

MUSIC IN EDUCATION.

BY THE EDITOR.

MUSIC is not indispensable to life. There are many people in civilized countries and among primitive races who are absolutely unmusical, and yet they do not seem to be the worse off among their fellow beings. For this reason, it might be considered that music is redundant and could be omitted in our plan of education. Nevertheless, it has been retained and perhaps not without good reason; for though man can live without it he is greatly benefited by it, and those in whose life music is a blank miss much of the broadening and refining influences which this wonderful art affords.

Music is a world of its own. After the analogy of mathematics it builds up a universe in the realm of imagination, the laws of which may be considered purely *a priori*. Music is not a mere mimicry of bird-song, or of any noises in the surrounding world, as has been suggested by those æstheticians who believe that all art is an imitation of nature. Music is an independent construction of motives, motions, tonal and rhythmic progressions, which take place in the domain of sound-vibrations. Musical themes may present analogous phases to the world of human sentiment and action, they may accompany outbursts of poetry; they may help to characterize dramatic action on the stage; they may depict pastoral, martial, or other events of human life: but we must remember that music remains purely tonal and never changes into real imitation of the occasions for which it has been invented. It is the most abstract art, and yet in spite of all its abstractness it is the most direct in its effects. Animals are attracted by music and there are few people even among the musically untrained who would not be stirred by the strains of an impressive melody.

For all these reasons it seems desirable that music should form part of our education. By its means we learn to appreciate that a representation of the world in words is not the only possible aspect

of life, and so it will prevent the onesidedness of those who think that they have exhausted the comprehension of reality after they have weighed and measured its materials and have reduced its phenomena to exact formulas. Life is too rich to be limited to one mode of interpretation, and even the methods of science, important though they are, touch only the hem of life's garment. Music is an instance only of the wealth of mental capabilities, and it is well fitted to the purpose of illustrating how deep is the realm of sentiment in which life finds its echo and reflection.

The usual method of teaching music in the schools is by singing which is indeed the natural beginning of developing an interest in the tonal world; for in singing we create the tones ourselves and utilize the musical instrument which nature herself has given us—an instrument which is part of ourselves and echoes in most direct reflection the sentiments of our inmost souls. Second to singing, the piano is commonly introduced, but here I venture to disagree with the common practice. It is true that the piano contains the most complete arrangement for practical use and is the instrument on which our typical conception of music has been developed. A knowledge of the piano is therefore indispensable to a musical education, but it does not recommend itself for educational purposes because the notes on the piano are ready made and the pupil has simply to touch the keys to produce the tone, while the correctness of the note depends on the instrument and not on the player. For educational purposes the violin would be by far preferable because on the violin the player produces his own notes, and if his notes are incorrect he has no right to complain, for he has to tune the violin and every note he plays is of his own making. For this reason I would consider it desirable for any musical education, that a pupil should at least for some time be taught the violin and learn to handle that instrument with some degree of skill.

Of late the musical world has been benefited by a new invention which seems to me to promise great success. The invention of the pianola, or by whatever name the piano-playing instrument may go, has made accessible to large multitudes the knowledge of musical composition. Until its introduction, acquaintance with good music was reserved only for specialists and concert-goers, and the difficulty of the technique rendered it impossible for common mortals to familiarize themselves with a great variety of music. Concert-goers hear a sonata once and perhaps a second or third time, but not often enough to become truly familiar with the intentions of the composer. The result is that they will be bored the first time, and

that the meaning of the beauty of classical music will rarely dawn upon them and only after a long time. It is for these reasons that truly good music is not sufficiently appreciated while rag-time melodies which catch the ear with impressive syncopation receive the plaudits of the masses. Now the piano-player will tend to do away with these difficulties. It will enable people of musical disposition who have not the time to acquire the necessary technique for enjoying truly good music to study the works of composers before they have a chance of hearing them in a concert, and they will find that a sonata which otherwise would have been tedious to them will prove not only interesting but also instructive and helpful. They will be able to follow the music knowing the succession of the different motions and in place of *ennui* will experience satisfaction.

Artists as a rule are opposed to the piano player, and their dislike is easily accounted for and to some extent justified. It changes an artistic performance into a mechanical reproduction, and thus threatens to take from music its most essential and truly artistic feature,—individual conception and interpretation. But this is no reason why the use of the piano player should not be encouraged. The same objection was offered against the introduction of the photograph, which threatened to subvert the artistic work of the painter, and in this case too, we see a mechanical performance displace artistic reproduction. It is true that the photograph has crowded a great number of portrait painters out of business and has made picture making a common possession, even among those who do not possess skill in drawing. Nevertheless, it has not only benefited mankind as a whole, but the professional artist also; for the mediocre limners have disappeared, and the standard of pictorial art has been raised, rendering paintings much more valuable than photographs, and portraits in oil even more desirable than before the days of the professional gallery and amateur camera.

After these comments it goes without saying that the piano-player will become helpful and valuable in musical education of any kind. It brings within reach the knowledge of our best masterpieces and will enable every one to familiarize himself without much effort with studies which may be collateral to his own specialty.