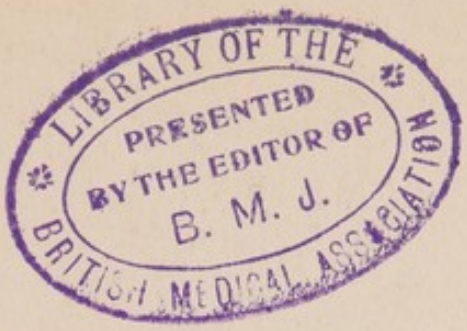
Stammering and successful control in speech and action / by Edwin L. Ash.

STAMMERING

EDWIN ASH, M.D.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STAMMERING

STAMMERING

AND SUCCESSFUL CONTROL IN SPEECH AND ACTION

BY

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'NERVES AND THE NERVOUS,' 'MENTAL SELF-HELP'
AND NUMEROUS OTHER WRITINGS ON NEURASTHENIA, THE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT OF NERVOUS DISORDERS
AND ALLIED SUBJECTS

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FOREWORD

THIS is not a medical book. It is not concerned with illness nor with ailments calling for medical or surgical treatment, but is intended to be a practical guide for the assistance of those unfortunate persons who through weakened control in speech or action suffer the tortures of stammering and the discomforts of various tricks of voice and manner. The indications and rules given are based on a systematic building up of general self-control, and no encouragement is given to methods that profess to banish such troubles without effort on the part of the individual concerned. Exercises and instructions are arranged throughout so that this little work can readily be used as a self-help book for daily use, and it is my sincere hope that it will bring encouragement and real help to many; whilst at the same time I trust that it will be found useful by parents, teachers, doctors, and all others who are commonly asked to advise about the disorders with which it deals.

THE AUTHOR

January 1916.

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STAMMERING

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION—HABITS BAD AND GOOD

IT is surely evident enough to every observant person that the world contains a host of unhappy people whose lot is hardly any concern of the doctor and who, in the absence of any definite system of mind-body assistance on scientific lines, wander about from pillar to post deriving what comfort they can from the well-meaning efforts of voice-trainers, muscle-trainers, mental healers, hypnotists, and many other folk who hope they have found a quick and certain means of conferring the power of complete self-control. What we want to-day are schools and teachers of applied psychology for the instruction of both young and old ; all these matters of stammering, tricks of manner, self-consciousness, and so forth, are at root largely dependent upon states of mind restlessness, and their remedy is largely a question of tranquil minds acting with smoothly working brains. Whenever these things bother people whose local and general health is good, the basis of the difficulty is an upsetting or want of acquirement of a

harmoniously ordered thinking apparatus—a badly tuned brain. Of course one must not ignore the fact that all such conditions as those under consideration are sometimes due to actual physical disease or ill-health; but, let us understand, under such circumstances the task in hand belongs essentially to the doctor, and instances of this sort do not come within the scope of this little work. It is important that this difference in two classes of morbid states of a similar kind should be clearly understood. The point at issue is quite simple. To put it briefly, whilst stammering, involuntary jerkings of limbs, excessive self-consciousness and oversensitiveness, are on occasion due to serious disease of brain or other parts—and are then purely medical questions—it far more often happens that they occur in healthy individuals, and are then due to deficient mind control, and haphazard instead of regular brain-action. Present observations, rules, and self-help exercises are intended solely for this second group. But the fact is, there is no rapid "cure" for any of these disorders of control, and complete relief can only come in one way—that is, by the establishment of a correct habit in place of the old bad habit. Yet, again, this can only come by practice and determination. Long practice; weary hours of thought and practice. Not by any cure-all, nor specific remedy; nor alone by any form of physical exercise; not for certain even by

hypnotism, suggestion, or the new science of psycho-analysis. But by arduous practice, practice, practice of the new habit desired. The way is long and hard; but it is sure.

Once a new—good—habit is firmly established, it will be as hard to break as was the old—bad—habit it has replaced. So the goal is worth striving for, because in its very nature it offers definite security. The task is twofold, because not only has a new habit to be formed, but it has to be constituted in the very teeth of a longstanding habit of exactly the opposite nature.

A habit once formed holds us in an iron-grip simply because its record is impressed on the patterns of the brain, and, just as a gramophone record yields the same tune time after time, so does a habit record result in the same set of actions once it is started off. Well might the Iron Duke exclaim—"Habit a second nature! Habit is ten times nature!" The ball is set rolling always by the performance of the first simple act, and as the initial movement may occur quite by chance it sometimes happens that our habits run away with us. This is just what befalls so-called "absent-minded" people. If one's guest comes down to breakfast in his pyjamas and dressing-gown, with a bath-towel over one arm and a sponge under the other, we do not put him down as a lunatic. Not at all. We laugh at him for an absent-minded beggar, well-knowing that some such

ludicrous mischance may befall each of us at any-time. Although perhaps most of us could not quite clearly explain happenings of this kind, we know that in essence what causes them is, that whilst absorbed in thought the first act of an accustomed series—setting-off of a habit record in fact—is carried out and the brain automatically goes through the rest of the performance before the victim of "absent-mindedness" becomes aware of what he is doing. Everyone can recall instances of automatic habit actions leading to results so absurd that their occurrence is indelibly impressed on the memory.

The more engraved is any particular habit the more likely is it to trick a dreamy person into a foolish situation. A tired man gets home late and hurries upstairs to dress for dinner, and consciously pulling off his coat and waistcoat finds in a minute or two that he is half-way to bed without knowing it; or, as much more commonly happens, he finds himself winding up his watch preparatory to further bedward progress. Usually the watch-winding brings him to himself. How difficult at first it is to go to a new room or a new house after one has suddenly made a change in habits of years! What an effort is required not to go back to the old place in the old way!

Particularly when tired or flurried are people likely to yield to habits and perform complicated actions in an automatic way. A man caught in a

railway accident in a tunnel, but uninjured, told me that all he knew was that he was making a frantic effort to get out of the compartment and out of the tunnel. To look for his hat or baggage in the rack was out of the question! Nevertheless, when eventually he emerged into daylight he found he had nearly all his belongings with him; his hat on his head and his bag in his hand! Evidently in the crisis his brain had acted automatically and in obedience to the habit familiar to all of us of taking down one's things from the travelling rack as we get up to leave a train.

The sleep-walker, of course, shows us an extreme example of the force of habit as expressed in automatic action. He gets on very well until he wakes up, when in bewilderment he tries to grip the situation and succeeds in falling downstairs or walking through an open window. That is why it is always dangerous to awaken a sleep-walker if you cannot get near enough to protect him. Compared to the number of sleep-walkers who get off scot free, the number of those who get into difficulties is very small.

The late Professor William James, one of the most practical thinkers who ever lived, in discussing habit extolled it as a merciful ruler of our lives; thus in one passage he wrote:[1]—

"Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society and its most precious conservative agent. It alone

[1] "Principles of Psychology," vol. i. p. 121.

is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprising of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and deck-hand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin and his lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and the frozen zone."

The acquirement of a habit means actually the opening up of new links and paths of nervous impulse in the brain; constituted as it is of a marvellous network of countless fibres and cells, that organ waits in early years for the opening up of lines of communication between different parts of itself, and between itself and various regions of the body. The links are all there, the apparatus is ready, but until a message is forced down any particular line it will not work automatically. Once, however, a certain thought or action has been accomplished it can be reproduced ever so much more readily when occasion occurs. Supposing one wants to write down a letter or a sign from some foreign alphabet—a Chinese symbol for example—how unfamiliar the necessary movements of the pen seem; but how much easier it seems after a little practice! The writing of this new (to the individual) sign means the opening up

of an entirely novel set of brain communications bringing into play cells, network and fibres in a combination quite fresh to this particular brain. But once the new channels have been opened up the nerve-energy manifests itself much more easily through them on subsequent occasions.

This is the secret of all habit, the secret of all control, the secret of all automatic actions; it explains how easy it is to write, play a musical instrument, eat, dress, or perform a thousand and one commonplace actions of life; it makes clear to us the difficulties of the kleptomaniac, the drunkard, or the drug-taker, as it does also the appalling swiftness with which morbid ideas and habits that have gained some hold sweep away resistance and evade the will. This wearing of channels in the brain tells us also why the STAMMERER who has got into the bad habit of speaking as he does, finds the ground swept away beneath him time after time when he would make a stand against his unruly organs of breathing and of voice. That habit and practice mean nothing else than forming paths of least resistance through which "thoughts"—mental forces, if one likes to put it that way—find their way most easily at a given signal, explains many things to the man of self-conscious tendency, or who is afflicted with any uncomfortable obsession of speech, thought, or action.

The stammerer from morbid fears or beliefs has not only to form new channels in his brain, but he

has to block unfortunate paths through which his thoughts and energies have to his great misery so long travelled unhindered. It is thus a double task and a hard one. But depending as it does on definite physical workings in a physical organ—the brain—under the control of the will—it is obviously certain of fulfilment if it be persevered with. The worst stammerer in the world, the most tormented victim of any morbid habit or idea, can cure himself by steady practice, always provided there is no impairment of brain or general health such as to have weakened his will-power. Where this is the case, medical or surgical assistance is necessary before any progress can be made; the persons thus situated do not come within the sphere of those for whom I am now writing. But the morbid idea or bad habit does not of itself necessarily mean brain disease or incurable loss of will, and particularly where expert opinion has pronounced brain, nerves, and body free from taint or degeneration—the sufferer can go ahead to master his trouble, to block up old morbid channels, and to create new paths of thought, in the sure and certain knowledge that he will win in the end. *But he must rely on himself.* Encouragement from without is a good thing, but the arduous uphill task of forming new thought channels—of practising day by day—of "sticking to it" in spite of disappointment, setbacks, and discouragement, must be carried through by the individual concerned. And, as a

matter of fact, the really keen candidate for victory always reveals himself by the determined way he studies the principles of self-help and then invariably invents exercises and methods of his own for creating a new weapon of control. Do not rely alone on formal exercises and rules laid down by others. Work away and improvise your own methods of attack, never give the enemy a rest. Keep at him every day. Undermine the old habit. Substitute new thoughts and actions. Practise the new habits and thoughts unceasingly, untiringly, and you will most assuredly in time defeat your stammer, or other trouble of this kind, and get the better of your bogey whatever be his disguise.

Of course, the younger the brain, the more impressionable it is; that is, the more readily are new channels opened up—new habits formed. The older one is, the more widened are the various paths and possible lines of communication. There is a limit of impressionable capacity even for an organ so absorptive, responsive, and plastic as the human brain. But that need not cause elderly people to despair. Their task in one respect may be harder, but in others it will be lighter, because will and judgment are invariably much more powerful in adults than in younger persons. So also is incentive greater, except in extreme age, when things do not seem so much worth bothering about. The exceptional plasticity of the brain in early life

only makes it all the more urgent that all automatic habits, and all methods of thought, control, and so forth be acquired as soon as possible. The responsibility lies, of course, with parents and teachers; also to some extent, and so far as opportunity is given, to doctors and clergymen.

In concluding this chapter, let me give some practical hints. In the making of a new habit—in the carrying out of a new resolution—observance of the following rules makes for more certain and more rapid success.

I. *See that you get a good start.*

There can be no question that a good start is essential to the rapid acquirement of a new habit. No half-hearted measures promise success. But if the whole problem under consideration be carefully thought out, individual possibilities examined and circumstances taken into notice, then—with mind fully made up—the plunge may be made with confidence and determination, with the result that the new record is vigorously impressed on the brain at the outset. It is unwise to make a beginning until the ground has been carefully gone over and prepared; when this has been done the order must be—"Full steam ahead and no looking back!"

II. *Once started never let the old habit catch you out without going back and correcting your mistake.* There is no doubt that a successful start is very

cheering, but at the same time it would be absurd to be discouraged because at first the old habit insists on asserting itself. Were there no difficulty about breaking bad habits and in acquiring successful control—itself the happiest of all good habits—there would, after all, be no sufferers. It is in the great difficulty of the whole thing, and in the patient perseverance needed that the trouble centres; it is the laborious nature of the task in hand that calls for assistance, such as this book purports to give.

III. *Keep on telling yourself you intend to win, and take every opportunity of showing you mean this by practising the new habit.* You must keep on trying if you want to make rapid progress, and once you have begun to attack the enemy the thing is to give him no rest until you have substantially broken his resistance. Stammerers are somewhat inclined to practise in private whilst putting off the day when they are to make a serious attempt to speak better in public; somehow or other they seem afraid that by special attempt to speak more fluently they will make things worse than ever.

IV. *Keep on practising, practising, practising your powers of successful control; and above all do not let a single day go without trying to make progress in the required direction.*

It may seem a bore to have to give time and attention to these things, particularly when the

defect of control is not great. But it is a fact that in the long run it pays everyone to practise constantly their powers of control in every way—large and small—that is possible. It pays in health, in success and in happiness to make a point of taking out one's sword of self-reliance and inspecting its fine edge; likewise it pays us to keep our armour of successful control bright and free from blemish or weakness. Making a point of not always giving way to harmless tastes or desires; knocking off one's cigar or pipe occasionally just when one really likes to enjoy it; seeing to it that tea or coffee, stimulants or luxuries of any kind, have no real power over us—all these things help to keep us fit for the day of battle with morbid ideas or false habits should it ever come; referring to such constant development of control at the expense of the minor incidents of life, in a way that must inevitably cause a certain amount of personal inconvenience. Otherwise the effort will be worthless.

CHAPTER II

SELF-CONTROL

Two men set out to enjoy a fine sunny morning. One seats himself in the comfortable driving seat of an up-to-date motor car, and the other takes the reins in a light cart drawn by a spirited nag—and away they go. The motorist soon waves a friendly "Good-bye," and vanishing round a distant bend of the road careers delightfully uphill and down dale, through sleepy sun-swept villages, past ancient cottages, and along inviting lanes. His brain becomes lulled by the soft singing of the air about him, his thoughts wander pleasantly whilst automatically he directs the marvellous mechanism that carries him, scarcely aware that he does so. Until, lo and behold! A careless carter drives out of a side-turning without warning, and before either can speak, car and cart have met with a crash. Much damage is done to both, although the angry drivers escape with a shaking. They are the more angry each with the other, inasmuch as they know that both were to blame for the catastrophe. The automobilist because he was dreaming, the other in that he urged his willing horses rapidly out into

the main road without due heed as to passers by.

The motorist has sacrificed the delicate machinery in his care to the habit of day-dreaming that troubles so many people. Whilst he gave attention to his driving, all was well. The panting machinery would even have pulled up at his call within a few yards. But without his guiding genius, beautiful in action and life-like in movement as it was, the car being a thing of matter without soul of its own, behaved as such. Did its careless owner expect it to warn him of threatening danger? How absurd to suggest such a thing, you will say. But he behaved as if it had some mind of its own, did he not?

However, before philosophising further on this unfortunate incident in a country lane, let us go back and see what has happened to our other pleasure-seeker. After leaving home he, too, soon found himself in quiet bye-paths, and, likewise succumbing to the drowsy influences of the day, let his reins hang loosely in his fingers, giving himself up to dreamland's fancies whilst his patient beast of burden ambled steadily along. Suddenly there is a jerk, and with broken reveries our driver comes sharply back to realities to find that his horse has stopped dead in front of a huge tree that lies across the road. Clearly the storm of the night before had thrown down this monster, and the news of its fall had not yet reached the neighbouring farm,

on land of which it stood. Still no harm has yet befallen the traveller that way, and the faithful horse has saved its master's bones. Saved them in simple enough fashion, forsooth—saved them simply by stopping. Suppose our motorist friend had chanced this way whilst day-dreaming, what would have been his fate? Why, indeed, the car would have crashed into the obstruction with truly disastrous results. It certainly would not have saved its owner a broken head—simply by stopping. Each of these men set out to travel by aid of a marvellous machine, the one responsive and life-like, a modern motor-car; the other, a thing of flesh and blood, also a machine, *but one endowed with a power of self-direction*—the gift of being able to choose for itself a course of action.

As the beast transcends the motor car by its inherent power of self-choice, so, but to a far great degree, does Man transcend even the highest animals beneath him, in his ability to choose and control his thoughts and deeds.

In the animal kingdom—apart from Man—the exercise of choice and self-control is, as a rule, but slightly developed compared with the exercises of those functions as we know them. Even such intelligent animals as the horse and the dog allow themselves mainly to be guided by the circumstances of the moment as to their actions, readily submitting without revolt to the bidding of the

meekest human will, and but rarely vetoing their own conduct, or deliberately choosing a new path. In a word, they tend to take the line of least resistance on most occasions.

Man, on the other hand, is accustomed to deliberate thought affecting even the trivial actions of daily life, and certainly through his developed power of choice and self-control is the unchallenged king of the animal world. Let him remember that self-control is the crown and sign of his kingdom. Nevertheless, in the beasts the faculty of choice and the elements of self-control are present, and by watching them we can judge how far Man has travelled upwards from the earlier periods of his history. By analysing the actions of a horse or dog can we most readily estimate the vastness of that inheritance which is ours by birth, yet which most of us take as a small commonplace of life that calls for little thought.

Therefore, to whatsoever extent we let the gold of our precious gift of self-control get tarnished, so do we by so much drop back towards the stage when Man ran about as a savage thing, naked and painted; therefore, also, must the individual who from constitution, ill-health, or other cause, finds his self-control below what it should be realise that by so much he is behind, and by so much must pull up as quickly as he can. "Forward, ever forward and upward," is the motto graven on the

heart of the race, and it is up to everyone who feels himself lagging behind—be his the fault or not—to take the necessary steps to catch up as soon as possible. He must not waste time in uselessly bemoaning his fate. He must take off his coat and endeavour to become master of himself.

Many of life's saddest tragedies are the result of a failure to realise the treasure that lies in a firm will, habits of direct thinking, and the power of self-control. Often so little lies between success and failure that a hesitating manner, uncertain speech or embarrassed expression at a crucial interview may prevent a man being started on a path that will inevitably lead to wealth and position. Just a simple weakness of this kind may bar him for ever from the promise of a successful career, and by manifesting itself at a critical moment make all the difference between a life of interest, freedom and independence, and a dull routine existence on an office stool. Quite recently a junior clerk employed in an important institution unexpectedly found himself one of three or four candidates chosen for a post far better than he had thought possible might be open to him for many years to come; found himself confronted with an opportunity that could scarcely come again in time to promise such a golden career as now seemed open. Moreover, on general grounds Mr Z, as we will call him, was far more experienced than either Mr A, Mr B, or

Mr C, who were also in the running. Yet what a tragedy of disappointment followed. Always a nervous, self-conscious young man, Mr Z had scarcely been ushered into the presence of the "chief" on the fateful day of decision, when he became obsessed with thoughts that he could not control his countenance, that he would appear incompetent, that he would blush, and, in short, generally make a fool of himself. What was the result? Instead of answering the questions put to him in a straightforward manner to the best of his ability, he actually managed to convey such an impression of weakness and indecision that this valuable appointment passed from his grasp into the hands of a less experienced junior. The promise of a lifetime vanished in the twinkling of an eye because he had never succeeded in acquiring that self-confidence and control that always make for success in every walk of life.

Emperors, kings, and princes have all in their turn provided tragic examples of the fruits of indecision. It was want of grip, born of ill-health, that finally brought down Napoleon—changed him with appalling rapidity from a Dictator of Europe to a prisoner on a lonely island. Similarly it was want of definite thought-control, likewise due to illness, that led his successor on the French throne, Napoleon III., into the misery of Sedan. Where ill-health is the prime cause of vacillation none can

be blamed for its results, but they are none the less examples of what may happen when Man loses his grip of that power of self-control that has raised him to his exalted position in the world. As an example of sublime tragedy due to natural habits of indecision, the fate of Charles I. of England stands out with terrible clearness. Could that monarch have been brought to understand the wisdom of curbing his desires, thoughts, and actions, it is possible that he might have acquired a mental outlook and a habit of control that would have enabled him to have led his people to prosperity and peace at a time of great national upheaval, instead of having to lay down his life in ignominy. It is possible that even after he had fallen into the hands of the Parliamentary forces, Charles I. would have escaped his dreadful fate if he could have been determined and confident in his plans, but his unconquerable habit of indecision and inability to control himself seemed to become worse in adversity, and his name stands to-day in pages of indignity.

Business men who have obtained positions of apparent security and soundness from time to time bring themselves face to face with calamity through failure of self-control in the hour of prosperity; drunk with wealth, power, and the good things of the world, the wise habits of moderation and thought to which they owe success are discarded, and, en-

snared by unreasonable schemes, they end their careers. Brilliant generals and brave officers of all kinds have come to disgrace through a moment's hesitation, when steady control of nerves and body alone could bring victory; few things in history make sadder reading than accounts of courts-martial which have revealed fatal deficiency of control in gallant soldiers or sailors whose dearest wish had been to serve their country to the last, but who have had to be condemned for hesitation and want of firm decision in the hour of trial.

On the other hand, many ambitious and intelligent men utterly fail to attain conspicuous success owing to a want of confidence in themselves that spoils even their best work. Want of self-confidence of this kind is, of course, nothing more than a manifestation of weak control. The optimistic individual's thoughts run naturally in happy grooves, and if he permits himself to be depressed through a setback, he nevertheless soon pulls himself together and forces his thoughts and attention to the work before him; whilst the pessimist who lacks confidence in himself has to waste valuable energy in trying to take a cheerful view of things, and, not having learnt to control his thoughts, finds them continually lapsing back to doubt and foreboding, so that not only does his doubtful attitude handicap him from the start, but he never gets the best use of his powers.

It is very unfortunate that persons afflicted in this way are so inclined to accept their burdens as a fixture, deeming it out of the question that they may get rid of this spiritual deadness and rise above the encumbrances of doubting and fearful thought that stand between them and the achievement of their ambitions. In all walks of life there are men whose knowledge and experience merits their obtaining a position of distinction in their work, yet who through some want of control in speech, thought, or action convey an impression of but moderate efficiency to those with whom they are brought into contact. With a little recollection most of us can call to mind lamentable examples of this sort of comparative failure. There is Mr Smith, for example, who did so well at school and college, but who has never "made good" as a barrister, to the infinite disappointment of himself or his friends; true enough he makes a living, but far more than this mediocre success might have reasonably been expected from a man with his record. What is the secret of his inability to grasp the gleaming prizes which hang within reach of a brilliant barrister? Surely it is because Mr Smith, with all his brain power, is the victim of a restless, nervous habit suggesting want of strength. He plucks feebly at his chin and repeats with irritating insistency, weak undecided phrases, such as—"Yes! Yes! We will hope so." "Yes! Yes!

We will hope so! To be sure! we will hope so." Similarly there is the Rev. Mr Jones, admittedly a fine scholar and thinker, who has never yet drawn a large congregation because all the good things he might say, all the soul-stirring sermons he might preach, are broken, marred, and lost in the hurried, half-frightened, monotonous diction that he treats his hearers to. But for this want of voice-control Jones would go far indeed in his honoured calling. And to match these truly sad instances of nervous want of control forming a barrier to success, one calls to mind the unfortunate case of young Dr Brown, whose student career gave promise of great expectations, but whose stammering speech and habitual self-deprecatory manner make patients hesitate to confide themselves to the care of a man apparently so lacking in strength and decision.[1]

And all these things are, at bottom, due to a failure of mental grip, to a want of control of thoughts which has in time developed to such an extent that the sufferer, although well aware of his weakness, shrinks from the appalling conflict which must be entered upon before it can be overcome. It is never too late to mend even in this respect, but the battle is far easier the earlier in life it is fought; and obviously the more readily the victory is won the less opportunity will there

[1] Smith, Jones, and Brown are, it need scarcely be said, entirely fictitious characters—taken just as types of sad reality.

be for the faulty habit to prejudice success. Self-consciousness, stammering, morbid thoughts, and all forms of nervousness in speech, thought, or action should be tackled as soon as they appear; when noticed in children it is the urgent duty of parents, friends, and guardians to initiate a campaign to strengthen the boy or girl whose future happiness and career is thus threatened.

Unfortunately, it seldom happens that parents recognise the signs of disaster and adopt such plans as will save trouble later on; children wanting in stability of mind are so often delicate that those who have charge of such youngsters are afraid to make use of seemingly harsh measures of teaching self-control. If people responsible for spoiling delicate, nervous children realised the misery they are laying up for someone in after-life, they would think twice before yielding to Johnnie's importunities, or Grace's fits of crying; once a quick, excitable child has learnt to get its own way by an outburst of temper, an exhibition of crying, a screaming fit, or by throwing itself about, it has fastened round its mother's neck a millstone that will be difficult to cast off. Woe to you unlucky mothers and fathers who let an only son or daughter go its own way from early years should it develop any nervous tendency; for your own miseries will only be equalled by that of your offspring when he or she finds a network of involuntary bad habit

hampering every contact with the world of affairs and success. Often it is only an inherent commonsense that saves the child of normal health and mind from the lamentable effects of "spoiling"; where a nervous, egotistical temperament finds no place for this commonsense, truly a demon of self-will and selfishness takes possession of the one-time darling, and makes its victim a terror to self, relation, and friends. On the other hand, when a tormented mother—distracted beyond description by a young fury who having gradually got the upper hand is terrorising a household—determines to seek some means of relief, her love for her self-willed child often blinds her to the true state of affairs; she cannot bear to think that these outbursts—these exhibitions of utter callousness to the feelings of others—represent the personality of her loved one, so she persuades herself that it is suffering from a "disease" and forthwith proceeds to find a "cure." No more disastrous cause of action could be followed. If medical advice is sought and educational measures advised so well and good. But it more usually happens that patent medicines and marvellous "systems" of exercises or special health resorts are tried in turn. It even happens that the aid of a faith-healer is sought to exercise the demon of unrighteousness. All to no good. The little tyrant accepts all these things in a spirit of critical contempt. The only thing he fears is the discipline

of a good tutor, and this is the only thing that can make a man of him.

Of course the whole question is one of education. Not so much of education in the popular sense of cramming with elementary knowledge, as in the literal sense of the Latin word "educo" = I lead out of. Yes; that is it. Boy or girl, the best elements of character must be sought for and "led out." All good human qualities must be carefully nourished, whilst the seeds of self-control planted in every child at birth—Nature's golden gift, Man's crowning glory—must be watered and matured till, in spite of the greatest difficulties, they sprout, and an understanding of self-mastery and ability to control temper, to guide speech, and to safeguard actions makes the previously petulant, nervous, ill-tempered child a little man or woman with all life's treasures to choose from.

Let sorely tried parents cease from trying to cure by pills, potions, or exercises, habits of indulgence and self-will that are largely the result of their own mistaken way of bringing up a nervous little one. A bad system of education must be replaced by a good one, and all will be well. But let them be warned in time by an exhibition of temper, by a morose disposition, by nail-biting, or evidence of ill-nature that things are not as they should be and make a change in their system before it is too late.

CHAPTER III

STAMMERING AND OTHER TRICKS OF SPEECH AND MANNER

ONE of the commonest mishaps occurring to human beings through a slipping of proper control is confusion of speech. Just as by ages and ages of perseverance Man has erected a wonderful monument of endeavour and progress—his highly developed languages—so he must exercise his highest faculties to make use of this special means of communicating with his fellows; and thus it is that a slight dulling of the brightness of his armour of self-mastery is likely to show itself immediately in some impediment of speech. Any such impediment at once attracts attention to the unfortunate person it afflicts; other forms of nervousness or want of control may on occasion be skilfully hidden, and the onlooker remain ignorant of the conflict within his guest or chance acquaintance, but not so with obstructed speech. Many self-conscious or very nervous people learn little tricks whereby their infirmity may be made to escape notice, and, although no intelligent person will think the less of anyone bothered with a trick of voice or manner,

all so troubled naturally gain much satisfaction from successfully hiding their weakness. But the stammerer or stutterer betrays his trouble the minute he opens his mouth, and in strange company is usually so wrought up with anticipation that his first attempt at speech is particularly disastrous. There is no escape for this one, and whatever happens he must perforce drag round this millstone of confusion that exhausts his energies, spoils his temper, annoys his friends, and constantly stands between himself and success with a big S. Not only is there no likelihood of the stammerer remaining undiscovered, but there is no better chance of his friends avoiding their dose of misery; perhaps in this there is just a spice of humour to leaven a truly unfortunate situation, for through habit the stammerer sometimes suffers less than friends who go through mental torments when watching his fearful efforts to tell a story or join in a simple conversation. Yet would he not be indignant were we to sympathise with his companions more than with himself? Sensitive people commonly feel very much for anyone who is caught in the agonies of a stammering fit; they would do anything to help him out with his difficulties and are generally most kindly disposed. Of course we all feel most sympathetic towards a stammerer—except, perhaps, when he is first of a long queue of people at a railway booking office stuck with his

mouth wide open—and we are last, with only a minute to catch our train; for it happens to the calmest amongst us occasionally to falter or forget a word, a name, an address, or even the place to which we wish to travel. Indeed, most of us have had some such experience; lapses of memory being most likely to occur when we are hurried. But under similar circumstances the man with an impediment of speech becomes absolutely helpless. His brain seems to stop working, or what nervous energies he can find seem to go to every other department of the body but the organs of speech, which are for the time being put right outside his scope of successful control.

This is just the position of a clerk in an office who suddenly has to face an enquiry despite a bad stammer that has been a burden all his life. Possibly he has been content with some subordinate job that has enabled him to make a living without having to appear in the limelight, but on this day, owing to the absence of a fellow-worker, he has to come forward and give a hand with callers. The utter misery of a stammerer so placed is really very great. Only those who have experienced the woes of hindered speech, or who have made a special study of these cases, can properly enter into the depressing state of mind thus occasioned. From the first moment when he is told to come forward until the actual crisis of some stranger speaking to him,

our victim is borne down with an overpowering load of fearful anticipation; he can scarcely do simple routine work properly; he is flushed and uncomfortable; his tongue seems too big for his mouth; and then, whilst he is deep in thought about his awful state—to him magnified ten thousand times worse than it really is—lo! and behold!—in walks the dreaded stranger and says sharply: "Is Mr Brown in?" After an agonised and spasmodic moment some weird sound is got out and the confused addressee bolts for assistance.

Or, again, a nervous stutterer is suddenly asked a question by a passer-by, or a fellow-traveller in a public conveyance, and the shock smashes his machinery of voice to pieces so that he can merely stare and gasp helplessly.

Can any other condition troubling people who are sound in brain and body be more pitiable? Is there any other state of things short of actual physical defect or deformity that can occasion more misery? Probably not; because a bad stammer or stutter puts a man out of all friendly relations with his fellows, apart from his intimates, and so shuts him off, as it were, from general friendliness with the world at large, exiling him into a waste place where he is alone with his thoughts. Worse follows, for exile leads to lessening self-confidence, and his nerve gets poorer and poorer to the great increase of his suffering and miserable anticipation.

However, in extending sympathy and a helping hand to stammerers we must not forget that there is a large class of persons who are most truly their brothers and sisters in distress—suffering as they suffer, equally thrown back upon themselves, in just the same way marked out from amongst their fellows by a troublesome infirmity. I refer, of course, to those afflicted with some convulsive movement of face, head, body or limbs. And, again, I must at once emphasise the circumstance that we are only now concerned with such disorders —whether of speech or action—which are not due to definite nervous or other disease; our concern is non-medical and has solely to do with the self-help of those who have ascertained that their trouble is not one calling for medical or surgical treatment.

In some people—usually possessed of what is commonly known as highly-strung nerves—jerky habits of head, face or limbs seem very likely to develop, and the worse these become the more do they sap their victim's confidence in his powers of control. One of the commonest instances of such a condition is that twisting or retraction of the head, termed "wry-neck," which, although frequently a secondary result of organic disease, none the less often occurs without apparent physical cause, and under such circumstances the sufferer can do a great deal to help himself by following

out the principles and exercises described in later chapters of this book.

No advantage is to be gained by going into details of all tricks of manner or action that obsess unfortunate persons; sufficient to each victim is the misery thereof. Among the simpler varieties of such convulsive movements—technically known as "tics"—perhaps the most common are wry-neck, spasmodic blinking, and facial contortions of all kinds, including varieties of coughing, laughing, and even crying. Sometimes the trick of action affects speech and results in some little exclamation being made or word repeated during the course of every sentence; sometimes it takes the form of touching certain things or making certain movements under particular circumstances as a sort of ritual that has to be gone through. Technical records contain accounts of extraordinary examples of very complicated tricks influencing daily action in an almost incredible manner; but for present purposes the matter can rest with the brief indications just given.

To the writer it is a constant source of wonderment that people who suffer in this way do not always make every possible effort to overcome their infirmity. The explanation seems to lie in a common misunderstanding of the nature of the condition. Of course, where the sufferer believes himself to be afflicted with some sort of a physical

disease which must be "cured" before he will be able to speak properly, he naturally throws the responsibility on to other shoulders and makes little attempt to help himself.

"I suffer from this wretched disease," argues the stammerer, "and it is for doctors or voice-specialists to cure me of it. It is not my job to cure stammering either in myself or others."

And so he goes on trying one alleged "cure" after another—for there are many to be had—all the while trying to get someone to do for him what he ought to do for himself; after all, it is much easier to take some medicine, however salt and nasty it may be, than to practise self-control exercises several times daily! Yet the latter method is the only reasonable way. How can one "cure" what does not exist? If stammering were a definite "disease" perhaps somebody might discover a "cure" for it. But as it is essentially a bad habit of nerves and muscles, it follows that it can only be got rid of by the substitution of a good habit—that is, by practice. To use the word "cure" under such circumstances is to give it quite an unaccustomed significance. Stammerers and others are frequently astonished—and, indeed, sometimes annoyed—when told that the relief of their trouble is chiefly their own job. But it is so nevertheless.

Certainly one must be absolutely fair, and admit that even if a stammerer accepts one's statement

that he must conquer his impediment himself as a rule he has little or no idea of what he has to do. Fortunately his instructions can be given quite simply, and once he has grasped the principles on which stammering occurs—once he understands *why* he stammers—he will be able to comprehend equally well *how* he may obtain relief; and it is the main object of this little book to explain the causes of stammering and other tricks, so that any victim thereof can be put into the happy position of being able to follow a path that must inevitably lead to increasing relief the more he perseveres with it. It must be repeated that these remarks only apply to what may be termed non-medical or non-surgical impediments. Where the difficulty is due to, or aggravated by, some unhealthy condition or obstruction of nose, mouth, or throat, it is quite clear that the case belongs to a different category altogether, and that no progress can be made until the necessary measures for relief of the physical trouble have been taken. That, of course, is a purely medical question, and not one for discussion now; this work being essentially non-medical and intended for the general reader.

As noted already stammerers and their confrères—particularly the very nervous variety—are inclined to waste much time and money in a vain pursuit of a "quick cure," doubtless being encouraged by the fact that every now and then one of them actually

does obtain speedy relief, the " cure " being sometimes of quite a miraculous or dramatic character—as where an electrical application to the throat gives such impetus to the vocal mechanism and self-confidence to the stammerer that he gets a good start with his speech and is able to keep his control thereafter. But even under these happy circumstances the " cure " will rarely be permanent if the individual concerned is not able to " make good " by a few days' practice amongst people he knows fairly well. Such sudden brilliant " cures " are unstable for some little time, and it does not take much to cause a relapse to the old state of affairs; should this happen subsequent relief is much harder to obtain than before. *In any case miracles of recovery amongst stammerers are quite rare and the average victim is unwise to build his hopes upon such;* particularly where there is a sure road to improved speech if he only cares to take his coat off and trudge along it patiently, not turning back, and confidently keeping his eyes fixed on the longed-for goal; letting not disappointment overcome him, nor cause him to give up on some of those " bad days " that will most surely come to him before he is through with this thing.

At one time I thought it possible that these " quick cures " might be made more common with the help of modern psychological methods, but careful trial and observation have convinced me

that for one stammerer who gets joyful relief, there are many who only court disappointment; the search for the marvellous here as elsewhere usually leads to waste of time and energy. Stammerers should start on the golden way to recovery the very instant they have got to the bottom of their trouble and realised that their affliction is not a "disease" but a habit; that is, realise it to the point of being able to explain the disorder in simple and readily understandable language. To this end then we may now quite well proceed to unravel the mysteries of voice-production in speech, learning how it is that Man controls that marvellous method of communication with his fellows which we call "talking," accepting it without question as one of the commonplaces of everyday life, when all the while it is one of Nature's great wonders.

CHAPTER IV

VOICE AND SPEECH

ONE of the most simple methods of making a musical or other sound is by causing strings or wires—that is, fibres of some kind or another—to vibrate. After all what we call "sound" is the impression made on us by certain vibrations in the air. A solid substance of some kind is made to vibrate—one strikes a gong for example—and its vibrations are communicated to the surrounding atmosphere: travelling into the ear these shiverings in the air set up a sympathetic trembling in the "drum of the ear," and as a further consequence a record of these vibrations is caused to travel along the great nerve of the inner ear—the auditory nerve—to the brain, where it is analysed and interpreted as the various sounds that are a familiar part of our daily experience.

Such tiny waves in the air are formed by anything that is made to shiver or tremble, but inasmuch as the human ear can only appreciate those of a certain sharpness, no more than a limited range of these air tremors are made known to us as sounds; some people are more sensitive in this respect than others,

so that, for example, they can hear the tiny treble cry of the bat which is unheard by the majority. Whether one strikes a drum, draws a bow over the slightly strung strings of a violin, twangs a banjo with the finger tips, blows through a horn, or whistles with pursed lips, the principle is the same; and in making instruments to soothe himself with musical sound Man has gone always to Nature in the first instance for his lessons in craft. Some of Nature's grandest music is caused by fierce winds rushing through nooks and crannies on mountain-sides, or tearing through forests with such force that the tree tops vibrate as if they were the strings of some huge instrument; imitating Nature Man has always sought music by blowing air swiftly through tubes in which some vibrating body is set, or by striking tightly stretched strings or resonant surfaces. Moreover, by a miracle of ingenuity, Man has found means of so regulating both vibrators—rush of air or blow of hammer—that the vibrating strings or surfaces can be made to give out the infinite range of notes that pleases one's ears to-day. Moreover, when Nature fashioned a sound-making apparatus in her creatures, she did not disdain her old well-tried methods, and in her later efforts relied on the swift blowing of air through flaps of tissue set in the throat; it being in this way that all the noises of domestic animals and beasts of prey are produced. The songs of birds

are also made by throat vibrations, whilst insects, on the other hand, make their strange variety of sound by shiverings of wings or limbs. In man—her masterpiece—Nature chose to place nothing less than a grand organ, with a range of sound and variety of harmony that must always call forth our interest, wonder, and praise.

Our lungs, of course, form an excellent pair of bellows for forcing air under pressure through the throat, and this alone would suffice to produce some sort of noise by setting up a vibration in folds of the lining membranes of the air-passages; or, indeed, by causing to shake rapidly that little curtain at the back of the mouth—the soft palate—which, when vibrating, enables us to roll our "r's," and causes snoring noises when we are asleep. That alone, however, would by no means have corresponded with the high estate on earth to which our race has been called, and so Nature developed a special little organ-piece set about half-way between the outer air and the bellows; this special development is, of course, the voice-box — technically known as the "larynx"—a conspicuous structure of firm gristle, the front of which sticks out prominently in our necks, and is known familiarly as our "Adam's Apple"! As everyone knows this voice-box is not simply a chamber somewhat more roomy than the rest of the air-passage, for it possesses as its chief feature two delicate folds of

membrane stretched across it from back to front, and lying closely parallel to each other so as to leave but a small space for air to pass between. These delicate membranes are the "vocal cords," which vibrate when brought close together as air rushes between and so produce the sounds which we call "voice." That is, of course, sounds which have no special meaning. For there is yet another marvel to study here. Treasure upon treasure for Man's assistance and pleasure. Miracle upon miracle. For we are able to control the tightness and position of our vocal cords, so that an infinite gradation of voice can be produced, and, as a consequence, the myriad sounds which we have built up into "speech." It is sufficiently clear that a high degree of control must be developed and retained before we can hope to make the best use of this marvellous human musical-box.

At this point it will be well for the general reader to make certain that he is quite clear in his mind as to the difference between voice and speech.

When the chest is expanded and filled with air the human organ is ready to play. The vocal cords in the voice-box being then brought closely together, and air expelled from the lungs with some force, a vibration is set up in these stretched "strings," and a sound issues forth from the mouth. Such a possibility of making a loud sound in the throat obviously we share with the higher animals,

and although we do not give such sound any special names in the latter, in ourselves we call it VOICE. Strictly speaking—from the physiological point of view—one might quite correctly speak of a cow's voice, and a dog's voice, or a bird's voice. But such use of the term is obviously so unusual that it would only occasion ridicule and suspicion of thorough ignorance. On the other hand, people constantly use the term "voice" outside its proper sphere. Thus we say "Madame So-and-so has a good voice," or "Mr Jones is in splendid voice just now"—or we speak of a "singing voice." Actually there is no such thing as *a* voice; but we have got into the habit of using the word to mean not only sound made by air setting in vibration the vocal cords, but the particular quality of the "noise" thus made by individuals. Of course, in discussing such a subject as stammering one must keep to the strictly technical use of terms to avoid misunderstanding and confusion; so in this book VOICE means nothing more than the sound we make when we breathe out with our vocal cords so set that they vibrate in response thereto.

What then is SPEECH? The term should be carefully reserved to indicate those modifications we effect in the sound made in our voice-boxes so that we can express our thoughts and wishes aloud.

SPEECH is specially adapted VOICE.

And SONG is an especially tuneful and harmonious form of SPEECH.

Remember these definitions are quite arbitrary and merely made for our convenience in talking about these things. Obviously no sharp line can be drawn between VOICE and SPEECH—or between SPEECH and SONG. Some primitive races converse by means of sounds—noises—that we should recognise as VOICE, but certainly not as SPEECH, until it was made plain that these noises were conversational.

And whilst we are on this question of definitions it will be as well to come to some understanding about the terms STAMMERING and STUTTERING.

As usually comprehended STAMMERING means a difficulty in producing consonant sounds—**b, c, d, f, g, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, z**—whilst STUTTERING indicates trouble with vowel sounds—**a, e, i, o, u, y.**

So that taking for example the sentence—

BRITANNIA RULES THE WAVES!

the STAMMERER will get his mouth stuck open and have a long pause before saying "Britannia"; but having got out the Br or B—the rest may come with a rush and a breathless descent on the second syllable—so that he says—

Br—i—tannia . . . . r—u—u—les . . . th—e waves."

Finishing up with a sudden rush on "waves."

As contrasted with this the true STUTTERER can get over the " Br " quite readily, but as he is beaten by the vowel sound " i " he goes on repeating the " B " at an increasing rate to the distress of himself and his friends. Thus he makes it :—

"B-B-B-B-B-BBB—ritt—t-t-t-t-t-a-n-n-n-n-n—ia r-r-r-r-r-ules th-th-th-th-th-e w-w-w-w-w-aves."

However, as STAMMERERS may have difficulty with their vowels as well as with their consonants it is best for practical purposes to drop the term STUTTERING altogether, just remembering that it has been used for that form of stammering in which there is constant repetition of consonant sounds owing to difficulty with vowels. Note carefully that the causes of stuttering are exactly the same as those of stammering, being dependent on an inability—under certain circumstances—of making a sound—VOICE—in the voice-box.

In more formal language—STAMMERING and STUTTERING are speech impediments in which the subject thereof is unable to vocalise—that is, unable to " make voice."

In short, the STUTTERER does not require a book to himself, and persons who have come to regard themselves as STUTTERERS as distinct from STAMMERERS, will please note that everything said about the latter *applies to themselves*, remembering that it is a matter of convenience to drop one of

two terms both popularly used in reference to similar conditions; and as the words STUTTER—STUTTERER—and STUTTERING—are not so commonly used as STAMMER and its fellows, we will agree to drop *them*.

CHAPTER V

WHY SOME PEOPLE STAMMER

If one closely watches a stammerer two things can usually be noted, namely—

that his breathing is jerky, and

that he is "nervous"—(using that term in its most general sense).

Clearly the first item alone is quite sufficient to upset the regularity and steadiness of speech. What sort of music should we get out of an organ in which the bellows were blown by a rheumatic old parishioner whose best efforts were hardly enough to keep the wind-pressure up, and who dozed quietly every few minutes? Certainly one would not expect to obtain anything more ambitious than a few jerky notes—some faint, some loud, some hurried together and others disconnected without rhyme or reason.

And it is just the same with the human organ. Unless a steady pressure of air is kept up in the throat by regular breathing the sounds coming from the voice-box will be uneven and jumpy; whilst if the easy flow of air into and out of the chest be not comfortably controlled, speech will

necessarily be harsh, jerky, and full of surprises both to speaker and listener.

When jerky uncontrolled breathing is accompanied by "nervousness" the plight of the stammerer is as bad as it can be. After all "nervousness"—want of self-confidence, with feeling of flurry or haste—of itself may be quite sufficient to upset the easy intake and output of air that is so essential for comfortable speaking. And as the bad habit of jerky breathing so often occurs in a nervous person we very commonly associate stammering with the nervous, excitable temperament. Occasionally one meets with a stammerer who appears to have plenty of self-confidence, and where this is so relief is likely to be all the more readily obtained when the right plan is followed; but more often than not his lasting difficulty has made him nervous, and wanting in confidence, even though originally free from "nerves." On the other hand, one very frequently meets people who speak quite evenly and distinctly until they are suddenly surprised or disturbed by emotion, when the "nerve storm" which sweeps over them completely upsets the balance of their speech apparatus, and so causes them to stammer pitifully for the time being. In some highly-strung individuals very little disturbance of equilibrium suffices to set the "nerves" of speech on edge as part of the general flurry, and such stammering can obviously

only be relieved by the gaining of general nervous control. Still in the average instance both these causes have to be taken into consideration, and inasmuch as strengthened control of breathing increases general nerve tone, whilst strengthened will-power helps bodily control, it is important that EVERY stammerer pays due attention to BOTH points.

All the spasmodic troubles—often seen—the grimaces, facial contortions, irregular movements of arms and head—are secondary to the jerky spasm in the breathing apparatus. It seems as if Nature, on finding an individual trying to speak without first getting up steam properly, makes a wild attempt to carry the thing off successfully and releases an excess of energy; indeed, floods the nerve channels with so much nerve-force that it overflows into face, head, and—sometimes—arms and hands.[1]

Clearly, then, for practical purposes, the stammerer who is determined to help himself must attack his trouble from the two points of view mentioned above :—

1. Trying to increase his will-power in the direction of CONTROL of all muscles, but particularly in regard to his breathing apparatus.

2. Learning a habit of quiet REGULAR AND STEADY

[1] It will be understood that the terms nerve-energy and nerve-force are here used as readily understood colloquial expressions without reference to the strictly scientific definitions of "energy" or "force."

BREATHING—making sure that at each breath he really does fill the chest with enough air for the purposes of ordinary conversation.

Many suggested "cures" for stammering have failed through neglect of one of these two essential rules. And we still find great claims made for systems of treatment in which either the physical fault or the nerve fault is ALONE considered. Such methods may help a few people here and there, but in the long run they cannot be strongly relied on to help the average case.

One of the most curious things about stammering is that, whilst the stammerer will usually at once acknowledge his nervousness and want of self-confidence, he will very often find it difficult to believe there is anything wrong with his breathing. So that it is as well that every victim of this trouble should convince himself by personal experiment as to the presence of this weak spot in his vocal mechanism.

How can this best be done?

Firstly, by getting him to place one hand flat on the pit of his stomach whilst speaking, when he will find that the lower part of his body—the abdomen—instead of filling out during breathing in and steadily collapsing whilst speaking, as in normal people, is held rigidly for a moment and then behaves spasmodically, jumping in correspondence with the jerky character of his utterances. This is because

the main muscle for inflating the chest—the diaphragm—which is working when we breathe in and blow out the "stomach," shares in the general spasm, its uncertain movements being readily conveyed to the hand held on the abdomen as suggested. These spasmodic movements of chest and "stomach"—particularly the latter—the stammerer should contrast with the steadier movements in a person speaking easily and distinctly. Once he has made this discovery, he will have a definite object in view—he will feel that here at anyrate is something to make a good beginning with—and if keen he will lose no time in trying to attain such a comfortable habit of breathing and speaking that his hand when placed on his "stomach" feels no jerks and unsteadiness.

When he has reached that much-to-be-desired goal he will no longer stammer.

If any stammerer wants convincing about this important point and mistrusts his own movements, let him find an opportunity of testing one or two other stammerers, and he will soon prove to his own satisfaction that far from breathing steadily and deeply as he has hitherto believed, the average stammerer is accustomed to make a very limited movement of his breathing apparatus—taking in a quantity of air much below the normal—and then is embarrassed by having far too little air-pressure for purposes of speech. The want of air-

pressure causes the system to make an unnatural effort, so that extra spasms—actually stammerings —in other parts are often set up.[1]

There are teachers of acknowledged weight and experience who continue to maintain that the physical trouble is the root of the whole thing and that for practical purposes nervousness and want of confidence may be regarded as being nearly always a *result* rather than a *cause* of stammering. True it is that with increased understanding of a difficult problem there has been a great change in expert opinion as to the root-causes of stammering, so that whilst years ago it was believed to be solely a physical malady for which a physical cure should be sought, nowadays it is widely admitted that the "nervous" factor—psychological causes—must be taken into consideration; and in this, as in most fields of human activity, when the pendulum of thought begins to swing there are keen theorists who try and make it go over to the opposite extreme. The truth is, that stammering must be considered as being due to a *complication of causes* which on examination invariably fall into two groups :—

1. PHYSICAL.
2. NERVOUS (mental, psychological).

[1] The lack of air taken in—which physiologists know as diminished "vital capacity"—can be readily shown by means of a simple instrument known as a spirometer.

And of these two groups it is certainly the causes embraced by the first group that are the easiest to remedy. Looking at the problem from the general point of view it appears to me that some writers, who lay chief stress on mental factors, tend to minimise the influence of their valuable researches by so distinctly pronouncing against the significance of physical conditions, as for example incorrect breathing.

Physical Causes

As pointed out at the beginning, this book is intended as a guide for stammerers whose trouble is independent of any condition of ill-health or local physical trouble, and, all through, the discussion has ranged round those cases of stammering in which a proper examination has definitely shown that no disorder within reach of routine methods of medicine or surgery exists. Obviously nothing would be more foolish than for a stammerer whose defective speech is due to something wrong in the nose or throat, for example, to attempt to obtain relief by any systems of self-help when local treatment of one kind or another is urgently needed to remove an active source of irritation, or other predisposing cause. Consequently, although in a book of this description—essentially non-medical—no suggestion as to the treatment of physical, exciting, or predisposing causes can be given, it will be

helpful to the reader to be reminded that physical conditions may on occasion either set up or aggravate a stammer.

To put the matter as briefly as possible, it may be said that any long-standing abnormality of the nose or throat counts against the stammerer; particularly such conditions as lead to a narrowing of the air-passages—enlarged tonsils and the little growths we call "adenoids" being so common as to be conditions familiar to every educated person. But it must not be forgotten that modern study of the delicately constructed nose and throat passages has shown that local inflammations, small out-growths of bone and gristle, chronic irritations, and "polypi," are much commoner than used to be supposed. Better methods of examination have shown that such abnormal conditions are very frequently to be found in out-of-the way situations where they may readily be overlooked. Common-sense tells us that the stammerer must be freed from the hindrance of anything of this kind before he can successfully take up the attack on his trouble by himself.

Again, where it is known that the impediment of speech definitely depends on some serious constitutional or local malady—epilepsy or paralysis for example—the sufferer does not come within the category of those for whom this little work is intended, but it may be pointed out that any state

of lowered health is likely to make stammerers feel their trouble more acutely. Particularly where there is constitutional nerve-weakness is this point important, for it stands to reason that under such circumstances whatever be done to relieve the speech impediment must be backed up by careful attention to nerve-health. Diet, fresh air, exercise and general hygienic measures, special treatments, and so forth, having for their object the strengthening of the physical nervous system, cannot be discussed here, but the part these things can be made to play in the assistance of a stammerer whose nerve-tissues are weakened or exhausted must not be overlooked.

Whilst making reference in passing to the physical causes and incitements of stammering one may well consider the question of heredity. Experience shows that in some stammerers the tendency to the condition is transmitted, and occasionally one comes across a family in which several members stammer. Under such circumstances one or two may have picked up the disordered speech through irritation in early years—also a child may imitate a stammering parent. But it is quite clear that some stammerers have to face the unpleasant fact that through inheritance the trouble is more deeply rooted in them than in others. Let them not be discouraged thereby. For although their task may be a little harder, there is *absolutely nothing in the*

fact of inheritance to make them on that account alone hopelessly incurable.

A New Theory

No modern book on stammering would be complete without some reference to the new theory and practice of mind-analysis which is exerting an important influence on present day views about tricks of speech and action. Briefly, the new idea is that such tricks are really due to some kind of suppressed emotion which has set up an "irritable spot" in the mind; for example, a man may be vastly angry with someone whom he is unable to chastise by word or deed, and so has to bottle up his temper, but in so doing he suppresses energy which must find an outlet somewhere or else occasion trouble. In a word, emotional storms of all kinds may set up disturbing factors in the mind with far-reaching consequences if not allowed to exhaust themselves naturally. Thus a buried anger is supposed to be capable of working away in our thoughts, quite unbeknown to ourselves, until in the course of time it has produced quite a lot of wreckage—obstructing here, confusing there, at one time upsetting the brain so that delusions occur, at another upsetting the body so that pains, jerky movements, stammering, and allied troubles result.

Further, we are asked to believe that by careful analytic processes it is possible to unearth such a "buried emotion," and that the latter when brought to light often loses its tension and powers for damage. A supposed emotional foundation sometimes appears to be remembered by the sufferer; more often he has no memory of the past incident his examiner is trying to discover by a method of mind-analysis—technically known as psycho-analysis—in which investigation is made both of the ordinary stream of thought and of dreams. It may be said at once that this mind-analysis is a highly technical process, the description of which would be quite out of place here, and of such a nature that it can only be used with any hope of success by experts. Of course this new theory is by no means accepted without reserve in responsible quarters, and from the practical point of view it certainly does not appear that its upholders have made out a very good case for mind-analysis as a cure for stammering and similar troubles.

In this country some attention was drawn to this subject at the International Congress of Medicine held in London, 1913, when various speakers welcomed the theory as a scientific explanation of such disturbances of speech and actions as we have been considering, but I am not aware that in the time that has elapsed since then practical experience has proved the truth of their optimistic outlook.

Indeed, I have searched in vain for any really satisfactory report of results obtained in the treatment of stammering by psychoanalysis ; isolated examples of cures have been reported by various workers, but I have found no evidence that anyone interested in stammering has been able to give relief on a large scale by the use of mind-analysis, or has found the method readily applicable to practical work. Looked at from the common-sense point of view, the new psychological theory seems to be that a man stammers because he has something on his mind which he wishes to conceal ; his impediment being the expression of his thought that he must hide this matter lest he be betrayed into "giving himself away." Personally I find it difficult to believe that every stammerer is in this unfavourable position. On the other hand, to be fair to the theory it must be pointed out that its exponents have another way of putting things ; they say that apart from the results of suppressed emotional storms stammering very often represents the unspoken wish of a naturally shy person to efface himself. That is to say, the stammerer is an individual of retiring disposition whose nervous system has hit upon the use of impeded speech as a means of permitting him to withdraw as much as possible from general social relations. This theory that stammering represents the unspoken wish of a timid person to efface himself is certainly interesting and, per-

haps, more reasonable than the theory of "buried emotions"; but the whole problem is one that requires further investigation before final conclusions can be arrived at, and attention is only drawn to it here in view of the fact that nowadays stammerers are not unlikely to hear about psychoanalysis, and naturally desire to know something about it. Clearly the subject is of chief importance to them in regard to the possible relief they are likely to obtain from the practical methods indicated, and if any medico-psychologist is able to find some method of technique by which assistance may readily be brought to stammerers in this way, his work will be very welcome. So far one has to note that apart from the scanty successes hitherto reported by even the most optimistic writers on the psychoanalytical treatment of stammering, the optimists themselves have always pointed out that at best it inevitably takes a very long time.

CHAPTER VI

FOUNDATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL CONTROL

HAVING thus studied with considerable care just how the stammerer behaves differently from his fellows who can speak easily, having analysed his feelings and conduct, having closely watched his method of breathing and efforts at speech, the reader may now feel able to say to him—"Now I know where you go wrong. I can point out several weak spots that you have overlooked. If you will pay attention to what I tell you in regard to these things you will certainly get rid of your trouble." That is decidedly a hopeful attitude, but it leaves out of account the stammerer himself, and many people who have taken up this question have too confidently assumed that by showing the stammerer exactly where he fails, they will be able to make him speak without difficulty. Such an assumption will lead to many failures and much disappointment, for in practice these optimists soon become undeceived, because it is not only necessary for the stammerer to understand his points of failure, and to be able to overcome them individually, but it is absolutely essential for him

both to understand them and learn how to overcome them simultaneously—and that is a difficult task. It is easy enough to help a stammerer to correct one fault, but the moment he tries to correct several faults at once, he becomes at first more confused and troubled than ever; and so, although at this stage of our discussion the task of relieving stammering presents itself in a very encouraging light, no greater mistake can be made than to suppose that the understanding and analysis of the trouble brings us within immediate sight of its successful control.

Let us sum up the chief faults that we have discovered in the analysis and discussion of preceding chapters. To put it briefly it may be said that the average stammerer fails in the following respects :—

1. He is wanting in self-confidence generally.

2. More than that, he is obsessed by a fear that his speech will always " let him down."

3. He breathes badly—not filling his lungs as vigorously as he should.

4. Largely as a result of the last-mentioned failing, he attempts to speak with too little pressure in his organ-bellows.

To these I can add two more common faults, which, however, have not, perhaps, come into our discussion as yet. They are :—

5. He has a bad habit of mental haste, one consequence of which is that he commonly rushes his

speech; attempting to get the words out almost before he has formed them properly in his mind.

6. He holds himself in a state of physical tension corresponding to his strained nerves. Watch any stammerer—or yourself stammering—and you will find that there is not infrequently a tendency to keep the whole body in a state of tension with the hands tightly gripping something, and the whole attitude one of strain. Obviously, then, the stammerer must correct ALL these faults and AT THE SAME TIME before he can completely conquer his difficulty.

In short, he has to make a radical change in his personal habit of both mind and body before he can win the great victory; *and to accomplish this is not only a question of understanding, but of persistent, determined, and long-suffering practice.*

For practical purposes it will make it much easier for teacher or pupil if we try and reduce as far as possible the number of main weaknesses to be attacked, and, indeed, the six prime faults indicated above can readily be reduced to three chief groups, of which, it will be noticed, the first two can be classed together as nervous, whilst the next two may be kept together as being closely associated with physical difficulties. Similarly the last two naturally depend on each other and may be discussed together; so that we now get three

chief points of weakness which must be overcome before a stammer can be completely got rid of. They are :—

1. Nervous obstruction—
   (*a*) Want of confidence.
   (*b*) Morbid fears.
2. Wrong breathing—
   (*a*) Too shallow breathing.
   (*b*) Too little wind-pressure.
3. Living at tension—
   (*a*) Mental.
   (*b*) Physical.

Now what are the possible ways in which we can attack these three main nerve-body weaknesses with reasonable prospects of success? Of course, the stammerer who is possessed by the idea that his trouble is disease of a specific kind—just as measles, influenza, or appendicitis are definite diseases—goes about looking for some kind of medicine or operation that will cure him; and one of the first things that all stammerers must do is to get rid of this false notion that they are the subjects of a *physical disease*. They are the subjects of a *bad habit*. They are not the subjects of a definite disease. If any drug or operation were known that would relieve stammerers of their sufferings, this point would not matter so much and one could scarcely advise them not to get help by such quick and ready means; but let it be stated once for all, and as

emphatically as possible, that no operation—nor any drug known to science—is of its own account capable of stopping a stammer. Where a difficulty of speech is clearly due to some local abnormality or obstruction, medical or surgical assistance may remedy matters, but in this book, as I have repeatedly reminded my readers, we are only concerned with those stammerers who have been given a clean bill of local and general health; so once more let it be repeated that no medicine, nor combination of medicines, nor operation can be relied on by itself to "cure" them of stammering, and, for this very good reason that whilst *diseases* require medicines and operations, *bad habits* require correction. If a child writes badly we do not give it medicine to make it write better. No; we endeavour by practice to turn the untidy habit into a good and correct habit of writing. And so with stammering, let it be regarded as a bad habit and not as a disease; this alone will be a vast help to the individual concerned. Clearly by getting rid of such an obstructive idea as that the condition is a disease very hard to cure we shall be doing a great deal to free the stammerer from part of the nervous obstruction which we have decided above is a source of weakness. And now, having freed ourselves from the idea that drugs or operations may help the stammerer without any effort on his part, let us proceed to study what means there are

to hand of getting rid of the success-destroying burden of impeded speech.

Practically all our most useful methods may be grouped under three headings, as follows :—

1. Self-training.
2. Educational.
3. Suggestion.

Of the methods based on these principles, the first throws both work and responsibility entirely on the stammerer ; the second offers him assistance if he will co-operate ; whilst the last offers to do all the work for him and so leave him no responsibility or anxiety in the matter.

Owing to the general nerve weakness—technically known as neurasthenia—from which so many stammerers suffer, they experience a constant sense of brain-tiredness which makes them shirk the irksome business of aiding themselves by self-help methods ; consequently they feel only too delighted at the thought of being relieved of their affliction without severe mental effort and quite naturally not a few jump at the idea of being " cured " by suggestion, for when thus treated all that the stammerer has to do is to recline gracefully in an easy chair with his eyes closed whilst the expert makes certain verbal suggestions designed to remove nerve-obstructions and to overcome the bad habit by sheer force of an implanted dominant idea. This is no place to discuss the theory of suggestion,

but nowadays most people know it means the planting of a curative idea in the mind of a patient. Frequently treatment by suggestion is backed up and emphasised by the use of hypnotism, but many people fight shy of this powerful aid to the method; still, inasmuch as it appears to hold out a chance of offering relief with little trouble, it is being increasingly tried to-day for stammering. Particularly have medical men hoped that by means of suggestion they would be able to rescue stammerers from the hands of the unscrupulous; for the stammerer has sometimes been victimised by persons who without experience have pretended to have found out the secret of its "cure."

I am afraid that both doctors and patients have suffered much disappointment in this connection. Some years ago, when first studying the possibilities of suggestion in treatment, the writer himself thought that herein was a great chance for stammerers and in consequence had some victims of the difficulty treated by this means. Observation of results showed that whilst a few did remarkably well, methods that "cure" without the co-operation of the sufferer do not correct the faulty breathing, however much they may restore confidence, and thus do not really strengthen self-control—a very important omission. Certainly, although achieving a brilliant success here and there, the advocates of suggestion and hypnotism have not scored the

victories over stammering that were hoped for. It stands to reason that in dealing with such a condition permanent relief is much more likely to be brought about by strengthening the will-power, and by correction of bad breathing, than simply by increasing self-confidence, however important a part weakened confidence plays in any particular example.[1] We are left, then, with the principles of self-training and education, and it may be accepted as an important principle in the relief of stammering that the best methods always include application of both; that, indeed, no system for dealing with this affliction is of full practical value where little or nothing has to be done by the sufferer. On the other hand, it is not fair to throw the whole burden and responsibility on the shoulders of the stammerer, particularly as he is often so lacking in nerve-energy, being apt to get tired and discouraged before he has reached his goal, and so can be vastly aided by a good teacher.

For all practical purposes the methods designated, Education and Self-training, both are ready enough to hand, and the student can go ahead with these confident in the knowledge that by perseverance with systems based on a combination of both the desired results are to be looked for, and thereby sure and certain relief can be obtained in the average case. It will be convenient to consider both these—

[1] See also Appendix II. p. 113.

Education and Self-training—together, as in both two similar essential principles are at work.

1. The explanation and understanding of the difficulties and causes of the impeded speech.

2. A knowledge of how to correct the errors found; constant practice to make perfect a new habit being therein implied.

One of the great disadvantages under which the stammerer labours is the length of time that is usually occupied in getting rid of his trouble, and not infrequently—partly owing to expense—he decides to discontinue a method which would bring relief if he only persevered with it for long enough. It has always seemed to me that once the stammerer has grasped the underlying causes of his trouble and can make an analysis of his own case the position of a teacher is to give a series of rules and exercises that can be practised at home indefinitely, so that the pupil has something to rely on if he cannot afford many personal lessons. Of course, personal encouragement is a great thing, and some people cannot get on without constant assistance of this kind, but all stammerers ought to make up their minds to shoulder the burden of persistent and prolonged practice, determining to be as independent as possible of the personal efforts of teachers once they have been given a good start. I feel quite certain that I have the support of all scientific teachers in stating this. After a certain

point, the more a stammerer relies on himself to carry out his exercises and rules, and to force his way to victory, the better it is for him. I admit that in the past stammerers have somewhat fallen between two stools. Their trouble has scarcely been one for the doctor, who after satisfying himself that no structural cause is at work not infrequently tells the stammerer he can do little for him; obviously doctors have neither the time nor the opportunity to act as teachers of voice-production, it is obviously not their job, and the most they can do is to suggest some system or teacher. On the other hand, there have not been many students of voice-production who have scientifically studied stammering in all its aspects—although a few have done most excellent work in this respect—and so the stammerer has again turned for help to a quarter not always quite able to give it.

CHAPTER VII

SELF-HELP FOR STAMMERERS—RULES AND EXERCISES

To put the matter briefly, the stammerer who sets out to cure his difficulty *must attain three objects*; at the same time, as I have previously emphasised, *he must understand the principles* by which he is to be guided. The objects he must have in view are :—

1. CONFIDENCE—that all is well with his speech apparatus from the physical point of view. That, indeed, there is no mechanical obstruction to his speaking.

2. A NEW HABIT—that of speaking naturally. He must get rid of the habit of speaking in a hesitating obstructed manner; he must re-educate his nerve-cells and muscles so that they work in entirely new combinations.

3. A RELAXED STATE OF MIND AND BODY—he must get rid of that feeling of strain, that mental haste and bodily tension, which so often accompanies stammering. Until he can hold himself comfortably relaxed in body, and calmly poised in thought, he will never completely conquer his trouble.

To help him make a start with his self-training, one addresses a stammerer somewhat as follows :—

" When told that an important part of your self-help system must be the attainment of great confidence in yourself you, as a stammerer, have every reason to reply, ' Yes, that is all very well. But considering that for years I have never opened my mouth without making myself an object for pity and ridicule, you cannot expect me to acquire suddenly the belief that I can now speak clearly. My want of confidence is based on sad experience.' Your reply seems fair enough, but it must be remembered that confidence is not to be attained all of a sudden ; it is to be built up bit by bit. Remember that the whole point of suggestion as a successful agent in regard to stammering is that occasionally it may implant an attitude of confidence in the victim, and the remarkable recoveries that have occasionally been reported, have depended entirely on this. But inasmuch as the suggestion of confidence does not act every time, as previously noted, we have had to fall back on a method of building it up on a substantial basis. You as a stammerer think that you have no grounds for confidence, but it is quite easy to show you that at anyrate you need not be quite wanting in confidence for one or two simple reasons. Thus are you quite sure that—

1. Your nervous system—and

2. Your vocal apparatus—

are structurally sound? If so, then you know that you possess the foundations for normal speaking right enough. That alone is something, is it not? You have the power and you have the machine; all you have to do is to make contact between the one and the other. This may be difficult. But you might have been in a position of a man with deficient power or damaged machine. How immeasurably worse off would you not have been then?"

At this stage the stammerer may well say to himself, "I have some grounds for confidence after all." Further he can say, "Is not my confidence strengthened by the fact that I can articulate definitely and regularly without hesitation if I sing, or speak in an unnatural voice." For it must be remembered that most stammerers can get their words out if they speak in a sing-song, or if they speak in a strange voice. This alone proves that they have the ability to speak, if not in the particular kind of voice that they would like to use for ordinary purposes.

Often it is useful at this point for stammerers to realise that they can even speak in a natural voice if they are careful in certain directions. Thus if one places one's hand either on the chest, or on the pit of the stomach and follows with pressure the in-breathing and out-breathing, and after a

minute or two insists on the stammerer breathing in and out in accordance with one's pressure whilst speaking—taking things very slowly, very calmly, and repeating instructions over several times—it will often happen that he will be able to get out a short sentence clearly and distinctly. Where this happens it is obviously a strong support to increasing self-confidence to the man who for years has allowed the idea of hopelessness in speaking to obsess his whole outlook; the demonstration that there are conditions under which he can pronounce words clearly, regularly, and without hesitation is a revelation that comes with great force. It wakes him up and makes him look for the latent possibilities within him.

Unfortunately the point thus made is often so badly followed up that the stammerer ultimately accepts this demonstration as applicable to an abnormal way of speaking only and to have nothing to do with normal speaking. This, of course, is absurd. If anyone can get his words out in a singsong voice, it is absolutely certain that it is possible for him to acquire the conditions necessary to get them out in what would be called a normal conversational voice. The gist of all this is that whilst the breathing and speaking exercises that play so important a part in self-training, and which we shall discuss later, are a necessary part of the cure the victory must be very largely a psychological

one if it is to last. In a word, the patient must build up so much self-confidence—not based on faith only, but also on reasonable explanation and demonstration—that he comes to a time when like ordinary people he will speak without his attention being largely concentrated on the fact that he is so doing. Whilst I dictate this paragraph, my mind is centred much on my subject and not upon the way I am speaking. Were I a stammerer much of my energy and labour would have to be wasted through a divided attention. The stammerer must learn to speak so that he pays attention to *what* he is talking about, and not as to *how* he is talking about it—his words coming automatically.

One of the reasons that he finds it difficult to take his attention off the way he is speaking is because he believes that everyone else is also thinking about how he is talking. *When one can get this idea out of his head another great advance towards complete self-confidence will be made.* Here just as in other forms of morbid consciousness—including blushing, shivering, and general nervousness in presence of strangers—it is absolutely necessary for the sufferer to understand and to absorb the ideas that it is no business of anyone else whether he stammers or flushes. As soon as he can grasp the fact that his little trouble is essentially a matter of his own concern, further relief will come and he will find himself on the way to complete

freedom from the state of mind that has enslaved him.

There is no doubt that—still remembering that they are very important in themselves physically—breathing exercises do help in part by distracting the attention from the actual spoken word. The same applies to sing-song, speaking in a strange voice, and to rhythmical processes such as beating time with the foot, or with a finger whilst speaking. Doubtless the rhythm assists the breathing—makes it easier for the organ-bellows to fill and empty regularly—but it is commonly overlooked that rhythm soothes the mind and to some extent brings about a distraction of attention. The stammerer must have it constantly impressed upon him that the more his thoughts can be thrown away from his speech, the better he will be, and many helpful rules assist in bringing relief through this principle. Thus stammerers are sometimes told—"Shut your mouth before beginning to speak—also shut it firmly whenever you find yourself failing." Here again the act of shutting the mouth takes off the attention from the actual process of speaking; it also has the undoubted advantage of offering a simple outlet for the nerve energy that tends to flow into many side channels. It is this overflow that we have previously noted as making not only a hopeless jumble of what should be an easy speech, but causing all sorts of jerks of the head and face muscles.

Rest of Mind and Body

Following upon the attainment of self-confidence comes the question of relaxation of mind and body. Where there is nervous unrest and excitability there invariably is also to be found a state of physical tension and strain. If one feels the muscles of an excitable person, one finds them tense and hard and much more firmly contracted than they need be. Often the legs are curled up tightly and the hands partly clenched, whilst the state of inner strain is also not infrequently "given away" by some abnormal and uncomfortable attitude of body. Similarly with the stammerer. Nearly always it will be found that his body and limbs are wholly or in part strained and tense in correspondence with his highly strung nerves. Watch the anxious strained expression on his face—notice how he bends forward in an attitude of expectant attention, with the muscles of the neck and shoulders held as if "ready to start." He is in a state of high tension long before he has commenced to speak—restlessly moving his hands or feet—frequently rolling and unrolling a handkerchief between his fingers—only too glad to get away the minute his interview is over. Is it not evident that the tumultuous, distressing speech is but the explosion which is bound to find outlet in some direction or other from this steady boiling up of

nerve energy? Truly the stammerer's brain seems ever on the boil, waiting to simmer over at the first opportunity.

All this has got to be corrected. He must gain a habit of restfulness in mind and body before he can make use of his new found confidence and his better methods of breathing.

How is this to be achieved?

As physical strain and mental strain so often go together, the first thing to be done is to cultivate a natural pose of physical relaxation. Where the body and limbs can be held comfortably relaxed *at will* at any time nervous unrest and strain will be reduced to a minimum. Consequently efforts must be made to secure such control of all the muscles that the whole body can be relaxed just whenever it is so desired. The boon of relaxation is unknown to many, but it is very valuable to the over-strained, and everyone who is accustomed to practise relaxation knows how much energy can be saved thereby, and how vastly the whole system can be rested by this means. There are plenty of exercises for physical relaxation in common use, and examples are given in an appendix of an exercise suitable for this purpose.[1] The stammerer should not rely only on such exercises, but make it his business to keep his body within control at every available opportunity. Let him attack this question so that

[1] See Appendix I. p. 111.

throughout the day he sees to it that whenever he is getting strung up he relaxes his muscles and assumes a comfortable attitude of limbs and body. Here again, practice, practice, practice—perseverance, perseverance, perseverance—determination, determination, determination—will win the day.

At critical moments stammerers can also obtain some relief to nerve tension by various little tricks. The trick already referred to of shutting the mouth before beginning to speak, and of shutting it firmly when the voice begins to hesitate, not only distracts attention but certainly relieves strain in that the voice trouble is for the time being shelved—if only for a moment or two. But some writers on the subject appear to think that to relieve mental strain in such simple ways is wrong although helpful, because it evades the question of the physical difficulty. This is not so and such an assumption puts the physical error into a position of importance that it does not merit. All along I have contended that the idea that we are dealing with what is merely a physical difficulty, a sort of physical disease—or constitutional defect of mechanism—is fallacious, *both* " nerve " and apparatus being at fault. Thus any simple method—call it trick if you like—of relieving mental stress and allowing mind-control to come into play smoothly and readily is a worthy object of attention and by no means to be despised. It will be found in practical work that such a " trick "

will be automatically discarded when the speaker has formed the new habit of easy self-control and free speech.

Similarly, a feigned voice, Charles Kingsley being a famous example of its efficiency, undoubtedly acts by—

1. Distracting attention—and

2. Relieving fear—in that the stammerer *trusts* his "feigned voice," as, finding one day that it gave him free speech, he placed implicit confidence in it as the one good thing that has not "let him down."[1]

[1] Numerous exercises and hints for the strengthening of powers of attention and nerve-control generally will be found in the author's book "Mental Self-Help" (Mills & Boon, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, W.).

CHAPTER VIII

FURTHER RULES AND EXERCISES

IT will have been noticed that the writer has repeatedly urged that practice is the key to success in the control of stammering, and it is a matter of urgent importance that it should be clearly understood what is to be practised so diligently. Of course, practice of exercises and rules of all kinds is going to help a great deal, but it is PRACTICE WITH THE ACTUAL SPOKEN WORD that the writer considers the most essential condition for relief. Perhaps someone will say, "That is all very well! But how can I practise with the actual spoken word when the difficulty is that I can't speak without stammering."

Not so fast. Stammerers have several times been reminded that there is always *some form of voice* in which the average sufferer can speak. It may be in a sing-song—or in a chant—or by imitating somebody else—or by putting on some kind of strange voice—but in one of these ways the stammerer is sure to find a means of getting his words out without obstruction.

Having discovered the best way of achieving

this he must then persist with his "practice voice" —as we may well call it—until he is thoroughly used to the sound of himself speaking, or singing without impediment. Note then that the rule is—

PRACTISE THE ACTUAL SPOKEN WORD,

not necessarily practise the spoken word in your natural voice! No; practise the spoken word in ANY voice you can manage, leaving the question of the natural voice until later.

Fortunately many stammerers have no difficulty in speaking or reciting when alone. Through a misapprehension of the principles underlying this trouble and its relief they only too often fail to realise what a powerful lever for self-help they have in this simple fact. But as speaking or reciting alone is rather a dull and tiresome business it should be replaced by READING ALOUD, which is even better for the purpose in view. *If necessary this must be accomplished at first in a sing-song or other "practice voice."*

As a first step along the trying road to complete recovery it is a most excellent thing for the stammerer to make a point of *reading aloud* daily—for at least a quarter of an hour. If a few minutes' extra practice of the same kind can be arranged at other times during the day so much the better. But the point is that *not a day is to be allowed to pass* without some reading aloud.

The exercise may be made still more helpful by reading aloud :—

1. In time with a companion—in a sing-song voice.
2. Alone—in a sing-song voice.
3. In time with someone else (who is also reading aloud the same passage).
4. In time with someone who is following the same passage but not aloud.
5. In the presence of someone who is not accompanying in any way.

One of the most successful cases that ever came into the writer's experience largely owed relief to persistent daily reading aloud in company with an intelligent companion.

To recapitulate—one of the first things the stammerer has to do, then, is to make himself thoroughly familiar with reading aloud, singing, chanting, or speaking in a false voice. These things may be tried in turn, or used alternately to vary the monotony. But the object to be attained is familiarity with a flow of spoken words in one form or another.

Whilst this form of practice is being undertaken, every opportunity should be seized of obtaining a thorough grasp of the principles underlying stammering as previously discussed. *The more the stammerer understands his trouble, the more readily will he be able to conquer it.* Throughout this little book stress is laid on UNDERSTANDING as a most important condition of recovery.

We shall soon consider in detail set exercises of various kinds, but it is important that too much reliance be not placed on any individual example. Of course exercises are extremely helpful in certain directions—particularly in regard to the breathing—and help the system to get used to better muscular action, and better filling of the chest with air. But it must be borne in mind that with stammering, as with all morbid forms of self-consciousness or panic, rules and exercises tend to be forgotten when sudden need arises. That is to say the " attack " is on and overwhelming before the victim can collect himself sufficiently to put his rules—mental or physical—into practice, and even if he recovers himself enough to make a struggle he feels he is fighting a losing battle—that indeed he has lost the initiative, and that his enemy now calls the tune to which he must dance. Certainly let exercises and rules be used as a convenient method of strengthening various nerve-muscle combinations, and movements—but let not the sufferer place sole reliance on them in time of stress.

Consonants and Vowels

Stammerers must make some study of the elementary sounds used in daily conversation if they want to make rapid progress, *and they should certainly consider sounds rather than letters.* Taking the consonants first it will be found that they can

readily be divided into various groups; thus **f, k, p, s,** and **t** require practically no sounding, and may be classed by themselves as "silent" consonants.

On the other hand, **v, g, b, z,** and **d** (corresponding sounds it will be noticed) require definite production of voice—that is, obvious action in the voice-box—and so may conveniently be grouped together as "sounded" consonants.

Further the nasals—**m, n,** and **ng**—are humming sounds made through the nose, of which the last two are quite easy to produce; whilst **l** and **r** represent simple sounds made by tongue and palate, and do not usually give trouble.

As to other consonants and combinations **c** occurs either as **s** or **k,** and so does not require special thought; **q** is really **kw,** just as **x** is **ks.** Then **ch**—as in chain, choice, or Charles—should be thought of and pronounced as **t-sh**; **j**—in John—or soft **g** in George—being regarded as **d-zh.** Thus the voicing of **t–sh–arles** and **d–zh–ack** gives Charles and Jack respectively. **Th** should be at first treated as a softly sounded **t.**

The stammerer will be greatly helped when he discovers that in speaking he can practically neglect **f, k, p, s,** and **t,** and by concentrating his attention instead on the syllable to follow will pronounce it easily. Taking, for example, the name "Tom," if he devotes his attention to saying "**om,**" and merely

throws the "T" sound in as a little rush of air, he will find that he gets the word out almost perfectly; whereas if he concentrates on the "T" sound, he will stumble and have difficulty in getting to the "om." It is important then to practise short words beginning with the silent consonants—**f, k, p, s, t**—repeating the syllables following them alone; thus—take the words **T–om, p–at, c–at, k–eep, f–oot, s–um,** and so forth—first think of the syllables "**om,**" "**at,**" "**eep,**" "**oot,**" "**um**"—repeating these over and over again; then when used to these simple sounds throw in the necessary "silent" consonants just at the moment of pronouncing the practised syllable. Note that these consonant sounds are but little gusts of air slightly modified by the tongue, lips, and teeth; that to pronounce them no effort of vocalisation—no muscular action in the voice-box—is needed.

With the sounded consonants—**v, g, b, z, d**—similar practice should be made, but the stammerer naturally finds them more difficult in that they are in part dependent on vocalisation—action in the voice-box. Still, curiously enough, his fault usually lies in half-heartedly sounding them, rather than in trying to miss them altogether.

Coming to the nasals—**m, n, ng**—it is to be noted that they are nothing more than simple humming sounds made through the nose. For their pronunciation some voice-box action is

required of a very simple nature. Before he has completely overcome them, the stammerer may make progress by always pronouncing "**m**" as "**n**"—the latter being by far the easier of the two. In any case he should send the voice humming through the nose freely, and not timorously as is his habit. Note that also with **l** and **r** it is THE VOWEL SOUND FOLLOWING on which attention should be concentrated.

So far so good, and we can now construct a simple sentence with which to practise overcoming, or rather avoiding, consonant stumbling-blocks according to these hints.

TOM DOES NOT GO TO MARKET

can be translated into :—

OM OES OT O O AR ET.

Let us repeat this a few times and then proceed to pronouncing it as follows, putting *full concentration* on these syllables and *very slight emphasis* on the **t, d, n, g, t, m, k.**

Saying thus :—

"T-OM d-OES n-OT g-O t-O m-AR-k-ET."

However, although this may help the stammerer whose chief difficulty is the consonant sounds, it will not be of much assistance to those whose trouble centres in pronouncing the vowel sound.

Let us then consider how the latter can be simplified for practice purposes.

The vowels are, of course—**a, e, i, o, u**—but before taking them individually it is important to study certain elementary vowel sounds as they occur in practically all words used daily. Of these, perhaps, the most important is "**ah,**" and after this "**oh,**" "**a,**" "**oo,**" "**ee.**" Fortunately enough "**ah**" is not only a very common foundation sound in familiar words, but also the easiest vowel sound to deal with. *If the mouth be allowed to fall open naturally to its fullest extent, with the tongue resting on the floor of the mouth, then, if with well-filled lungs a steady gust of air is driven through the voice-box with the intention of making a sound, it will be found that "ah" comes out readily enough.* The thing then is to practise this constantly and with great perseverance until the "**ah**" sound can be pronounced quite naturally. As it is the foundation sound in so many words, its mastery will give sufficient support and confidence to enable the rest of the word to be enunciated without trouble. Take for example the word "sight"; its pronunciation necessitates the use of the sounds "**ah**" and "**ee**"; having once got out the "**ah**" the "**ee**" sound will follow readily. If the stammerer recognises this he will find it of vast assistance, as instead of —in the example just given—struggling away to pronounce the "**i**" sound he goes straight away for

"ah" leaving the "**ee**" to take care of itself—as he may do with perfect confidence. Further, practising with "**oh,**" "**oo,**" and "**ee,**" it will be found that the mouth must gradually be closed a little more for each of these according to the order given, until when "**ee**" has been reached, the teeth will practically be meeting. It is, of course, in connection with the early mastery of these sounds that the services of a good teacher are very helpful; for whilst movements of the lips and tongue-tip in relation to the teeth come naturally enough to most persons, the body of the tongue commonly gives a lot of trouble. The actual movements and position cannot be satisfactorily learned from a written description alone. Suffice it now to say that with the "**ah**" sound the tongue should be allowed to lie easily on the floor of the mouth, and that in pronouncing "**oo,**" "**a**" and "**ee,**" it should be allowed to accommodate itself without any forced effort on the part of the stammerer.

Before going further, it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the two rules indicated above will carry the stammerer a very long way. To repeat:—

1. Neglect the consonants (particularly the voiceless group)—**f, k, p, s, t**—*concentrating on the vowel sound to follow.*
2. If you have most difficulty with the vowels, *concentrate your attention on the sound*

"**ah**" until you have made it part of your very self.

Remember it can be pronounced quite naturally by allowing the mouth to drop widely open, letting the tongue rest quietly in its place and sending a good stream of wind through the voice organ (larynx), whilst making just enough movement in the throat to bring the vocal cords together.

TH— W— AND Y.

We have not yet referred to the sounds for **th**—**w**—and **y**—each of which is responsible at times for a great deal of trouble. The beginner should treat "**th**" as a voiceless consonant, practising the use of words beginning with "**th**" but speaking as if this combination of letters did not exist. After a while the way must be felt carefully to a position in which "**th**" is treated as a voiced consonant and a slight sound given to it at the beginning of various words. Once this can be done with comfort very little more practice will be required before the speaker will be able to give the "**th**" sound its full value.

As to "**w**" and "**y**" there is a very simple method for depriving those of their sting—and that is by merely substituting **o͞o** and **e͞e** for them at the beginning of words. Thus treat the sentence

Y—ESTERDAY W—AS W—EDNESDAY

as

E͞E—ESTERDAY O͞O—AS O͞O—EDNESDAY,

and by taking the **EE** and the **OO** quietly yet firmly the word will sound quite correctly to the casual listener.

Once the habit of using "$\overline{\text{OO}}$" and "$\overline{\text{EE}}$" in this way has been formed the "**w**" and "**y**" sounds will be found quite naturally and will present no further obstacle.

Breathing Exercises

It must be remembered that some successful teachers of voice production rely chiefly upon chest gymnastics when they have to deal with a stammerer, but, as the writer has previously pointed out, where this is so there is grave danger lest the unstable nerve-state which almost always accompanies stammering be overlooked. A likely consequence of this is that whilst the pupil gets on well enough so long as he is doing his exercises under the watchful eye of his master, he is likely to relapse when left to his own resources, simply because the problem of his inherent want of confidence has not been tackled during the attempted "cure." On the other hand, used as an aid to the stammerer who sets out to help himself on the lines suggested in this little book, breathing exercises can play a very important part in gaining successful control over not only tricks of speech, but of manner and action also.

As to the actual exercises performed it matters little what particular movements are gone through so long as they ensure—

1. Deep, regular breathing.

2. Provide for expansion of the deeper parts of the chest, particularly movement of the lower ribs which encase the lower parts (bases) of the lungs.

3. Avoid the mistake of drawing air chiefly into the upper parts of the chest, with sudden lifting of the collar-bone and little or no filling of the deeper portions.

N.B.—Do not exhaust yourself if you are a stammerer—or your pupil if you are a teacher.

Details of suitable exercises can be found in many guides to physical training; a useful form of breathing-exercise—which can with advantage be carried out in front of a mirror—is given on p. 98.

Further points to be noticed in connection with breathing exercises are :—

1. The benefits to be derived from them are much increased if they are performed in front of a looking-glass.

2. The expansion of the lower (more voluminous) parts of the lungs should be intelligently watched by the pupil, who for this purpose places one hand over the lower ribs, or, as a variation, over the pit of the stomach. Under such circumstances he will not be satisfied until he readily feels the pressure against his hand showing that air is being drawn

into the most capacious levels of the lungs and with some force.

3. All breathings in or out are to be steady and well-controlled—so that no sniffing, blowing, gasping, or other jerky noises are made. This is one of the more difficult points to gain and is correspondingly important.

4. Practise—PRACTISE—PRACTISE !

CHAPTER IX

REINFORCEMENT OF CONTROL—LOOKING-GLASS DRILL

CLEARLY it is desirable that many of the commonplace actions of daily life—such as eating, writing, and walking—should be placed in the sphere of automatic control; educated people have far too many important things to think about to wish to be bothered with conditions of attention to the routine acts of the day. The busy man thinks out his plans for the day whilst shaving in the morning, his hand controlled by habit carrying the slender blade safely over his face, although his attention is scarcely directed to what he is doing—just as, later, he converses at table whilst automatically eating his breakfast.

Who follows minutely the various steps of his getting up in the morning or undressing at night? Who watches closely his pen or his knife and fork? Normally there is no need to do so. But should the automatic nerve centres fail in their work, and some complicated function be thereby jumbled, then perforce must the victim learn his task all over again; and in so doing must, firstly, make a con-

sciously helpful habit; secondly, turn it over to the automatic part of his brain with instructions thereto to carry it out for ever afterwards.

And so with regard to speaking; here we have a function that has become a habit scarcely controlled by direct attention, except in so far as it is wanted to modify the voice in tone or rhythm for some particular purpose. Should the automatic controlling machinery slip its gears a fresh start has to be made—the brain, nerves, and voice-apparatus have to be taught to work together in a better and more useful way; then this new habit having been acquired it has to be so drilled into the automatic machinery department that it can be carried out in future without further trouble.

This process of re-education is, of course, a hard way—but, after all, it is the best way. Still one sighs to think of the wonders claimed for re-education of self-control, and regrets that it is just the preposterous claims made for some systems professing to teach self-mastery that have brought not a little discredit upon a very worthy practice. Of late years there have been professors of re-education who have told us that they can relieve long-suffering humanity not only of tricks of speech and action, but of nervous disorders, rheumatism, chest troubles, and chronic ill-health of all kinds. What a pity it has been that all these systems have

achieved nothing more than a "not quite"! They have started by promising so much and ended up by giving us so little. Some have been initiated on quite sound lines but have suffered from an obvious anxiety on the part of their promoters to take the field with a boisterous enthusiasm in place of a scientific equipment of knowledge, experience, and understanding. I only touch on this point here for the purpose of encouraging sufferers who may be in a position to say, "Oh! I have tried a re-education cure and it did me no good." To these it must be pointed out that there is no such thing as a "re-education cure," there is no one plan or method—except that of simple practice of common-sense rules and exercises—that has any right to be called a system of re-education. The term merely means beginning again in regard to the learning of some essential habit of human conduct and daily activity, and, considering that in many instances where people are troubled with tricks of mind or muscles, the root of the difficulty rests in a faulty early training, the familiar word education might more reasonably be used by itself in this connection, or better, the expression "re-inforcement of education." It is, however, convenient to speaking of re-education on the assumption that, after all, at some time or other definite ways of using the voice or limbs have been learnt, and that as these are inconvenient the brain and

muscles have to be made to relearn their tasks in these particulars.

This important reinforcement, in addition to being aided by the various hints and exercises previously referred to as helpful in acquiring successful control, can be greatly strengthened by the use of Looking-Glass Drill, which depends, of course, on the carrying out of exercises in front of a looking-glass according to rules now to be given. Before giving details of these, however, one may conveniently review the chief objects we have in view in obtaining strengthened control; briefly, these are two-fold :—

1. *The power of keeping still*—immobility.
2. *The power of carrying out a new movement*—designed, of course, to antagonise or cut short the trick one wants to get rid of.

Obviously where stammering is concerned the first object is attained simply by keeping silent. In practice stammerers should make use of this power far more than they do. It will be said, " But if I keep silent how can I speak ? " Clearly no such absurd paradox is suggested. All stammerers tend to speak before it is really necessary for them to do so, and in conversation they often start talking long before an ordinary normal person would break in. Pauses in conversation are restful to everyone, and when the stammerer is advised to make use of his power of keeping still it is intended

that he should do this by prolonging the usual time of his pause.

On the other hand, when jerky, irregular movements of limbs or body—tricks or convulsive movements—are in question, the power of keeping still is exemplified by an immobility of the whole body. Even where the involuntary tricks are very bad it is usually possible for the sufferer to maintain stillness for *a few seconds*. It is just these few seconds that should be seized upon as a basis for establishing the power of keeping still by gradually learning to increase it according to the plan about to be outlined.

As a foundation for his future efforts let the pupil satisfy himself that however bad his trouble may be *he can really keep motionless for a space of time*. Never mind though that space of time be lamentably short. Ambition must not spoil his start on the road to successful control, and so a period of FIVE SECONDS' immobility may be taken as the first goal.

Many a sufferer from troublesome tricks will say, "There is nothing in keeping still for *five seconds*! I can do that easily enough." Just as some stammerers may say, "Of course I can keep silent for *five seconds*." Very well then; if so, congratulations are due that they can so readily accomplish the first essential step to better things. But let these fortunate ones remember that there are others not

so happy in their powers of control. Moreover, let every stammerer *actually practise* this five seconds' pause before going into the action of each fresh sentence, and note how often he fails—note how often he is rushed into attempted speech before he is well-balanced. Indeed, it is not so easy a thing for the confirmed stammerer to keep silent for even *five seconds* when struggling in the grips of attempted conversation.

The sufferer from a tic—the tiqueur, to use a technical term—and the stammerer MUST IN ALL THINGS take for their motto the plain words "GO SLOWLY." And so in beginning Looking-Glass Drill they must consider fully and deliberately this first step, not rushing on to the development of various exercises, but pausing a long time to consider in all its learning this simple point of—

FIVE SECONDS' IMMOBILITY—OR SILENCE.

The next advance is—

TO LENGTHEN THE PERIOD OF REST.

This is to be done gradually and without strain. A second is to be considered worth winning. Beginning with *five seconds*—this minimum must be sharply fought for where necessary—steadily make for six seconds, then seven seconds, and so forth; accounting it as a real victory where even a second is gained. After all it is agreed that our motto is to "GO SLOWLY"; therefore there is no need to

push ahead too quickly. Ground won steadily and slowly will be retained; sudden advances achieved by great mental strain are likely to prove but hollow victories.

And so the battle is slowly fought until the victor finds that he can remain still for an appreciable time without his trick of action or manner overcoming him. So the stammerer finds a new sense of control over his impetuous organs of speech. And let it not be lost sight of for a moment even that the mirror is a sure help to keeping still, as by its aid even the least restlessness will be at once detected. Those who have not tried to keep still will be surprised to know how difficult it is to be sure of absolute restfulness when not corrected by a mirror or a friend's criticism. But the fact remains, and it is only the looking-glass that can give the pupil the help he wants when alone in his room.

Now for the third stage of progress. This consists in mastering some form of exercise which will counter or substitute the trick it is required to get rid of. In its fulfilment it is nothing less than the establishment of a *good* habit in place of a *bad* habit. In the case of stammerers the only *good* habit to be attained is that of speaking normally, whilst with sufferers from tricks of manner and action the *good* habits vary as indefinitely as the jerks, jumps, twitchings, and other movements which occur.

There are, however, certain general exercises that are most helpful whatever be the exact nature of the trouble; these and one or two other examples I will now outline, but before doing so I must emphasise the conditions most favourable to the successful carrying out of all such graduated tasks of re-education. Briefly the best results will be obtained if the exercises are performed —

1. In front of a looking-glass.
2. The same number of times daily.
3. Always at exactly the same hours each day.
4. With keen attention and intelligent thought.

By paying attention to these four rules the seeker after successful control in speech or action will get results far and away better than those who attempt to help themselves without knowledge of these points. And with regard to the last I cannot say too strongly how important it is to be keen and watchful; haphazard performance of exercises—treating them as a boresome task that must be got through somehow or other—regarding them as nasty doses that have to be swallowed willy-nilly—makes for nothing but failure. Indeed, such an attitude of mind deserves nothing else, does it?

Now as to the sort of mirror exercises that are helpful to those wishing to conquer some unpleasant trick of speech or manner that has got beyond their powers of everyday control. In the first place

I will draw attention to one or two of a "general" kind, certain to be found useful under all circumstances, then consider others more especially applicable to definite troubles such as stammering, contortions of face, or wry-neck.

General Mirror Exercises

Let it be noted that all *rhythmic* exercises, including those associated with breathing, are helpful to the class of sufferers in question. Rhythmic movements of all kinds soothe the restless system, act as balm to the jumpy brain, and pour oil on troubled waters generally. When carried out in front of a looking-glass they are even more useful. Have we not already seen how reading aloud, particularly in rhythmic sing-song tones, readily assists those who stammer?

The following is a simple rhythmic method suitable for inclusion in Looking-Glass Drill:—

1. Be seated squarely in front of your mirror on an ordinary dining-room chair.

2. Rest your hands lightly one on each knee.

3. Regard yourself for ONE MINUTE—breathing quietly and keeping as still as possible.

4. Then draw the breath a little more slowly and deeply. Watch yourself doing this for another MINUTE.

5. Next raise and lower the arms in time with

your breathing. Lift them up as you breathe in, drop them as you breathe out. Each movement to be carried out slowly and as steadily as possible; yourself carefully watching in the mirror all the time.

When jerky movements are very troublesome the exercises may be slightly varied by standing upright against a firm support—obviously the wall of the room is as good as anything else for this. In this position the arms may be steadied against the wall whilst being raised and lowered, the whole muscular system being more readily controlled with the aid of such assistance. And, again, still further support can be obtained by carrying out this exercise whilst lying on the floor, only here there is a certain amount of difficulty about the mirror; a long adjustable dressing-glass will minimise this when to hand. As to how long the exercise should last, the following points may be observed:—

1. Begin with three minutes.

2. Repeat four times daily—always at the same hours.

3. Gradually increase by a minute or two as confidence is gained—but DO NOT HURRY—GO SLOWLY.

4. Ten minutes is a reasonable maximum for each attempt.

Special Mirror Exercises

It scarcely needs pointing out that the different combinations of movements that may be carried out in Looking-glass Drill are countless; they are, indeed, only limited by the ingenuity of anyone working them out. Individual sufferers from tricks of manner, "jumps of limbs," or such like troubles, can readily plan exercises to suit themselves once they have grasped the necessary principles. To this end the following special forms will be helpful.

Mirror Exercises for Wry-neck

Exercise I.

1. Sit squarely on an ordinary chair in front of a looking-glass.
2. Relax all muscles as far as can conveniently be done.
3. Take a few moments to secure a comfortable, easy pose.
4. Note that you can keep the head quite still and properly posed for a few seconds. Count the number of seconds you can control the head *without great effort.*
5. Practise moving the head slowly from side to side; and then up and down in a nodding movement.
6. Lift up one arm and move it up and down

or backwards and forwards in time with a movement of the head in one particular direction and back again.

7. When progress has been made with this try and move both hands in time with controlled head movements.

Exercise II.

Beginning as before, gradually try to make easy head movements in time with deep regular breathing in and out. For example, having taken up position in front of a mirror, slowly turn the head to the right whilst breathing in, and turn it back again to the *original position* whilst breathing out. Vary the exercise by moving to the left, or up and down in time with the breathing.

Mirror Exercises for Stammerers

1. Stand upright in front of a looking-glass and take a deep breath, noting if the lower ribs are filled out on so doing.

2. If not, practise breathing from below. That is to say, the lower parts of the chest, as indicated by the lower ribs, should be expanded first of all, the upper parts of the chest last.

3. To test this expansion of the lower chest, the hands should be placed over the last ribs with thumbs forward and fingers backward. The expansion required can thus be felt.

N.B.—When taking breath, no gasping or sniffing noise should be made in the throat or nose, and there should be no movement of the abdominal muscles.

4. This practice of breathing so as to fill the lower as well as the upper parts of the lungs should be repeated until this method of taking in air has become a habit. (Occasionally throughout the day one hand should be kept on the chest in the manner indicated above, so as mentally to guide the breath.)

N.B.—This exercise must be practised with the mind fully concentrated on the various muscular movements indicated, and a mental habit cultivated of controlling breathing on the lines shown.

For Tricks of Expression

The following is a type of exercise that will be found useful in instances of facial contortion :—

1. Sit comfortably in front of a mirror.
2. Keep the face absolutely still for FIVE SECONDS.
3. Read aloud for ONE MINUTE.
4. Then get up and walk about whilst keeping face quite still for FIVE SECONDS.
5. Repeat several times during five minutes.

N.B.—The objects of this exercise must be to lengthen gradually the various periods of stillness and freedom from contortion—just as before.

I need scarcely add that there are not a few

difficulties to be met with in carrying out these exercises. In the first place it is almost a certainty that they will be actively interrupted by the trick of manner or movement it is wished to correct; when this happens no despair should be felt. The possibility of interruption should be allowed for, and when it happens patience must be exerted. There is then nothing to be done but to make a pause in the proceedings and begin the whole thing over again. Begin again, that is, with a new period of tranquillity and control, aiming at nothing more than the FIVE SECONDS taken as the first goal.

It is absolutely essential to success that all previous nerve-waves or storms should be allowed to pass off before the exercise is proceeded with; this necessary tranquillity of the nervous system can only be secured by a firm voluntary effort of stillness just for those few seconds. Haste and hurry are the pitfalls to avoid; they may lead to serious set-backs if not strongly countered. GO SLOWLY.

But whatever the exercises chosen, or designed, success will the more readily be won by careful attention to the following cardinal rules of Looking-glass Drill.

1. The more obstinate or more complicated the trouble the simpler and shorter should be the exercise.

2. Complete stillness—even if only possible for a few seconds—must precede the active movements.

3. Arrangement should be made for carrying out the selected exercises—(*a*) at least twice, preferably three times a day. (*b*) At exactly the same time each day.

4. In securing stillness, or in timing movements, freely make use of counting—aloud if possible.

5. Simultaneous movements of both hands should always be given a place in any system of looking-glass exercises.

6. Movements in time with the breathing likewise should be used frequently.

7. Speaking, reading, counting, or reciting aloud are all powerful aids to these exercises.

8. PERSISTENT PRACTICE—*with increased persistence and determination on bad days*—is the secret of success.

DOUBLE MOVEMENT EXERCISES

1. In addition to the kinds of mirror exercises just discussed, there is another method of Looking-glass Drill that is very useful in the cultivation of successful control.

2. This is carried out by attempting to perform a similar task simultaneously with both hands, *e.g.* writing a word or sentence. When this is done it will be found that the left hand, or the right hand in a left-handed person, will, if not controlled, automatically write backwards, in the form, that

is, assumed by ordinary writing viewed in a looking-glass.

Drawing simple outlines, or tracing outlines through transparent paper, may also be made use of in such exercises.

Particularly where anyone is bothered with a habitual jerk or trick of one arm or hand can great help be obtained from "looking-glass drill." This is because the normal limb tends to control the jerky one by sympathy, or, in physiological terms, because where two muscle-groups are accustomed to work together each exerts an influence over the other. One knows how much easier it is, for example, to beat time with both hands, than, say, to beat time with one and write something with the other.

Discipline in Everyday Things

In concluding this chapter I cannot too strongly advocate the introduction of routine and discipline into the simple things of daily life as an aid to getting the better of a wayward nervous fault, whether it be of speech or action. I have for years urged nervous people to put into practice the elementary precepts of WRITE SLOWLY, THINK SLOWLY, WALK SLOWLY, EAT SLOWLY.[1] Anything that will bring order into the chaos of an excitable nervous system

[1] (*Vide* "How you Waste your Energies," p. 61, Mills & Boon, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, W.)

will be found of invaluable assistance to the sufferer from all nervous tricks. In this I believe myself to be supported by various authorities both in this country and on the Continent. Hence there is much to be said in favour of a stammerer, or similar sufferer, mapping out his daily life so that in his early stages of training he will follow a regular and well-ordered plan of living in all things. If he do this he will find the increasing harmony of daily life speedily reflected in an increasing discipline and harmony of thought and action. Ultimately these will react on each other favourably and to his greatest comfort.

CHAPTER X

SOME FAMOUS STAMMERERS

It may be of some interest as well as of some consolation to all afflicted with impediments of speech or other tricks of voice or action to know that they are in very good company, as so many famous men have been similarly afflicted; indeed, references to the speech troubles of distinguished persons occur in the literatures of all times. Kings, princes, statesmen, scientists, and persons distinguished in almost every walk of life have at one time or another been the victims of stammering; and remarkably enough the list includes orators of great fame, who, although troubled in ordinary conversation, were able to rise above their infirmity when speaking in public. Amongst famous speakers whose ordinary speech was difficult, Charles Kingsley comes to mind; contrast between his preaching and his harsh conversational tone being very remarkable. Similarly Phillips Brooks was a famous preacher, who in private life was bothered by obstructed speech; whilst still more recently one may remember that the late Father Hugh Benson, although a very eloquent preacher, was in social life bothered

with a stammer so troublesome at times that he used to apologise for it to his friends. Thrones have often been occupied by stammerers, both Louis II. and Louis XIII. of France being among them; whilst Michael II., a great Byzantine emperor, was surnamed "the stammerer"; further, although women so very seldom suffer from impediments of speech at least one queen—Mary II. of England—was thus troubled.

It must be noted that stammering has very often been part of the general nervous instability sometimes associated with special intellectual gifts; thus Lombroso, the well-known authority on these questions, has found many men of genius to have been poorly developed, lacking in moral tone and stammerers into the bargain. Of these, the Italian poet, Manzoni (1785-1873) was an example, for in spite of his brilliant gifts he not only stammered, but lived in a state of mental uncertainty, finding it very difficult to make up his mind and being obsessed by morbid doubts, fears, and depression.

Stammering not uncommonly exerts an influence on the life-work of clever men, as with Charles Lamb, who is said to have had to abandon an intended career in the Church because of this affliction; here, again, the speech impediment was but one of many other nervous troubles that bothered a brilliant intellect. Charles Darwin was another distinguished Englishman who stammered.

Other famous stammerers have included Camille Desmoulins (1760-1794), a prominent figure in the French Revolution; a violent unprepossessing individual, stammering badly, he was, nevertheless, able to speak in the French Parliament in a way that won great admiration from his hearers.

Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), a brilliant Jewish philosopher; Tartaglia (1506-1559) a famous mathematician; Vicomte de Turenne (1611-1675), Marshal of France and a great commander; François de Malherbe (1555-1628), a brilliant French littérateur; Cardan, a great Italian doctor and scientist—were all restricted in their activities by impeded speech.

In earlier times we find that many famous Greek savants were similarly hampered; among them Aristotle, Alcibiades, and Demosthenes; the last-named is supposed to have walked along by the sea for hours each day practising vocalisation with pebbles in his mouth.

Apart from stammering various notable people have been known for peculiar tricks of manner. The frequency with which such have characterised great men being particularly noted by Lombroso, who in his interesting work "The Man of Genius" collected a number of such instances. Among these he has recounted that queer involuntary movements of expression afflicted Buffon and Samuel Johnson, of dictionary fame; that "jumps" of

his arms were habitual with Chateaubriand; whilst Lenau and Montesquieu jerked their feet about spasmodically when hard at mental work.

His contemporaries described Peter the Great, of Russia, as having had his face frequently distorted in such a manner that his countenance became savage and terrible; whilst Napoleon had a characteristic mannerism consisting in a quick raising of one shoulder. When excited his shoulder would be raised several times in succession, and with such vigour that strangers became thoroughly alarmed, taking this strange action as evidence of his displeasure. Molière, the famous dramatist, is said to have been afflicted with a jerky movement of the throat, producing a sort of hiccough which is said to have made things very difficult for him in his early days on the stage.

APPENDIX I

RELAXATION EXERCISE

THE following exercise and remarks on relaxation, reprinted from the author's book "Mental Self-Help," will be found useful in all conditions of nerve-strain and physical tension.

Take a reclining or semi-recumbent attitude and proceed to relax the whole body as follows: Close the eyes so as to withdraw the mind from distracting outside conditions, and give full attention to the matter in hand. Then, directing the thoughts to each foot and ankle in turn, endeavour to relax all muscles in that part of the body as thoroughly as possible. Having done this, proceed to deal with the other muscles and joints, ascending to the trunk, and finally to the shoulders and neck.

It is important to note that each step in the relaxation process must be mentally realised at the time. That is to say, a mental picture of the muscles and joints of each portion of the body in turn in a relaxed state must be formed and dwelt on. At the same time a mental order to the muscles to relax must be formulated before the movement is actually carried out.

When the utmost relaxation of the whole body has been attained, the eyes should be opened and the slack condition allowed to persist whilst mentally counting ten. Should the exercise tend to produce sleep, as it sometimes does in those unaccustomed to concentrating the attention in this way, it is best to carry it out with the eyes open all the time.

As many nervous states and other conditions of ill-health are followed or accompanied by intense marked tension of various muscles it follows that a feeling of relief will often be experienced when complete bodily relaxation is obtained. And it is surprising how many people fail to relax their bodies entirely from one year's end to the other. For the due preservation and conservation of our nerve-forces a complete relaxation of the muscular system should be carried out daily. This, of course, can quite easily be done just before going to sleep at night without personal inconvenience. Time and again one is told of the surprise with which people have found relief of pain or feeling of stress when they have made use of this simple exercise.[1]

[1] From "Mental Self-Help" (Mills & Boon, Ltd.), pp. 75, 76, and 77.

APPENDIX II

STAMMERING AND SELF-SUGGESTION

It has been pointed out that whilst treatment by suggestion may be helpful in some instances, the method does not yet appear to have been developed to such a point that it is readily applicable in all cases or that one can recommend it very confidently; although it may quite reasonably be tried where a stammerer is very badly troubled and seems to lack ability to help himself. My own view is that the principle of suggestion will be found more useful to stammerers and others in the form of self-suggestion; for undoubtedly considerable increase in confidence, coolness and general mental control can be attained by the conscientious use of self-suggestion exercises on the right lines. The subject cannot be considered in detail here, but the author has dealt with it at some length in "Mental Self-Help" from which the following observations and self-suggestion exercise are reprinted:—

A variety of faulty mental attitudes lead to stammering, but perhaps the most usual is an idea of self-weakness, backed up by a steadily growing morbid self-suggestion of helplessness. Indeed, very

often it is this latter that forms the chief stumbling-block in our way of assisting stammerers. Self-control of muscles of speech and of breathing may be developed fairly readily perhaps, but the firmly rooted idea that the condition is chronic, incurable, or inherited is frequently very difficult to get rid of. When a person has been telling himself for years that he can never speak properly, that "Uncle Somebody or Grandfather Somebody was a stammerer, and that therefore it is a hopeless family condition," he has built up a splendid shell of morbid self-suggestion which may for a long while shut out the truth which only can give freedom from distress. Ideas of harmony, self-confidence, and their kind are valuable in all instances of stammering, whilst they should, of course, be aided by self-suggestions aimed at special weak points wherever they may be discovered. The following directions may serve as examples of the steps to be taken by stammerers, always, of course, where there is no actual paralysis, or mechanical obstruction, that must first be dealt with from another point of view.

(1) Keep before you the mental picture of yourself speaking normally and easily. Realise the possibility of your doing so. Realise this not as a pleasant dream, but as an immediate possibility capable of speedy fulfilment.

(2) Keep in mind the same mental picture in

special reference to positions known to have been difficult on previous occasions.

(3) Develop your poise and self-control by habitually controlling yourself in little things, such as the number of cigarettes you shall smoke, the time you shall get up or go to bed, as well as by carrying out exercises of concentration and attention, all of which increase will-power.

(4) Similarly avoid all undue haste of thought and action, keeping a firm watch on yourself all the time. Make a point of thinking before speaking, and then of speaking slowly and with full consideration.

(5) Mentally saturate yourself with the ideas of harmony and self-control. Live these ideas in every way you can think of.

(6) Make use of such declarations as—

"I will attain harmony of mind and body."

"I am a centre of mental power, and will control that power at will."

"I realise my developing self-confidence."

(These declarations should be said aloud, written out, and thought of frequently.)

(7) When you are in circumstances which experience has taught you are adverse to your proper speaking—when suddenly confronted by strangers, for example—use your will-power to call up the ideas of harmony and self-control and actually say them mentally, to yourself, that is. At the

same time give physical expression to these ideas by maintaining an attitude of body that is at ease, restful, and free from strain or any undue muscular tension. (*N.B.*—Many stammerers express their tense mental states by their uncomfortable tense physical attitudes.)[1]

[1] From "Mental Self-Help" (Mills & Boon, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, W.), pp. 142-5.

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