

## Contributors' Department.

## SHOULD MUSIC BE TAUGHT IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

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AMONG the subjects of art, which, according to a principle of education based upon the requirements of the age, should be taught in the Public school to an extent consistent with the reasonable and necessary limits of a common education is, I will venture to assert, that of music. Notwithstanding that this is true,—and I take this as granted from the fact that it is admitted theoretically, and, in part, practically by our masters in the science and art of teaching—due attention has not been given, generally speaking, to the subject of musical culture, either in the course of the teacher's professional training, or in the course of his subsequent professional work. True, a certain qualification in music, to be tested by a prescribed examination, is required of each student who obtains a teacher's certificate in the Model or Normal schools, but this mere requirement of knowledge and skill in the art of music is distinct from and does not at all comprehend the art of teaching music. The art itself has thus been taught to a certain extent, but the subject of methods, so important to the teacher, so necessary to the accomplishment of any really useful and practical results in the diffusion of knowledge or development of faculty, has not been applied or worked out in the case of musical culture. This is why I say that the place of music among the subjects to be taught in the school is admitted theoretically, but only in part practically. The student in the Model school, for instance, knows his "Tonic Sol-fa," and has also attained considerable ability or skill to put his knowledge of the art into practice for himself, but he has not been instructed in the way of further imparting his knowledge to a possible pupil. If he is enabled to do this he must have drawn his inferences from the principles of teaching himself, and worked out his own application of methods. Indeed, the teacher who sees fit to teach music in his school must have arrived at his own conclusions as to the need of taking up the subject at all, for even this is not mentioned to the teacher in his preparatory course of training. The bare importance itself of teaching music is not, so far as I know, suggested to the model student, who is, therefore, left to his own resources, his knowledge of philosophy and power of inductive reasoning to infer—from the fact that he has been taught music himself, perhaps,—that it is his duty to attend to the cultivation of the musical talent of his pupils.

So sure, then, as it is true that music as an art deserves a place among the others more fortunate, writing, drawing, etc., in the category of subjects to be taught in the the Public school, which is, as I have said, virtually, though not practically, admitted by those who have thus slighted the subject, just so certainly is it true that this inattention of our teachers of teaching is a mistake, that is, a thing to be corrected. However, it is more to my purpose in this article

to call the attention of teachers to the most important reasons why the subject of musical culture requires attention in the common school, such reasons as may convince or influence the teacher himself, rather than to dwell upon the neglect of Model school teachers in this matter. The following arguments, briefly noted, are submitted to the reader's consideration.

1. Musical taste, at least, if not talent or skill, in some degree is looked for at the present day in every individual who enters good or refined society. This taste, if not present in the person as a natural endowment, must be cultivated. This requirement of society is the direct result of public sentiment in favor of aesthetic culture, especially in the "divine art." This tendency of sentiment has no doubt been induced by the teachings of great artists and moral philosophers who have been taught the concomitancy of the absence of the love of art, particularly of music, with the absence of soul in the individual character. This argument thus barely suggested leads us on to the next and most important truth in connection with this subject.

2. The greatest of all reasons for educating musical capacity in the child is the moral importance of the musical art. Its influence upon the human soul, as well as its suggestiveness of soul-character, should command the attention of anyone who aspires to do good in the world. That melody has a remarkable effect upon any sentient being who appreciates it, is a truth which has received general sanction. Philosophy teaches it as a scientific fact, poetry proclaims it in its truest reflections of philosophic truth, while experience affords a clear testimony to the same effect. Under the influence of music, love, "the greatest thing in the world," may be generated in the most unloving and unlovable of characters and the soul moved to the highest and noblest thoughts and actions. The beggar with his instrument, rickety perhaps, yet musical, and therefore serviceable, is a phenomenon aptly exemplifying this fact. The poor mendicant well knows the value of his gracious melody as an accompaniment of his request for alms. Shakespeare gives us an unmistakable intimation of his opinion as to the beneficial effect of music, when in speaking of it he begins:

"Since nought so stockish, hard nor full of rage,  
But music for the time doth change his nature." etc.

If then music exerts such influences on obdurate hearts, it obviously constitutes a moral force not to be slighted in the moral education of the young, for, at a time when the human character is most susceptible to moulding influences, such effects as we find are caused by music, though they be apparently only temporary, cannot but produce a lasting impression upon the nature of the man.

3. We may now consider the physical importance of musical culture. The vocal exercises necessarily connected with and involved in the music lessons with their certain effect upon the physical condition of the pupil are of no inconsiderable importance to teachers and pupils. As an accompaniment of the usual calisthenic exercises, nothing could be more suited to the improvement of the condition of the lungs,

or other vocal organs of scholars accustomed to leaning over their work and to other unnatural and unhealthful positions, than such vocal exercises. The utility of music lessons comes under the head of physical culture, classed as vocal gymnastics.

4. The last idea concerning this matter of music lessons, is the removal of monotony and inducement of more "pleasure in toil" in the school room. A music lesson of a few minutes duration is clearly the most effective tonic for school-room gloominess that may be conveniently utilized. This fact constitutes the *argumentum ad hominem* to the teacher in behalf of teaching music. It is not needful that this point be further dwelt upon. It will scarcely be insufficiently appreciated and certainly not disputed.

To sum up then, we have placed at the teacher's disposal an art, well meriting the title "divine," a knowledge of and taste for which are highly approved by public sentiment and also by the best judges of human nature, and which will undoubtedly exert a lasting influence for good upon a young pupil, while in the very act of teaching it immediate benefits are realized by both pupil and tutor. Is this not sufficient reason for consistent action? Am I justified in conclusion in affirming, that it is the duty of those who have to do with the work of education wherein moral culture is implied, to provide some means, whether through the teacher himself or a special instructor or music teacher, for the fulfilment of the demands of a musical education.

## \* Special Papers. \*

## MORAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

BY W. D. LE SUEUR.

*The Week*, I am glad to see, fully recognizes the difficulties in the way of anything like systematic religious instruction in the public schools as part of a legally-prescribed course of study. At the same time, it is rightly anxious that moral education should not be neglected; and it thinks that such education might partake of a certain religious character without giving just cause for objection in any quarter, provided the matter were left to be regulated, locally, under some arrangement not of too formal a character between ratepayers, trustees and teachers. This at least is my understanding of *The Week's* position, which to me seems a very reasonable one. The chief reserves I am disposed to make are not on grounds of equity, but are connected with the question of feasibility.

In a former article I indicated my opinion that the best intellectual results were not to be expected from any state-directed system of education; and to-day I must profess a more deeply-founded conviction that state schools have a special inaptitude for moral and religious teaching. Who would dream of asking any form of political government to supply our pulpits—to train and appoint ministers of the Gospel? The idea will strike everyone as absurd. But when we