

character so essential to good singing. Teachers of singing schools frequently enjoin their pupils to open their mouths in singing. This direction is substantially good, but at the same time it is far too vague; for one may open the mouth to the widest extent and by raising the back of the tongue almost stop the passage of the breath, thereby considerably altering the sound; and the head may be inclined downward, or forward, or twisted round in the act of reading the words or notes, to such an extent as to have the like effect. With the head in a natural position, the mouth well open, and the tongue quite flat, take a full breath and sing the sound "ah" to the note G. Prolong it to the utmost extent. Sing it evenly, firmly, and without the least wavering. Now you will be surprised to find how difficult it is to do this. Indeed, it takes a long time to acquire that command of the voice to give the sound with evenness, firmness, and purity of tone. It will also be found that sustained efforts are necessary, and that the procedure has no pleasure for *lazy* singers. Still it is the only way to produce the sounds correctly, and practice will wonderfully improve the quality of the voice. The Italians have long been celebrated for giving to the world the best and sweetest singers; and the secret of their success, we believe, lies in the fact that they start in this manner at the foundation and insist on the proper production of the voice. Let us, then, follow their example, and in all our vocal Church music first insist on the proper production of the voice. Natural defects and the influence of rude customs and habits no doubt constitute serious obstacles. But it must be remembered that without this training in voice production the ear will never be ready to perceive the defects in the harmony and melody of a composition and the voice will never produce harmonious and melodious tones. Nor will the voice ever be well formed or well polished; but on the contrary flat, rough and loud, thereby continually and increasingly injuring the discernment of the ear. For it cannot be too strongly impressed upon the people that a delicate ear for music is *not* to be acquired by loud and rough noises.

Our Choral Unions have for their objects the improvement of Choirs and the encouragement of congregational singing in our Churches. In the music for the forthcoming Union there are excellent exercises for the proper production of the voice, and in no part of the service will it be tested to a greater extent than in Mozart's magnificent "Gloria." Unless special care be taken the high notes are liable to strain the voices. Already while practising this piece we have heard remarks as to the strain it puts on the voices. Proof that the singers have not been taught to properly produce their voices!

After practising the proper production of the voice on the note G the other notes above and below G within the compass of the voice should be practised, the utmost care being taken not to force or strain the voice with the high notes. Then the scales, ascending and descending, still to the open sound "ah," should be taken, at first very slowly and gradually increasing in speed. These will be found difficult to perform correctly with firmness, evenness, precision and purity of tone. But the effect in the improvement of the voice will soon be apparent. The scales should be succeeded by exercises on the intervals, and for this purpose we would strongly recommend the Tonic Sol Fa Notation. In England this system has enabled many persons to sing correctly from note at first sight, and it would undoubtedly soon enable many persons in our Deanery to do so. This, of course, requires much practice, but the ability to sing music at first sight is worth the time and trouble.

The proper production of the voice and the ability to sing the intervals correctly are not all the points to be attended to in the rendition of vocal music. There are the important points of expression, accent, time, modulation, phrasing, and several others, but we only intend to call attention to the first of these as being the most important. Expression is the *soul* of music. The sentiments of the piece to be sung must in all cases be grasped before due expression can be given to them. The general character of the piece, whether penitential, wailing, pensive, or joyful must first be ascertained; then the soft and loud, retarded, accelerated, increasing and diminishing passages noted, the emphatic notes marked, and the whole piece sung accordingly. Our "Hymns Ancient and Modern" have, on the whole, music of an appropriate character set to them. Thus the penitential and wailing hymns have music in the Minor Mode; the pensive hymns music either in the Minor Mode, or that moves in the lower notes of the tonic octave of the Major Mode, that is, between the key-note and the fifth above; and the joyful hymns, music that moves through the interval of a whole octave or more. But we seldom hear any distinction made between the soft and loud, the accelerated and retarded, or the increasing and diminishing passages. Let us have these lights and shades of expression as much as possible in our music, and thus show that not our voices alone, but our whole souls are engaged in the glory and praise of God.

In conclusion we trust that many of our readers will endeavour to improve their singing in the directions pointed out, and so swell the harmony in praise of Him whose universe is one harmonious whole.

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