

THE VOICE, ITS PHYSIOLOGY AND CULTURE.

IN FORM OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MASTER
AND SCHOLAR.

(By J. Davenport Kerrison.)

PART III.

In our two previous lessons we have considered respectively, the Voice and its Physiology. We will devote this morning to a few hints with regard to its proper cultivation. Do not, however, imagine that all that the word implies can be exhausted in this morning's lessons, even if it were possible so to do, abstractedly, it would be of little use practically. Let us then rather suppose a voice of ordinary quality and compass. The first difficulty which presents itself is the unevenness of the scale. It may be said at once that this arises from the different form, or mode of producing sound, which the Vocal Organs assume on passing through the scale. This gives rise to those divisions of quality in the voice, which are technically known as registers. In all voices there are *three*, and although differently named by some teachers, may be simply described as *chest*, or lower; *medium*, or middle; *head*, or highest registers. These registers being of different tone quality and power it will readily be seen that while they remain in their natural state that the scale must be uneven, and one of the chief objects to which the art of voice culture is directed is the smoothing over and blending the breaks which occur at the junction of these registers. with the view of obtaining a smooth and equal scale.

SCHOLAR: You say there are three registers in the voice, are all these registers used in both male and female voices?

MASTER: No the Basso Profundo, which is the type of a true bass, should use only the chest or lower register. The Baritone and Tenor uses the first two, chest and medium. The head tones in men (sometimes called *falsetto*) should never be used.

Of the female voices, the Contralto generally uses only the chest and medium. The Mezzo Soprano and Soprano make use of all three, the most effective and brilliant part of the latter voice is the head register.

SCHOLAR: What is the compass and extent of the registers in the male voices, and do they differ from the female?

The chest, or lower register extends through the entire scale of all the male voices (excepting of course the forbidden head tones) but the upper notes of the Baritone and Tenor, the former extending *down* to A, fifth line Bass. The latter to middle C, (actual pitch) are common to both registers. The break which occurs in the Baritone will be generally found to occur about D, a third or fourth above the lowest note of medium register; and that of the Tenor about F, or F sharp. To smooth over this break and to blend the registers, the student should carefully practice notes alternately from each

register, and at the earlier period of their study give the greater part of their attention to the developing of the medium tones, the chest tones in both the Baritones and Tenor will generally take care of themselves. Necessary however, as this is to the successful formation of the voice, through ignorance or unwillingness, the reverse is the method generally pursued, bringing with it sooner or later the destruction of the voice.

In all the female voices, the chest register extends from the lowest note in the voice up to G, the second line in the treble cleff. The medium begins a fifth below the highest note of the chest register, that is middle C, and extends upward to C or D (treble staff), generally the former, here the head register begins and extends upward as far as the compass of the voice.

SCHOLAR: I perceive that the notes from middle C to G (second line) treble staff are common to both registers, are there any notes in like manner common to the head and medium.

MASTER: No. In the case of the chest and medium the notes should be practiced alternately from either register as before described, but in the case of the medium and head tones, no such alternative is desirable, even if possible, nor is there generally much difficulty in blending these registers.

SCHOLAR: Should the notes in the head register be used much?

MASTER: No. On the contra, as little as possible, but great care should be given to the cultivation of the medium, which on account of being generally weak and of a poor quality of tone, is frequently neglected in favor of the chest tones. Pupils frequently force this register above its limit (G), but do so at the risk of destroying the voice, without improving their position, for the break will assuredly occur, a note or two higher—that is to say, at the inevitable point of junction.

In training the voice it is better to begin with the chest tones; and this from the fact that the voice is weak and uncertain at that point where the registers play into each other, and therefore difficult to strengthen and equalize, *but without this equalization*, however good the quality or extent of the compass, the voice will be imperfect.

SCHOLAR: I think I understand the use of the registers; will you tell me the best method to develop the strength and flexibility of the voice.

MASTER: This will vary with different voices. No exact rule therefore can be laid down; but for general purposes the following method may, I think, be safely relied upon: Use the broad sound of the vowel *a* (as in far), taking the greatest care to *preserve* that sound, and not (as is too frequently the case by changing, ever so slightly, the formation of the mouth, during the emission of the sound) resolve the "*a*" into "*er*." Take a full easy breath, shoulders well thrown back and head erect, and give utterance to middle C (male voices will of course produce this note really an octave below). Do not hang