

ders of nature. Yet, beyond the necessary acquaintance with these simple and natural facts, the student is likely to find herself hampered by much that mystifies and retards if she yields to the fascinations of the study of this phenomenon.

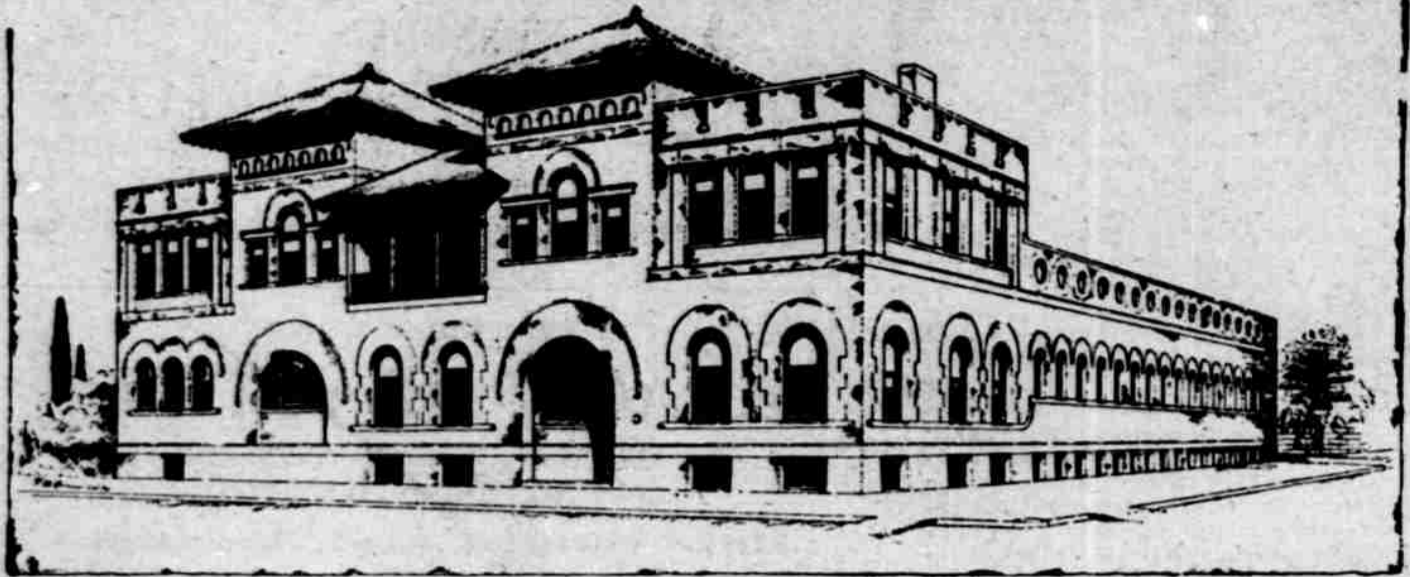
As in the case of the inanimate wires, the chief strength of tone, as well as its highest beauty, will be found to emanate from the central point of the vocal bands, and the nearby tones both higher and lower the lower tones being of subtler influence the higher tones thinner and less capable of being projected into great spaces. In common speech, from six to twelve tones are unconsciously employed; an exclamation of joy or pleasure often corresponding to E in the fourth space of the musical staff, while deep sympathy, grief, warning, find their natural medium in low A, and even F.

On the platform the accustomed speaker finds herself, not infrequently, suffering from sudden constraint, and her vocal organs limiting their action in consequence to a very few tones, generally the middle ones, but often to the high, strained ones or the extreme low voice, according to the degree of oppression under which she is momentarily laboring. To avoid incurring such contemporary indisposition, many, notably the clergy, adopt a chantlike form of speech, almost a monotone, in order to relieve the supposed strain of the vocal chords. This is an extremely dangerous experiment, however, not only offending the aural sensibilities of all listeners, and including a somnolence against which even the eloquence of Demosthenes would prove unavailing, but it reacts upon the speaker, strengthening the particular part of the voice organs brought thus into constant use, but eventually hardening it beyond the possibility of cure.

The pitch so produced is not nature's handiwork, but the result of a bad vocal habit. Persons who are obliged to constantly talk above other sounds, such as the rumbling of street cars or the roar of exchanges, frequently speak in a high, strained manner, which is widely removed from the pitch they should properly employ, although the habit of strained speech is most natural. It should be ascertained and remembered thereafter, that that which is habitual, especially in vocalism, is not perforce, to be laid at nature's door. The large number of thin, high, harsh, or notably disagreeable voices one hears, are directly attributable to early neglect, indifference, some nervous consciousness, or other bad habit, each telling its own story to the ear of the close student.

Only an occasional voice is heard to speak naturally upon extreme tones, high or low. Low tones almost invariably possess rotundity and carrying power, with a capacity for sympathy, which is seldom present in the very high voice; and the universal recognition of this fact leads many superficial instructors to indiscriminately direct the attention of the student, whatever her natural vocal attributes may be, to the development of a low-speaking voice. Few, if any, direct the attention to the raising of the pitch, except where the voice is intended to be the medium for song. Nevertheless, such treatment is now and then necessary, and grave injury is often done by urging a constant use of the lowest tones of which the voice is capable.

A voice is said to have its pitch from that point in whence the higher tones ascend and the lower ones begin their descent. This central plain, or resting place, will commonly be found to



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correspond with the middle C on the piano, although it sometimes rises to G natural in the higher voices. In seeking the pitch, therefore, which will present to the hearer the best and most potent portion of the voice, the experimenter, having fully satisfied herself as to which are truly the most natural and easy sounds at her command, should practice daily—reading, it may be—some blank verse selection (since this can be musically divided without slipping into the less conversational and more "singsong" accentuation of rhyme). Before beginning the experiment the reader should conscientiously take the dorsal exercises, and having accomplished them, stand firmly upon both feet, heels together, with chest well expanded, and hips strongly vitalized, in this way habituating the body to correct action and position with every vocal effort.

A perfect easy tone having been chosen upon which to begin the vocal exercise, the words of the selected passage should be slowly and clearly read, and with each new line a new and higher tone should be employed, until the limit of the comfortable use of the voice is reached. Then, reading on, the descent should be begun, continuing in like manner downward to the lowest tone upon which it is comfortable to articulate. It is unwise to test the capacity of the voice in either direction, since vocal feats are not in this instance sought after. The practice should be done with but one aim in view; not to see how high or how low the student can carry her voice, but to exercise it equally throughout its easy range, giving it elasticity, and allowing the natural pitch to presently color and characterize the voice. By such rational daily exercise, the student is shortly prepared to begin the polishing process which must now be entered upon in order to bring about pure and finished speech.

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