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AND

DRAMATIC INSTINCT.

SOME PRACTICAL STEPS FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT.

BY S. S. CURRY, Ph.D.

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PREFACE.

This book is a study of vocal expression, as the direct revelation of the processes of the mind in thinking and feeling; and as the manifestation of the elliptic relations of thought which words cannot symbolize, such as the convictions, the beliefs, the interest, and the purpose of the speaker. According to this view, vocal expression is a significant, not a symbolic language, and is more subjective, complex, and nearer to Nature than words, and hence cannot be developed in the same way as a symbolic or representative language, nor be made subject to the same mechanical rules.

The work is meant to furnish simple and practical suggestions. In nearly every case a poem or selection is placed before the mind of the student, and the remarks made are intended to aid in the study of the extract, and especially in its interpretation by the living voice. "To know a thing, we must do it" is a fundamental principle of education. The mind must be brought directly into contact with nature. Experiment is the true method of scientific study, but the principle applies even more to literary or artistic work. The student must be set to doing,—explanation must be subordinate, and only for guidance in the discovery or study of the principles for himself in practice. This book is an endeavor to furnish a practical means of studying and training the Imagination and Dramatic Instinct. It aims to bring the mind of the student into direct contact with the noble works of Literature, not
merely to analyze or to understand the thought in such works, but to stimulate and awaken the faculties in the reader which are awake in the writer, to study the processes of the mind in creating and assimilating ideas for the true artistic interpretation of literature by the living voice. It furnishes a practical means of educating some important actions of the mind by the oldest of all artistic agents, the voice.

In certain cases problems are definitely stated, but more frequently there are suggestions which can be formulated by the teacher, or by the student himself. All great artists sketch and make studies of the objects of nature. This is the true method of art study; there is no substitute for it. Hence, the same method must be used by the student of literature, or of vocal expression. There must be long-continued study in the rendering of single lines or phrases. Such studies must be arranged for students according to their needs, and the student himself must direct his efforts to those points in which he is weakest.

In using the book in class, my custom is to assign certain selections a week beforehand and have students study and read them alone; then afterward with the teacher for suggestions and criticisms. The studies are to be read over to aid the student in comprehending criticisms and difficulties in the rendering of a poem, or to stimulate deeper studies or broader investigations. The student’s understanding and assimilation of the principles involved are chiefly to be judged by his rendering of a passage, or by his method of speaking. Occasionally, questions should be asked to test the student’s conception of the deeper meanings of a passage of literature or the apprehension of its vocal interpretation or by his understanding of the steps which are being taken. My own aim is usually to keep many things before the student’s mind, such as the essential nature of all ex-
pression, of all artistic endeavor, the steps he is taking in vocal expression, the spirit of the literary work he is studying, or the speech he is trying to make, and also his own special needs or tendencies; first one and then another of these is emphasized to stimulate his harmonious growth.

This work is intended to follow "Lessons in Vocal Expression." That volume takes up the simpler processes of thinking, the more elemental or logical relations of ideas, while this takes up the imaginative and sympathetic elements, the ideal and dramatic relations of ideas to feeling and experience.

Practice in vocal expression should always be connected with vocal training. At every stage of his progress the teacher should give the student definite steps for the training of his voice, using the same or different extracts. The student must realize the character of his tone, and the effect of his mind upon it. Do the qualities of his voice change with his ideas and feelings? Does he feel his ideas, his imaginative conceptions of relations and background, his deeper feelings in the tones and modulations of his voice?

The book has grown from practical struggles in teaching for twenty years, from a realization of the importance of awakening the Imagination and Dramatic Instinct of college, theological, or law students, and in fact of every man and woman of whatever aim in life. The volume is larger than it would otherwise have been on account of the neglect or misconceptions of many aspects of the subject at the present time. Many of the lessons may be easily extended or related to wider courses, the History of Humor, Forms of Poetry, History of Lyric Poetry, and many other subjects. In fact, the volume is intended as a companion to the student in the study of literature to throw light upon practical vocal interpretation as one of the chief means to get at the spirit of literary work.
No one realizes its inadequacy, its imperfections, more than the writer. It has been prepared in the midst of the continual and engrossing duties of practical teaching. It is hoped that, while it has the imperfections of the teacher, it will also have the spirit of practical teaching, and prove suggestive and helpful to a large number of students, and meet a great variety of needs.

S. S. C.

Boston, Massachusetts,
September, 1896.
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