

“Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter”;

yet to imagine the unheard sounds there must be at least the recollection of some true rendering of good literature; you cannot ignore elocution, if you wish to preserve the power to discriminate and appreciate what is good. Voice culture was one of the chief factors of education at Athens. To the Athenian Homer was a voice, not a book. The tendency with us is to judge our music by its appearance rather than by its sound. We labour with the eye for understanding of that which has its true appeal to the ear. We forget that literature had its origin in oral composition, and that one of the first conditions of our insight into its content is a right consciousness of its sound.

The poets themselves seem to err in the other direction. One reason for the failure of poetry to interest and inspire the many, is the cultivation under the influence of such a master as Swinburne, of a type of poetry that exaggerates the element of sound, which to the average reader is as a tinkling cymbal. There is thus an impassable gulf fixed between writer and reader. It is the latter who is the chief sufferer by this. For the most part he leaves poetry alone, as something for which he has no need or use.

There is need of a new baptism of power on the part of the poets; but the need with which we have most to do is the need of new power of appreciation on the part of the reader. The reader's failure is due to a wrong basis of judgment, and he needs to understand that he must hear as well as see what he reads. No possible influence can accomplish this, unless the educational system makes provision for it. One Canadian university has recently made the study of elocution obligatory on all Arts students. Let us hope soon to see the subject given the recognition it deserves, not only as a system of training for public speech, but as a means for the interpretation of the choicest of literature, old and new.

Zeal and duty are not slow;
But on Occasion's forelock watchful wait.

—Milton.