It was not until my signed contract to speak for forty nine consecutive days in forty nine different places was laid before me that I realized I had agreed to do what I did not know how to do. I had never in my life stood on my feet and made a professional speech. To begin with - could I make people hear? I felt convinced that I had something to say and so did my sponsors, but to what good if I could not be heard? What was this thing they called "placing the voice?" I went to my friend ——— Sargent, the head of the Sargent Dramatic School, told him of my perdicament. After a first test he agreed with me that I did not know how to use my voice and that unless I could learn ~~to use it~~ I was letting myself in for a bad failure.

Mr. Sargent was good enough to take me on as a pupil, uninteresting a one as I must have been. He began by putting me on the simplest exercises but with severe instructions about keeping them up. I went about my apartment day and night shouting "Ma, Me, Mi, Mo" - "Ba, Be, Bi, Bo." I learned that the voice must come from the diaphragm and that the diaphragm must be strong to throw it out for an hour at a time. Regularly day and night lying on my back with books on my stomach I breathed deeply until I could lift four or five volumes.

See Page 2-3

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Chapter XV: A New Profession:

It was not until my contract was laid before me that I realized what I had done. I had agreed to speak for seven weeks, Sundays included, before audiences accustomed to trained speakers. And I had never stood on my feet at least in my life and made a professional speech. I did not know even the first principles of lecturing. What was to be done about it?

My first alarm came with the question, "Could I make people hear?" I felt convinced that I had something to say, and so did my sponsors. I felt certain that I did not know how to do it. What was this thing they called "placing the voice." I went to a friend of mine, the head of the Sargent Dramatic School, a sound serious teacher and told him my predicament. He realized, as I did, after a first test that unless I could learn to use my voice that I was letting myself in for a bad failure. Mr. Sargent was good enough to take me on as a pupil, uninteresting a one as I must have been. I went three or four times a week for three or four months to him for an hour. He began with the simplest exercises with severe instructions about how to keep them up. I went about my apartment day and night shouting "Me, My, Mo" - "Be, By, Bo." I practiced standing, and particularly deep breathing. I learned that the voice must come from the diaphragm and that the diaphragm must be strong to throw out a voice for an hour and a quarter at a time. Deep breathing and regular hours. I lay on my back and breathed with books on my stomach feeling very proud when I could

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Circuit opener

By the time the ~~circus began~~ in July I knew theoretically ~~at least~~ how to use my voice, but I soon found that to do it successfully without now and then getting it into my throat, making horrible noises and throwing myself into nervous panics, I must be more conscious of it than was good for my material. Indeed it was not until my second year of speaking that I could use my voice unconsciously, could count on it for the hour of the performance. However, I had never come to a point when I did not have to ask for a glass of water to be put on the desk or nearby table just in case. I found that glass of water was a safety measure and my attention was distracted for a moment so I was in danger of losing my line of argument - one of those curious moments of perspiration which sometimes overtook me. I would pick up the glass of water, walk around the table, attract attention, and come back to my place as if nothing had happened.

So much for my voice. I could make people hear what I was saying. As for oratory I had no time for that, nor for an emotional use of the voice. It was the plainest and the most direct speech that I was speaking. I was to make the same speech day after day, that is talk on the same subject but the idea of a set speech, which was written out, was repugnant to me. I decided in the first place that I would never write the speech, never commit anything, that I would work out my arguments for my talk clearly and would select the facts and the illustrations. I was to speak at

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Lecture
My experience of
my old friend George Kennan I was Engley responsible
for the text,

After he had published his classic work on Siberia Geo Kenna
took his story to the lecture platform. He was the
most careful of men in statement and both the material and the
form of his statement. He wrote his lecture with the greatest
care - polished it until it was letter perfect - memorized it
and repeated it night after night on the long tours he made.
It was an admirable lecture, one of the most moving I ever heard

See 4A

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I must be more conscious of it than was good for my method of handling my material. Indeed it was not until my second year of speaking that I could count on ~~for~~ my voice the hour of the performance. I never came to a point where I did not have to ask for a glass of water to be put on the desk or nearby table - just in case. I found that glass of water a safety device if my attention was distracted for a moment and I lost my line of argument. I could pick it up, pretend to drink, change my position, regain poise.

So much for my voice. I knew how to make people hear what I was saying. Now as to material. I was to talk on the same subject day after day. That is, I was supposed to make daily the same speech. I was afraid of a set, memorized speech. A lecture experience of my old friend George Kennan was largely responsible for that.

See reverse of 2-3

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A telling me of his platform experiences and the lesson he learned

and I heard it long before I ever met George Kennan. "One must be very careful in giving a memorized lecture," said Mr. Kennan, "that you do not lose your place. That no two sentences should ever end with the same word."

That is what happened to me one night. Towards the end of my lecture I had a sentence ending with the same five or six words with which I had ended a sentence early in the lecture. Trusting to my memory this time my memory tricked me. I finished the first sentence and instead of picking up what followed it picked up the words that followed the sentence at the end of my lecture. Before I knew it I was ending my lecture, when I had only just begun it. And because I trusted so absolutely to memory it threw me into great confusion, scared me. Of course I saved myself, but after that I always took care that there were no two sentences in my talk that ended in the same way.

B My memory is a tricky and unreliable organ - never properly trained - never held resolutely to its job. I would have been afraid to trust it on a lecture platform. I had the feeling that if I forced myself to think through aloud what I was doing, taking of course a logical line of argument, I would make a more interesting presentation and more natural. I reaalized that whatever hold I had on an audience depended on informality.

As I said I determined to work over my material constantly and that I did. I soon enough discovered that the

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(1) (2) different

In my letter in Liberia I unwittingly used the
same word to describe my endearment - one meaning
the opening, the Mei near the close of my letter,
one might mean perhaps I was somewhat tried

Ursi

Moreover

(2) realize since I was no platonic admirer
and even denied be, my only error was to
give disappearance & [illegible] relatively
[illegible] - just to yield - that rested a-
lone de pure wit and decided. Ca-
[illegible] it open every day - never to begin with-
[illegible] same verdict - pure perversity -
[illegible] aloud & permanently - with [illegible]
plan 2 ma de dérision

[illegible] - A

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In telling me of his platform experiences once Mr. Kennan dropped this warning, "In giving a memorized lecture one must be very careful that no two sentences end with the same words. In my lecture on Siberia I unwittingly used five or six indentical words to end different sentences - one near the opening, the other near the closing of my talk. One night when perhaps I was unusually tired instead of picking up what followed the first sentence I picked up the words that followed the second. That is, I was ending my lecture when I had only just begun it. I saved myself, but after that I always took care that there were no two sentences in my talk with the same, not to say identical endings.

See Page 4 B

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conditions under which I was working made it impossible. I soon was giving a set time of the morning and the evening no matter whether I was travelling or in my hotel to an hour to two hours study of my talk, to keep the material thoroughly in mind as I went over it. I soon gave up the idea that I could have a fresh beginning every day that was too much work for the conditions under which I was travelling. And I found it foolish, too, for once I had set on an opening that seemed to arrest attention at the start I stuck to it. My discovery was that what I had started out with would have made an article of the kind I wrote but that same material had to be handled in a different way to get the best effect as a lecture. The illustrations were all right for a reader but did not seem to catch with an audience and I made substitutes. The argument which I would have followed in an article became more effective when switched about on the platform. That is, I continually worked on this although I was giving the same lecture every day it was never the same. I worked on it constantly and that is what kept my interest, I think, because always I found however tired I might be, however scared of my audience, however reluctant and however much I despised myself for undertaking to do this thing which I thought I did not know how to do. I always was so interested in my subject, talking as if this was something of which I had never talked before. It was that personal interest in my material which carried me through.

See P. 6

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I soon discovered a fresh beginning every day was too much to ask of myself under the conditions of travel. I found it foolish, too, for if I had struck an opening that arrested attention why change it for one that might not? I soon found that illustrations which were all right in an article did not serve with an audience. The points of the line of argument which I would have followed in an article became more effective on a platform if switched about. It turned out, although I was giving the same lecture every day, it was never quite the same.

See B Page 5

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Will

out ~~with.~~

I had not given a thought in advance to the physical aspect of the ~~on which I was entering~~. I had known that every day for forty nine days I was to speak in a different place; I knew that meant daily travelling and ~~the schedule that was presented~~ but that constant disturbed me. But I always prided myself that I was ~~rather~~ superior to physical surroundings. I had not been long on ~~this great~~ Chautauqua Circuit before I was realizing what an enormous part ~~it played in one's physical being~~ my bathing to which I was inquiring ~~all~~ about the town we were next going ~~soon~~ "How about the hotel? Were their bathrooms? If so, was I to get one?"

I was uneasy about the table - the ideas of cooking and serving and at night about the noises, the drafts and other unmentionable worries. To my amazement the bed in which I was to sleep ~~This~~ soon was taking an altogether proportionate place in my mind. It is a fact that when the Circuit was over and I

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came to tell a story I found to my astonishment that I could draw a diagram of any one of the ~~forty~~ nine rooms in which I slept, giving the exact location of the bed in relations to windows and doors and bathroom. I remembered the beds but I did not remember the hotel.

See P.

~~The work of this Circuit which I had joined was carried on circus fashion in a tent.~~ (See P. 604 of ~~Atlantic article~~)

I was never to recover fully from this first experience. From that time on through all the years I talked I have been humble before all audiences, afraid of most of them, conscious of what I had to say was so little food for their daily life, particularly when it came to women.

This first experience of mine was when I spoke in the afternoon and my audience was largely made up of women - "Shirt waist audiences" they called them. They came in large bodies and for the most part did their own work and who had planned their days ahead in order to be free for the Chautauqua. How little could I give them? I never was quite at ease with them. I had an impression which I have always had more or less with lecture audiences that the women were sizing me up. These were women who had something to do, responsibilities they took seriously, work they knew was necessary. They were building communities, rearing families, standing by the institutions which made these communities a good place for their children. They were curious about a woman who did not carry on the work of the world as they saw it. Why should I be going about in this

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