

[ABSTRACT OF PAPER.]

## THE RELATION OF NORMAL SCHOOL MUSIC TO PUBLIC SCHOOL WORK.

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## OUTLINE.

I. Introduction.—1. Society a complex system.

II. Present status of music in the public schools.—1. Statistics and illustrations.

III. Preparation necessary for grade teachers.—1. Ability to sing easy songs; 2. Ability to read at sight melody or a harmony part; 3. Mastery of scale construction, key signs, meter signs, various tonalities, transpositions, etc.; 4. Knowledge of elementary composition; 5. Familiarity with lives of great composers and their works; 6. Discriminating discernment of good music.

IV. Reflex action of advanced Normal School status on public school music valuation, and vice versa.

V. What shall we do about it?

## THE RELATION OF NORMAL SCHOOL MUSIC TO PUBLIC SCHOOL WORK.

From the normal schools there comes a cry, pitiful and pleading, for students who have had more nearly adequate training, or at least *some little*, training in the subject of music. And from the public schools there comes a cry, more nearly sounding like a petulant demand, asking that teachers that come from our professional schools be prepared to give proper music

training to their pupils, either under the guidance of a supervisor or without that welcome assistance.

It shall be the purpose of this paper to show, first: that the present efficiency of normal school music work is below what it should be. Second: that if the condition of normal school music be improved, the status of music in all the ramifications of the public school system will be raised. Third: that, with more general attention paid to music in the public schools, there will be a proportionate reaction upon music in the normal schools. And lastly: what shall we do about it?

Judging from the statistics as obtained by Mr. Manchester, of Converse College, S. C., nine per cent of the normal schools report that *various percentages* of their students give ten hours or more per week to music. One of these schools is the Crane Normal Institute of Music, Pottsdam, N. Y., another is the Catholic Normal School, Wisconsin, in both of which cases music is evidently made a major subject.

Twenty-two per cent of the normal schools report that *some* of their students give five or more periods a week to music. These few normals, and the various schools to which their graduates go, are very much to be congratulated upon the generous treatment accorded their music departments.

At the head of the list of fortunate ones should probably be placed the public schools of Cincinnati. Three generations ago, in 1835, the revered Charles Aiken and his assistant, William Colburn, began their work of teaching the children to sing. And steadily, during these generations, has music been accorded its rightful place in the heads and hearts of those children. Through the eight grammar grades, four years of the high school, as well as in the Teachers' College, and University, has music gone hand in hand with the "three R.'s." And what is the result? The observer finds there a music-loving people, conservatories of music that rival those of Boston and Greater New York. Notable among the musical attractions is the famous Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, second to none in the United States. There is, besides, the well attended May Festival, whose support from the music lovers of the city is of so substantial a nature as to make it possible for the Festival management to engage as its soloists a galaxy of the greatest stars of the musical world. In fact, Cincinnati has become,

chiefly through its public school music, one of the few recognized musical centers of the United States. And what of the pedagogical situation? All applicants for positions as teachers in the Cincinnati schools must be graduates of the Cincinnati University and Teachers' College. Then, if they can pass city examinations, they must teach for a year as substitutes before their names are placed on the list of the Superintendent of Schools. "This is probably the highest standard of any city in the United States and possibly the world."

But what of the sixty-nine per cent of normal schools left out in the cold—with "*less than five hours per week?*"—for in too large a proportion of these cases the phrase "*less than five hours per week?*" is only a charitable way of saying one lesson per week, or thirty-six lessons for the scholastic year. Music is one of the most subtle of the fine arts: and yet is it to be considered so simple that a pedagogical knowledge of it can be acquired in thirty-six hours during each of the three years, when arithmetic has required sixteen hundred hours? To quote Miss Crane of Crane Normal Institute: "After a student has had his sixteen hundred hours in arithmetic, the normal school provides as many hours for the study of *methods* in arithmetic as are allotted the full course in music. Is music teaching such a natural gift that successful teachers can be expected under these conditions? Is it surprising that the statement is often made that the normal schools do not fit their graduates to teach music of the grades?"

What would the musical world call a fair preparation on the part of the grade teacher? First of all, there must be the ability to sing easy songs with correctness, and intelligence as to phrasing, etc. But immediately some one raises the objection, what of those otherwise excellent teachers who are tone deaf? Let them prepare either to sing their songs by proxy or to do departmental work where their deplorable lack will never be discovered. For in the primary grades an abundant supply of good and attractive rote songs is needed as the initial language or expression work in music. And in *all* grades, up to that point where the students are able to read their own songs at pleasure, rote songs should be freely used for their ethical and aesthetic value. Martin Luther gave expression to a psychologic fact in this terse form, "Words, music hallowed,

never die." These rote songs, then, may become the students' future treasury; they are the teacher's great responsibility. G. Stanley Hall, in his address on the function of college music, well said: "Good music may almost create virtue and tune the heart to all that is good, beautiful, and true, bring poise, courage, enthusiasm, joy of life, tone up weakness, and cadence the soul to religion and morals.

Obviously, then, those teachers who cannot sing for their students the songs which may be considered necessary from a cultural as well as musical standpoint, have placed themselves in the wrong department of school work.

Second, there should be the ability to read at sight a melody or a harmony part equal in difficulty to J. B. Dykes' "Lead, Kindly, Light," for example; for no amount of enthusiasm over the ethical value of music can supply the lack of ability in sight reading. As a builder in musical education, every teacher should have a working knowledge of its tools.

Third, in technical knowledge, there should be a perfect mastery of such items as scale construction, key signs, meter signs, tonalities under various disguises, transpositions, etc.

Fourth, such a knowledge of composition as would enable the teacher to write practical studies or songs in one or two parts.

Fifth, there should be a reasonable familiarity with the great names of the musical world, and sufficient information on matters of musical history to obviate the danger of such statements as "Anon was an Italian composer living in the seventeenth century."

Sixth, and last and by no means least, these grade teachers must have gained the knowledge by which they can discriminate between good and bad music, and must have acquired not only an abhorrence of yellow-backed musical literature, but an equally strong appreciation of that which is good.

Does anyone raise the objection that these requirements are rather too comprehensive? The reply comes, they do not go one whit beyond what have been for years, for generations, the requirements in every other subject, except that of the kindred art, drawing.

There is an old principle in economics that the supply tends to equal the demand. Are our normal graduates supplied with all the abilities as here demanded? Decidedly, they are not.

Now where lies the blame for this deficiency? With the normal school instructors? Well, if so, courtesy and generosity have kept the critics quiet on this point. But could an unquestionably talented instructor, with pupils of mediocre ability, accomplish the desired end, no one lesson or even two lessons per week, for a course of three school years? The logical theorist and the experienced teacher must unite in an emphatic *no*. The time allotted is far too short and far out of proportion to the demands in music and to the distribution of time given to other subjects.

Now let us imagine that by some means, magic or otherwise, the standing of music in all our normal schools has been advanced, the instructors not handicapped by poor tools nor lack of time, the subject itself not tolerated as a useless art and a concession to the effeminate taste, but ranking according to its merits, both as an art and as a science, which latter condition has for some years been the case in the larger institutions of learning in America. Just here, let us digress for a parenthetical quotation from Mr. Manchester on this subject. "The treatment of music education," he says, "in colleges, particularly those of women, and in secondary schools, has been one of confusion, and, too often, of low standards. The *larger institutions* are notable exceptions. As early as 1837, a society known as the Harvard Musical Association, composed of alumni of Harvard College, announced as its ultimate object: 'The advancement of the cause of music, particularly in this university.' We would have it regarded as an important object of attention within its walls, as something which sooner or later must hold its place in every liberal system of education—and that place not an accidental or a stolen one, but formally recognized. We that love music feel that it is worthy of its professorship, as well as any other science." And the musical and professional circles remember Harvard for having blazed the way for the rest of us, she having been first to grant credits in music toward the degree of A. B. (1870); first to establish full professorship, 1876; first to grant entrance credits for musical qualifications. To Harvard be due honor paid for the uplift she has given to the standing of music in our educational institutions.

Returning, let us see just what would be the effect upon the

public schools if music were more comprehensively and thoroughly taught in normal schools than is now generally possible under existing circumstances. Some of the normal school students enter with a modicum of knowledge of music, it is true. But in too large a per cent of normal schools in our newer States, an appalling number of students present themselves in music classes, and have to confess that they know nothing technically of vocal music and have, in fact, never even heard the scale sung as what we might call a vocal formula. They know nothing of the masterpieces of musical literature, their hearts have seldom been touched by such a plaint as Mignon's "Dost Thou Know That Fair Land?" nor gladdened by Mendelssohn's "Spring Song;" their souls have never been lifted toward heaven on the wings of such songs as

"When Morning gilds the skies  
My heart awakened cries,  
May Jesus Christ be praised."

And worse still, the songs with which they *have* been familiar are for the most part best classed as yellow-backed literature, unworthy the attention of any student, and perfectly unfit for the plastic minds of children. With ample opportunity and means, our normal schools would quickly lead their students away from all worthless music, to that which is clean, correct, strong, and inspiring, thus sending out to our country the city school graduates who are better prepared intellectually and spiritually to be the leaders of the children in their community.

Are not our schoolrooms too often dominated by that cutting, strident speaking voice, from which adults will consciously flee as quickly as possible, but from which the children cannot get away? A voice of this sort is ample cause for nervousness with adult hearers, but with the helpless children, it shows itself as a case of restlessness and so-called "disorder." The general voice-culture work in our normal schools can and should modify, if not wholly eradicate, the harshness and other unpleasant qualities of our future teachers. And along this line of discipline, what experienced pedagogue does not know the corrective, refreshing, enticing effect of a charming song, introduced at a timely moment? Suppose thirty or forty boys and girls to have come in from their play at recess, where the games may have been a bit boisterous, or the vanquished may



not yet be able to give a friendly smile to the victor: what better thing could a teacher do than to start the pupils brightly on such a song as Mrs. Gaynor's "Foggies' Swimming School," whose two stanzas consume, by the way, exactly one minute of valuable time—and most scoldings, or that silence in which children are often allowed to readjust themselves, generally take more time, and accomplish less. And it is in the normal schools that our teachers should procure not only a working knowledge of what are good schoolroom songs, but also a working repertoire.

In most country schools, and in far too many village schools, the "powers that be" feel too poor or imagine the school patrons unwilling to buy music texts of any sort, so that the teacher in charge must be the text, must furnish the genius for the occasion. Here, then, is ample room for the practical application of the normal school work in composition, phrasing, harmony, etc.

The students think that musical play, running up and down a tone ladder represented in wood or drawn upon the black-board, is great fun. Or, perhaps better still, it is most interesting to read songs from the five-lined staff—fingers on "teacher's" left hand—the "notes" being placed there, one by one, by the pointing finger of "teacher's" right hand. Or, by way of variety, easy songs written on the board in scale numbers or scale syllables, from *splendid incentives to further study*.

It might not be amiss right here to add that just such work as this, *well done*, with the further attraction of beautiful rote songs, will so popularize music with the children, and through them the parents, that the music books, at first noticeable by their absence, will soon be forthcoming. And this desideratum will be gained, too, with the full consent of the School Board, who, as school men or as politicians, are neither blind nor deaf to the wishes and just demands of the public.

Now as to our third proposition, namely, that with more general attention paid to music in the public schools, there will be a proportionate reaction upon the music of the normal schools—to try to prove this would be almost as useless as to try to prove the truth of an axiom. Musical seed can produce only musical fruitage.

Yet to most instructors of music in normal schools, to think

of having classes composed wholly of students from country and city schools where music had been adequately taught would be quite a bit like heaven, very delightful, indeed, but hard to imagine. Think of the splendid choruses that might be given, the benefit that might be derived, from the intellectual association with such minds as Handel, Mendelssohn, Rubinstein, Wagner, and others, if only the necessary foundation had been laid, making such study possible! Doubtless a little work of this kind all normal schools attempt, but by what painfully slow degrees are results accomplished, only the initiated know; whereas music students should be able to study their Handel or Wagner scores, just as English classes study their Milton or Shakespeare texts.

But the stern facts that we must face right now are that in the great majority of normal schools, music is not given an amount of time commensurate with the results demanded by the public schools. Normal school graduates in general are not prepared to do the music work of the grade room, and, in turn, the pupils entering the normal schools are equally unprepared to take work in music at all parallel with their work in English, geography, and the like. Many School Boards, too, are either ignorant of the cultural and ethical value of music, to say nothing of the keen mental drill possible, or else are indifferent, and are merely waiting for the public to make known its wishes in the matter.

Now what shall we do about it? It is an acceded fact that the majority of educators would gladly see music study made more general as well as more practical and thorough. But to whom shall we turn in our efforts to bring about this desired condition of affairs? First of all, to our students of both public schools and normals. This is upon the plain business of advertising "directly among the consumers." Children of all ages naturally love music, and through this God-given faculty of music-loving and music-making, we can create a desire *which shall grow by what it feeds upon*. But in popularizing music, I would not be thought for a moment as suggesting its accomplishment by means of so-called popular music. On the contrary, the greatest ultimate success will be gained through the use of the purest music obtainable. No mistake can be more fatal to the lasting success of this enterprise than the use of music of a low or even ordinary standard.



The people of the poor do not need poor music: the people of the slums do not need and are not helped by "slummy" music. In this connection, might it not be well for our amateur teachers to remember that not all hard music is good, and not all good music is hard. And, also, as Edward Baxter Perry has said, that "classic music is not so bad as it sounds."

It is the consensus of opinion among philanthropists who work among the very poor and lowly that the Sistine Madonna and the Oratorio of the Messiah speak as directly and unmistakably to the factory hand as to the factory owner. In the language of the Oriental saying, let us "make haste slowly," remembering that the best is none too good for our students.

Nor can this musical awakening be accomplished through the cold theory of music: it must come through the pulsating life of song. Says Dr. Clarke, "all the mathematical and acoustical lore in the world would not endow their possessor with the ability to write one phrase of the "Last Rose of Summer;" even as a "speaking acquaintance" with all the languages of men since the dispersion at Babel would not enable one to write

"Hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings  
And Phœbus 'gins arise."

In union there is strength and in concerted action there is power. Our desire to see music-culture as widespread as is public education should take upon itself the form of a well directed campaign, conducted as are other movements having the good of the people at heart. Our leaders should lend us their time, their influence, and give us of their wisdom. Our magazines and papers should arouse the public to the fact that there are advantages within reach which have not yet been fully appreciated nor appropriated. The rank and file should keep the good of the cause close at the warm hearts of the people.

But "if to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. \* \* \* I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching."