

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Crane
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Verne
Burroughs Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Scott
Kant Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells James Hastings Cooke
Bunner Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Doré Dante Pushkin Alcott
Swift Chekhov Newton



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Evolution of Expression – Volume 1

Charles Wesley Emerson

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EVOLUTION OF EXPRESSION

BY CHARLES WESLEY EMERSON

FOUNDER OF EMERSON COLLEGE OF ORATORY, BOSTON

**A COMPILATION OF SELECTIONS ILLUSTRATING THE
FOUR STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN ART AS APPLIED TO
ORATORY IN FOUR VOLUMES, WITH KEY TO EACH CHAPTER**

THIRTY-THIRD EDITION

VOLUME I—REVISED

TO MY STUDENTS Whose need has been my inspiration and whose understanding my rich reward, these volumes are affectionately DEDICATED

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INTRODUCTION.

Teach me, then,
To fashion worlds in little, making form,
As God does, one with spirit, — be the priest
Who makes God into bread to feed the world.
— Richard Hovey.

The revised edition of the "Evolution of Expression" is issued in response to frequent requests from teachers and students for a formulation of those principles upon which natural methods in the teaching of expression are based. It is hoped that the brief explanatory text introducing each chapter may aid teacher and pupil to avoid arbitrary standards and haphazard efforts, substituting in their place, psychological law. Growth in expression is not a matter of chance; the teacher who understands nature's laws and rests upon them, setting no limit to the potentialities of his pupil, waits not in vain for results.

No printed text, however, can take the place of a discerning teacher. A knowledge of the philosophy of education in expression avails little without the ability to create the genial atmosphere conducive to the development of the student. The teacher is the gardener, his service — his full service — is to surround the young plant with favorable conditions of light and soil and atmosphere; then stand out of its way while it unfolds its full blossom and final fruitage.

The tendency of modern education is towards the discovery and perfection of methods. The thought of leading educators is turned from the what to the how; to the development of systems of progressive steps through which the pupil may be led to a realization of himself. This trend is best shown in the multiplicity and excellence of recent pedagogical treatises and in the appearance of carefully graded and progressive text-books. The ancients believed that

their heroes were born of gods and goddesses. They knew of no means by which the mind could be developed to the compass of greatness. The ancient theory to account for greatness was preternatural birth; the modern theory is evolution. To-day the interest of the child is awakened, his mind is aroused, and then led onward in regular steps.

The study of all forms of art, so far as methods are concerned, should be progressive. For correct guidance in our search for the best methods, we must understand the order of the development of the human mind. A child, before he arrives at an age where he can be taught definitely, is simply a little palpitating mass of animation. Soon he begins to show an attraction toward surrounding objects. Next he begins to show a greater attraction for some things than for others. His hands clutch at and retain certain objects. He now enters the period of development where he makes selections, and thus is born the power of choice. Objects which, at first, appeared to him as a mass now begin to stand out clearly one from another; to become more and more differentiated, while the child begins to separate and to compare. Thus the brain of the child passes through the successive stages from simple animation to attraction, to selection or choice, to separation or analysis. This principle of evolution, operating along the same lines, is found in the race as in the individual. In all man's work he has but recorded his own life or evolution. All history, all religions, all governments, all forms of art bring their testimony to this truth, and in each the scholar may find these successive stages of development.

In the age of Phidias the art of sculpture reached its maturity. No race and no people have ever surpassed the consummate achievements of that period. But this perfection was the result of a process of evolution. There had been graduated steps, and those same steps must to-day be taken in the education of the artist. Art had passed into its second period before authentic Greek history began. The first stage was shown in that nation so justly called the "Mother of Arts and Sciences." In Egypt we find probably the first real manifestations of mind in art forms. They are colossal exhibitions of energy, such as the Temple of Thebes, seven hundred feet in length, statues seventy feet tall, monuments rearing their heads almost five hundred feet in air.

"Those temples, palaces, and piles stupendous
Of which the very ruins are tremendous."

To Assyria we turn in our search for the next step in the progress of art. Here we find the artists making melodramatic efforts to attract the attention and fascinate the mind with weird and incongruous shapes of mongrel brutes and hydraheaded monsters.

Finding art at this point, the Greeks, true to their race instinct, at once began to evolve from it higher forms. They soon awoke to the perception that beauty itself is the true principle of fascination. Reducing their new theory to practise, the Greek artists turned their attention to perfecting the details of the art they had borrowed. To works originally repellant from their very crudeness, they supplied finish and perfection of the parts. The ideal was still before them; the grotesque monsters might fascinate the beholder, but, however skilfully executed, however perfected in finish, the impression produced was but transitory, and failed to satisfy the craving of the soul. Beauty was found to be the only abiding source of satisfaction. As the conceptions of the past no longer satisfied the criterion which their own minds had embraced, the Greek artists sought in nature herself for models of that beauty, which, when placed in art forms, should be a joy forever. The monsters of antiquity disappeared, and in their places, came attempts to faithfully copy nature. To be sure, some specimens of the art era from which the Greeks had just emerged appeared at much later periods of their history; but these creations, as in the case of the Centaur, were usually representations of what were believed to be historical facts, rather than fantastic creations designed by the artist to startle the beholder. The Greek still gratified his passion for beauty of detail, while he was pursuing his new-born purpose of copying nature. It was not long before he found that nature, however skilfully copied, could be perfectly mirrored to the eye of the beholder only when presented as she appears to the mind of man. This discovery budded and blossomed into the consummate flower of true art, the fourth or suggestive era, which reached its acme in the work of Phidias and his contemporaries. Every creation was the expression of some state of mind. Everything was made as it appeared to the eye of the poet, not as it might seem to the man of no sentiment. The impression of

the poetic mind found its expression in art, and now the statues think, fear, hate, love.

The same general laws which have governed the rise of sculpture, underlie the evolution of all forms of art. It is the purpose of the present writing to hint at, rather than to trace, the four stages of development in painting, music, and literature. To follow the steps of progress in painting is somewhat more difficult than to trace the evolution of sculpture or architecture, on account of the perishable nature of the materials. Music has unfolded with the unfolding of the human mind, from the startling sounds of the savage,—exhibitions of pure energy,—through efforts at fascination by the medium of weird and unnatural combinations, and through attempts to reproduce natural sounds, ever upward till it breathes the very spirit of nature in a Haydn or a Beethoven.

We may follow the growth of the English drama through the same process, from its dawning in the fantastic miracle plays with their paraphernalia of heaven and hell, of gods, devils, angels, and demons, to the creations' of "the thousand-souled Shakespeare." In religion we see the same phases—from the worship of life itself, of natural phenomena, through the panorama of deities friendly and deities unfriendly, of gods many and of devils many, until the human mind grasps the conception of Unity in deity, and bows in worship before an Infinite Being of Love and Providence.

In the history of government is written the same tale of evolution, from manifestations of brute energy, seeking gratification in subjugation for its own sake,—from the government typified by the iron heel,—to the government which, seeking the education and protection of all the people becomes a school rather than a system of restraint.

Therefore the race, in its march from savagery to civilization, may be considered as one man, showing, first, animation; next, manifesting his objects of attraction; third, displaying his purposes; and finally putting forth his wisdom in obedience to the true, the beautiful, and the good.

These principles of natural evolution have been applied by the writer to the study of oratory. The orator must illustrate in his art the same steps of progress which govern the growth of other arts.

He may have developed the power of the painter, the sculptor, the musician, yet if he would unfold the art of the rhetorician, he must pass through the progressive gradations that have marked the education of his powers in other departments. In a single lifetime he may attain the highest art expression, yet he cannot escape the necessity of cultivating his powers by the same process of evolution which the race needed centuries to pass through. It remains for the teacher, therefore, to so arrange the methods of study as to enable the pupil to pursue the natural order of education. In all things he must stimulate and not repress normal growth.

There is an old notion sometimes found among theoretical educators that the mind of a child is like a piece of paper upon which anything may be written; a mould of clay upon which any impression may be made; a block of stone in which the teacher, like the famous sculptor of old, sees, in his poetic vision, an angel, and then chips and hacks until that angel stands revealed. The theory is absurdly and dangerously fallacious. Paper and clay are not living organisms; the orator is not the statue chiselled from the rough stone of human nature, or, if the teacher succeeds in so far perverting nature as to hack and trim a human organism into the semblance of a statue, the product of his work will stand forth a living illustration of the difference between the genuine and the spurious. The stone has no life. Life must be breathed into it, and the sculptor may breathe into it such life as he chooses. The gardener, on the other hand, must obey the laws of the life of the plant he nurtures. He must so direct the forces of nature as to help its inherent tendencies. A certain line of growth is written in the structure of every species of plant. The plant may be hindered or perverted in its development; it may be killed, but it cannot be made to grow into the form of another plant.

The progress of the human mind can be illustrated only by that which is vital, not by anything mechanical. Mind reacts upon whatever is given to it according to the divine laws of its own organism. The human mind, like the plant, must exhibit vitality in abundance before it finds a higher and more complex manifestation. The unskilled teacher, instead of inviting out the young pupil along the line of his own organism, may, at the outset, paralyze the unfolding mind by ill-advised dictation. There can be no true teaching which

does not involve growing, and growing in the way intended by nature. The teacher must be something more than a critic. The critic establishes criteria, protects the public, and, in a measure, educates the public taste. When he is able to teach others how to reach true criteria he becomes a teacher. Until he can do this he has no place in the class room.

It will be observed that the four volumes of the "Evolution of Expression" recognize the four general stages of man's development: Volume I., representing the period when the individual is engrossed with subjects or objects as a Whole, and his passion for life is expressed through rude energy, size—the Colossal; Volume II., when he delights in so presenting The Parts to which he has been attracted, as to make them Effective in attracting the attention of others; Volume III., when his appreciation of the use or Service of the Parts carries him beyond the melodramatic to the Realistic; and Volume IV., in which his dawning perception of that higher service resulting from the truthful Relationship of the Parts leads him beyond realism to idealism, the Suggestive.

In choosing the selections for this and the accompanying volumes, the aim has been to preserve the natural oneness between the study of literature and that of expression, and to encourage the appreciation of this unity in the minds of teacher and student. It may be said that the greatest of the world's literature was written for the ear, not for the eye, and its noblest influence is felt only when it is adequately voiced by an intelligent and sympathetic reader. It is the object of these volumes to foster in the student a keener and deeper appreciation of the truth and beauty of great prose and verse, and at the same time to enrich his own and other lives by cultivating the power of expressing the glories which are opened to his vision.

The arrangement of the selections is for the purpose of teaching the art of reading according to the steps of natural evolution hinted at in the foregoing pages, and in a way which experience has found most prolific in practical results.

While no effort has been made to search for novelties, great care has been taken to secure selections which, while of pure literary merit, are especially adapted for drill in the several steps of progress

in reading. The power developed in the student through carefully directed drill on these selections will enable him to illuminate whatever other literature he may care to interpret. The arrangement of the selections in small divisions or paragraphs has been made for convenience in the work of the class room.

The "Evolution of Expression" does not offer art criteria by which the work of an orator is to be measured; it presents rather a system of education by which one may attain the plane of art in expression. The teacher or student who desires a formulation of laws which afford a standard of art criticism is referred to the four volumes of "The Perfective Laws of Art," the text-book succeeding the "Evolution of Expression."

The author wishes to express his sincere gratitude to George N. Morang & Co., to Bobbs-Merrill Company, and to Houghton, Mifflin & Co., for their courtesy in allowing him to reprint in this volume selections from their publications.

THE WHOLE.

THE COLOSSAL PERIOD.

The body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body. —ST. PAUL.

How good is man's life, the mere living! How fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!

—BROWNING.

