

THE VOICE AND SPIRITUAL EDUCATION.*

Every book written by Professor Hiram Corson is sure to meet with a hearty reception from those who are interested in English literature. He is undoubtedly one of the leading critics now living ; his works on Browning and Shakespeare have made him known in all parts of England and America. Of late years he seems to have turned his special attention to the discussion of general phases of educational work. His "Aims of Literary Study," now in its fourth

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edition, struck the keynote of the movement that tends to the more sympathetic study of the masterpieces of English literature in our colleges. The little volume just published, entitled "The Voice and Spiritual Education," is an expansion of some of the ideas suggested in the previous book. With all the power that comes from a life-long study of the best literature and a long experience of teaching, Professor Corson speaks to the educators of this country in no uncertain tones. He has a facetiousness of expression that reminds one of Lowell; and in this book there are many brilliant statements that might be quoted, but which must be omitted in this brief review.

Spiritual education is necessary for the highest vocal culture. Without this ability to respond to and assimilate the informing life of any product of literary genius, mere vocal training avails little or nothing. This education is the very opposite of what generally passes for education: "He would be the ideal teacher who could induce a maximum amount of education on the basis of a minimum amount of requirement." Knowledge may be developed at the expense of the interior divinity. Spiritual education must be begun early. "The child must *feel* before it can *know*." The child must be considered as an impressionable being, and home-life must minister to his spiritual nature. Some very suggestive remarks are made on the reading of children. "Upon the closed bud of reason, while it is not yet ready to be unfolded, must be brought to bear the genial warmth of sensibility, sympathy, and enthusiasm." In the colleges and universities there must be the same appeal to man's higher life; all acquisition of knowledge must be made subordinate to the one great aim of quickening life. "To fit the soul to be spoken to by the eternal word, is the true, the ultimate object of spiritual education."

With this spiritual training received in the home and college, with the power to see the hidden meanings of the author, the man or woman is prepared to undertake vocal culture. The author is very severe in his denunciation of modern "elocutionary spouting"—"The voice instead of being the organ of the soul is the betrayer of soullessness." He gives several amusing incidents of extreme elocution of the present day. There is nothing in the average elocutionist that is "clamorous for expression, not even a very still small voice urging him to express something." The true vocal training can only be begun by one who is "impelled to

cultivate vocal power because of his desire to express what he has sympathetically and lovingly assimilated, of a work of genius." With this purpose in view, "it is possible for the heaviest, clumsiest voice to be trained to the light touch." The student of vocal culture must by long years of study and practice get the mastery of articulation, wide range of pitch, all degrees of force, every variety of inflection, accelerated and retarded utterance, many qualities of voice, etc. The author gives an interesting practical exercise in the "light touch" by marking a long passage from the Book of Daniel.

The writer of this review heard Professor Corson say that twenty years of diligent practice were required to give him the control over his voice that he now has. No one who has heard him read the plays of Shakespeare can fail to see how much there is in his contention for the highest kind of vocal culture. To hear him read is to remove all doubts as to his thorough knowledge of the subject which he treats in this book. The book will doubtless be widely read, and will have a wide influence in calling attention to the evils of so-called elocution and the need for a more rational culture of the human voice. "The sweetest music is not in the oratorio, but in the human voice when it speaks from its instant life tones of tenderness, truth, or courage." EDWIN MIMS.