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**Music in the Home**

**CONGREGATIONAL SINGING**

The Men Can Sing, Want to Sing and Will Sing.

Congregational singing is a subject that gets too little attention to-day. It is, therefore, encouraging to see contributions to the musical discussions in the press of the nature that those who read the musical papers have noticed from the pen of such a prominent gentleman as Geoffrey O'Hara. In urging more and better congregational singing as one of the prime needs of the church to-day, Mr. O'Hara goes on to say: "Good, rousing congregational singing in which everyone joins, old and young regardless of any unusual ability to sing, is always an acquisition to a church, to its service, to the parish, and is, therefore, much to be desired. This is a self-evident truth and, therefore, needs no defence nor proof nor commentary. Hence it should be a necessary acquisition to a church and nothing should be left undone till excellent hymn singing is attained, in every parish in the country."

"It is the writer's contention that in the future the singing of congregations will be good in exact proportions to the participations by the men. It is idle to say that men can't, won't or don't sing. The writer has too many times heard men sing in lodges, at club dinners, etc., to say nothing of the inspiring gatherings in the camps during the war periods. Men can sing, want to sing, will sing, and the fact that they do sing upon many occasions out of all proportion to the way they sing in church, and together with the fact that the writer, using the methods proposed in his paper, has developed congregational singing till it was quite satisfactory, fore- but one conclusion, and that is, that their singing has been innocently discouraged. There is a way out, and as compared to other much more arduous tasks which the Church accomplishes, is quite simple, and that is, to encourage it."

"In passing, mention might be made of the fact that a great deal of criticism has been levelled at the text of many of our hymns, and the claim is made that mediocre congregational singing is the result of the hymns not being up to date to coincide with the advancement made along other lines. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that there is an evolution in the art of hymn-book making, and each few years see a new book with some new hymn-tunes and new words, etc."

"Here follow a few suggestions which have helped the writer in his work: Hymns must be in keys calculated to let men sing, no hymn must go above E flat; if it does—don't sing it, for even one high hymn in a service will entirely destroy singing morale. Recollect that low hymns will pick up most of the men, and most of the women, whereas high hymns have the opposite effect. In the second place, the writer has seen demonstrated time and time again that a loud organ or a large-chorus choir does not necessarily produce good congregational singing but often produces exactly the opposite effect. Good results often follow soft singing. This tends to give the weak

voices in the congregation courage and also helps the timid ones who are afraid to sing lest their neighbor hear them. Weak voices like to hear themselves sing quite as much as the loud voices. Finally remember that congregational singing, like anything else, is good only when the very last person in the church is singing." For Release October 3, 1920.

**Use It Every Day.**

There is always something pathetic about seeing a home that does not possess a musical instrument of some kind, especially if there are children growing up there. Play it as doubly pathetic to see a home that has an instrument—but a silent one. Do not allow your piano or phonograph or organ to fall into disuse. A musical instrument in the home is no good unless it is music in the home.

The best way is to plan to have some music every evening. There are families where this is done. One instance that comes to mind is of a mother who figures on her three little children hearing some music every night and before going to bed. Usually the mother plays and sings for them. A second family known of are making good and continuous use of their phonograph and their splendid collection of records. One evening they will have eight or ten violin selections by various violinists. Another time it will be choruses from the great oratorios and operas. Again it will be a round of orchestral records. When feeling ready for some fun they will have monologues and popular songs. Sometimes the pieces are varied and records played promiscuously. But the point is they are enjoying their music systematically day by day.

Family singing unfortunately is not as much in vogue as it ought to be. It is a great delight to see a family of boys and girls and their friends around the piano giving themselves up whole-heartedly to song. Use your musical instrument whatever it is. Use it regularly and as often as possible. There is rest and comfort and recreation and joy in music. Get all you can out of it.

**A Perverted View.**

There seems to be an occasional school teacher or university professor who does not warm up much to the great advantages of musical instruction in the schools because the children enjoy their music classes. The type of man in mind appears to act on the principle that a study, to count for anything, must be one that is considered by the pupils to be a disagreeable grind. What a foolish notion!

The fact that music, well taught, always proves an enjoyable study to the average school class is one big reason for its place on the curriculum. After a more or less wearisome period of grammar to be followed by another spell at history, a song in the interval relieves the strain on the children's minds, freshens them, and puts them in a receptive mood for the next subject.

Again it is so much easier to go through a day's work at school knowing that with four o'clock comes a period of orchestra practice. The school orchestra is destined to prove a big factor as of direct educational value and as one means of training pupils to make a wise use of their leisure time. The fact that any subject, of the acknowledged educational status that music has, has an immediate appeal to school children is a decided argument in its favor for its potentialities are unlimited.

**Leaving Father to Work.**  
Father had been left to wax the hardwood floors. His stove for the Saturday afternoon was the parlour, dining room, and hall. Being fortified with a good substantial dinner, he assumed a kneeling posture and rubbed wax on the floor until his knees were sore. Then swish, swish, swish, went the polishing brush backward and forward. It put on a gloss that apparently pleased the man of the house for when the writer dropped in, father was standing with his arms resting on the handle of the brush surveying with satisfaction the result of his work on the dining room.

"Walk right in" was the salute. We chatted about work and politics, for a few minutes and then "have you heard our newest rolls" he asked. Without waiting for any reply he sat down at the player piano and put on a roll of "I dreamt I dwelt in marble halls" from Balfe's Bohemian Girl. Perhaps he had visions of marble halls that had no hardwood floors to polish; at any rate he played the selection with evident delight explaining that unlike most operas this was composed not by an Italian but by an Irishman. It went fine. Then there followed Dvorak's Humoresque, Marsellaise, Medley of Irish Airs, Elgars Pomp and Circumstance, Chopin's Polonaise Militaire, and then one selection after another until before either of us knew how the time was going the lady of the house returned and in most emphatic English served notice on us that it was after five o'clock and almost supper time.

And poor father! He had forgotten all about the parlour and the hall. He may have worked on into the evening. We didn't stay to see. The air was charged with an ominous something that suggested to a visitor a quiet withdrawal was quite in order. They say music makes work easier. Probably it does—easier not do.

**Encourage Popular Songs.**

It is idle for people to talk about stamping out popular songs. But we can see no reason for teaching them in the public schools. That the children will learn them anyway does not constitute a very good reason for introducing them into school life. If the schools perform their proper function, a taste for good music can be developed among school children. There are some who object to popular songs; but the number of those who are positively vicious in their effect far outnumber those which have real merit.

The community singing movement may have called forth the writing of a few good popular lyrics, but it has apparently done nothing to diminish the number of songs which are inferior musically, and whose words are worse than inferior. Many educators have the knowledge which enable them to distinguish good music from bad, and apparently they pay

little attention to the words. There are songs such as "The Long Trail," and "Keep the Home Fires Burning," which have gained a real hold upon the affections of Canadians. No one objects to school children singing them. But who is to form the basis for a common sense stand on the part of musical educators? By far the safest plan will be to stick as closely as possible to material which has been pronounced of the right sort by musicians who are competent to judge.

**Nero Thought He Could Sing.**

Nero's musical career began in childhood when he studied the art for some time. Upon ascending the throne he sent for the harper Terponus whose playing delighted the emperor beyond all things. In fact he would sit for hours listening to his music master and practising far into the night. Then Nero made the fatal discovery that he had a voice, and diverted his attention to vocal music. His voice was said to have been very high, thin and husky, but what vocal teacher would have had the courage to reveal this fact to the domineering emperor? They probably chortled to him like this: "Ah, your Majesty! what a voice! what tone! what roundness! what sweetness! what power! only the lark soaring over the Tiber could be its equal. With just a little acquaintance with my indispensable method—the true bel canto—what a marvel it will be!"

If they had told the truth and said, "Your Majesty's voice sounds like the frogs croaking over the 'Campagna' they would probably have been strangled to death.


**About the Cornet.**

The cornet, as we know it, is less than a century old, and largely the invention of a Frenchman named

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Sax, yet we read of the "cornet" being used in England in the time of Charles II (about 1660) to strengthen the soprano parts of the church music during the temporary scarcity of choir boys. Further than that, we read in the Bible of the "cornet" being used among other instruments at certain idolatrous ceremonies (Daniel III, 15), several thousand years ago. What was the primitive instrument? It was a flaring tube, usually made of wood and covered with leather, having a cupped mouthpiece like the cornet of our day, but pierced with holes like a flute. In Germany, it was known by the name of Zinke, and was made in various sizes, just as are the brass band instruments of our day. In its largest, or deep brass form it was curiously curved, and known as the "Serpent," it must in this form, have been more used in England than on the Continent, for Handel, on first hearing it in England, inquired what that might be, and being told, remarked: "I think it no de Serpent dat tempted Eve!" Evidently he did not consider its tone very seductive.

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