

many ways. The fault that I have to condemn is that of the invariable and constant use of the vowel A (ah), which I noticed was sung on every possible occasion, to the entire exclusion of the four other vowels. For instance, such sentence as "Oh that men would therefore praise," reached my ears simply as "Ar thar mar war tharfar prar."

"Now this plainly shows that most of the boys either sing no exercises at all, or else sing scales, etc., to one vowel only—A (ah.) Either of these systems is absolutely fatal to voice production and pronunciation; and let me beg those in authority with the choir to insist on the practice of all the vowels to each note of the scale, the vowels being pronounced of course in the Italian method. I know that most church choirs can only meet once a week for rehearsal, and their time is limited; but an extra quarter of an hour with the boys (it would not do the men any serious harm), when each vowel should be softly sung to long-holding notes, would lead to surprising results in a short time.

"If I could only make friends with all the schoolmasters in the diocese, I would beg them to try this simple plan for a few minutes daily, for I suppose that most country choir-boys are taken from the National School of the parish, and they would learn very early in life a lesson of the utmost importance in voice production and pronunciation. Such a system entails no expense; no books, pens, ink or paper are required, and no musical instrument is wanted. The master should simply teach the children to first say, and then sing the vowels *softly* to any long holding note he likes to start himself

"I have used this simple method of vowel-singing with the choristers at Winchester, Llandaff, and Gloucester Cathedrals with good results, and I am anxious to bring so simple and trustworthy a method of training the voices of children to the notice of those who take an interest in the subject."

LEARNING THE PIANO.

Learning the piano is a thing over which some people make hard work, but it is simple enough. First learn to strike the notes in your piece of music without any mistake—that is, do not play C for D nor A for B. Be as careful as you can about this; then get right down to work; hit them one after the other in their regular order, gradually faster and faster, as fast as you can without leaving any out. There is a marked difference between half notes and sixteenths, which you will notice. If you can count time and observe the rests, and do not forget the pedal, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might—an excellent saying, which many players apply to the foot also. This is the complete art of learning to play the piano, and it takes only from six months to a year, according to the ignorance of your teacher, to acquire such execution as will astonish your most sanguine friends. If your playing is not always appreciated as you would like, console yourself, as other players do, with the thought that there are people who have no ear.

You will hear a good deal said about an agreeable tone and a correct touch. Do not be disturbed. What have you to do with the tone? It is plain that is the piano-maker's business. And as to correct touch there is, of course, only one kind of touch—anybody can see that. Hit the right key and you have the correct touch. Some teachers never cease talking about what they call the "legato touch," but there is much doubt about there being any such thing; at least ninety-five per cent. of players know nothing of it except by hearsay, and the best teachers acknowledge that at best it takes years of steady work to learn what it is. Like many other novelties, such as "pearly touch," "singing tone,"

"shading, phrasing," accent, expression, crescendo, diminuendo, sforzando, ritenuto and rallentando—these are mostly foreign importations, as you see. Americans have very little use for them. If there is anything in them we always "catch on" to them in course of time naturally, if we have an ear for music, and if we have no ear we could not get them anyway.

But the best way for you is to stick to the natural touch; at least that is my advice. If you want a foreign name for it call it staccato; that comes as near to it as anything; and as a means of cultivating the ear and fingers to a staccato habit, you might make it a rule to repeat to yourself several times before each lesson the following bit of real staccato from the "Mikado":

"To sit in solemn silence in a dull, dark dock,
In a pestilential prison with a life-long lock,
Awaiting the sensation of a short, sharp shock
From a cheap and chippy chopper on a big, black block."

By observing these few and simple lines you will in a remarkably short time acquire a mastery of the piano and a way of penetrating to the deepest recesses of the human heart that would delight even a Fiji Islander, and we suppose those happy children of Nature are about as hard to please with the divine art of music as anybody.—*New Orleans Morning Star.*

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OURSELVES.

WHEN our next issue appears, the MUSICAL JOURNAL will be under the editorial and business management of Mr. Edward W. Schuch. Mr. Schuch is a gentleman who is well and favourably known as a musical critic as well as a thoroughly practical musician in the departments of music he has chosen as his field. Having had in former years an extensive experience in the advertising department of the *Globe*, and in later years in its local columns as a critic whose opinion has always been faithful to the truth while kindly in its expressions, he brings with him a ripe judgment and training which we feel assured will give the MUSICAL JOURNAL that prominence which it deserves as the organ of the musical profession and as the chronicle of the musical events taking place not only in our midst but in the outside world as well. The MUSICAL JOURNAL will be enlarged and will hereafter appear on the fifth of each month. The present high standard of its work