

**DRAMATIC SINGING
PHYSIOLOGICALLY
ESTIMATED**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649493937

Dramatic Singing Physiologically Estimated by Walter Hayle Walshe

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WALTER HAYLE WALSH

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BY

WALTER HAYLE WALSH, M.D.

ARS LONGA . . . JUDICIUM DIFFICILE



LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1881

174. f. 61.

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PREFACE

THE SCHEME of the following little work, first thought of some years ago, was fixed on during convalescence from a recent illness, when its arrangement played a pleasant part in beguiling long hours of tedium. And the writer has been induced to place himself in the printer's hands with the idea, it might not be disadvantageous to give publicity to a plan, whereby visitors to the Opera, technically uninstructed, should be helped to analyse profitably their impressions. He further hoped the appearance of his tentative essay might lead some one of musical attainments to undertake a more ambitious treatise of the kind; and it likewise seemed worth showing how naturally one of the most fascinating of the fine arts falls within the scope of medical study.

The short physiological and acoustic details, introduced mainly for the purpose of proving the

wideness of the issues involved in estimating any given element of the singer's art, will, it is trusted, prove otherwise not devoid of interest, from the glimpse they afford into a few of the intricacies of vocal mechanism,—intricacies some of which are still far from being thoroughly unravelled.

LONDON, 1881.

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DRAMATIC SINGING.

INTRODUCTION.

A LIGHT soprano, who some years ago created a quasi-furore in the parts of Maria in 'La Figlia del Reggimento' and Violetta in 'La Traviata,' cannot yet have faded from the memory of London opera-goers: Piccolomini, the artist in question, decisively made her mark of a certain kind even with qualified critics, while she yet more positively managed to captivate the *jeunesse dorée* of the hour, and excite their commonly languid enthusiasm beyond all intelligible bounds. At a dinner party, where the popular operas furnished as usual the staple food for talk, one of this gilded class, true to its accepted creed, broke out into the habitual transports in describing the performance of the preceding night: 'Most charming singer ever heard; twenty times better than Grisi, Viardot, or anyone past or present!' The justification of this extravagant preference being