

VOCAL MUSIC.

An Essay Delivered by Prof. Hunt at the Teachers' Institute at Albany.

A learned man once said: "Let me write the songs of my country and I care not who make her laws." Who can estimate the power and influence of good music? It is used to encourage brave men as they rush to battle. It is used in celebrating our national holidays to make men patriotic and love their country. It is used to bring men to Christ and comfort the sick and dying. The mother uses it to put her babe to sleep, and it is also used to lead men into sin and vice. It is employed to charm the ear while the soul is led captive by wine, cards, or other forms of wickedness; but this is a monstrous perversion of one of the most beautiful gifts of God.

The world has certain notions about music. Some people think that time spent by their children in learning to sing is just so much time wasted, while others think it is time well employed, and to be a good musician is a desirable accomplishment, but the great majority of them, like most school teachers, are quite indifferent about the matter.

Teachers as a class, I believe, are as honest and wish to do as nearly right in everything as any other class in the world. If they are wrong in any of their customs or methods they are willing to "right about" and do differently, but the trouble is to convince them that they have been wrong.

Now what do you believe in regard to vocal music in common schools? Do you believe that there should be singing every day in every school in this broad land of ours? Do you believe that the time to commence to teach children to read music is from six to eight years of age? I do. Do you believe that they can be taught to read the notes do, re, mi, as easily as they can be taught to read the words, man, cat, rat? Do you believe that pupils can be taught, so that when they reach the age of 16 or 17 years, that they can sing any ordinary piece of music at sight as easily as they can read the words set to it? I do. Do you believe that it is your duty to prepare yourself, if you are not already prepared to teach vocal music in your own school-room? I most emphatically do. Do you believe that you can prepare yourself in a reasonable length of time to teach the subject? I know that you can.

I am aware that there is an idea abroad that no one can learn to sing unless they have an ear for music. Now I believe that any one who can talk can be taught to sing. Those people who say that they can't sing or learn to read music have received but little, if any, instruction. They have had their belief more firmly fixed by some convention leader coming to their town advertising that he would hold a four day's convention and give them three lessons a day, making twelve in all, and that anyone could learn to read music in that time under his instruction, and if they ain't satisfied he would refund their money. Of course they did not learn in that time. Therefore it is no use for them to try.

I will now attempt to answer the questions. First—Why should vocal music be taught in the common schools? and second—How should it be taught? The importance of the subject requires that all should be taught and in no other way can we reach them all except through the public schools. Nearly all children like to sing. It is therefore a pleasant exercise for them, and makes them happier and better children. It gives pleasant employment during leisure hours. He who is fond of music need never be troubled about amusing himself, because he has the source within himself. It makes home pleasant and is the means of keeping many wayward boys at home who would otherwise spend their time at saloons or other places of vice. If rightly taught it cultivates the vocal organs and makes the voice clear and full. The chest is enlarged making more room for the lungs. Hence there is little danger of that dreaded disease consumption.

If our pupils were taught to read music in our common schools we should have more and better music in our churches and social gatherings. It

would not be so difficult to provide good music for our fourth of July celebrations, our county teacher's institutes and entertainments of all kinds.

Music is especially valuable in the school-room as it relieves the monotony and promotes good order. A school without singing is like a dinner without salt. I have noticed in my own experience that those who liked to sing as a rule were not bad children. In no other way can moral and religious sentiments be so well and easily taught as by means of song and appropriate words. There is no one branch of study that will so well cultivate a child mentally, morally and physically as the study of music.

Concluded next week.

He who in the fullness of his heart, with a longing to do good to his fellow men and intense desire to see himself in print, attempts to chronicle passing events, finds the path not strewn with roses all the way.

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