

VOCAL MUSIC IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Principal Ernest Smith, King's School, Westmount, P.Q.

A great many people say, and perhaps many more think that music is an art to be learnt only by the "born musician," and that, so far as singing is concerned, the number of persons who will never learn; who can under no circumstances be taught to sing from note, is very great.

That it is impossible to teach everyone in the same length of time, or to obtain the same degree of accuracy from every member of a class in either instrumental, vocal or theoretical music is so apparent as to need no discussion, but that there is anyone utterly destitute of the power to learn some music is difficult to prove. "Music is the effect produced by the union of sound and time," hence it is possible to produce music from such an instrument as a telegraph key, or a typewriter. The former apparatus would be useless were it not for the combination of long and short sounds, in other words take the "music" out of the instrument and you at once destroy its usefulness. There are hundreds of boys who "cannot sing," yet who by very slight practice become fair operators.

Watch the physical exercises of a class of boys or girls who are not inspired by an instrumental accompaniment, and then take the same class (all of whom have declared that they cannot sing), into a room where they are accompanied by some instrument—a kettle-drum, a piano, an orchestra, if you

will, I care not what, and you will at once see evidences of life and interest where before there was apathy and listlessness.

The music has given a language to the calisthenics which has filled the class with animation. Let us watch a group of mere babies in the summer time. An old man with an older barrel-organ is grinding out some dance music, and the little tots immediately pair off and "dance," baby fashion, of course, but in perfect time with the organ. If the group is one of little boys and the old man grinds out "The Men of Harlech," "The Soldiers of the Queen," or any piece written as a march, the most natural thing for the little fellows to do is to get into line, put sticks over their shoulders and parade in "review order."

There is, then, sufficient ground for the assumption that all children who are sound in mind and body have in them a natural inclination for music in some form or other, and it is necessary only to develop this natural taste in one of the many branches of the science and art of music in order to create a desire to go on in that department.

The great majority of people who "play a little" or "sing a little" have never taken up the matter seriously and know very little indeed about music. This is more their misfortune than their fault and is the result in a great measure of cheap lessons from persons who "play upon the piano," but