

MUSIC AND READING.*

BY J. H. KNIGHT, P. S. INSPECTOR, LINDSAY.

I PROPOSE in this paper to make a comparison between the science of Music and the art of Reading, with the view of drawing out practical suggestions as to methods of teaching not only reading but some other branches of education.

To deal with this subject profitably it will be necessary to consider the place which reading and music take in religious exercises. And if I do not treat the subject as tenderly as some would like, my excuse is that the times demand that we should deal with things as we find them. Our public schools will have much to do with the preparation of the clergy, the choir masters, and the choristers of the future, and if in the past the work has been badly done, it behoves us hereafter to try and do it better.

Some weeks since I read in one of the Toronto papers the statement that there were only three clergymen in that city who were good readers; and so far as I am aware, the statement has not been contradicted. Of course the remark was intended to apply to one denomination only, but when it is remembered that that denomination has nearly forty clergymen in Toronto, it is rather humiliating that ninety per cent. of them are, as far as reading is concerned, so deficient in the art. Now is it any wonder if, under the circumstances, as is sometimes stated, people go to church more to hear the music than for anything else?

I do not pretend to say that in

general the musical part of the services is better than the reading; but were congregations one half as critical about the reading as they are about the music, were they alive to the pleasure afforded by good reading, did they realize its advantages as a means of instruction, they would not tolerate what now they are satisfied with.

If the reading were subjected to criticism as the matter of the sermon usually is, no doubt the clergy would be more alive to its importance. But, singularly, not one person in a hundred seems to think it worth while even to form an opinion, much less to express it, in regard to the reading. And equally singular is it that ninety-nine out of every hundred members of a congregation consider themselves quite capable of giving an opinion in respect to the music.

I am far from supposing that the bulk of those who profess to be judges of music are entirely ignorant of it, for it is satisfactory to know that a musical knowledge is being sought by many, and that a large number of our teachers are making advances in this study. Under the impression that most of you can intelligently estimate the remarks I have to make, I shall now proceed to consider

I. The importance of learning the Notation.—Time was when teachers kept their pupils for six months studying the notation of music before they allowed them to touch the piano. Now they go to the other extreme, and let them play tunes before they have well mastered the names of the notes.

* Read before the E. Victoria Teachers' Association at Lindsay, November 26th, 1880.