

Correspondence.

THE TONIC SOL-FA SYSTEM.

To the Editor of the CANADA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

May I ask your earnest attention to a few facts concerning the Tonic Sol-Fa system? You will notice that advocates of that system, unlike their opponents, do not waste time with mere words, theories and suppositions, but go straight to the point with "thus and so has been accomplished and proved." They ask no favors or concessions because they hold the truth, and the truth needs no tender consideration. It only asks for unprejudiced investigation.

Here are the facts which must be set aside before any one has a right to oppose the system of which such things can be said.

1. Of the hundreds of thousands of teachers and pupils who have begun to use Tonic Sol-Fa *not one* has ever been found to afterwards renounce it.

2. Of those hundreds of thousands *not one* has failed to realize and acknowledge that the value of the system became more apparent to them the farther they continued in its use.

3. Of those hundreds of thousands *not one* has failed to find (and often with great surprise) that Tonic Sol-Fa leads to the most intelligent knowledge of the staff, and to its surest use as a medium for reading music. The general verdict is, that it saves one-half the time in learning to read music from the staff.

Now will the JOURNAL state definitely how much value should be set upon the arguments of those who have never used the system as against the foregoing facts presented by those who have? Will the JOURNAL permit me to say with some degree of warmth that the opposing of invariable fact by mere influences is becoming very much like child's play. It is unworthy of the subject; it is unworthy of the position of many who do it. All that Tonic Sol-Fa asks is a fair trial. With such a history as it has had, and such an array of statistics as it gives in evidence of its uniform success, justice to the public, justice to the whole human race with its innate love of music demands that such a trial shall be made before the system is rejected.

The inference drawn by the October JOURNAL from the success of a few cities in their systems of musical instruction does not "cover the ground." In a recent number of the Tonic Sol-Fa Advocate I printed the following sentence: "The time is not far distant when it will be considered as absurd to teach music by the staff notation as to teach a child to read by the use of a dictionary." That comparison is a fair one, the only difficulty being that it does not put the case strongly enough.

Now, suppose it was the custom to teach reading by or with a dictionary, and suppose nine-tenths of the people of Canada never succeeded in learning to read would the fact that many or even most of the pupils in a few large cities learned to read be any proper argument for the general introduction of the dictionary method? The cases are strictly parallel. Nine-tenths of the people in the United States cannot read music. Therefore the prevailing method of instruction is a failure. The comparative success in a few individual cases where the conditions are more favorable than they can possibly be on the average does not alter the truth of the above statement.

Here is a fair summing up of the case.

1. The staff method in America is a failure. A large proportion of those who begin the study of music by that method never gain an intelligent knowledge of the subject or acquire the ability to sing at sight.

2. The Tonic Sol-Fa system in England is a success. All who study it grow rapidly in musical intelligence, and become sight readers.

Mr. Curwen's statement has been explained by his son, Mr. J. S. Curwen. If he had known Lowell Mason's system he might have adopted it, but *not* knowing it, he considered that he had been led to the development of a system that was of incalculably greater value to the human race. Thus he firmly believed to the end of his life, and his belief is shared by *every one* who has used the system.

T. F. SEWARD.

New York, Nov. 1881.

Contribution.

HINTS TO LADY TEACHERS.

READ BY MISS R. WOOD BEFORE THE TEACHERS OF THE COUNTY OF HALDIMAND.

In attempting to offer some hints to the lady teachers present, I am sure that I will be pardoned by them for so doing; my object is not that I presume to possess any superior qualifications, but as I have spent now nearly eight years in active work in the profession, and have been fairly successful, I hope that I can advance a few suggestions that may assist you in your work—thoughts that may increase our interest in our profession, and help us to bring to our work patience and perseverance, hope and courage.

Teaching is one of the few professions in this country available to women, and even in this I think we are placed at a disadvantage. We have to write on precisely the same examinations as the gentlemen, and exactly the same percentages are required of us; but the opinion is very general, that we should not receive the same remuneration for our services, even when as well performed. Now, who is to blame for this unjust condition of public opinion? The lady teachers themselves, to a great extent, are surely to blame. So many girls are educated with such false notions of their object in life, that many who enter the teaching profession seemingly enter it with no love for the work, but they find in it a means whereby they can make a little money, and leave it at the earliest possible opportunity. Those who enter with such notions usually accept small salaries, and when trustees have the option of choosing from quite a number, and can get the majority of them at low figures, there is very small chance for those who are laboring for success in teaching to get much of an advance on prevailing salaries. Now my idea of a true worker, either male or female, is that of one who makes duty his or her watchword, and who will, if entrusted with any work, prove worthy of the trust in all respects. I find that the best part of my life lies in the performance of my daily duties, and that with these performed rightly I can enjoy true happiness. Let us strive to feel that our success in life bears a direct proportion to the exertions we make, and that if we aim at nothing we shall surely achieve nothing. I have never known real merit in teaching or anything else to fail in receiving appreciation, and I think that we can, if we only strive to do so, make others feel that we are worthy of more than the scanty remuneration that is tendered to so many women at the present day. Let us be ambitious to excel in our work, not merely doing it in a mechanical way, but introducing so much of spirit therein that we receive the names of good workers as well as good teachers. Some may say, are we to work ourselves past our strength for the purpose of acquiring a competency? I have never known hard work to injure any of my lady friends who took judicious care of themselves when teaching, and I feel convinced that work properly performed strengthens body, mind, and character,—late hours, and improper food and clothing, injure far more than their school exertions do. Let us honor our profession, and seek to elevate it at all times. I think those who speak slightly of their work, whatever it may be, prove themselves unfitted for its responsibilities and lower themselves far more than they do their profession.