

THE GEORGE ADLINGTON SYME ORATION

by

**THE PRIME MINISTER
(THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR ROBERT MENZIES,
K.T., C.H., Q.C., M.P.)**

at

WILSON HALL, MELBOURNE

on

Tuesday, 28th May, 1963.

S P E E C H A N D S P E A K E R S

THE GEORGE ADLINGTON SYME ORATION

SPEECH AND SPEAKERS

In April 1929, being then a junior Minister in the McPherson government, I arrived at Scott's Hotel to attend the annual dinner of the Melbourne University Graduates' Association. Ten minutes later I was told that Sir George Syme, who was to have made the principal speech, had suddenly become ill. Would I speak in his place? I agreed, and did the best I could. Sir George Syme died a week later. He bore a name which has been part of the stuff of Victorian history. He himself added lustre to it; not just because he had remarkable technical skill, but because he had statesmanship, unselfishness, devotion, and a clear integrity. The great medical profession does itself honour by regularly calling his name into remembrance.

My own qualifications to deliver the Syme Memorial lecture are open to grave doubt. True, in my hey-day at the Victorian Bar I appeared in quite a number of medical cases and cross-examined a considerable number of medical witnesses. True also, I have, on satisfactorily rare occasions, been a sometimes impatient patient. I have no more reason than most to believe in the infallibility of medical judgment, which in my own lifetime has had to be exercised in rapidly changing circumstances and in times made turbulent by a greater achievement of new knowledge and new techniques than can be found in almost any other field. But I have emerged with a profound respect for the medical profession, and in particular for its leaders and original thinkers. Sir George Syme was one of these. He sought to raise standards and to accept growing social responsibilities. He was one of your great statesmen.

A statesman in any aspect of life has great responsibilities. He must evolve ideas, and, even more importantly, he must intelligently understand and assess those of others when they reach him. The product of these processes may be a policy and a course of action. In this event, he must convey to others something of his own beliefs and enthusiasms. He will sometimes do it in writing; he will, more frequently, find it necessary to do it in speech - in conversation, in conference, in all the means of persuasion. For good or great ideas are not commonly their own advocates. They must be conveyed, with lucidity and conviction.

In our world, speech grows more and more important. If competently engaged in, it can shorten time-tables and accelerate results.

It is this reflection which has led me to select as my topic "Speech and Speakers", a topic which may not be so irrelevant to medical and surgical progress and practice as might appear on the surface.

The art of speech is of course much admired. Its practitioners are numerous, for it is attractive. Its masters are few, for its difficulties are great. Yet it remains the most potent instrument for spiritual, social, and political progress.

The passion for making speeches is prevalent, particularly in our own country and in America. It is, in my considered opinion, possible to survive, and, with good fortune, enjoy three speeches after a public dinner. But six or seven or eight, or more, are beyond reasonable human endurance. Yet, at a Smoke Night of a respectable body some years ago there were 29 speeches, and not all good. In a sound country town which I visited for some official purpose when I was Attorney-General of Victoria, I listened after lunch to 14 speeches, thirteen of which were, fortunately, highly critical of myself.

In the United States people are so addicted to listening to speeches that they actually pay people to make them. This must be a splendid experience for the speaker; I have yet to enjoy it. In my own earlier political days I suffered greatly from two classes of men. One was the Chairman of a public meeting who, clearly and perhaps reasonably doubting my capacity to expound my subject, would make a preliminary explanation of, say, 20 minutes, usually leaving my political audience in such a state of vocal exasperation that it took me another 10 minutes to get a hearing at all. Still, it may turn out that I owe that Chairman something, for he unwittingly, in my salad days, gave me much practice in the handling of interjectors.

The other man I am thinking of was the good friend who, being called upon to move a vote of thanks, took the opportunity of devoting 20 minutes to explaining to a rapidly dispersing audience what I would have said had I know how.

Yet, these little souvenirs of mine do establish that there is a widespread interest in speeches, a popular desire to make them, and even, though I hesitate, to listen to them. The subject therefore warrants (as I hope you will generously agree) some examination of principles and some illustrations from my own life and experience.

In a growing world, the complexity of whose problems invites but at the same time defies quick or superficial judgment, the evolving or the criticising of ideas remains pre-eminent. Every research worker knows this. And, because "there is no new thing under the sun", which means that research is discovery, not creation, truths of an earlier discovery will from time to time have to be applied to new circumstances. The work of the thinker cannot end in the laboratory or the study if it is to be fruitful for mankind. It must be conveyed to others clearly and, where possible, simply, in writing or in speech.

Tonight I am, having regard to the clock, confining myself to speech. Indeed, I go along a narrower path still. I want to speak about that kind of speech which is public or semi-public, designed to achieve some result other than the rare pleasures of conversation.

As I understand the matter, public or semi-public speaking has three main purposes; to instruct, to persuade, to entertain. The three are, I hope, not mutually exclusive. There have been, of course, speeches designed for vanity, for personal notoriety, or for the purpose of occupying time, as in the case of a stone-wall or "filibuster". They do not fall within my thesis.

There are almost as many methods of speech as there are speakers. I will illustrate some of them, from my personal knowledge.

Winston Churchill wrote and read his speeches on most occasions. When I say "wrote", I should say that, in my own time, "wrote" meant "dictated and amended". Most of us, when we dictate, either to a human being or a machine, prefer to dictate alone. There is still a certain amount of self-consciousness about it. Churchill was not like that. Early in 1941, for example, when I spent about 8 or 9 weekends with him at "Chequers", I walked in to his small study one evening, to find him, pacing up and down, dictating a draft of a broadcast. The stenographer was tapping away at a silent typewriter, in a corner. I offered to withdraw. Winston gave me a cigar and waved me to a chair. I soon discovered his methods - ("You know my methods, my dear Watson!"). He tried every word, every phrase, for weight, for meaning, for sound. He knew, of course, that a broadcast speech must come effectively to the ear and must, if possible, achieve its instant persuasion and inspiration. He knew also something which, for the rest of us, would be a vain dream; that posterity would dwell upon his words. In the result, he had arrived at a composition with his stenographer. When he was just trying out a phrase, he would speak it in a low voice, almost like a grumbling whisper. When he had arrived at the phrase, he spoke it "loud and clear", and down it went.

Thus - softly - "until victory is assured" - "until we have emerged victorious" - "until" - "UNTIL THE DAY HAS COME!"

I remember, many years ago, when Ramsay MacDonald was Prime Minister, sitting in the gallery of the House of Commons, looking down on Churchill, who was then in the political wilderness. He sat, as he has in more recent years, in the front row, just below the gangway. He was speaking, i.e. he was reading his typed speech, which he had ensconced in a species of book, held in front of him. This disappointed me, for I had never heard Churchill speak before. But I suddenly realised the superb art with which he could read. He would pause, chuckle, change

the tempo and the inflexion, and then deliver the carefully prepared phrase as if it were literally a brilliant impromptu. That was the occasion, recently referred to in a Melbourne newspaper, on which Churchill was criticising Ramsay MacDonald and, referring back to an earlier speech, said -

"and that, Mr. Speaker, was when I ventured to describe the Right Honourable Gentleman as - er - chuckle - chuckle -" (while every Member sat forward with expectancy) "as the bonelsss wonder!"

So you will see that Churchill had his own methods. But the result, as we all know to our advantage, was all clarity, and feeling, and inspiration.

I did not ever hear Lloyd George in a public or parliamentary speech. But I did have some opportunities, in long private conversations, of asking him about his methods. He wrote his speeches, memorised them, and delivered them in the high Welsh manner. This faculty of memorising a speech is one to which I have never been able to aspire. For me, it would be dangerous: I am sure that I would, mentally, be looking back over my shoulder, and the forward drive of my speech would be lost. But Lloyd George managed it to perfection. He was, of course, a man of extraordinary and magnetic personality, like Winston himself; such men can survive the dangers of any technique. Lloyd George's son, Gwilym, who was to become a Conservative Cabinet Minister, once said to me, at a small luncheon in London, "I believe you have been seeing something of my old man. What do you think of him?". I protested that this was an impossibly embarrassing question. Gwilym smiled, and waved my protest aside. So I sat up and said - "Well, for many years now your father has made no political pronouncement with which I could agree. But if he thought it desirable to make me a disciple and an apostle, and exercised his powers upon me, I think I would find it necessary to follow him!".

My third example of this speaking technique is the late J.M. Barrie. Back in the thirties, when the late Lord Dunrossil was "Shakes" Morrison, M.P., he took me to Stanway Hall, in the West Country, to meet J.M. Barrie. It was a fascinating experience, upon which I have no time to dwell tonight. But, as I walked around the grounds with Barrie, we fell to talking first about cricket, and then about speech making, and in particular about Barrie's famous rectorial address at St. Andrews on "Courage" - one of the great speeches of our time. Those of you who have read it (as I imagine you all have) will remember its extemporaneous quality and its flashes of whimsical and penetrating humour. "Well", he said, "Menzies, I wrote it, and learned it, and delivered it, and a fortnight later I could not have remembered it at all!"

I mentioned, then, the word "whimsical". I am of course conscious of the fact that the contemporary intellectual rejects whimsicality, and probably rejects Barrie.

I don't know whether they will regard this as evidence in their favour, but I feel compelled to tell you that, on this same memorable (to me) occasion, Barrie said to me, "Did you ever think of writing a novel, Menzies?". Those of you who have known me only as a political tactician will be surprised to learn that I replied - "Yes, frequently, but though I think I could write the dialogue, I could never invent a plot". To which Barrie replied:- "Take my advice". Write a play. A novel means 90,000 words. A play means only 20,000 words and they pay you five times as much for it."

I record this memory not to cry down the name of one of the great literary figures of our time, but to prove, if it needs proving, that he had a wry humour of his own.

Take another type of speaker - the after-dinner speakers. We have all suffered from many of them. After-dinner speaking is a great art, much neglected by the kind of man who thinks that the state of euphoria induced by a good dinner should be counteracted by a dose of heavy statistics. Before the war, the late Lord Hewart, then Lord Chief Justice, was regarded as a great after-dinner man. The first time I heard him was at a great Anglo-American dinner in London. When his time came, he unashamedly pulled out from under his plate a typescript and held it up, and read it! He did better on the last occasion when I heard him, at a dinner at the Goldsmith's Company, when he was down to answer the last toast, that of "the other visitors". His speech I can remember vividly. "My Lords and Gentlemen, at this time of night I have two speeches of thanks. One is my short speech - 'Sirs, thank you very much!' The other is my long speech - 'My Lords and Gentlemen, I take this opportunity of thanking you very much indeed!' Pray regard me, on this occasion, as having made by long speech!."

The best after-dinner speaker I ever heard was the late Norman Birkett (Lord Birkett), who was also a wonderful cross-examiner and advocate. He had a beautiful voice and a flashing wit, and, so far as I could tell, did not prepare the language of his speech in advance. He entertained his audience without fail; it was only later that they realised they had been instructed as well.

Speech, especially clear speech based upon knowledge and clear thinking, is of immense importance to the expert witness. I will take just two examples from your own profession, many members of which have in my own forensic experience, failed as witnesses by under-estimating the cross-examiner and not refreshing their memory of the text-book elements of the subject in issue. But cross-examiners usually fell back defeated

before Alan Newton and Victor Hurley. How admirable it was to listen to great experts who knew that a capacity for clear and authoritative expression is as important in one profession as in any other. Alan Newton was, of course, a man of most versatile genius. I thought he would have excelled in any field. The point I am concerned to make is that Newton never fell into the not uncommon error of thinking that the precisions of speech do not matter - that "You know what I mean" is good enough.

My personal methods may perhaps deserve a very brief mention.

I invariably write memorial lectures, since I have what is, as yet, a not completely defeated hope that some day somebody may wish to read them.

I write important formal statements for the House. All this writing I do in long hand, by a lead pencil! But I do not write debating speeches or public political speeches (except, of course, a Policy Speech), or social speeches. I do a lot of preparation of facts and ideas, and make highly summarised notes and headings; but I never prepare the actual language.

Naturally, drawing upon my own forensic experience, my mind turns to the advocacy of the courts of law. Yet, interestingly enough, the most persuasive advocate I ever heard was a soldier and engineer, Sir John Monash. When I was, for a brief period, a junior Minister in the McPherson government in Victoria, and John Monash was Chairman of the State Electricity Commission, a proposal he had put forward was almost unanimously rejected in Cabinet. When the news reached him he came straight up, and was without delay admitted to the Cabinet Room. He was given a seat at the table. He asked whether he had been rightly informed of the rejection. The answer was "Yes". He hitched up his chair, looked at all of us, one by one and said, slowly and firmly - "It is clear to me that Ministers have not understood the matter. I will now explain it." He proceeded to do so, with a clarity and force I can remember to this day. We were all attracted by his magnetism and swayed by his argument. Questions were few, hesitant, and almost apologetic. When the final silence came, Monash produced an Order of Approval from his pocket and, with the mere hint of a smile, said - "I take it then, Mr. Premier that my proposal is approved. If you will be good enough to sign this paper, I can depart". The Premier signed. We all, quite spontaneously stood up, and the great man left. I have always felt certain that if Monash had not possessed what the late Brudenell White once described to me as "the divine gift of utterance", his place in military and civil life would not have been as assured as it is.

I have just referred to the great John Monash. I could contrast him with another great man and soldier, Field Marshall Lord Wavell. When Wavell wrote, whether in a life of Allenby or in a despatch to Winston Churchill, he wrote like a master. In the earlier part of 1941, when Wavell was greatly outnumbered in the Middle East campaign and Rommel's panzer divisions were rolling eastwards, I saw quite a few of the pungent messages sent out by Churchill, who was of course in complete command of direct and (where necessary) colloquial language. I also saw some of Wavell's replies. They rivalled Winston's own. Yet, oddly enough, Wavell's conversational powers were limited. When I was in the Middle East in January-February, 1941, and had proper occasion to put quite a few questions to him, Wavell's replies were almost always monosyllabic and frequently cryptic. I naturally concluded that he did not approve of me. This did not surprise me, for many people had felt the same way. But later on, when I had arrived in London, I found that this was wrong; that he was very well disposed towards me; but that he had found oral utterance difficult and even embarrassing. He preferred to work out his ideas on paper, and was cautious of talk. It is perhaps for this reason that some other generals of the war achieved a quicker fame. The historian will ultimately, I hope, correct this, for Wavell's mind and character, exercised under great difficulties, were of the loftiest order. Perhaps the truth is that the power of exposition and persuasion is more important in an operational commander. I don't know. Wavell was acutely conscious of his great responsibilities, and would not lightly speak about them. Yet, years afterwards, in 1948, at a dinner at Leo Amery's house in London, I found, to my joy, that, with the responsibilities off, Wavell could talk freely and with fire and conviction.

My first profession was that of the law, as a barrister. I loved it. Some people think it dreary; I cannot think why. But it is not my purpose to write or read a treatise on the practice of the law. Tonight I am concerned with expression, particularly oral. Expression in writing, as I have endeavoured to show in the case of Wavell, must take a high place. Barristers are briefed by solicitors to write opinions on matters on which the solicitor or his client thinks Counsel's opinion necessary. In my time at the Bar we wrote our opinions on blue draft paper, and only occasionally sent them out to a professional typist for copying. One consequence of these primitive methods was that, in order to avoid writer's cramp, we wrote with economy of language and managed to answer the questions without undue circumlocution. If, when we were juniors, we were briefed to draw interrogatories, (which are written questions delivered before action and to be answered on oath by the opposite party), we seldom drew more than seven or eight. But they were drawn with such care that in most cases they could not be evaded, with the result that the calling of certain evidence at the hearing was rendered unnecessary. Then came the great age of the stenographers. They proliferated in

Selborne Chambers. Opinions became much longer, and sometimes, cynical friends have told me, less intelligible and precise. As to interrogatories, their numbers multiplied out of all proportion to their results. It may be, of course, that one tends to glorify the past.

"Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day."

But, from the point of view of speech, the great art of the law is advocacy; the examination or cross-examination of witnesses, and the speech to the judge or jury.

My learned friends tell me that cross-examination is not what it used to be. Perhaps it never was. But, in my own time, I knew more than one case to be lost by bad cross-examination. Too many advocates forgot that to cross-examine a witness effectively you must study the witness and try to assess his strengths and weaknesses, instead of putting your head down and laboriously making notes of his evidence in chief. Good cross-examination requires homework to determine the real points of issue on the facts, a close study of the human being in the box, and a most careful, though perhaps casual-seeming, precision in the framing of each question. Repetition and noise and a belligerent attitude may tickle a few ears, but they will seldom win a case.

But it is in the address to the court, judge or jury, that the highest arts of consecutive forensic speech and argument are called for. Here there is a distinction to be made between argument to a judge (who is by popular legend a man not swayed by emotion) and an address to a jury (which is by equally popular legend subject to all the frailties of mankind).

I hope that the greatest of contemporary lawyers, Sir Owen Dixon, will forgive me if I say that I did not ever think him to be quite at home addressing a jury. To use the modern jargon, he found difficulty in getting on to the same wave-length. But I never expect to hear a better legal advocate. And I say this having in mind, at the English Bar, such men as Wilfred Greene, Gavin Simonds, and Stafford Cripps. He wasted no words. He knew his case in all its aspects, and was of course extraordinarily well furnished with its legal background and its subtleties. But above all he had a superb sense of selection. If you were his opponent, hoping that you would have time, when your turn came, to dwell pleasantly on your better arguments, you suddenly found yourself precipitated into the most difficult argument of all, Owen Dixon having most unexpectedly sat down with a characteristically Dixonian smile.

On the criminal side, I remember with pleasure George Maxwell, the most formidable advocate to a jury I ever heard, or, for that matter,

ever heard about. Maxwell played, not upon the intellect, but upon the human emotions. He had a remarkable faculty for identifying himself with his client. So much was this so, that I have known him, as we robed at adjoining lockers at the Law Courts, to speak despondently about his client and tell me that all he could do was "to make a bit of a plea for mercy", and be back at the luncheon adjournment, shaking his head at me and saying - "It will be a gross miscarriage of judgment if the young fellow is convicted!". By the time George Maxwell had made his final address and had convinced the jury that they ran some risk on the "dread day of judgment" if they wantonly or unreasonably convicted the accused, the case was almost over. I have heard quite a few professionally humorous counsel laugh their own case out of court. I have known a few criminal advocates succeed in being so detached that they lost contact altogether. But Maxwell was pre-eminent. Even when he became blind, at the height of his career, he had a superb touch. I looked into his court one day, just in time to hear him say:-

"I now turn to the witness Robinson. I could not see him, gentlemen, because it has pleased the Almighty to deprive me of my sight. But although I couldn't see him, I could hear him. And he sounded like a damned rogue!"

Could I turn to my own second profession, that of politics? That it involves the art of speech is of course clear. It is hard to suppose that a great thinker who was inarticulate could command support and give effective leadership to a democratic electorate. This may seem to you to be a misfortune, and in one sense it is. But we must face the facts of Parliamentary democracy. People will not follow a leader whom they do not understand, or who seems to them to be unaware of the problems of their own lives.

Thus it is that the great Parliamentary leaders in Australia or Great Britain have, in I suppose the great majority of cases, had the faculty of speech. They have, of course, varied. Fashions of speech change. The classical speech of the famous parliamentarians of the late 18th century is still most readable for us. Burke, for example, may have bored the House of Commons, but he still reads uncommonly well today. On the other hand, coming to the 19th century, I find the speeches of Gladstone somewhat dreary reading. I remember that, having just been reading the story of his famous Midlothian campaign, I got hold of the speeches he then delivered. I am bound to say, with improper irreverence, that they would never have done for a modern audience. I at once concede that this comment ignores the effect of the voice and the appearance, which must have had a magnetism of their own. Of all the 19th century Parliamentary speakers, I confess to a preference for John Bright, whose flashes of simple

and moving prose, coming, as such things do, from the generous emotions of the speaker's heart and mind, have the stuff of immortality in them.

"The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings!"

It is, of course, to be remembered that uncommon eloquence is sometimes self-defeating. The critics are all too ready to assume that fluency and an apt choice of words can create a great speech independently of thought and ideas. This not uncommon error has temporarily done a disservice to the memory of that very great Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin. "Ah yes", you will hear someone say, "He was a silver-tongued orator" (the word orator, by the way, has achieved an almost offensive connotation!) "but, after all, what did he say?"

Now I heard Deakin only when I was a school-boy. But, years afterwards, I became immersed in the stream of Australian political history, and became a Prime Minister myself. All I wish to say is that Deakin did more to fashion the great national policies of Australia than any other leader we have or have had. Men and their work are easily forgotten. But if you care to examine the foundations of Australian policies on defence, tariff, British trade, industrial arbitration, to say nothing of our irrigation systems, you will find the mark of Alfred Deakin. Yet, for the short run of history, he spoke too well.

"Billy" Hughes observed no rules; as a speaker he was sui generis. The more eloquent of his earlier speeches do not, in my experience, come well out of a second reading. They lack restraint and are over-decorated. But at the time, delivered with enthusiasm, despite the defects of his voice, they had a profound and at times an historic influence. Those were, of course, the days when he was expressing deeply held beliefs. Later on, when I was associated with him in Cabinets, the fires had burned low. He had become much too conscious of the pressures of what he regarded as contemporary - or even temporary - public opinion. The old wit remained, cruel and devastating, but as a speaker of persuasive or compelling power he had ceased. Perhaps he stayed in politics too long; I will make a mental note of it.

So that it will not be thought that I am entering upon the risky experiment of making a graded list of Australian political speakers, I will mention only a few, simply to illustrate my theme.

Among leaders in my own time, J.A. Lyons was, I think, the best Parliamentarian. In my opinion, this has not been adequately appreciated. At question-time or in debate, he preserved, with the greatest of simplicity, the personal friendship of his opponents. He had great humanity and no

malice. He could, of course, speak, and speak very well. But other aspects of Parliamentary life and government administration attracted him more, for he was above all a great humanist. There was much to learn from him.

John Curtin and J.B. Chifley, both notable Labour Prime Ministers, were quite different personalities and speakers. Curtin had a philosophical quality; he spoke with great effect, and enjoyed the rounded period. Chifley was no orator in the conventional sense, and had a somewhat grating voice: but he was, in his direct and homely fashion, a powerful and commanding leader of his party.

Quite a different type of speaker was W.A. Watt. He was, I think, the best platform speaker I ever heard; the voice strong and vibrant, the appearance almost piratical, the tempo measured, with every word and every syllable receiving its proper weight. He created a sort of intellectual compulsion. I should add, by way of irrelevant reminiscence, that many years ago, before I had thought of entering Parliament, I was asked to speak, as a sort of preliminary pipe-opener, at Geelong. The principal speaker was Watt, who was at his top, rejoicing our friends and destroying our opponents in the hall with unerring strokes. The next morning, I turned to the local newspaper, hoping, no doubt, to read some of my own boyish profundities recorded. What I read was a first-class report of Watt's speech, followed by the encouraging sentence - "A Mr. Menzies also spoke, and revealed a peculiar sense of humour".

No doubt my amour propre was wounded at the time, but I have since come to believe that it was one of the best reports I have ever had.

The art of Parliamentary debate is, I think, suffering from some adverse influences. The introduction of the broadcasting of Parliamentary debates at Canberra has some advantages in public information. But my own feeling is that speeches are tending to become set speeches, and are losing something of their true debating quality. It was for the fear of this that Winston Churchill, himself a great Parliamentarian, used his influence, when the bombed-out House of Commons was being restored, to resist broadcasting and fight for the re-creation of a House which could not seat all of the Members at the same time. He wanted to preserve the intimacy of debate, to make members still conscious of the fact that they are addressing the House, their fellow-members, and not the outside public. There is much to be said for this view, though perhaps the changing techniques of today are tending to impair it. In spite of the disproportionate and adverse publicity which is frequently given to quite trivial incidents, Parliament remains a remarkably good cross-section of the people; and this, after all, is its historic function.

I hope that what I have said will have shown that there are many varieties of speech, several different purposes to be achieved, and greatly differing techniques. Are there, then, any basic principles? I would think not, for there are even more variations in audiences than there are among speakers. Indeed, there are clearly different tastes in different countries. In my limited experience, Americans, who practically invented that phenomenon, the lunch-time speech, delivered on the precarious foundation of cold meat, a lettuce leaf, and a warming draught of iced water, enjoy listening to written speeches, suitably stocked with statistics. In England, where the best after-dinner speakers are the best in the world, because they regard the speech as an expression of art, most speakers in the House of Commons appear to read their speeches. At Canberra, for intelligible reasons, many second reading speeches by Ministers and leaders are read, but most of the speeches in general debate, certainly most of the effective ones, are expressed in impromptu language. I have occasionally written out a speech on international or economic topics, or even a memorial lecture like this, where precision is essential. But whenever I have to do so, I dislike it. It is good for the record, but is not good for the direct audience. It secures better newspaper reporting, for obvious reasons; the art of reporting is in decline. But if the object of a speech is to persuade, the speaker must be sensible of his audience, must catch its mood, and must be prepared to turn aside into productive avenues at the expense of the pre-determined course. For, if you are to persuade an audience, you must metaphorically be down off the platform and among your listeners. And the object of persuasive speech is to have your audience not leave saying "He can speak", but saying "He was right!".

My final observation is this. Over the course of history, many men have been asked to give advice about speaking. Let me start high. It was Demosthenes himself who said that the condition of oratory was "Action! Action! Action!". This was a somewhat cryptic statement, and has been sometimes misunderstood as if action meant physical action.

As it happens, I have on a few occasions been asked by young men to offer advice on public speaking. My invariable answer is:- "There are three rules. The first is, have something to say. The second is, have something to say. The third is, have something to say."

I stand by this advice, though you will be the judges of my capacity to take it myself.
