

The Position of Music in Culture

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Individuality is the basis of culture. Our student must have a power by his culture which uses books, arts, facilities, and elegances of speech, but is not subdued by them, or lost in them. Only he who has a good determination is a well made man and the end of culture is not to destroy this determination, but to take away all other things and leave power alone in its purity.

Our student must have a style and determination that will enable him to master his own specialty.

He must possess the power to see every object with a free and disengaged look so that while he is speaking of the object before him he is not thinking of himself and trying to catch your admiration.

Culture is the suggestion of the best thoughts. A cultured man has a range of affinities through which he can modulate the violence of certain master tones that have too great a prominence in his scale.

It makes up his balance; puts him among his equals and superiors; awakens that delightful sense of sympathy; and warns him of the dangers of solitude and repulsion.

It is not a compliment, but rather otherwise, to consult a man on the races, books, art, or music, whenever he appears; or to turn the conversation to the subject he is known to fondle, when he approaches. He must leave our pets at home when

we go into the street and meet men on broad grounds of good sense and meaning.

We should endeavor to make our education have and preventive. Politics is an after work - the law is passed, the evil done, and then we begin the agitation for a repeal of that which we ought to have prevented in the first place. Someday we shall learn to supercede politics by education, though perhaps that day will not come soon.

Our reforms of slavery, gambling, intemperance, are only the healing symptoms. For a cure we must begin at a higher point, at education. A good thing to do, if not a part of good sense, is to provide every fine soul with such culture as will give it no reason at the end of thirty or forty years to say "This which I might do is made hopeless through my want of weapon."

Books must always enter into our consideration of culture. The best men that ever existed, Plato, Pericles, Shakespeare, were all well read and quite too wise to undervalue letters. Their opinions have weight because they had means of knowing the opposite side.

Books, however, are of use only so far as we are ready for them, and some of us reach that period very slowly.

The secret of culture is to interest a man more in his public than in his private life and affairs. The musician as a craftsman cares only for the praise accorded to him, not the censure though it be ever so just; while the musician as a cultivated person takes an interest in himself and in humanity, and at last exults as much in the demonstration of his own unsoundness as his critic. As soon as he sides with his critic against himself, joyfully, he is a cultivated man.

We need intellectual quality in all property and all acts or they are nought. We must have a social state, events, and history, or our thinking will lack a basis. But to give these accessories value we must consider them as only contingent and rather showy possessions which pass for more with other people than with us. A man known to us only in politics gains greatly in our esteem when we discover he has some intellectual taste or skill.

Culture opens the sense of the beautiful, and cannot begin too early. Many scholars have lost or made companions those years which might have been given to imaginative literature. The chance for being an appreciator is greatly increased by being the son of an appreciator.

Culture is that which gives the mind possession of its own powers; it is to the mind what language is to the critic; telescopes to the astronomer.

It changes the political status of an individual, and makes him the possessor of an independence which monarchs cannot look down and to which they must often succumb.

If the man who studies Nature knows more of her laws than his fellow men his nation cannot spare him. So it is if a man knows the secret of algebra or geometry on which the computations of navigation and astronomy rest. If one can converse better than others he rules the minds of his neighbors wherever he goes. Even manners are a distinction not to be overdone by mere rank, or even by talents.

It is very plain that a cultivated laborer is worth many who are untaught; that a scientific engineer with instruments is worth a hundred ordinary men.

The foundation of culture is at last the moral sentiment. Science corrects the old creeds and sweeps away our infantile catechism to prepare us for grander and more universal laws which it discloses. It was the conviction of such men as Plato, and Pascal that great thoughts come from the heart.

Man's culture can spare nothing — he wants all the material.

In the early days it was no unusual thing for a boy to graduate with honors at the age of seventeen. The so-called universities then were but high schools, and the honors thus obtained were but the honors of a school boy. They gave no guarantee of real merit, yet such laurels as these with the addition of a couple of years of professional study were all that America had then. If one wished for more he had to exile himself to find it, or supply it as best he could by his own solitary efforts with little encouragement when it should have been pressed upon him at some institution.

It is needless to say that time has changed this state, and the mass of our colleges, now, are where the highest were, then.

American culture has also advanced in other respects in the last twenty five years. Schools have been improved; the number of periodicals and libraries has greatly increased; while music and pictures have become much more accessible.

Our educational systems need additions not subtractions. We do not wish to save the children from study but to give them an opportunity of studying that which will cultivate the sensibilities, their emotional nature, a part now frequently neglected.

The demand for high culture outruns the supply, as is shown by the fact that so many of our pupils are sent to Europe every year for instruction. This is especially true of pupils in music and painting.

What we need is the opportunity of high culture somewhere - a place where music will be as much a part of the education as any of the other branches of science.

There is much said nowadays about the study of music in our public schools and the opinions of people vary greatly respecting its value.

Most persons have known or heard of something to the effect that music was universally valuable, or have thought that such might be the case but in many cases their observations have failed to confirm their convictions, and in still other cases, where music had gained a foothold, in the school it has either been discontinued or allowed to dwindle down to nothing because the effort was not sufficient to prove satisfactory, for those who appreciated the value of music felt as if they could not afford it.

Again in other places where the work has been fair and the pupils were willing to learn from hard working teachers it has been thought

there was something wrong with the notation, and the lessons have been gradually stopped, and music has been put away with the things of the past.

A visit to some of our schools will soon decide one as to the question whether or not music should be taught in the public schools.

Here, during the music lesson, the children scream away, going over their songs and exercises again, and again, with little or no meaning or expression, and when they have done this with a certain number of songs they think their lesson complete and they have had good musical instruction.

Does it make any difference whether an individual is refined or not? whether he is intellectual or ignorant? Does it make any difference whether the bright and joyous children sing or not; and whether their songs are of pure sentiment, or songs of the ribald or the dance house; songs which speak of god, home, affections and happiness or the senseless song of the clown?

Does it matter if the school children sing those songs which will make them happy and cheerful wherever they may be?

See here the home of a cultured family

where the classic song, the sonata, and the best of music is sung and played with almost faultless execution, and where music is among the most frequent employments and enjoyments. Does music make a difference in the happiness in this home?

Again, here is the home of less cultured people. The father has a fiddle, the son a banjo, and together they play the lively waltz and jig; joined now and then in a song by the mother and little ones. Do you think that music makes a difference in this home?

At some schools we find music in its proper place among other studies. Here the children sing at sight — the time, reading, and tune are all correct; there is no dependence of one pupil on another for a test shows that each pupil is familiar with his work.

They understand the notes as things for the ear, the marks and characters as things for the eye, and as representing certain tones.

As we go from grade to grade we find their study of music advances as the child grows into the youth and the man.

Already there is great awakening throughout the land; many persons have

found situations and much good work is being done to aid in the advancement.

If those who already have positions do their duty in the right way; if the matter is agitated through the educational journals; if teachers and musicians advertise and agitate by word and deed it will not be long until civilization will awake to the value of music and accept it as a necessary part of education, and will tend to all matters connected with its management.

Yet, while there are musical conventions and revivals, it is the kind of material the teacher turns out in the quality of his pupils that is first to determine the universal acceptance of music and give it its proper place and fullest function in education.

All children, no matter what their standing in music now is, can be placed in the best position for advancement if the teacher is in every way competent for his work. For children, like clay, can be moulded at the teacher's will provided he is competent and has the necessary knowledge and skill to manage those elements which add no good to the process; and to put the lessons into the most desirable forms.

The whole matter may be said to rest on the query "What is the teacher?"

If we once know the teacher, his knowledge, manners, and methods we can better judge what the results will be. He should have besides a good musical education refined thought and manner.

Most assuredly we are on the way to better things, though there is still much to be done.

There is a public school department in the American Teachers' National Association in which the public schools take a conspicuous part. The college is composed of one hundred and thirty five members who are among the best musicians in the United States.

It is incorporated under existing laws and is the only real authority empowered to make musical examinations grant degrees.

The great musicians who used to sneer at the idea of teaching music in the public schools are now in sympathy with it and are doing their best to advance its interests.