a good figure, and a dignified and pleasing platform deportment, as well as with literary interpretations exhibiting careful, even meticulous and painstaking study. "But reading is more than literary interpretation. . . . the living reader arrests the attention and touches the heart-chords of the auditor. There is an irresistible fascination in watching the quivering of the flesh, the shaking or stiffening of the form, the flashing, expanding, or contracting of the eye, the knitting or smoothening of the brow, the dilating of the nostrils,

101 Alfred Ayres, 'Mr. Alfred Ayres's Criticism of Mr. Woollett,' in "Four Prominent Readers: Sidney Woollett," Werner's Magazine, XVIII (March, 1896), 265-266. Cf. others' criticisms of the same performance, through p. 268: e.g., "a conscientious though stilted style of elocutionary effort . . . . To one not familiar with the play, the text was often obscured by an absence of correct emphasis. . . . Woollett is reputed as belonging to the first-class of readers in the country, and his impressions are undoubtedly good, but his expression would seem to require more careful study before it can be classed as a high standard of artistic merit. . . . This is the first opportunity we have had of hearing Mr. Woollett since March, 1890, when we wrote a criticism at which he was much offended. In order to treat him justly we engaged three competent critics to pass judgment upon his reading." The latter were, in order of presentation, Alfred Ayres, Livingston Russell, and a Miss R.
the tightening or relaxing of the mouth, the restlessness or immovability of the arms and legs, the agony or ecstasy of the soul. . . . Mr. Ayres wears a full beard." Moreover, Ayres "reads from a book, using eyeglasses which he takes off and holds in his right hand during impressive scenes, or during gesticulation. . . . He used little pantomimic action. This was in keeping with the reading, and the frequent gestures of the little fingers, while the rest of the hands held the book, could have been dispensed with."\(^{102}\)

In this instance, Ayres was reading the dialogue between Portia and Nerissa (I, ii) and the trial scene of The Merchant of Venice, on April 16, 1896, at a young people's church association meeting in New York.

Mr. Ayres prefaced his reading by saying that William Shakespeare was the greatest of all writers; that he wrote at a time when people ate with their fingers; that he wrote without the aid of dictionaries, without books of synonyms, and without the aids that are at the service of modern writers; and yet he enriched the language greatly . . . .

Mr. Ayres does not attempt impersonation, hence he cannot be compared with Leland T. Powers. He does not attempt to differentiate his characters through voice and pantomime, hence he cannot be compared with George Riddle. [But as George Riddle] He does not memorize his text, hence he cannot be compared with Sidney Woollett. The reader with whom he may be compared is S. H. Clark, who has been Mr. Ayres' pupil and who has publicly acknowledged his indebtedness to his teacher in very strong terms. . . .

or mood. That is to say, if the particular character was in a joyous mood, Mr. Ayres would attempt to speak this character's lines with a joyful voice.\textsuperscript{103}

Despite the latter approach to the material, however, in practice "an atmosphere of seriousness, which was almost sombre, enveloped all Mr. Ayres's reading, particularly marked in the Portia-Nerissa Scene. . . . There was not a trace of the gaiety and sparkle with which that immortal bit of chatter overflows. Had it been the melancholy Jaques himself they could not have been more depressed. The potency of the poet's lines was well illustrated, however, at the speech, 'God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man!' though repeated as if no ray of fun illuminated it." Then too, concerning Ayres's telling his audience where the various characters stand, "the latter would have been quite proper had he impersonated largely, which he did not do, so the staging seemed rather unnecessary. . . . It would have been better sometimes to mention the names of the minor characters as they speak, for the benefit of those who may not have been familiar with the story."\textsuperscript{104}

Moreover, Ayres's repertory was confined to only a few Shakespearean plays. In this connection, he claimed that he had given more study to The Merchant of Venice than had any other man then living and asserted "that he has seen every actor of note for the last thirty years who has appeared in the play." Such boastfulness was not calculated to gain support for Ayres and no doubt encouraged others to challenge his belief

\textsuperscript{103}\textit{Ibid.}, 449-450.

\textsuperscript{104}\textit{Ibid.}, 452.
that "it is better to be great in one thing—however small it may be—
than to be tolerably good in many things. The point may be worthy of
discussion, whether a good all-round reader is not preferable to a
great special reader."\textsuperscript{105}

Whereas one critic began by condemning Ayres as a writer because
"we have no use for abuse" and continued by attacking Ayres as "an
elocutionary degenerate, an elocutionary adventurer, a dog-in-the-
manger elocutionist—a person who, not being able himself to read, is
bound that no one else shall read,"\textsuperscript{106} another pursued a more learned
analysis and concluded by likening Ayres's results to the oral commun-
ication which later developments would associate with radio speech.

Many readers fail because the auditors do not understand them.

This brings up again the point, Should the reader adapt him-
self to the intellectuality of his audience? . . . Locke Richardson
answers this question in part in his readings by making copious
explanations. George Hiddle . . . by individualizing his characters
through voice and pantomime. Leland T. Powers . . . by changing
himself into his characters—expanding or contracting his body,
assuming mannerisms, arranging his hair, twisting his mouth, etc.
S. H. Clark does little or nothing of all this. Mr. Ayres also
discards all these media of expression, and relies almost wholly
upon verbal language for the communicating of the author's thoughts.

But is verbal language enough? It is not. Mr. Ayres has often
condemned what he calls "playing with the voice." But vocality
is the chief medium for the conveying of thought and emotion.
Men used voice long before they used what we know as verbal speech.
So long as man met man the vowels—vocality—sufficed for inter-
course. It was only when the voice could not be used, when,
for instance, man wished to write information either for preservation
or to convey it to a distant person, that consonants—the dis-
tinguishing elements of verbal language—were invented.

\textsuperscript{105}Ibid., 450.

\textsuperscript{106}Fair Play, "Mr. Ayres Taken to Task," under the rubric LETTER-
BOX, Werner's Magazine, XVIII (April, 1896), 381.
Mr. Ayres depends too much upon consonants, the artificial part of speech. This is one of the reasons why he fails to move his auditors as much as do some other readers who are on a lower intellectual plane than he . . . We do not mean that he exaggerates consonantal sounds, but that he pins his elocutionary faith almost wholly to articulate words, to verbal language, thinking his task is done when he has hurled out the words properly paused and properly emphasized. To carry his theory to its finality, an invisible talking-machine, if its pauses and emphases were right, would be a good reader.107

In explaining Ayres's lack in "power to move the auditor," the above critic drew upon a currently popular and often repeated criticism, whose deft balancing of verbal language may have contributed to its appeal: "His agents of expression are not co mensurate with the quantity and quality of his impressions. Mr. Ayres does not realize this . . . Mr. Ayres is not the only elocutionist who fails to see himself as others see him." Primarily because Ayres failed to adapt to the emotional needs of an average audience, the following conclusions appeared warrantable:

He [Ayres] pays chief attention to the intellectual nature, leaving the aesthetic and emotional natures to take care of themselves, often missing his mark by being too analytical and not being sufficiently synthetic.

He lacks magnetism, that indefinable something that puts the reader en rapport with his auditors. He would force attention and admiration, rather than win them. He gives it to be understood that the people are there because of him, and that he is not there because of the people. He lacks professional tact.108

A special critic, known by the initials C. E. E., was invited by Werner's Magazine to supplement a regular critic's commentary on Ayres's reading. C. E. E. noted "flashes of excellence," especially in Ayres's

108Ibid., 451-452.
reading of Shylock and of Portia's "Mercy Speech, which carried weight and directness, though there might be slight differences of opinion regarding some of Mr. Ayres's emphases. He did not attempt to assume the 'feminine voice' for his women, but allowed Portia's dignity and earnest purpose to carry her through, and no one regretted the absence of the high pitch." Then too, although Ayres regarded Shylock and Portia "as foemen worthy of his steel, and he would attack them with a deliberation of purpose that was almost amusing... As for the other characters, Mr. Ayres hardly took the trouble to get acquainted with them. He read the lines from the book, and for the most part we felt they were words. This was especially true of Antonio's speeches, which were slighted almost unpardonably."

In general, even though Ayres was praised for "careful, penetrating study of the character" and for his straightforward technique which refused "to saddle the character with any trick of voice, but relied on his deep-seated impression to shadow forth the expression," Ayres often failed to make his "creation [come] alive as it flows through the soul of the creating re... The work was that of the student with interest of intellect rather than of feeling, and from this standpoint, fairly satisfactory. Grant...his knowledge of the Shakespeare plays was most comprehensive and profound... But he was an intellectual rather than an emotional player, and his portrayals made appeal, therefore.

\[109\]

\[Ibid., 452.\]
364

to students rather than to average theatregoers.¹¹⁰

In addition to Ayres's appearances as a public reader at a time
when words were a ceremony, as the actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell
characterized the era, Ayres appeared both abroad and in the United
States as an actor, performing on stage in the German language as
well as in English. Not only in Germany as a young man did he enact
Shylock and Richelieu in German, but in New York during the early
eighteen-seventies he also performed these roles in German and later
delivered Shylock and Hamlet in the English language.¹¹¹ For example,
Colonel T. Allston Brown, in whose home Ayres lived soon after arriving
in New York during the year 1870, has cited a Bowery Theatre benefit,
on July 11, 1872, which staged the trial scene from The Merchant of
Venice with O. B. Collins as Antonio, with Effie Johns as Portia,
and with Alfred Ayres as Shylock.¹¹² And again, at the University Club
Theatre, a "kindly, tolerant hall," on May 20, 1885, "amateurs appeared
in The Little Treasure and acts of The Merchant of Venice; in the latter
Alfred Ayres was Shylock and Genevieve Stebbins (not exactly an amateur)
Portia."¹¹³

¹¹⁰ "The Death of Alfred Ayres," New York Dramatic Mirror, XLVIII,
No. 1,245 (November 1, 1902), 15.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Cf. Eliza Warren, "In Memoriam, Alfred Ayres: His Work
as Orthoepist, Verbalist and Elocutionist," Werner's Magazine, XXX
(December, 1902), 12-13.


¹¹³ Odell, op. cit., XII, 541-542.
Ayres's performances on stage, as well as on the reading platform, suggest that he interpreted only scenes culled from a complete play, except possibly his 1891 appearance as Shylock with Eliza Warren, in several New England towns, where "his impersonation won considerable praise." Notwithstanding, Ayres differentiated the type of interpretation in demand in public readings or lecture recitals from that demanded by impersonation and acting. In general, Ayres was beginning to break away from a traditional belief in the near-identity of the various speaking arts and to qualify, for example, Thomas Sheridan's definition of elocution as "the just and graceful management of the voice, countenance, and gesture in speaking" in terms of the view of the mid-twentieth century which regards "interpretation as the study of literature through the medium of oral performance."

Specifically, as a public reader, Ayres rejected the impersonation associated at that time with Leland T. Powers and the copious explanation used by Locke Richardson, as well as George Riddle's characterization through pitch-change and pantomime; but along with Riddle, Ayres read from a book, unlike Sidney Woollett, and came closest in manner of delivery to that of his own pupil, a person destined to lead

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114"The Death of Alfred Ayres," loc. cit.

elocution into the twentieth century, S. H. Clark, Ayres relied on his voice to communicate the thoughts and, less successfully, the emotions intended by the author. He depended upon his understanding or impression of the speeches to bring forth, at the moment of delivery, proper agents for expression. His chances for success and acceptance were hindered, however, by a full beard, his eyeglasses, and on occasion his sense of not being fully appreciated or even understood, together with the distracting gestures of his little fingers while holding a book before his audiences.

Moreover, the dignity which he associated with platform deportment restrained him from catering to the interest of an average audience in emotional delineation. If effect, although his interpretation reflected conscientiously detailed study and a freedom from vocal tricks, its failure to adapt to the level of intelligence common among theatre-goers, as well as a refusal to try to win the latter's attention and admiration, restricted Ayres's appeal primarily to the student of literary analysis.

Another devoted pupil, with whom he performed on stage as late as 1891, Eliza Warren passed this final judgment upon Ayres's abilities as actor and reader: "Those who saw his performances, especially Hamlet and Shylock, regret that he did not make the actor's profession his life work, but Mr. Ayres was, above all things, a student and a teacher and possibly in this modest domain his influence may prove farther reaching and more potent than it would have in a field of more brilliant personal achievement."116

116op. cit., 12.
Teacher and Coach

Throughout the preceding survey of Ayres's capabilities and accomplishments, his function as a teacher and a coach has received attention. In concluding this investigation, it remains only to state briefly some general aspects of his teaching philosophy, especially in comparison with certain policies practiced during the mid-twentieth century, and to identify several of Ayres's pupils in order to suggest the direct, as well as the indirect, influence of his theories and his practice.

Today Wallace A. Bacon believes that "once they have been persuaded of the close correlation of mind and body, voice and spirit, most students will find that an increase in the intellectual range is the surest way to an increase in the whole emotional range." It will be remembered that Ayres was one of those that believe in attacking the actor's art from the intellectual, not from the gymnastic side; one of those that believe in giving one's best energies to the cultivating of the brain rather than of the brawn; one of those that believe if the mind goes right the action is pretty sure not to be far wrong. The brain, not the muscles, is the seat of emotion, and emotion is well-nigh everything to the actor.

More than all else it is an actor's utterance that fixes his position as an artist.

Get all the voice possible, but don't cultivate modulation; that will come of itself as you progress in the art of reading.118

Then too, Bacon has been pleased to note that, "quite properly, teachers of reading and speaking, from classical times to the present, have at least bowed in the direction of the text. . . . To be sure, some

118 Ayres, Acting, p. 39. Italics are in the original.
were mechanical in their methods of teaching and some few were not.\footnote{119}

One of these latter few was Alfred Ayres, who never tired of pointing out:

Both Forrest and Cushman were close and successful students of Nature, and their delivery had in it none of the mere noise and circumstance of declamation. Their minds were ever occupied with the thought, the sentiment and spirit of their author, never with the tones they employed. They knew that if they succeeded in mastering their author, the time, the tone, the pitch, and the force best suited to the rendering of him would all take care of themselves. They knew that any other course of procedure would result in making their delivery mechanical, automatic and soulless, instead of spontaneous, realistic and impressive.

But I would not be understood to intimate that it is necessary merely to understand an author in order to read him well; I say only that a thorough study of the language to be read is the first step to be taken, and that what follows is often comparatively easy.\footnote{120}

In insisting that his students first get the meaning or sense of a passage and the spirit or attitude or purpose of the author in writing it, Ayres not only sounded intimations of a philosophy which would gain decided recognition in the near-future; in essence, he was taking up echoes of doctrine available to him in many of the books already cited as his sources for authoritative pronunciation. For one, Thomas Sheridan had focused upon the expression of ideas, of thought, of meaning, as opposed to emotional delineation.

Sheridan's position was not in this respect new. The basic significance of meaning was expressed a century earlier by William Holder, for example, and by Isaac Watts in 1720 and by John Mason in 1748. In his own time, Sheridan was by no means alone in emphasizing the importance of ideas, for John Walker, William Enfield, Joseph Priestley (to pick three names almost at random)

\footnote{119}{Op. cit., 149.}

\footnote{120}{Essentials, pp. 12-13.}
were equally alive to the role of meaning in the whole art of speaking and reading. The eighteenth-century term elocution embraced not alone the classical concept of "style of composition," but the whole conveyance of meaning through style of composition delivered, and it was neither a "mechanical" nor a "natural" view, but simply a conventional and normative view, which recognized that Sense was the determining element, and that all passions must arise from and be fixed by that element.¹²¹

Comparison of Ayres's analysis of the elements of elocution with that of Sheridan is particularly revealing. Ayres believed that "the gesture or the tone that is not spontaneous is better not made, and it will not be spontaneous unless it is the expression of an emotion, and it can not be the expression of an emotion if the player is thinking of his gestures and tones. It is this mechanical, brainless procedure that has brought elocution into disrepute."¹²² Sheridan, by comparison, had "singled out tones and gesture as the 'pleasurable aspects of delivery,' related particularly to the emotions; the other elements [pronunciation, accent, emphasis, pause, and pitch] he related particularly to the expression of ideas. Tones, he said, are the auditory aspects of emotion, and gestures are the visible aspects of emotion... Although he stated very clearly the great significance of tones and gesture, Sheridan devoted only two of the eight lectures to these elements. The bulk of his attention went to the expression of ideas."¹²³ And again, in this connection, according to Ayres:

¹²¹Bacon, op. cit., 148-149. Italics are in the original.
¹²²Acting, pp. 37-38.
¹²³Bacon, op. cit., 148.
You want the action and the modulation, but both should be mainly the natural, the spontaneous outcome of study in another direction. As for gesture, a few general notions should suffice, while modulation may safely be allowed wholly to take care of itself. 124

After having carefully studied the language to be read—supposing that its meaning is not obvious—one should proceed to determine how it should be spoken in order to make the meaning clear:

1st. Which are the words that should be emphasized.
2d. Which the clauses that, being comparatively unimportant, should be lightly touched—slurred.
3d. Where the voice should be kept up, and where allowed to take the falling inflection.
4th. Where the pauses should be made, the longest of which are always made between the thoughts.

The tone, I insist, will take care of itself. Herein he that knows what he is reading about, he that appreciates his author, will never fail. 125

Bacon also admonishes the "many teachers of interpretation who are too timid in venturing out into the world of scholarship and criticism for the kind of solid assistance which that world can often supply. The teacher who reads no more than the students in his class—and who does not know where to go to find more to read—will not necessarily find that such reading makes him a full man."

Ayres demonstrated, in this vein, the vast difference between comprehending an author and comprehending him. Most persons of any culture think they comprehend Shakspeare [sic], yet there is quite as much difference in their appreciation of him as there is in their appreciation of, say, the paintings of the great masters. How many of the readers of "The Merchant of Venice"—to take a very simple example—discover in Portia's speech

124 *Acting*, p. 38.


in the fourth act, beginning "Tarry, Jew, the law hath yet another
hold on you," that the law is specially severe when an alien attempts
the life of a citizen, and would so emphasize the language as to
bring out this thought? Very few, indeed, as I [Ayres] know by
observation. I once knew an elocutionist (i) that for years had
been getting $5 an hour for teaching, and had gone over this
speech again and again without discovering this peculiarity of
the Venetian law, and, of course, without making it appear in the
reading.127

Ayres recognised that "elocution cannot be learned from books, any
better than painting or sculpture can. No treatise on the art, no matter
how voluminous it is, can do much more than give the learner a few hints to
set him thinking and observing."128 Accordingly, Ayres, who had worked
professionally with Steele MacKaye, was teaching in the latter's
Lyceum Acting School, which opened its first session in October of 1884;
under the management of Franklin H. Sargent, no more than four months
later, Ayres was dismissed as old fashioned because he refused to adjust
to a Delsarte-geared curriculum.129

129Hodge, "The Private Theatre Schools in the Late Nineteenth Cen­
tury," in Wallace, op. cit., p. 565. For earlier MacKaye ventures in
which Ayres may have figured, see ibid., pp. 558-561: Wishing to found
a Free Conservatory of Art, analogous to the Paris Conservatoire, Steele
MacKaye "began his campaign late in 1871 with the publication of a
prospectus setting forth his plans to open an acting school at the St.
James Theatre . . . . How MacKaye conducted this first school has not
been recorded. It lasted only a few months, and apparently there was
little enrollment beyond the members of his acting company. . . . Continu­
ing to teach privately and to lecture wherever he could, MacKaye launched
a second enterprise in 1877, the School of Expression on Union Square. . . .
of brief duration. But MacKaye soon took over the management of the
Madison Square Theatre . . . . a first-rate theatre at his command for
the first time. But the conservative Mallorys, the Madison Square owners,
restricted his activities, and he withdrew to heed a most ambitious
undertaking, the new Lyceum Theatre. . . . Within a few weeks after the
Ayres, as also held true for the school's founder MacKaye, was then forced to turn to private instruction. Ayres's studio was located in his rooms at 224 West Fifteenth Street, where Ayres became "perhaps the best known of the group in New York,"¹³⁰ which included such private instructors as Emma Waller, Harry Pepper, Rosa Rand, Parson Price, and Ada Dow, the teacher of the actress Julia Marlowe. Notwithstanding, "in 1900, the Stanhope-Wheatcroft Dramatic School in New York conducted private and class lessons in practical theatre subjects . . . . Alfred Ayres, well-known as a critic and writer on acting as well as a teacher, had opened, the tuition money became a subject of contention: MacKaye and [the business manager Charles] Frohman were accused of mis-appropriating these funds into other departments of the theatre and in this way preventing the prompt payment of the faculty and the proper administration of school activity. . . . Within a few months after the School had opened, MacKaye, pushed to the wall by unforeseen difficulties in getting the new plant into operation, was forced to abandon the management of the Lyceum and revert to private teaching as a means of livelihood. Reorganized, the Lyceum School came under the sole control of Franklin Sargent, the Harvard-educated teacher and organizer whom MacKaye had won as a Delsarte convert in 1878 while delivering a lecture at the Boston School of Oratory." Cf. "Mr. Sargent's Work," New York Mirror, XVII, No. 418 (January 1, 1887), 1. Then called the New York School of Acting, and surviving to the present day as the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, "The School [with twenty-five students] is now on a firm footing," said Mr. Sargent, "and its usefulness has been fully demonstrated. The first year it suffered from mismanagement, and I have spent nearly two years in removing the bad reputation which my early associates created for the enterprise. I think that now I am in a position to prosecute my work diligently and unhampered," with, as an advertisement on p. 8 indicates, "Mme. Malvina of Daly's, and many other prominent professionals" as "Instructors." Incidentally, at a convention on June 28, 1897, Sargent granted that "gesture is not an intellectual process primarily. It is a physical process. It is a question of sensation." See Amer's Magazine, XX (1898), 54h.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 563.
offered instruction in dramatic art and elocution.\footnote{131} Before turning to Ayres's pupils, in transition, consider his modest definition of elocution as "nothing else than good speaking, or perhaps it would be better to say it is good vocal delivery." However, although Ayres wisely held in suspect many of the ephemeral enthusiasms of current elocutionists, his own overweening emphasis upon the mental, as opposed to the physical governed by \_mind, kept him from examining physiological and psychological factors for possible application in the communication process.

To bring elocution "into better repute with the world," we have but to make the elocution of the elocutionists more frequently elocution . . . . One says: "We should be eager in our desires and work heartily," but he doesn't tell us how to work or what to work at. Another says: "You must advance or you will retrograde," but she doesn't tell us what to do in order to advance. This same adviser adds: "I feel that the diggers of the earth who go down deep have better results than those who spend their time in displaying what they know"; but how our adviser would have us dig deep we are left to divine, hence the advice is of doubtful worth. Another says: "First of all, I think that elocution, both in teaching and in practice, will be reformed by the light of the harmonic principle. How the harmonic principle would aid in determining just what an author would say, and just how one should emphasize, inflect, and pause in order to make an author's meaning clear, we are left to find out as best we can. Here, perhaps, we should do well to invoke the aid of the principle harmonic. This same counsellor

\footnote{131}{Fred C. Blanchard, "Professional Theatre Schools in the Early Twentieth Century," in Wallace, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 622. Cf. Hodge, in Wallace, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 566 and 568: Nelson Wheatcroft, Director of the Empire Theatre Dramatic School, merged his enterprise with Sargent's Academy in 1899 or, according to Blanchard, in 1897. But Mrs. Adeline Stanhope Wheatcroft became director of a school of her own, the Stanhope-Wheatcroft Dramatic School with which Ayres was associated. See also \textit{Werner's Magazine}, XX (January, 1898), 524-525: "As a rule," Mrs. Wheatcroft found, "the voice is very monotonous. . . . I like best a nervous temperament in a student. One may be ever so painstaking, but if he or she has not temperament, there is seldom a chance of rising above mediocrity."}
tells us that we must be in love with the poetry we attempt to interpret, and that the greatest thing in elocution, as in religion, is the love of God. How love of God or of poetry could possibly sharpen one's wits I [Ayres] cannot see. I have yet to find that the pious read any better than the impious, nor has it ever seemed to me that love for the poetic better that discretion that Shakespeare intimates is the elocutionist's best tutor. Indeed, I have always been under the impression that poets are commonly bad readers, even of their own compositions. Love of poetry may, usually does, make the reader earnest, but unwhipped earnestness is seldom anything but fuss and fury. Then we have "The New Elocution," and perhaps some other kinds of elocution that I have never heard of. Whether any one of these various kinds of elocution is likely to drag elocution out of the slough of despond, in which all concede that it at present wallows, is a matter that I have not even an impression with regard to, as I have not even a vague idea of what these various kinds of elocution are. Philistine-like, I have been content to stick to the old sort, of which I have still much to learn. No man should attempt the new till he has mastered the old.  

Granting that Ayres "did yeoman service in bettering the practice of the art of elocution on our stage" by remaining "steadfast in upholding the natural method of delivery," one contemporary listed as Ayres's "pupils a number of players prominent on the American stage. Among them are E. H. Sothern, Virginia Earned, Bose Coghlan, N. C. Goodwin, Eliza Warren, Cecilia Loftus, Alberta Gallatin, and Adelaide Fitz-Allen."  

A brief survey of critical comment relative to these performers follows with the purpose of suggesting an influence by Ayres upon them and upon the legacy which they, in turn, handed down to others.  

Concerning Edward Hugh Sothern, son of the actor Edward Askew Sothern who had died in 1881, the critic Charles E. Russell noted a  

\[132\text{Ayres, }\text{Essentials, pp. 58-61.}\]  

\[133\text{"The Death of Alfred Ayres," loc. cit.}\]
number of weaknesses in Sothern's Hamlet, delivered two years after Ayres's death.

But his readings are very interesting and often wonderfully good. For instance, it is a delight to hear him say:

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor,—

the common utterance of the lines being as if the Queen both fed and batten on the moor, thereby obliterating the real meaning.

For the most part the readings in "To be or not to be" are unexceptionable, and surely the whole speech has seldom been heard with more effect; few actors in our time have such thorough knowledge of the value of tempo and pause. . . .

. . . Sothern reads far better than the average Hamlet, far better than Tree or Robertson, immeasurably better than Irving. . . .--this is the best Hamlet since the great light of Edwin Booth passed and left the stage dark; and knowing Mr. Sothern to be of fine mind, studious habit, and reverent spirit, we may think it a Hamlet that has but begun to be.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Some of the managerial prejudice must be ill-founded, ruin cannot always be the right orthography of Shakespeare. Played by such capable, studious, thoughtful actors as Miss Julia Marlowe and Mr. E. H. Sothern, Shakespeare would seem to spell success, even to eyes that must needs regard balance-sheets. . . . For what else but Shakespeare so delivered would the public crowd the theatre so many nights at advanced prices?134

Moreover, at the very time of Ayres's death, "Sothern bids fair to be the greatest actor in America. In a peculiar way his influence upon the drama is great. Not often do you see him rushing into print with dicta or preaching, but there is many a struggling young dramatist

134 Charles E. Russell, "A Notable Dramatic Achievement: Miss Marlowe and Mr. Sothern in Shakespeare," The Critic XLV (December, 1904), 525-531. See especially pp. 530-531 and 525.
Whereas Sothern was acting in 1904 with his wife Julia Marlowe, born Sarah Frances Frost and trained by the professional actress and teacher Ada Dow, he also acted with another wife, namely, the Ayres-trained Virginia Harned. The critic J. Hanken Towse witnessed their performance in Charles H. Meltzer's English version of Hauptmann's The Sunken Bell and noted, early during 1900:

"E. H. Sothern in Tragedy," under the rubric CONTEMPORARY CELEBRITIES, Current Literature, XXXIII (November, 1902), 533. Cf. ibid.: "The public heard two years ago that Mr. E. H. Sothern, an actor famous in light comedy and a rather young man, announced a production of Hamlet. . . . Mr. Sothern produced a profound sensation. The reading of his lines was musical in quality and intelligent in interpretation. His conception of the character and its portrayal was clear cut and rich in its suggestion. Not since the days of Edwin Booth has there been seen a finer Hamlet upon the stage." See also: under the rubric THE DRAMA, The Independent, LVII (November 10, 1904), 1084-1086; Henry Austin Clapp, "Reminiscences of a Dramatic Critic," Atlantic Monthly, LXXXVIII (October, 1907), 492; "Sothern as a Star and Before," Munsey's Magazine, XXVI (December, 1901), 320-322; "Portrait as Lovelace," The Critic, XXXIX (October, 1901), 327; Bookman, XIV (November, 1901), 227; "Portrait as Richard Brinsley Sheridan," Bookman, XIII (August, 1901), 538; "Portrait," The Cosmopolitan, XVIII (February, 1900), 421; The Critic, XXVI (May, 1900), 389; The Critic, XLIII (December, 1903), 512; Munsey's Magazine, XXVII (July, 1902), 618; Munsey's Magazine, XXX (January, 1904), 582; The Critic, XXXVI (June, 1901), 493; "Portrait as Hamlet," Munsey's Magazine, XXIV (December, 1900), 414; Munsey's Magazine, XXIX (July, 1903), 624; Canadian Magazine (Toronto), XVII (May, 1901), 41; Review of My Remembrances, by E. H. Sothern, Bookman (London), LII (June, 1917), 96; M. Aldrich, "E. H. Sothern," Arena (Boston), VI (October, 1892), 517-531; Review of Reviews (London), VI (November, 1892), 485; R. E. Davis, "E. H. Sothern," Harper's Weekly Magazine, XXVI (September 24, 1892), 916 and 918-919; D. Kermer, "Sothern in Hamlet," Harper's Weekly Magazine, XLIV (October 6, 1900), 946; Munsey's Magazine, XXV (December, 1900), 425; The Independent, LV (February 5, 1903), 299; W. D. Adams, "Actors of the New Generation" and "Actors of the Past Generation," The Theatre, XXXI, 247 and 309 and XXX, 316; and Percy Fitzgerald, "On Some of the Old Actors," Gentleman's Magazine (London), LII (New Series), 82-170.

Hodge, in Wallace, op. cit., p. 562.
The equipment of the modern actor, as a rule, does not include any special capacity for dealing with elocutionary difficulties. Both Mr. Sothern and Miss Hamned have much to learn concerning the art of speaking verse. The former . . , spoiled some of the best passages by the monotony of the cadence with which he rounded off every period, while the latter was almost unintelligible in the opening lines allotted to Hauntendein. Later on, with an easier metre, her utterance was sufficiently clear. As these players meditate an excursion, at no distant period, into the realm of Shakespearian tragedy, the importance of their elocutionary defects is obvious.\textsuperscript{137}

Still their "acting with a sincerity and intelligence" caused Towse to hope "that the success of the production will encourage them to further efforts in the same direction.\textsuperscript{138} Perhaps, too, they were encouraged by the imminence of Shakespearian production to seek out Ayres's help at this time or to apply their talents more diligently under his tutelage. When under the management of Charles Frohman,\textsuperscript{139} during the year of Ayres's death, "Miss Virginia Hamned plays the heroine with coquettish charm, plentiful spirit, and considerable skill" in spite of, according to the same critic Towse, "scenes thrown together in haphazard and crude fashion.\textsuperscript{140} Then too, for example, Hamned played in\textit{Iris}, by Arthur Wing Pinero, as well as enacted Lady Lorna

\begin{itemize}
\item 137 J. Ranken Towse, under the rubric THE DRAMA, The Critic, XXVI (1900), 441-442.
\item 138 Ibid., 442.
\item 139 See, e.g., professional card in New York Dramatic Mirror, XLVIII, No. 1, 244 (October 25, 1902).
\item 140 J. Ranken Towse, under the rubric THE DRAMA, The Critic, XL (1902), 38-42. See especially p. 42.
\end{itemize}
Just as E. H. Sothern had early attracted Ayres's critical favor for his stage delivery, although Ayres qualified the endorsement by noting the improvements needed, so also Rose Coghlan received limited approval from Ayres during the year 1886. Apparently before becoming a pupil of Alfred Ayres,

Miss Coghlan is possessed of unusual natural aptitude for the player's art; she is, probably, the best all-round actress in the country; but she is not, and never has been, a student. She doesn't know what study means. Never has an actress achieved more than she has achieved with the same amount of mental labor. She is wholly indebted for her position to her good looks and her inborn cleverness. She never has a reason for anything she does. She always looks well, is always graceful, is always dashing and vigorous; but her handling of the lines is generally worse than bad. Her emphasis is more frequently in the wrong place than it is in the right place, and she always lets her voice run down as the breath leaves her lungs until she is scarcely audible, though the faintly spoken words may be of more importance than any others in the sentence. Miss Coghlan might easily have been at the very top of the heap; but with haphazard, unthoughtful methods, no actress, though she have the genius of a B&chel, can ever rise above respectable mediocrity.

141 "Portrait" of Virginia Harned, Harper's Weekly Magazine, XLVI (September 27, 1902), 1345; XLVIII (February 20, 1904), 285. See also: Munsey's Magazine, X.V, 309; The Critic, XL (January, 1902), 38; The Cosmopolitan, XXXIII (October, 1902), 630; The Cosmopolitan, XXXV (October, 1902), 708; "Portrait as Ophelia," Munsey's Magazine, XXIV (December, 1900), 415; and G. Kobbe, "Edward Sothern and His Wife," The Ladies' Home Journal, XX (October, 1903), 4-5.

142 Ayres, Acting, pp. 59-60. Cf. ibid., pp. 128-129 and 131: "From Mr. Sothern's reading of this line, I [Ayres] take it he is one of the many that read, my heart of hearts, the man of men, great among the greatest, the mightiest in the mightiest. I respectfully suggest, my heart of HEARTS [etc.] . . . Now why is it that Mr. Sothern so easily walks off with the honors of the presentation of The Love Chase? . . . in Mr. Sothern's utterance there is more intelligence, more nature; because his mind seems to be wholly occupied with the thoughts the words convey; because he seems really to mean what he says; because he so speaks his lines as to make their meaning easy to seize. In a word, it
Coghlan eventually became "the admired leading actress of Wallack's."  

Of the remaining performers listed as pupils of Ayres, Nathaniel
Carl Goodwin achieved greatest distinction in the profession. Eliza
Warren has already been mentioned as having attended Ayres devotedly
during his last illness and having accompanied his body to Woodlawn
Cemetery. She not only wrote "In Memoriam" at that time in the
final issue of Werner's Magazine, a lengthy account of Ayres which has
served throughout the present investigation; she also copyrighted, from
Cleveland, Ohio, during the autumn of 1904, three typewritten play-scripts
authored by Ayres and, in May of 1891, had supported Ayres by playing
Portia to his Shylock on stages in several New England towns.

Adelaide Fitz Allan, also spelled -Allen, on occasion billed herself
as because he speaks like an intelligent, earnest human being—like a
man! It is because his method is simple, direct, NATURAL. Original
source for the latter: New York Mirror, 1887.

143 Odell, op. cit., IX, 141. Cf. Ibid., IX, 154: a performance
on August 23, 1872, in which the aforementioned Charlotte "Thompson
played Julie, in The Hunchback, with Bose Coghlan (specially engaged)
as Helen . . . . The Herald review states that Miss Coghlan was Julia
and Miss Thompson Helen." See also "Portrait [of Bose Coghlan] as
Penelope," Harper's Weekly Magazine, XLVII (November 14, 1903), 1829;
and "Who Is Greatest Living English Actress?" Idler (London), VIII, 393.

144 See "Portrait [of Nat C. Goodwin] as David Garrick," Bookman,
XIII (August, 1901), 536; "Portrait as Shylock," The Critic, XXXVIII
(June, 1901), 488; Overland Monthly (San Francisco), XXXIX (New Series: January, 1902), 568; "Portrait," Munsey's Magazine, XXIV (January, 1901),
603 and XXVI (February, 1902), 727; "New Mr. Goodwin in the Play In Missouri," Harper's Weekly Magazine, XXXVII (October 28, 1893), 1026.

145 "The Funeral of Alfred Ayres," New York Dramatic Mirror, XLVIII,
No. 1,246 (November 3, 1902), 17.

146 "The Death of Alfred Ayres," loc. cit.
as "Late Leading Support with Mlle. Rhea." Marie Cecilia (Cissie) Loftus, who married Justin Huntly McCarthy, was cited by Daniel Frohman, along with Mrs. Leslie Carter, Ethel Barrymore, and the like. This former player of "music-hall parts" had taken decided strides forward, no doubt under Ayres's guidance, and attracted critical attention, as follows:

Cissie Loftus as a possible Sir Henry Irving leading-lady probably never entered the mind of even the critical theatergoer of a few years ago, and it is hard to imagine her interpreting Ibsen and Maeterlinck. Still, all things are possible to a woman of Miss Loftus' genius for surprise, the mark of your true actress.

In addition, Ayres not only translated and adapted the German play Deborah for the stage use of Madame Janauschek but also taught her the English language and coached her in many roles. Before studying with Ayres, Mme. Fanny (Franziska Magdalena Romance) Janauschek had played, for example, at the Boston Theatre on November 3, 1863, with Edwin Booth in Macbeth. Booth spoke in English in response to her Lady Macbeth delivered in the German language. "The critics declared that Mme. Janauschek had accomplished a marvellous feat in language study

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147 E.g., professional card in New York Mirror, XVII, December 25, 1886.


150 Warren, op. cit., 12.
[mastering "English, a language which, it was said, she had miraculously
learned in a year"], and all agreed that, although she spoke with a
decided accent, she spoke fluently and well. Thereafter she belonged
to the English-speaking stage of America."

She played at first to German audiences exclusively, but, by
degress, the knowledge of her ability reached the critics. Richard
Grant White and Montgomery Schuyler wrote of her in enthusiastic
terms... She visited this country three successive seasons,
playing Schiller's dramas and those of Alfieri and Jiaicometti in
German. In 1871 she undertook the part of Deborah in English,
under the management of Augustin Daly... She then appealed
to the English-speaking public in a dramatization of Dickens's
Bleak House, called Chesny Wold... her reputation rests on
the performances of Lady Macbeth, Mary Stuart and Brunhilde... A.
C. Wheeler [Ayres's long-term antagonist], who wrote the last
play in which she appeared... [found her] "still capable of
playing Lady Macbeth as no one else in America could play it, the
only Mary Stuart left to the Western world." 152

Perhaps further possible influence of Ayres upon the eminent German
tragedienne was evidenced in her selection of Thomas Hunter "to accompany
her across the continent. Mr. Hunter always reads his lines with great
intelligence and discretion."

Then too, Mrs. D. P. Bowers, who reportedly starred for many seasons
in Ayres's historical tragedy Lady Jane Grey, allowed herself to be

151 Odell, op. cit., IX, 71.

152 "Passing of Janauschek," under the rubric EDITORIAL COMMENT,
Current Literature, XII (October, 1902), 395-396. Cf. Odell, op.
cit., IX, 71, 106, 299, and 387-388; "Portraits of Fanny Janauschek,"

153 "Under the rubric MUSIC AND THE DRAMA, The Spirit of the Times
(New York), XCIV, No. 10 (October 13, 1877), 290. See also Odell, IX,
388: "the bright little comedietta, Come Here, in which Janauschek's
repetition of those two monosyllables under a wide range of passion and
feeling was little short of an elocutionary marvel."
quoted, as follows: "Had I my career to go over again, I should consider Mr. Ayres's teaching invaluable. There is no beginner who would not greatly profit by it. He is a master." And again, the eminent elocutionist Georgia Cayvan said, "You [Ayres] have put some golden truths into your little Elocution book. I am glad that such common-sense views on so abused a subject are in the reach of all."\textsuperscript{154}

Concerning Ayres's influence upon the transition from elocution to twentieth-century interpretation of literature, his pupil S. H. Clark has already received attention. Clark "is comparatively a young reader, and has sprung to the front in a surprisingly short time. He is to be congratulated upon his rapid rise."\textsuperscript{155} Relative to Clark's own teaching and writing, especially the extensive section on "Mental Technique and Literary Interpretation" which Clark contributed to Chamberlain's 

Principles of Vocal Expression, Clark felt obligated "to acknowledge . . . the vast amount of benefit I have received through the media of the personal and published criticisms of Mr. Alfred Ayres. . . . of all the works extant on elocution there are none which lay the amount of stress on the thought and its interpretation that does Mr. Ayres. . . . Mr. Ayres deserved the thanks of the profession . . . for his struggle to obtain a thoroughly natural style in pronunciation and delivery."

Clark continued by noting Ayres's failure to receive credit for

\textsuperscript{154}Quoted in an advertisement, New York Mirror, XVII (December 25, 1886), 12.

the contributions:

I [Clark] think that Prof. Roberts, of Philadelphia, is the only prominent teacher of elocution who has publicly acknowledged the value of Mr. Ayres's work; but one cannot have followed closely the train of thought in several recent contributions to your paper without noting the unacknowledged tribute to the work of Mr. Ayres. . . . no one has been so bold and uncompromising in his endeavors to root out of elocution anything which would tend to its deterioration.  

Add to these endorsements for Ayres's pioneer work the considered judgment of Maud May Babcock: "The more I teach, the more I meet elocution teachers, the higher is my regard for Mr. Ayres. My work with him has been of more use than all my other work put together."  

S. Werner, editor and owner of Werner's Magazine, accredited Ayres as "original in his views and original in his language. . . . author, dramatist, and actor. . . . analytic thinker. A close student of the manners and methods of Forrest, Cushman, and other giants of pure speech and effective delivery, and withal eminent as an orthoepist, rhetorician, and critic, he is indisputably an authority in elocutionary and dramatic matters, and deserves thankful recognition for what he has done to check the small-brained but big-voiced people who have by their false methods, personal vanity, and ignorance brought the very

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157 Letter to the Editor from Maud May Babcock, Werner's Magazine, XIX (January, 1897), 78.
name of elocution into disrepute."¹⁵⁸

At the time of Ayres's death, the lead editorial in what was destined to become the last issue of Werner's Magazine recognized a continuing need for the labors which Ayres had pursued diligently throughout his career.

In a country where there are 70,000,000 people, about half of whom do not pronounce the English language correctly, there is room for all the teachers of elocution. At least 2,000,000 foreigners need to be taught how to pronounce, without dialect, the words of common conversation. Clerks and business men are interested in effective speech. To all who have a mission there is a mission. It is not a question as to who has the largest school, or who does his work in a studio—but is the work good? Mr. Alfred Ayer did his work in a private way, but the nation knows and feels the benefit. Perhaps some larger schools have really developed fewer good readers, actors and speakers.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, in the following manner Ayres's devoted pupil Eliza Warren summed up her master's influence:

The positive personality of Mr. Ayres enabled him to overcome much of the early opposition which the brusqueness of his criticisms engendered, and for forty years he had been a guiding force among actors and elocutionists. It has been said of him that he created a new school of elocution. Not so. He merely revived the method that is as old as speech—natural expression in words and action.

Yet the coming of Alfred Ayres into this field did create a

¹⁵⁸Edgar S. Werner, "Introduction" to Ayres, Acting, p. 14; see also ibid., p. 15: "Ayres is a veritable elocutionist. He contends strenuously for intellectuality in elocution, maintaining that much of the prevailing preparatory training, with its peculiar nomenclature and divisions, is unnecessary; indeed, that it is more of a hindrance than an aid, for it proceeds from a wrong basic principle, and substitutes the shell for the kernel, shallowness for depth, mechanicalness for spontaneity, artificiality for naturalness." Much of the material that Werner presented in this introduction had appeared earlier in an article which Werner contributed to his own journal, X (February, 1888), 33, namely, "Alfred Ayres, An Analytical Study of the Principles and Method of His Teaching and of His Criticisms."

¹⁵⁹"Room for All," Werner's Magazine, XXX (December, 1902), 5.
revolution in the art of expression. Old and stilted methods were
shorn of their absurdities and a newer, freer interpretation was
encouraged, with more of meaning and infinitely more of grace.
The art has met with a loss which we—his students—feel cannot
be replaced. Perhaps sometime, another may arise who will be a
landmark in his time but not more than one such may come in any
one century. Epochs do not often recur.

To summarize the last section in this final chapter in the
investigation: Just as many of the direct sources for Ayres's theories
and his practice relative to language and its delivery lay in eighteenth-
century England, so his philosophy for teaching speech and dramatic art
took up echoes from pronouncements by, say, Thomas Sheridan in 1762.
Ayres insisted that students first get the meaning or sense of a passage,
together with the spirit or attitude or purpose of the author in writing
it, and then in delivery students should let tones or modulation and,
to a less degree, bodily action come forth spontaneously in response
to the ideas expressed. Sheridan, for example, had identified tones and
gestures as, respectively, the audible and the visible aspects of
emotion, an association which Ayres also made, and had devoted much
greater discussion to the other elements of elocution, more directly
related to the expression of ideas. In the latter connection, too,
Ayres analyzed emotion as a function of thought, located the seat of
emotion in the brain, and encouraged cultivation of the elocutionary
elements: emphasis, inflection, and pause.

In his overweening interest in the mental, as opposed to the
physical governed by mind, Ayres was unable or unwilling to recognize

possible application for physiological and psychological factors in the communication process. But the latter approaches had only recently begun to take on the respectability of scientific verification; moreover, earlier efforts by often-termed new elocutionists had soon foundered in mechanical systems. Considering the disrepute into which elocution had been descending and the observed need for immediate reform, Ayres consistently advocated a return to the basic principles for effective delivery which he associated with the practice of Edwin Forrest and Charlotte Cushman and which he propounded as the method for all time.

Accordingly, Ayres seized upon every opportunity to place his beliefs before the people who were, or who would be, in a position to improve the general level of speaking, and reading aloud, through careful application of this doctrine. Ayres worked with Steele MacKaye in the latter's attempts to found a free Conservatory of Art, analogous to the Paris Conservatoire, at the Lyceum Acting School in 1884, and possibly also in MacKaye's School of Expression on Union Square in 1877 as well as in the project under way at the Madison Square Theatre. Then too, reportedly the year 1900 witnessed Ayres's teaching in the Stanhope-Wheatcroft Dramatic School in New York. For the most part, however, Ayres conducted private lessons and coached performers for roles in the theatre.

Consider Ayres's possible influence upon, and through, his theatre pupils, of whom E. H. Sothern and Hose Coghlan and Nat C. Goodwin gained prominence in the profession, as well as upon the eminent German tragedienne Madame Janauschek to whom he taught the English language.
and coached in many of her characterizations. Furthermore, especially in his view of interpretation as the study of literature through the medium of oral performance, as distinct from vocal tricks and gestural virtuosity, Ayres handed down, primarily through S. E. Clark and Maud May Babcock, an enlightening concept of elocution for the service of twentieth-century speech and theatre.

Incidentally, because of the distinct partition employed in this chapter, as well as the immediate presentation of a final summary for the complete investigation, the individual summaries for the four fundamental divisions of this chapter, identifying Ayres's capacities as an author and editor, a playwright and adapter, an actor and public reader, and a teacher and coach, are not repeated at this juncture.
Numerous forces, operating both from abroad and at home, combined with the events in Alfred Ayres's own life to shape his beliefs concerning speech and theatre and, relative also to the needs of the time which he professed to serve, to determine the course taken by Ayres's use of this heritage.

During his life-span of some sixty-eight years (1834-1902), Ayres was known by the following professional titles: ophthalmologist, actor, linguist and translator, orthoepist, verbalist, playwright and adapter, elocutionist, teacher and coach, public reader, author and editor, as well as theatre critic and correspondent. Moreover, Ayres functioned as an authority on acting and on language and its delivery. Speaking from a well-qualified background, he passed judgments that, in effect, often anticipated developments for which, in many instances, others would receive credit in the annals of speech and theatre.

As the comparative space allotted each of his capacities indicates, the proportional relationship Rhetor (including Teacher and Critic) : Dramatist :: Performer : Scholar did not hold true for Ayres; in his case, the product of the extremes far exceeded the product of the means. Notwithstanding, educated and trained as Ayres was both in this country at Oberlin College and in Germany and France, he disappointed some men
of letters by failing to realize completely his apparent potentialities for original scholarship.

Instead, after having observed in the dramatic profession an urgent need to return to basic principles and elemental knowledge, Ayres dedicated his life to reducing to fundamentals the unwieldy systems for delivery, which had been obscuring through mechanical detail the value of elocution. In order to communicate his suggestions for improvement to the performers and the teachers who were most in need of such benefit, Ayres wrote in a simplified, straightforward, conversational style and frequently repeated what often became emotional appeals for reform.

His blunt, commonly dogmatic, manner originally encountered opposition, especially from the performers whom he criticized without mercy. But soon the sincerity in Ayres's wholehearted devotion to his convictions, together with the positive results netted by his campaign for better speech, gained increasing support for his tireless efforts. In this connection, too, audiences had begun to sense the cumulative effect of faulty delivery even though they were not critically attuned to Ayres's order of understanding the reasons why ineffectiveness resulted in a certain instance.

Ayres locked with nostalgia upon the past's high regard for the lessons taught by the science and the originally creative philosophy of elocution. He called attention to the desiccation of systems for elocution, however, in a multiplicity of rules and codified procedure which burdened its later development. Still, without question, Ayres preferred elocution's capacity for intelligent interpretation to the
haphazard, slapdash methods of a so-termed new school, which was rapidly usurping the reign of elocution. He had witnessed a calculated courting of effective communication yielding, in the new school, to underplaying vocal delivery with overacting, and with spectacular and commonplace effects, in a frenzied seduction of coin from the spectator.

Ayres's work, then, cannot be evaluated fairly only in terms of a nostalgia for the past. His theatre reviews reflect an exemplary critical acumen based upon his fundamentally sound theory for acting and for language and its delivery.

In contrast, on the whole, theatre critics at that time evinced little knowledge of, or interest in, vocal delivery. They seldom registered a complaint against performers' widespread deviations from simple, direct, natural methods, although the latter had been calculated to effect clarity and impressiveness. Their interests had begun to center, rather, upon the splendor of scenic investiture. They came to a performance to note, say, the character in an actor's new wig. The days when a critic wrote, in effect, a dissertation upon a pause misplaced, or upon a certain vocal inflection, were passing away.

The theatre critic Alfred Ayres endorsed a traditional procedure of observing and evaluating the speech of actors. Then, by means of articles in theatrical magazines and newspapers, he was able to lay faults in delivery, together with suggestions for improvement, at the doors of various offenders.

For bodily action on stage, Ayres recognized a need for only a few simple rules, easy to learn and to apply, which he believed to
function throughout all artful expression. He refused, however, to condone the excess to which typical Delsartians eventually codified their gestures and movements into an artificial system of poses. Such unnaturalness led Ayres to advise actors to let bodily movements, like tones of the voice, take care of themselves at the moment of delivery.

Accordingly, his critique of the immediate followers in the elocutionary tradition can be related not only to Lawrence Barrett's denying elocution any value for stage training, for example, but also to John McCullough's turning away from the strict tenets of elocution to indulge his potential for great acting in the byplay of Delsarte's system.

Frequently Ayres voiced a dissenting opinion about a star performer who was revered at the time. For instance, Ayres granted that Edwin Booth was an exceedingly clever actor and a marvelously successful entertainer, but even Booth, the foremost tragedian of the period, did not impress Ayres as a great dramatic artist. No one was too important or too insignificant to escape his straightforward evaluation of merit.

Significantly, on occasion, when other critics and scholars have been able to look back from the perspective gained by the passing of time, they have often tempered earlier adulation along critical lines which Ayres had drawn years before.

In criticism, however, Ayres's avowed purpose was not to belittle the players but to encourage would-be dramatic artists to think before delivering their lines. For, ultimately, Ayres blamed the chaos in delivery upon a lack, or careless use, of histrionic intelligence. Specifically, he believed that all truly great actors would agree that
there was one best way, and only one, to utter every line.

In the theatre, Ayres heard vocal delivery draw heavily upon the conversationally natural speech of everyday life at that time. Unfortunately, the trend was giving off signs of passing below the level of colloquial delivery to degenerate into the commonplace. Ayres’s theatre criticisms bear witness to his efforts to stem the tide of excessive naturalness, as well as to hold in check excesses operating from the opposite extreme, namely, overly declamatory delivery. He felt that the time needed to be shocked out of indifference toward faulty delivery. His criticism, as a result, often gave voice to a zealous plea for uprooting a pernicious practice from the field of delivery.

A comparison of Ayres’s practice in writing various theatre criticisms with his mental view of delivery, as examined in his book *The Essentials of Elocution*, reveals Ayres’s critical method at work in the following manner: (1) The ideas were often repeated, sometimes almost verbatim, in the introductory paragraphs of a review. (2) The ideas found expression, often in forceful pleas for their acceptance, in the body of a review. (3) The ideas were exemplified by numerous instances, from current theatre practice, of the wrong and the right application of the principle involved.

Ayres’s comparative neglect of inflection, for example, in favor of a detailed treatment of emphasis, stemmed from confessed limitations in his critical method. Recognizing the difficulty in writing about speech faults, Ayres found emphasis and, to a less degree, pause
particularly suited to discussion on paper; he left to oral illustration any extensive treatment of the other elements in vocal delivery.

Again, the printed page was an asset when Ayres tried to lead other persons to the high level of precision in pronunciation which he had attained by having compared various authorities' views with the best current American usage. His unrelenting criticism began to influence stage pronunciation at that time. Even most natural-schooled performers eventually came to place primary and secondary accents within words appropriately and to avoid mangling the distinctive quality of a vowel, at least in accented sounds.

But Ayres's campaign for the actor to arrive at an effective middle ground between the Scylla of overpronunciation and the Charybdis of underpronunciation did not result in such general success. For Ayres required from the actor, who was usually seeking the personally unique at all costs, instead, increased intellectual effort and tedious application. These demands discouraged the evolution of a norm in delivery where the traditionally calculated and the colloquially natural could effect a compromise for better communication of the dramatist's purpose in writing.

On the contrary, the excesses of the latter school's underpronunciation and of the former's overpronunciation were often mixed in erratic profusion in order to court a whim of the moment. In Ayres's judgment, one of the few virtues of the easy-going delivery of the new school was a tendency to slur unemphatic pronouns and particles and such grammatical form words as to and from. In the speech of many performers, of course,
such slurring was merely part of a general indiscriminate, Ayres-termed gim-e-glass-o'-beer, style which was employed throughout.

In Ayres's analysis, emphasis and slurring, its counterpart, functioned in relation to breath control. Ayres explained many actors' radical departures from the critically acceptable, then, in terms of a faulty production and use of the breath stream, which makes phonation possible. Speaking from breath propelled from the apex instead of from the base of his lungs, a typical new-schooled performer took breath in loud gasps before delivering almost every thought unit. He then proceeded to let his voice dwindle progressively in audibility during exhalation, while a particular sequence of words was reeled off. As a result, words near the beginning of the exhalation commonly received stress, and final elements in the unit were lost to the understanding of most, if not all, of the audience. Sometimes such pectoral inhalation was accompanied by a distracting raising of the actor's shoulders. Ayres found that the monotonous repetition of this vocal effect, often used in conjunction with intonation, laid the performer open to censure for undermining the dramatist's meaning with a sing-song mechanical pattern.

Ayres also noted that vowels in unaccented syllables, especially those in suffixes and those near the end of a very long word or in very short words, began to lose full value and to approach in their formation toward what today is called the schwa-vowel area. This obscuration echoed a natural trend at work in the everyday speech of the time. This brand of naturalness, therefore, was encouraged in its bid for stage use because it pleased the populace in their quest for the pleasantly
familiar in the theatre.

Compared with an American actor in this respect, a typical British performer satisfied Ayres by not obscuring word endings. This habit may have been instilled by the British actor's need to make words audible in such vast amphitheatre-like structures as Drury Lane and Covent Garden. But the English language, unlike Latin and Russian and German, does not require a distinct utterance of grammatical endings in order to identify the function of the various words in a sentence. In highly inflectional languages, on the other hand, it is common to find stage practice guided by the injunction that an actor speak all his endings loud and clear. No doubt, Ayres was familiar with this belief in Goethe's rules for German players. But its urgency need not apply to the analytic syntax of English. Just as grammarians had been foisting systems from the Latin language into English, at times Ayres seemed to be advocating a style of English pronunciation more appropriate to, and indeed necessary in, the rhetorical delivery of Latin periods. In Ayres's defense, though, even today some authorities, who are far from reserving the title "purist," advocate less use of the schwa sound in some unstressed positions, especially by members of professions involving impressive communication with large groups of listeners.

Moreover, Ayres endorsed partial obscuration for unaccented vowels, derided an actor's giving the full name-sound to a vowel in an unstressed position, and decried the international reputation of the United States for hitting hard the indefinite article a during delivery. He also condemned, as indicated, the widespread opposing fault of under-
pronunciation, for he observed a common tendency to annihilate completely an unaccented phoneme by supplanting it with the schwa sound or by going even further to destroy its potentialities for any manner of phonation.

In Ayres's demand that even an unaccented vowel should retain some identifiable aspect of its original phonemic structure, there were shades of the studied pronouncements made by such early influential lexicographers as John Walker and Stephen Jones. These writers had favored an exact pronunciation for each differing quality of vowel sound when found, as expressed by their followers, in the byways of vocal obscurity the same as when found in the highways of accent within a word or phrase and in the main artery of emphasis. Again, today, this influence of Walker can be noted in the unwillingness of the so-called Webster Key to abandon distinct qualitative symbols, in italics, which indicate the several obscured vowels that in ordinary speech are sounded alike.

It becomes less surprising, then, that Ayres in his time held out against complete obscuration of phonemic structure; his belief in the value of partial obscuration or slurring for unaccented or unstressed elements reflected his sympathy with natural usage as it then chafed beneath the pedantic yoke of overpronunciation, beneath certain prescriptive dicta of Walker, Jones, and their followers of whom Professor Virgil A. Pinkley, of Cincinnati, rose militant against Ayres's position. More important, though, wherever a uniform treatment of vowel-value obtained, that is, either consistent obscuring or constant stressing, Ayres heard not only a faulty, inflexible pattern of emphasis, lacking
variety, but also a stilted, pedantic, unnatural utterance which made
the performer appear self-conscious.

Often, too, the capacity of a particular phoneme for prolongation
in time or for increased volume or for a startling circumflex, by the
nature of the sound then, led the actor in delivery to pounce on vowels
and on certain voiced consonants. Also, emotionally colored or loaded
words attracted the stress of performers who were eager to capitalize
upon a public interest in the melodramatic. Changes were wrought to
satisfy the new importance of the ensemble production as a spectacular
composite of scenic appointments and to assist the individuality of a
star performer in focusing attention upon himself through a unique
twisting of traditional interpretation.

Even when an actor was able to sense the beat of a verse-form in
his speeches, this little knowledge often led him into the pitfall of
playing up the rhythmical pattern at the expense of the author's mean-
ing. Ayres found the average performer, of course, comparatively un-
familiar with the involutions of blank verse. Commonly, this actor
looked upon the first word in a line of verse, capitalized as it was in
print, as the most important element in that line and therefore the word
most in need of stress.

Ayres observed, in addition, a general American tendency to make
certain vowel sounds too much in the throat. He was referring, no doubt,
to what is associated today with Middle Western speech and is often
explained in relation to an excessive retroflexion of vowelized /r/ in final
and preconsonantal positions—the so-termed "burred /r." Ayres's dislike
for this guttural quality led him to advocate, as a corrective measure, a type of so-called drawling or, more precisely, an intrusive “yot,” the latter taking the phonetic symbol [j] and functioning, for example, in the word car as [kjær].

Ayres disapproved of a typical British actor’s failure to sound an ɹ, finally and preconsonantly, after many vowel sounds when the spelling of a word called for an ɹ; he chastised Americans who had the bad taste to affect it. Moreover, after the common manner of at least the British performers who were in America and who thereby were in a position to serve as models for this country’s native crop of thespians, some of the latter even aspirated the initial ɹ of pronouns and employed such criticisms as slurred my.

Along with many of his British colleagues, however, Ayres preferred sounding an a quality intermediate between the so-labeled “broad” and “flat” ɹ’s, which had been vying for supremacy in the pronunciation of certain words. This vowel phoneme was apparently meant to stand in compromise between the excesses of its two neighbors. For the latter, at different times in their respective histories, had brought both the anathema “affectation” and, its counterpart, the ban “vulgarism” to challenge the continued use of one ɹ sound in favor of the other.

Significantly, Ayres readily granted that minor deviations from critically acceptable usage did not depreciate noticeably the over-all effect of a pattern in delivery. In pleading for a return to the good old days of effective elocution, Ayres eschewed the new because of its failure to channel naturalness skilfully in the ways of art and, thereby,
to arrive at clarity and vividness in communication. True, Ayres made the age critical of niceties in pronunciation, but not so critical as to lead interpreters to obscure, through pedantry, the meaning of an author's language.

The age demanded naturalness. Not infrequently an individual performer responded by becoming natural unto himself. If this particular pattern did not coincide with what a specific audience's sense of the natural had been conditioned to expect, the performer's delivery attracted undue attention to itself and thus detracted from the effect intended by the playwright. In America the common man's frequent slips in delivery influenced the average actor, reared in this milieu apart from theatrical tradition, to handle language on stage in such a reputedly vulgate manner. For little or no training, especially in vocal delivery, was afforded the new-school actor, whose apprenticeship propelled him into almost immediate performance before a paying audience.

Incidentally, both the old and the new schools in acting and delivery professed to make use of nature, indeed to be based upon nature. The declamatory pattern of the old had generalized the typical in nature, according to traditional procedure, and called for an artfully conceived and executed product determined in relation to conventionally acceptable stage behavior. The so-termed natural approach of the new looked to various personal interpretations of nature as championed by individual performers. Ayres concluded that the merits of each school diminished when copying and inbreeding, or imitations building upon an imitation, began taking their toll.
In the new school's attempt at meticulous imitation of commonplace models from the current scene, the new actor began to find himself equipped to interpret only characters whose speech and manner reflected the trivia of everyday life. Eventually, then, a critical public could hardly avoid noting, with Ayres, that this actor had been progressively disqualifying himself for roles from classic and standard repertory.

While indulging his potentialities within the seemingly easy ways of the new, in exchange, he not only sold his actor's right to individual recognition but indeed frittered away the so-called higher drama which had been capable of bringing about his rebirth as a histrionic artist. Because a new breed of actor was evolving, ignorant of the demands of the higher drama and unskilled to meet them, adequate casting of a Shakespearean production became almost impossible.

Being natural on stage meant, for Ayres, adapting one's delivery to the nature of the dramatic script, that is, letting vocal style be natural to the general production style which the playwright's dialogue demanded. But Ayres saw the actor of the new school forego traditional training in versatility and, consequently, increase the probability of laying himself open to the charge of antagonizing the spirit that pervades the language of a certain drama. The performer thereby undermined his chances for success in classic and standard repertory, the standard by which Ayres determined an actor's professional stature.

Ayres insisted: first get the meaning or sense of a passage, together with the spirit or attitude or purpose of the author in writing it, and then in delivery let only tones or modulation and, to a less
degree, bodily action come forth spontaneously in response to the ideas or the thought expressed. Ayres's theatre criticisms reported a general decline in skilled histrionic intelligence to favor an individual performer's emotional inspiration at the moment of delivery. During Alfred Ayres's tenure as theatre critic, he observed an increasing incompetency, becoming an inability, to realize the art of acting and delivery in the late nineteenth-century American theatre.

In addition to his knowledge and application of contributions from many distinguished writers in the general field of language and its delivery, especially of the work of Archbishop Richard Whately and of numerous authorities on pronunciation, Ayres wrote authoritatively not only in this field but also concerning principles of acting. His interest in words and their expression led him to center his theory, for acting as an art, in the thought which a playwright intended to convey. For Ayres analyzed emotion as a function of thought and, after the manner of Thomas Sheridan, identified vocal modulation and bodily action as, respectively, the audible and the visible manifestations of emotion. Accordingly, as already indicated, he insisted that tones and gestures be allowed to respond untutored to the ideas expressed, but he encouraged cultivation for the elocutionary elements, primarily emphasis and inflection and pause, which contribute more directly to the expression of ideas, of thought.

For personal as well as professional reasons, Ayres rejected, or refused to recognize, Delaistian doctrine and practice which were calculated to eventuate, through inbreeding, in subordination of the
mental, indeed language itself, to the physical. True, especially
during the early months of the Lyceum Acting School which, incidentally,
survived as the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Ayres had taught
and coached along side of the American disciple in this movement—Steele
MacKaye. But when MacKaye was forced to abandon the original project
late in 1884, the school's administrator Franklin H. Sargent dismissed
Ayres for failing to adjust to a Delsarte-geared curriculum.

Even though Ayres then turned to private instruction, as did
MacKaye himself, Ayres's writing and teaching continued to propound
the value in training performers after the manner of the Paris Conserva­
toire. Ayres's plan suggests not only a similar approach by Samuel
Silas Curry but also Henry James's program for improving the English­
speaking theatre as well as the goals toward which Steele MacKaye had
been striving in his hope to establish a Free Conservatory of Art in
America.

Ayres's writings, however, cited neither the French theorist
Lenis Diderot nor that country's currently popular actor Constant
Coquelin. The latter's books on the art of acting had recently provoked
a heated controversy in contemporary periodicals with Henry Irving and,
in this country, with Lion Boucicault and Richard Mansfield. This
basically European discussion found a new transatlantic ramification in
comments exchanged by Alfred Ayres and his long-term intellectual
antagonist A. C. Wheeler, a drama critic who wrote under the name Nym
Crinkle in the New York Dramatic Mirror—the theatre journal for which
Ayres served as an authority on stage speech.
In effect, not only did Ayres coincide in basic theory with the mental view of the technician Coqueluc; paradoxically, Ayres was also coming close to Irving's general belief, an inspirational bias which stressed an actor's living his part, when Ayres told the actor first to get the sense of a passage and then to let the tones of his voice and his gestures in delivery take care of themselves. Ayres differed from Irving's position in his own inflexible demand that a high order of prolonged intelligent analysis, rather than only an emotional feeling for the role, dictate nearly all aspects of acting. He favored spontaneity in acting, but not the type produced, as Wheeler believed, by unconscious cerebration.

In Ayres's overweening interest in the mental, as opposed to the physical governed by mind, he was unable or unwilling to recognize possible application for physiological and psychological factors in the communication process. But the latter approaches had only recently begun to take on the respectability of scientific verification; moreover, earlier efforts by often-termed new elocutionists had soon foundered in mechanical systems. Considering the disrepute into which elocution had been descending and the observed need for immediate reform, Ayres consistently advocated a return to the basic principles which he associated with the stage practice of Edwin Forrest and of Charlotte Cushman and which he pronounced as the method for all time.

As a satisfactory standard for acting, Ayres applied the criteria of directness, simplicity, versatility, and dignity of the old school at its best. Again, he was unable or unwilling to envision any other
art form capable of attaining such breadth of treatment and such perfection in semblance of spontaneity. Interpreted by this school of Forrest and Cushman, drama enchanted while its subject matter edified the listener. In this manner, the old school in acting met Ayres's requirement that a playwright's thought be communicated clearly, forcibly, and agreeably.

Although Ayres may have erred in attributing to his past idols an almost life-long pursuit of this policy, with near-perfection resulting even during their very early careers, the teacher-critic Ayres persisted in sticking by his guns and condemning most newcomers for falling far short of the elocutionary prowess he had come to associate with Forrest and with Cushman. To implement his general plan for speech improvement, Ayres seized upon every opportunity to place his ideas before the people who were, or who would be, in a position to help to raise the level of speaking, and reading aloud, through careful application of this doctrine.

As a teacher, not only did Ayres work professionally with Steele MacKaye until late during 1884, after which he conducted private lessons and coached individual performers for stage roles; reportedly, as late as 1900, Ayres was teaching in the Stanhope-Wheatcroft Dramatic School in New York. Besides the eminent German tragedienne Madame Janenschek, to whom he taught the English language early in the eighteen-seventies and for whom he translated and adapted plays in addition to coaching her in many characterizations, Ayres's theatre pupils included such notable performers as E. H. Sothern, Rose Coghlan, and Nat C. Goodwin. Furthermore, in his view of interpretation as a way to study literature,
specifically by means of oral performance, Ayres handed down, primarily through his pupil S. H. Clark and through Maud May Babcock, an enlightening concept of elocution. Ayres challenged the vocal displays and gestural virtuosity which had been becoming common in this area.

As a performer himself, especially in the capacity of a public reader, Ayres rejected the impersonation associated at that time with Leland T. Powers and the copious explanation used by Locke Richardson, as well as George Riddle's characterization through pitch-change and pantomime; but along with Riddle, Ayres read from a book, unlike Sidney Woollett, and came closest in manner of delivery to that of his own pupil, a person destined to lead elocution into the twentieth century—S. H. Clark. Ayres relied on his voice to communicate the thoughts and, less successfully, the emotions intended by an author. He depended upon his understanding or impression of the speeches to bring forth, at the moment of delivery, proper agents for expression. His chances for success and acceptance were hindered, however, by a full beard, his eyeglasses, and on occasion his sense of not being fully appreciated or even completely understood, together with a certain distracting gesture of his little fingers while holding a book before his audiences.

Then too, the dignity which he identified with platform deportment restrained him from catering to the interest of an average audience in emotional delineation. In effect, although his interpretation reflected conscientiously detailed study and a freedom from vocal manipulation, its failure to adapt to the level of intelligence common among theatre-goers,
as well as a refusal to try to win the latter’s attention and admiration, restricted Ayres’s appeal primarily to the student of literary analysis.

Ayres’s performances on stage, as well as on the reading platform, seem to indicate that he interpreted only scenes culled from a complete play, except possibly his acting in Germany during the mid-fifties of the century and his 1891 appearance as Shylock, in several New England towns, with his devoted pupil Eliza Warren taking the part of Portia. In Ayres’s favor, at least by modern standards, was his attempt to differentiate the type of interpretation in demand in public readings or lecture recitals from that demanded by impersonation and acting. Ayres, then, was beginning to break away from a traditional belief in the near-identity of the various speaking arts.

Parenthetically, the relation of Ayres’s experience as a performing artist to his practice as a playwright and adapter may be compared with similar advantages which attended no less a dramatist than William Shakespeare. But, even though Ayres’s dramatic reworking of the novel Jane Eyre and his translation and adaptation of foreign plays served the period for which they were written, his original plays met with less financial success. A first-night audience for Jane Eyre was practically assured by general interest already instilled by the Bronte story; trying to follow the same furrow, perhaps, Ayres created play scripts concerning such well-known historical personages as Lady Jane Grey, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Mary Tudor, the latter also having been a source for the adaptation, apparently by Steel Mackaye in 1876, of Victor Hugo’s Marie Tudor as Queen and Woman. Still no one of Ayres’s
works of imaginative literature stood the test of time by having been produced long after the initial performance.

In comparison, however, with the abortive literary effort by the voice scientist James Rush, entitled *Hamlet, A Dramatic Prelude in Five Acts* and published in 1836, Ayres's creative products not only reflected his critical acumen but also, at least some of them, received the plaudits of so-called judicious audiences. Ayres's plays had not been written apart from the theatre; in effect, they surpassed the dramatic literature of Dr. Rush, for instance, who had been considered indeed fortunate in having achieved even the status of "closet drama" for his own work.

Granted, much of the approval gained by *Jane Eyre* related to the play's wholesomeness and morality, which stood in contrast to much contemporary theatrical fare and led certain critics to encourage its influence at the time. Still a critical consensus could not overlook the general excellence and masterful restraint in Ayres's adaptation: its structure and delineation of character and freedom from sentimentality. Moreover, the dramatization became for Charlotte Thompson a stage vehicle upon which her success as an actress continued to depend.

Ayres tried to practice what he preached when he left the classroom or studio and the critic's chair to function as an actor and a reader and as a practicing playwright before the public. Understandably, greater success greeted his books which were based upon his reworking of the critical findings of others, qualified and presented in detail according to the observed needs of his time, as well as upon his own contributions within this general area of knowledge. In addition, then,
Ayres's first book, on pronunciation, was selected for detailed analysis in order to supplement his critical reviews relative to the delivery of language, already discussed, and to provide an insight into the workings of Ayres's method as a serious writer or a scholar, even in the sense of a scholastic considering his customary insistence upon traditional doctrine. Ayres believed that before beginning the study of elocution proper, each student of delivery and of acting should know how to articulate language distinctly and how to pronounce words according to some recognized authority.

Therefore, Ayres set as his own initial task: examining numerous authoritative sources, comparing the letter's pronouncements with contemporary usage, and then suggesting a preferable pronunciation for a certain word in terms not only of the foregoing but of ease in utterance, of euphony, of analogy, and of general linguistic trends apparently at work modifying individual words for future use. In operation, his method concluded, for example, in a given instance that forced analogy had to yield place to euphony, despite the latter's deviation from some system which may even be working its influence from beyond the English language, that is, through the etymology of the word; the suggested pronunciation gained even more sway when contemporary usage, often
together with ease in utterance, and especially when established authority had long stood in support of Ayres's preference. Ayres's straightforward expression of his own considered judgment was usually qualified in relation to that of other authorities.

Ayres did not hesitate, however, to try to arrest the influence of antiquated authorities, especially when their pronouncements sorted oddly with contemporary usage. True, he made every effort to stem the tide of commonplace obscuration, mentioned earlier, which had inundated everyday speech and which by extension, considering the theatrical philosophy of the time, was also reducing the intelligibility of stage speech. In this policy, Ayres' approach took direction from the influential John Walker. But Ayres was neither awed into agreement with Walker nor content to follow his example. Then too, Ayres pointed out changes in pronunciation among the various editions of Noah Webster's American Dictionary. On at least one occasion, Ayres lined up four possible renderings for a word and advised free choice among the entries because each had good authority supporting the pronunciation.

Unlike Isaac K. Funk in A Standard Dictionary of the English Language, for which Ayres served as Special Literary Critic and as a member of the Advisory Committee on Disputed Spelling and Pronunciation, Ayres was not guided in his system of symbolization by the efforts of such phonotypic reformers and phoneticians as A. J. Ellis, Isaac and Penn Pitman, Elias Longley and his brothers, Nathaniel Storrs, Dan S. Smalley, Edwin Leigh, James Stone, and Andrew Comstock; nor did the Visible Speech of Alexander Melville Bell exercise noticeable influence.
Ayres compromised with the past by indicating the sounds in words while trying to preserve the orthography. Even in a pronunciation entry, when at all feasible, he wished to place only the correct spelling before the eyes of a student and, of course, shunned such phonetic respelling as evinced in Elias Longley's *Furst Fonetic Redur* of 1850. In championing spelling after the manner of such illustrious predecessors as Samuel Johnson, Ayres rejected the method of marking the several variations for a specific vowel according to a numerical sequence, introduced by William Kenrick in 1773, and elected instead to use diacritics, the general procedure first associated with William Johnston in 1764.

But Ayres's analyses did not confuse orthographical letters, in the spelling of a word, with the true sound of the letters when pronounced as a part of a thought unit. Rather, by noting, for example, both the letter *p* and its "compound" in *banquet*, Ayres sensed the running kinesiology of speech sounds in observing that a sound is determined in part by the sounds which precede and follow it. To express his beginning grasp of such phonetic concepts as a voiced and a voiceless fricative, each regarded as a single sound, he employed the long-hand of English verbiage, of course, not phonetic or phonemic terms or symbols in any way.

Ayres applied his knowledge of foreign languages in many entries. Still he believed that a person speaking English should avoid foreign words and phrases and, if used, that the latter should be Anglicized to show common usage. Good English was always better than, say, bad French. He condemned especially such so-called "mongrel" pronunciations as the
half French and half English handling of New Orleans, placard, envelope, and the like. Moreover, in speaking English, to pronounce restaurant as in French signaled questionable taste, even pedantry. Of all faults to be avoided in pronunciation, as well as in elocution, Ayres placed first the sound of pedantry.

Trying to counteract a popular practice to speak and to write as verbosely as possible, Ayres repeatedly reduced such constructions as the observation of the to observing the. Then too, not uncommonly, Ayres's writings took on the function of a sounding board for his editorial comments in criticism of the use of English by specific persons or professions or publications, that had ready access to his printed remarks. In the heat of arming his points, the personality of the man was wont to come forth to enliven the mechanical following of one entry by another; his personal beliefs supplemented the alphabetical scheme of the work.

On occasion, especially in suggesting preferable pronunciation, the scholar Ayres could stand apart from his customarily deep-seated ideas and re-evaluate them in terms of current serviceability. But believing that a person should not attempt the new until he has mastered the old, Ayres remained adamant against any indiscriminate redistribution of values.

Always a student, he continued to state that he still had much to learn concerning traditional doctrine. His knowledge of the past led him to propound a school in acting and delivery which had produced such notable exemplars of dramatic art as, in his own time, Edwin Forrest and Charlotte Cushman. In contrast, as a theatre critic Ayres observed
that the contemporary stage had been failing to yield comparable products, except when an influence from the best of the old prevailed both over slavish imitation of certain facets of the old and over calculated as well as ignorant deviation from the old.

In the excesses of a so-called new school for acting and delivery, Ayres recognized a pronounced need for reform. As a hope for the future, the value in the artistic and, incidentally, the financial success which he associated with Forrest and Cushman could not be denied. Moreover, Ayres was not attitudinally conditioned to try to adapt or to adjust basic concepts to whims of the moment. Rather, he identified such concepts as constants capable of withstanding ever-changing temporal enthusiasms. His aim was to maintain and to perpetuate fundamental principles, valuable not only for an age but for all time, and to discard trivial interpretations which cater to immediate popular taste.

Whatever circuitous route Ayres pursued in analyzing the demands made upon the speaker and the actor in performance, on his way back in his thinking Ayres met once again the theories of his great predecessors in the field. Ayres formulated these dicta in simple, straightforward, often memorable, language and handed down this legacy for the use of twentieth-century theorists and practitioners in the art and craft of speech and theatre.

His frequent repetition of his basic beliefs, with emotional appeals for their immediate application, may appear to represent needless laboring of elemental principles. But the need of the time called for such avid dedication from a conscientious critic.
Earl, though, Ayres had decided against continuing his active participation in the National Association of Elocutionists. This move did not reflect the position of Thomas C. Trueblood, among others, who remained satisfied with this organization even when the Speech Association of America was taking definite form more than twenty years later. Significantly, however, Ayres's considered judgment antedated the view of S. H. Clark and of James Albert Winans. For the latter, also, soon observed that the elocutionists' society, founded in 1892, had been offering increasingly fewer benefits to serious students and teachers in the profession.

None the less, Ayres searched out every opportunity to place his ideas before the profession and the general public, whether by means of letters to the editor, as well as personal letters and conversations, or through the printed page and the prepared speech or even by way of other teachers, and speakers and performers, trained in the Ayres tradition. His suggestions, often stemming from intense personal convictions, were thereby put in a favorable position which enabled them to continue to work for the betterment of the individual performer and of the profession in general.

Only one month separated the death of Alfred Ayres from the demise of Werner's *Voice* Magazine, a pioneer speech journal which had been founded, in 1879, as simply *The Voice* to serve music and theatre in the art of expression. Edgar S. Werner's periodical was eclipsed, however, when the new century witnessed Arthur Hornblow editing *The Theatre Magazine*, which was aimed directly at the theatrical profession. An era
in the American theatre was coming to a close. The voice was yielding emphasis to the production. Notwithstanding, Ayres's tireless efforts had been calculated to keep vocal delivery effective in the theatre.
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**Uncle Tom's Cabin** (adapted by G. Aiken), John Moore, Prompter, Park Street Theatre, New York, 1852. Courtesy of Folger Shakespeare Library. OSU Film No. P. 35.
I, Daniel William Scully, was born in London, Ohio, March 25, 1927. I received my elementary and secondary school education in the London Public School System and was graduated from London High School. After having served in the United States Naval Hospital Corps, I entered The Ohio State University and, in December of 1948, was granted the Bachelor of Arts degree in the general field of speech and English language. From the Louisiana State University, I received the Master of Arts degree during 1951. While in residence there, during the years 1949 and 1950, I worked with Professor Giles Wilkeson Gray in projects concerning the history of speech education. Then, before entering the Graduate School of The Ohio State University in 1951, I also specialized in the Department of Drama in the University of Southern California.

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