

Literature and Expression

ON the seventh day of January, 1907, there was formally opened the most beautiful public building in the city of Toronto. This statement may not be considered highly complimentary, for the outsider says that Toronto is unhandsome in matters of architecture, and a gentleman of high position, himself a citizen of Toronto, has declared his home town to be both un-beautiful and unadorned. But anyone who can survey the severe and classic exterior of the Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression on North Street without a feeling of aesthetic satisfaction is hardly to be moved by what a Frenchwoman has rightly called "frozen music."

While the building itself is one of the last gifts of the late Mr. Timothy Eaton, the school for which it now makes an artistic home was founded six years ago by Chancellor Burwash, Mrs. Burwash and Mrs. Scott Raff. The ideal before this trio of founders was that which one of the foremost professors of the day has called "the vocal interpretation of literature." The word "elocution" has fallen into disrepute and has become associated with cheap display and superficial study. The mushroom schools of oratory, which seemed to spring up by scores in the United States years ago, brought discredit on the elocutionist and provoked a smile by their idle pretensions. But there is a real voice culture, far removed from the affectation and superficiality of that which has proved unequal to modern demands. This development, where the voice is trained to express what the soul feels, is the ideal of the newly-opened school and its enthusiastic support by 167 students is a proof that Young Canada appreciates the undertaking.

That education means much more than acquiring knowledge is a fact sometimes forgotten in these days of hurry and haste. If this modern school can, to any extent, fulfil its promise of being a place "where the education that consists of mere knowledge is supplemented by the culture that opens the way to wider understanding and a larger life," it will have gone far towards making the lives of its students broader and brighter. The curse of many of our educational systems, especially

those for women, has been narrowness. They have dabbled in the little learning which has inevitably proved a dangerous thing and which gave the student a touch of intellectual priggishness, a spirit utterly opposed to the things which are more excellent. Literature and voice culture are allied in this modern curriculum with physical culture and household science, proving the healthy recognition of the importance of developing the body and the keeping of the home.

Chancellor Burwash calls attention to a lack in our educational system. "The prevailing method of education to-day cultivates written rather than vocal expression. This we regard as a very serious defect. Our most healthy and natural, and, we think, our highest and best spiritual life is that face to face with our fellow-men. In the great struggle of our active life, our best is called forth, and as it is called forth it at once finds expression in attitude, in countenance and in spoken word or act." The objection may be made by the cynic that we already talk too much. That may be. But do we talk well? The study of true speech, like that of writing, leads to correctness, not diffuseness, of expression. But into voice culture there enter elements, peculiar to itself, all the graces of modulation and intonation which make the difference between articulation and melody. Canada is in sad need of just such training. Listen to Mr. Willard, Mr. John Hare, Mr. Forbes Robertson and you realise what Mr. Kipling means when he talks of a voice that is "a golden miracle." Such tones will not be heard on this side of the Atlantic for many a day; but to acknowledge the lack is a step towards more melodious conditions.

Literature, from the best that ancient and modern writers have given, is the best former of taste. From Shakespeare to Yeats, the selections have been made for this school with a view to the finest dramatic study. The most instructive recitals for this year will be those by Professor Richard Moulton of Chicago University in April, when the distinguished Englishman will give Biblical and Shakespearian interpretations, as well as a dis-

course on Greek plays in English. To hear Dr. Moulton read the Book of Job is to have a revelation of the dramatic force of that magnificent piece of literature, and to be brought to a realisation of how badly the average clergyman reads the texts which he expounds. To bring such a man to the city is, in itself, an educational movement.

The old prejudice against the drama is fast disappearing, as the formerly Puritan Canadian comes to see the possibilities of the art. National Theatres and University Chairs may yet be among the development of drama. However, these high dreams may meet with failure or fulfilment, it remains for the modern educational system to meet the demand for training in expression, such as the past has not known.

It is a pleasure to announce that Professor Mavor of the University of Toronto and Mr. Davis, president of the Undergraduates' Union, have asked Mrs. Scott Raff, principal of the School of Literature and Expression, to take charge of the Commencement festivities of next June, when "She Stoops to Conquer," Gilbert's version of "Pygmalion and Galatea" and "As You Like It" will be given by the Toronto Dramatic Art Club.



Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression.