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Music in the Home

Considers Rag-time Has Injurious Effect.

To-day rag-time has a host of critics and a strong band of defenders. The ranks of the latter have of late been extended to take in some important personages, and even some who own up to having been converted on the subject. An the debate is still open, the controversy goes on. A layman who allies himself with the opponents of rag-time produces a telling contribution to his side of the question. Here is his argument:

Abraham Lincoln once said "the Lord must have loved the common people—he made so many of them." If you do not want to be "biased" among the great herd of common people—do not do common, cheap things. Rag-time is not only common and cheap, but degenerating, because it weakens the desire for better music. Music that only appeals to the physical senses without stimulating the spiritual, is a dangerous toy.

The fundamental principle of music is order: rhythm and time. Simple musical rhythm is "one two, three four," correct accentuation requires the strong pulse to be on the first and third quarters of the measure, but when we make it "one two and, three four and," or "one two and, three and four," for miles and miles, it is as if a smoothly flowing river is suddenly turned backward, forming a whirlpool; a musical monstrosity results, and we have the alluring, tin-selled rags of music. The natural

rhythm being thus disturbed causes a corresponding mental and emotional disturbance within ourselves, whether we are aware of it or not.

Imagine yourself, while walking with an easy, natural gait, suddenly compelled to take one short step in between—or to hold one foot suspended in mid-air, half the time of the next step, you will have a mental and suspension corresponding with the physical. Try it, and watch the result on your mental equilibrium. This is exactly what rag-time does with your whole system. To play with anything better, the brain is a dangerous thing at best, while under certain conditions it becomes a menace.

Watch the girl whose taste runs to rag-time, gradually her desire for better music reaches the vanishing point, while her pile of bright-colored musical rags grows apace. It is the external agent that appeals to the senses, and because it is artificial and exotic, it benumbs and destroys all true music life until the merry jingler finds himself incapable of enjoying anything better. The brass band, leaving the field to the senses, and finally loses even the will to act.

Even if the argument were true that rag-time is the music of the masses, that would not prove its right to existence for simple and limited minds will always listen to the bright and joyous rag tempo, because time and noise are the barbarian's first symptom of musical emotion, its seductive artificial rhythm intoxicates the senses and at the same time ticks the few brains.

The great musical treasures of Europe did not grow to their perfection out of a rag-time soil. There the masses, simple untutored people, were saturated for years, for centuries, with pure melody, founded on natural musical rhythm. Do not confuse rag-time with syncopation. Syncopation, as used by the great composers, has always been employed to express a great musical idea, for emphasis, or to show forth some particular phrase in a different light. But syncopation is always used sparingly, just as rare lace trims a garment; the whole garment is not of lace.

Rag-time is not constructive but destructive, as is the fungus which thrives on decayed wood often beautiful to the eye, but unproductive. It could never lead an army to victory or inspire a great reform; no true musical life will ever germinate from the fungi of rag-time.

Music's War Compensation.

A Toronto musician made the plea at the Exemption Tribunal that he was an asset to the country by continuing the practice of his profession. In a sense he was right, but he was drafted none the less, and no one can find fault with the judgment.

Many thousands of musicians are in the armies of the Allies and of the Central Empires also. War is the death of art, but it is also the death of the artist. Fritz Kreisler the Austrian violinist fought in the ranks of the enemy during the first year of the war and was wounded during the Carpathian campaign. He came to New York while the United States was still neutral, and the critics declared that he played better than he ever did. It is not unlikely. He had seen life in its primordial aspect and had discovered the wonder of man. After all it is character that makes a musician. The man who follows duty to the last hour of act will play or sing better than his neighbor who is ready to avoid his responsibilities to the State and to humanity.

The students of Paris were in the thick of the Commune troubles which followed the Franco Prussian war. Many of them had been at Gravelotte. No inconsiderable number of them were slain. Yet the survivors had such a broad knowledge of the spirit of France, mainly because of their experiences, that they built a national school of painting which made all the world marvel. Cloistered Art is always feminine, and often it becomes decadent. It may be confidently stated that a poor such Swinburne could not be the product of the present age.

For many years the British people have been cursed with the notion that music was a pursuit of persons who were less manly than their brethren. There is no reason why musicians should be less gallant, less virile, than his neighbor who wheels slag all day long at the rolling mills. The masters of music were men of power and ardent temper, and even to-day the high spirit of Terese Careno, the woman pianist was that "she played like a man." This is without prejudice to the charms of the temperament in music as in life. Nevertheless Art is built upon force of character rather than upon emotionalism. Let us musicians go to war if they are needed. The result will show some day in a Canadian school of Composition.

Music and Politics.

While everyone is talking politics a reference to music may be deemed an impertinence, yet there was at least one campaign in Ontario where music had no inconsiderable place. Ask Mr. Ruthven Macdonald if he remembers "the Laurier Quartette!" He and Mr. Frank Fitz were half of it and in the campaign of 1906 it flared like a comet across the political sky. London, Ontario, was the place of its beginning and political managers elsewhere yammered for it so insistently that it had a perpetual and circulating engagement in Western Ontario. Its trade was to sing "campaign songs" to familiar tunes. Tearful and wonderful was the doggerel poured out upon an expectant public. Many and varied were the "barber shop minor" chords introduced as decorations in the performances. Did the people like music with their politics? Did they like it? They fairly ate it up and called for more. Meetings dead and matter-of-fact were stirred to the right pitch of enthusiasm before the speakers began their fulsome flattery of the Outs. Generally such meetings were

a whooping success. In a word, the religious revival method was applied to politics, and the result was thrilling. In later campaigns something of the sort was tried but the novelty was gone, the public was politically apathetic and the songs lacked "pep." Yet it is practically certain that in the presence of a wide-spread and fiery interest in politics, such as we have been revived with advantage. A few lively patriotic songs in the presence of such a national crisis as we face to-day would be likely to rouse enthusiasm. Yet in Ontario we may be sure, a "Laurier Quartette" at this juncture might lack some of the elements which go to make up a widespread popularity. "Times change and we change with them!"

Music in Australia.

A little flurry has been caused in musical circles in Adelaide, Australia. It is over the appointment of a new city organist. The appointment has gone to a man who is a thorough musician and an organist with a creditable record for church playing. He holds the post for a period of three years, is required to give six recitals a year and receives no salary. It is stated that practically every other city in Australia has a salaried city organist, the one in Sydney being required to give almost six recitals a week at times.

Since the war began we have learned a good deal about our Australian country and the statement that almost every city there has a city organist, and apparently with the one exception he is a salaried officer, is one of those things we didn't know. But it is one that should be heralded throughout Canada for it is a custom which we could very well introduce. How better could the city fathers in any of the leading centres spend the very nominal amount necessary than in engaging a civic organist to give regular recitals for the benefit of the masses. A lady remarked the other day that she hoped to see the day when Saturday afternoon organ recitals would be the general thing, and in the larger cities one in each section of the city. It is doubtful if anything would accomplish this sooner than the city council's going into the proposition enthusiastically.

The women of Adelaide also take no back seat in the musical world. They have a Ladies' chorus of 250 voices which has given some most acceptable programmes, and in connection with the Elder Conservatory there is a Ladies' Part-singing class. At a recent concert by the latter special mention is made of their rendering of "In Sherwood Forest" by Liza Lehmann and Schubert's beautiful part-song "God in Nature."

A Sad Premiere.

Perhaps no other Grand Opera is so widely popular as Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, produced recently in Toronto by the Grand Opera Company. Let at its first performance the work was a complete failure. Campanini was the conductor and the scene of the performance was LaScala, Milan. Zaretello, one of the principal tenors of the Boston Opera to-day, sang the role of Pinkerton on that occasion, February 17th, 1904. The popular attitude towards the opera was expressed in the Italian manner, by whistling, booing and laughing aloud, and it is said that Puccini offered to reimburse the manager of the theatre for the expense of the production.

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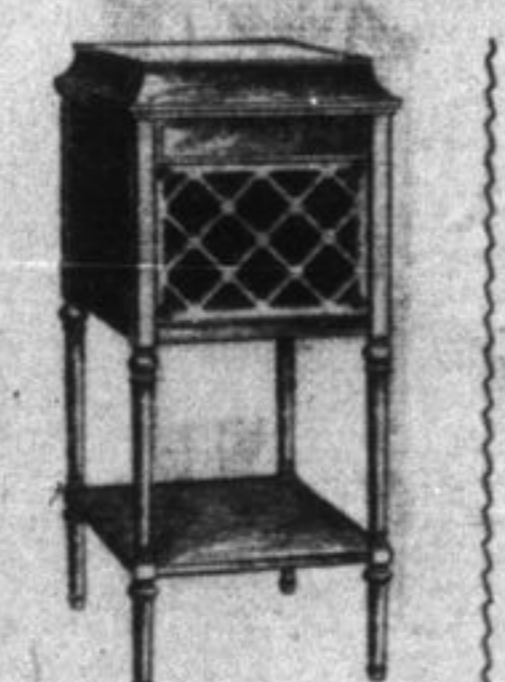
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