

imperfect and stammering articulations, and in the higher classes, with all the conditions bad habits have left us, and which we must now accept, I recommend the following practice suggested in an excellent work on the cultivation of the speaking voice, by James E. Murdoch, a distinguished public reciter: "Begin at the end of a line or sentence so as to prevent the possibility of reading negligently. Then, 1st—Articulate and sound every element in every word separately and very distinctly, throughout the sentence. 2nd. Enunciate every syllable of each word in the same clearly and distinctly. 3rd. Pronounce every word in the same style. Then read the whole passage in the natural order with the strictest regard to exactness in the elements." Mr. Murdoch adds, that the habits of classes of young readers have, in a few weeks, been effectually changed from slovenliness and indistinctness to perfect precision and propriety; while to adults the exercise is recommended as most successful in correcting the erroneous habits of early and social education.

The best condition of voice will give the best effect to all reading exercises. Modulation, force and pitch of voice are as essential to good reading as to good singing. The reader whose utterance is perfect but whose voice cannot be attuned like a sweet instrument, to give expression by its modulations and purity of tone to the thoughts which it utters, may satisfy the popular view and make himself *heard*; but will utterly fail in the higher qualities by which good reading is made to interpret the sense of an author, to realize the passion embodied in words by imitative tones, and to charm the ear and to captivate the mind of the listener. The majority of human voices are poor, miserable, harsh-sounding affairs,—not because nature has made clear, sonorous tones the privilege of the few, but because in home and school training we neglect to cultivate our natural endowments. We have all the gifts of sound and musical tone born with us, did we but cultivate them. But the material utilitarianism of the age discourages the ornamental and purely beautiful in our nature. The speaking tones in trade and business and the conflicts of life, when the principle of selfishness sways the heart, are harsh, husky and discordant; but when the nobler emotions of our nature overbear the selfishness of the shop and the bitterness of partizanship, then the tones of the mother, and the friend, and the lover, are rich in tenderest music, and the zeal of the patriot and the fervency of the devotee swell into organ-like peals.

Now the culture of the speaking voice lies in the province of the teacher of reading, and the nearer the voice approaches music, without singing, the further is it from harsh and discordant sounds, and the nearer it is to the truthful expression of thought and feeling. Nothing can be more monotonous and unmusical than the first sounds which strike on the ear of childhood in the wearisome drone of a, b ab, e, b eb, o, b ob, repetitions. The voice of childhood, so clear and flexible, and musical in its tones of joy and cheerfulness and trust, is instantly checked and afterwards for years drilled into discordant sing-song monotone. Practice in expressive inflections should begin with the alphabet. The vowel sounds constitute the organs of speech music.

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