

For the REVIEW.]

School Music.

In a former paper I endeavored to present a plea for the introduction of music into our public schools, as a pleasure and benefit for one and all; and now I wish to speak of some of the difficulties to be met, and suggest some method whereby the best results may be obtained, and the subject made clear and interesting.

Music is more analogous to language than to any other study, and should be taught in a similar manner, the principles underlying both being the same.

Let us first consider the youngest child attending our public schools—the average age we will call six years—and assume that he has received no previous musical training. Look back for a moment to the time when his mother first taught him to lisp the baby words, by associating them with objects familiar to him, and thus slowly built a vocabulary into his mind. Gradually he puts the words together, and when he enters school is able to speak quite readily. At this period music should be taken up in the same way.

Eminent psychologists have agreed that the faculties of the mind are developed by four natural and successive steps. The first, sense perception, which enables the child to see the object; second, sense conception, by which faculty he begins to realize something about the object; third, imagination; and fourth, reason. So with music as with other studies we must awaken the child's senses, and gradually develop them as he becomes able to grasp new ideas.

Returning in thought to the first school days, let us place music before the child as the mother does the first steps in speech, and teach him pure rote singing. By this I mean singing from a good example or model. This plan at once appears practicable and natural, and has been strongly endorsed by Matthew Arnold, Locke, Fröbel and Pestalozzi, and many other men of broad and gifted minds. By this method the highest aims in teaching children may be realized. And just here we might appropriately consider what these aims should be in music.

I would answer that the same principle which actuates every earnest worker in imparting knowledge to others should prove its value in music as well. The opportunity is ours to begin to train the child's musical ear for life; and did all realize how much depends upon these early lessons more care and attention would be given to the work. The tendency with children is to sing too loudly; seem-

ingly they think the one who makes the most noise does the best. But we should strive for softness and purity of tone. Make them understand the sentiment of their little pieces, that an appreciation of and sympathy with their work may be aroused and developed as their knowledge increases.

Great care should be paid to the correct pronunciation of words, and this may be aided in a great degree by constantly reminding the child to open his mouth naturally, and let the words flow freely as in speaking. Also, attention should be paid to the pitch or starting point. In all of the first songs no tone lower than F should be selected as a key note. Otherwise the chest tones are exercised too much, which has a tendency to make them coarse and unpleasant, and the pure head tones—the sweetest part of the voice—are neglected when they should be strengthened and improved.

There is some diversity of opinion concerning the amount of work to be accomplished by the children during their school course. If they have never sung I think the first six months might very profitably be spent in pure rote work, placing before them a good variety in the selections, and taking special care that the habits thus early formed be correct and helpful toward future good results. Should it chance that some previous training had been theirs, the teacher can easily determine how much rote singing is needed towards training the ear and cultivating a taste for the best kind of music. Then, by degrees, I would introduce to them the first step in the theory of music until they have a full comprehension of the "staff," "bar," "double bar," "clef," the value of the different kinds of notes and rests, the scale, ascending and descending by number, letter and syllable, and the places the letters occupy upon the staff.

At the beginning of the third year's work some exercises may be taken by the class that the teacher constructs upon the scale; and in all of the work particular attention should be given to the quality of the tone produced, the erect position, good attention, careful pronunciation of words, and pure air in the room. It will often happen that they grow restless, and seem not to enjoy the work. At such a time do not—for the satisfaction of gaining an immediate result—force the work upon them. A change to something of a different nature will often work wonders. I would not have the first aim abandoned but accomplished in another way. A certain amount of diplomacy and tact is creditable in teaching music as well as in other subjects.

Following the school course into the grammar grades we realize how much the preparatory work has done towards singing by note, which should now be