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Music in the Public School.

T. L. Jones.

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Music in the Public School.

Music is every where; in the forest where the little birds sing and cheer up the lonely traveller who passes by; even the babbling of the brook, the sighing of the breeze, produce sounds which are pleasing to the ear.

What a world this would be with out music. How lonely, how burdensome would be the task if there was nothing to break the monotony of the working man.

A farmers boy toiling in a field on a fresh spring morning, whistles or sings some old song. He is happier than the greatest monarch that ever lived. He is nearer to heaven and God, nearer to that all seeing eye that directs the Course of humanity. How essential is music to mankind!

The question of music in the public school then, is an important one. Years ago this was not thought much of but now the people are beginning to realize the necessity of music being taught in our public schools.

Music has, and always will be an important helper in the civilization of the world. It inspires the people and makes them more patriotic. It helps keep the nation together, with out National Songs patriotism would hardly exist.

We can judge the character of a nation by the songs its people sing. The higher the nations intellectually and morally the more refined are the songs.

How then is the mass of the people to be taught how to sing and what to sing? You would answer, the best way is by means of the public school.

It is said that the public school is the bulwark of the nation. We then should give the rising generation the very best chance we can, as on it the future of the nation depends.

Every thing is supposed to be taught in the schools which will aid in the education of the child. But is there not something lacking? You can teach a child spelling, grammar etc. Yet he will lack that which inspires and makes him think of higher things. But you would ask does music inspire? I would answer yes! The poet is inspired when he writes a grand poem. Is not music the cause of his being inspired? When he writes a verse of poetry he divides it into measures, by placing the emphatic accent on the first note of the measure, and the music is suggested to him by the words. Then a true poet is a musician. How about the painter? When he goes into the woods, the little birds or the babbling brook sing to him and aid him in his work.

What painting, what poem can have as great effect on a child as that grand song, "Hear my God to Thee!"

Its effect is marvelous and many a wayward child has been made to follow the straight and narrow path by its influence.

Music in the school room is like sunshine coming in through a window; it cheers and makes the scholar happy.

All children like to sing and to hear singing. As an illustration the mother with her babe in her arms sings and rocks it to sleep. The singing seems to have a soothing effect on the child.

Why should music be taught in the school room? Because it is the easiest way to reach the people, so that the rising generation can all learn to sing. I don't mean to teach the scholar to be a trained musician, but give him a general idea of music, teach him to read common hymns, and know and appreciate a good piece when he hears one. If you can't sing yourself, it should be a great pleasure to listen to a song well rendered.

Half an hour spent each day in singing will pay a school for the trouble.

Music has been thought of ^{by} some school boards as only a source of pleasure, and therefore they did not recommend the teachers to take the scholars time in singing. They thought music was an expensive luxury, and that there were plenty of things needed in the school room which the children should have before a musical training. Thus music has not received the attention it should in our public schools.

Music helps the scholar physically, ~~mentally~~ and morally, and ~~physically~~. Physicians say that singing

will cure and prevent diseases of the lungs and throat. It has been said to the strong, "sing that you may remain so and to the weakly, sing that you may become strong."

Singing develops the lungs thus giving the foundation of good health. It develops the voice makes it clear and strong and enables us to control our breath. You often hear a scholar recite a piece of poetry on a Friday afternoon. He will sing it, as we say, from the beginning to the end. How tired we get before the little fellow has finished his piece.

If he knew anything about music he would not speak it in this way, he would see where he ought to pause, where he ought to raise and lower his voice, where the accent should be, in fact he would be better able to get the meaning^{out} of the selection.

Music is a source of great pleasure. We listen to a great concert and say we could listen to it all night. Always when a grand concert is to be given the opera house is seated to its utmost capacity.

Music is a difficult study, probably more so than any of the arts. The painter has his model before him as the human form, or a golden sunset, when the scenery is beautiful. But it is not so with the musician he has no models, he has only a few shrill or gruff sounds from which he builds his different harmony.

Our religious world has been affected greatly by music. What would the church be without it. The services would seem monotonous, not meaning much of anything. But introduce music into the church and it becomes what it should be, a gateway which leads from this world into the next. Thackeray after listening to choir boys sing, said, "I was lifted as near to heaven as mortal man ever attained in this world."

We owe to music to a great extent the Christianization of the world at the present day. Think of the influence of such a song as Jesus Lover of my Soul, on the world. When a religious song is sung there are many who hear it will be influenced by it and will become Christians. Should we let such an important factor in this world as music go without our attention?

Music is difficult to teach in the school room because there are scholars of all ages with as many different kinds of voices. But because it is difficult to teach is no reason why it should not be taught in the school room. Mathematics is difficult for some, for others grammar is difficult; ^{because they} should we leave out any of these branches, are hard for some? You would answer no!

Teachers always find ~~if~~ difficulty in trying to teach music in the school room, some persons of the district think it is time thrown away, others think

there is no time for it in the school room. Then there are some scholars who could not sing even if they had the best of chance because they either have no ear for music or don't care about it. There are many who with a little practice could sing very well. There are some who always spoil the singing of the whole school. If the teacher tells a certain one that he cannot sing then the child gets angry and says he has just as good a right to sing as the rest.

The question is often asked, what good would it do to pass a law making music one of the branches in the school? It is often stated that teachers do not understand how to teach it, and what is the use of placing extra work on the ^{him} teacher. If however such a law was passed the teacher would soon be prepared to teach music, and nine tenths of them would be happy to have a chance to devote a little time to singing. Luther said, "Unless a school master knows how to ^{sing} teach I think him of no account."

Another difficulty is because the school board is not accustomed to appropriate money to get the necessary charts and books essential to a correct method of teaching vocal music. They say that the taxes are heavy enough and to spend money on music in the school room to teach the pupils to sing a few songs would not seem the best thing to do. They look

on music as only an expensive pastime, to give pleasure etc., they do not think that music is essential to a good education.

The question of how music should be taught is a difficult one. I will give some of the leading methods that are used at the present day. There is singing by rote i.e., the teacher sings and the scholars sing after him until they learn the song. The pupils do not have to see the words or music. They simply sing by ear. This ~~is~~^{was} practiced in early times but now is not used much except in the primary departments of schools for an entertainment etc. Probably the average person learns to sing by this method. When a piece becomes popular you will hear the street mechanics whistle or sing it in a crude manner. They learn the song by hearing some one else sing it.

The movable "do" system is also used, the key note determines the position of "do" i.e., if the piece is in one sharp it will be the key of G. and "do" will be on the second line from the bottom of the staff. This makes the intervals, minor seconds of three and four and seven and eight come right.

The fixed "do" system differs from the movable "do" system only in that we consider "do" in all keys the same a "C" on the piano. If the

signature is one flat then it is the key of F , and "do" is in the same position as if the piece was in the key of C .

The Tonic Sol-Fa and Syllabic systems are not much used in America but they are used extensively abroad in England, Germany and France. They are the simplest and easiest of ^{the} systems. The Tonic Sol-Fa system originated in England about fifty years ago and since that time has steadily come into use. A letter is used instead of a note and to it is attached the proper marks to indicate the duration of the note. This system is highly recommended by leading musicians of the United States as well as of the old countries. The system is very simple, you have a system of dots, dashes and figures which with a little practice the scholar can readily sing, they don't have to know anything of the sharps or flats and with a little practice can read readily.

Let us see what Foreign countries think of music in the public school. Germany, France and many of the European countries, years ago placed music in their schools as one of the branches to be taught. They devote about thirty minutes a day to singing and the pupils are benefited greatly thereby. They teach music successfully. Why can't we? They have no trouble to find good school

teachers who are able to teach music successfully.

Here we spend about five minutes a day, and in some schools they do not sing at all. And with this state of affairs existing we say that music cannot be taught with success in our schools. Is it any wonder that our system is not a success? no! If we thought as much of music as the Germans do and introduced it in our schools as a branch of learning and then devoted the time in proportion to the other studies there is no reason why it cannot be as successfully taught here as in Germany.

The time is not far distant when we will have music in our schools as a study and it will be taught just as important as any of the other branches now taught. We will spend at least thirty minutes each day, we will have the school sing an opening piece in the morning to prepare them for the forenoon's work, singing again just after the close of the noon hour to prepare the scholars for the afternoon's work. (This will encourage them and they will enter in their work with zeal), and singing at the close of the day.)

By so doing we will have less lung and throat diseases than are now prevalent, consumption and catarrh will not be so noticeable among our people,