

ing Desk, and it is noticeable that they not only wear well with the public, but, with increase of years devoted to their art, they are acquiring an increase of fame. In the interest of the noble art of reading, may their numbers increase!



MRS. AGNES KNOX BLACK.

It is also a great and good thing for an elocutionist to know his or her limitations. So capable and accomplished a reader as Mr. Belford, who read with such acceptance in this country a few years ago, knew this. Mr. Belford had studied his powers,

and once in conversation with the writer, he remarked when discussing Shakesperean readers: "I know I can't read Shakespeare. When I read the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius, it sounds to my ears like a wrangle between Smith and Jones."

This was indeed too self-deprecatory, as any person will acknowledge who has ever heard Mr. Belford in a Shakesperean reading. No doubt Mr. Belford was lacking in the temper and voice requisite for a great Shakesperean reader. But his good judgment, taste and scholarship, bore him across bridges which would have sunk beneath the heavy and rude step of self conceit.

The best beginning in preparation for the work of the Reading Desk, is an assimilation of the spirit of the great masterpieces of prose and poetry. In fact, if you start out in this way you will find it comparatively easy to have all other things added unto you. Voice is a God-given gift, and should receive careful cultivation, not for one or two years in an elocution school, but throughout life. But voice is meaningless without soul power—it is *vox et praterea nihil*. How then can one add to his or her soul power? Through the means of a wide experience of human life, and by holding daily and hourly converse with the eternal, the absolute, the permanent in literature.

Let a reader read aloud daily for two hours the best thought to be found in Browning, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Burns, Moore, Longfellow, Whittier, Shakespeare, and such prose writers as Ruskin, Newman, Carlyle, and James Russell Lowell, and I will guarantee that such a reader will have a voice and soul tuned and toned to the needs and responsibilities of the Reading Desk. Mere seasons of vocal culture or scraps of recitation bear