

RIGHT WORDS.

BY GERVAS HOLMES.

“*How forcible are right words!*”—JOB.

“La science des noms ! nous n'en avons que l'art, et même nous en avons peu l'art, parce que nous n'en avons pas assez la science. Quand on entend parfaitement un mot, il devient comme transparent ; on en voit la couleur, la forme ; on sent son poids ; on aperçoit sa dimension, et on sait le placer. Il faut souvent, pour en bien connaître le sens, la force, la propriété, avoir appris son histoire. La science des mots enseignerait tout l'art du style.”—*Joubert.*

IN the dark days when the iron of the old Roman empire was most of it turned to clay, an unfortunate nightingale once formed a fraction, as unsatisfactory as it was minute, of the banquet of an imperial glutton, who pronounced it in disgust, “a voice and nothing else”—*vox et præterea nihil.* The cry of this disappointed materialist finds an echo at the present day in regard to human oratory. The verses of the poet, the well-chosen words of the orator, the sanctified eloquence of the preacher are each and all of them too often treated as if they were very agreeable to listen to—like the “lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument”—but only words after all, a sound, “a voice and nothing else.” Of still less esteem are the words of many a carelessly read book, and the daily flow of those which are uttered in the ordinary intercourse of life. They are regarded as “airy nothings,” and proverbially set in opposition to deeds, or worse still, as empty sounds used, in conformity with the old French sarcasm, for the purpose of disguising one's thoughts.

It is the purpose of these present words, which aim to be *right*, and therefore convincing, to show that the articulate voices of the world are not without signification, that there is power behind, or rather *in* all of them when rightly used ; and that it is only the abuse or misapplication of words that renders them vain and unmeaning.

Words may be defined as symbols of thought—adumbrations, more or less complete of the mental conceptions of the orator or