

CHAPTER II

THE VOCAL ORGANISM IN RELATION TO VOCAL CULTURE.

§ 97. Great importance of vocal culture.

1. *The voice is of paramount importance in delivery*

This would seem to be sufficiently obvious. If it were not, we might refer to the following authoritative declaration of Cicero: "For the effectiveness and glory of delivery, the voice, doubtless, holds the first place."

2. *It is capable of as great improvement for speaking as it is for singing.*

The wonderful improvement of which the voice is capable, is well understood, and fully appreciated by the teachers and proficients in the sister art of music; but it is not so generally understood that it is capable of equal development, by systematic training and exercise, for purposes of oratory. Yet every teacher of elocution can refer to numerous instances, in which voices very inferior by nature, have attained, in a short time, by a few simple exercises, to great excellence; have, in fact, doubled, tripled, and even quadrupled their speaking power. There would seem to be no instances in which diligence

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in such exercises, with due care to guard against overstraining the organs, has not resulted in great improvement; whilst it may be said, in general, that the untrained, or uncultivated voice, is worth little more for public speaking than it is for singing.

3. *The culture of the voice was highly appreciated by the ancients.*

Among the Greeks and Romans there was a distinct class of teachers, called *phonasci*, or *vocists*, who devoted themselves wholly to the training of the voice, and who carried their pupils through a most laborious and protracted course of exercises. In order to develop strength of voice, *e. g.* they prescribed declamation whilst walking, running, climbing, and lying upon the back; and in this last position, with weights on the chest. The results which they attained have been already alluded to (§19) as exemplified in the thunder-words of Demosthenes, and in the sweetness, compass and power of Cicero's voice. Similar pains are taken in vocal culture, and similar results are obtained by the great singers and tragedians of modern times.

4. *Modern neglect of vocal culture for public speaking is inexcusable.*

In consequence of this neglect it is a rare thing to hear a public speaker with a voice of great purity, compass and power. And this in clergymen especially, is the more inexcusable, because they have to rely upon the same instrument, namely, that of oral speech, which was so assiduously cultivated by the ancient orators, for infinitely higher and

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holier purposes than were ever conceived of either by Cicero or Demosthenes.

§ 98. Some knowledge of the vocal organism is essential to the greatest success in the culture of the voice.

Some general acquaintance with the physiological structure and functions of the vocal organs, is found by experience to be a great help in elocutionary training. We might expect that this would be so, for such reasons as the following.

1. *Many of the organs are strictly voluntary.*

A large class of these organs are immediately under the control of the will. Such *e. g.* are the lips, tongue, and breathing muscles. Some knowledge of these, in their more important functions, is of great utility. For one of the most common and fruitful causes of poor speaking, is that these organs either have never been reduced under the complete and facile control of the will, or that this control has become impaired, or well-nigh lost, from careless or slovenly habits. Hence, in order to attain, or to recover such control, it is found necessary that the attention of the student, in his exercises, should be directed to their functions and modes of operation, that the power of his will may be brought to bear immediately upon them.

2. *Many other of these organs are semi-voluntary.*

It is difficult to impart the necessary information with respect to the voluntary organs, without taking into view some of the more important of those which are semi-voluntary. These are such as the