

MUSIC IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Harry Hill, Instructor of Music, Addresses the Rotary Club

That the teaching of music in the schools is of great benefit to the pupils physically, mentally and morally, was the statement of Harry Hill, music instructor in the Kingston public schools, addressing the members of the Kingston Rotary Club, at their luncheon on Thursday. The address was a most interesting one. Rotarian "Jack" Phillips presided.

Mr. Hill spoke under the title, "The Why and Wherefore of Music in the Schools." In his opening remarks, he referred in a jocular way, to the fact that music formed part of the menu, at the Rotary club's luncheon, and stated that music also formed a part of the menu in the public schools. The speaker gave a very interesting history regarding the introduction of music into the public schools. Music had its first hold when it was taken up in the kindergartens.

The speaker had a few words to say about parents who criticized the Board of Education, and yet they never took any interest in the work of the board, the teachers, or their work in the schools. He appealed to the parents to visit the schools and the teachers, and to take an active interest in the machinery at work for the education of their children. The department of education had found that the teaching of music in the schools was a good thing for the pupils, and the speaker felt that the time was not far off when the teaching of music in the schools would be made compulsory, and one would have to pass an examination in music for entrance into the Collegiate. How this would be worked out the speaker was not in a position to state, just at present. The introduction of music into the schools had been made in Toronto thirty-five years ago, and at the last meeting of the Ontario Educational Association it was shown that there were twenty now supervisors. This showed just how the system of teaching music in the schools was taking hold. Eastern Ontario, however, was behind western Ontario, in this respect, as very few places in Eastern Ontario had qualified musical supervisors.

"And why have music in the schools?" asked the speaker. "It benefits the pupils physically, mentally and morally. It benefits them physically, as it teaches them to use their lungs. Physicians tell us that many diseases attack the lungs at the base. One cure is fresh air, and in singing a person takes in more fresh air than when he is talking. It is not necessary there should be elaborate exercises. Children should be taught to sing in a proper method and taught to use their voice properly.

"The singing benefits the children mentally. Singing calls for a great deal of concentration. And then again it is a good form of relaxation between lessons. When a teacher finds that his pupils are just dragging along, he stops a few minutes for a 'sing song.' The singing brightens up the pupils, and it helps a lot when the studies are continued.

"The singing in the schools also creates a cherry atmosphere in the class rooms, and at the same time it also creates a class spirit. The department of education at Toronto has, I believe, laid out one of the finest courses. The programme is mapped out just like in the other studies. We start in the primary departments, where the pupils are given exercises in breathing. And when the scholars leave school, they should be able to take any ordinary song book and sing by sight.

"The results so far in the Kingston schools have been most gratifying. I am greatly pleased with the work so far, and I wish to say that I have never worked among teachers who have given more hearty support and co-operation than I have received since coming to this city. Kingston has a splendid lot of teachers. They appreciate the value of the singing in the schools, and they are doing everything they can to promote the work.

"And I would like to ask for the co-operation of the members of the Rotary Club in this work. You can help the work in many ways. Give the work your sympathy, and speak a good word for the teaching of music in the schools when you get a chance. Scholars turned out of school with a knowledge of music, will find their way into some choral association. I believe that Toronto has more choral societies than any other place in the continent, and this is because of the teaching of music in the schools there. I hope in time to be able to get together a chorus of Kingston school children and to provide for the public choral work that will be first-class.

Following the address of Mr. Hill, Rotarian Roy Ward voiced his approval of the teaching of music in the schools, and moved a vote of thanks to the speaker, which was given with loud applause.

The club had as their guest, Rotarian "Bill" Cairns, of Ottawa, who is always a very welcome visitor. He was given a warm reception, and spoke briefly, giving the members some good sound Rotary doctrine. He spoke of one of the chief planks in the programme for the club that of boys' work, as laid down by international Rotary. He mentioned the fact that the Ottawa club had taken up the work of co-operation with the school teachers, and he made the timely suggestion that the local club take up this work too. It was most important for the parents to get acquainted with the teachers who had the work of the education of their children.

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