

SINGING.

37. The purposes of the singing lessons, and of the singing exercises practised in the schools, are—

- (a.) By wisely chosen songs to awaken the imagination, and widen the capacity for emotion, while subjecting expression to artistic restraint :
- (b.) To cultivate the musical ear and the love of sweet sounds, and to train the pupils in the use of the melodious tones in their voices :
- (c.) To give some practical elementary knowledge of musical notation, and thus lay a foundation for further musical progress :
- (d.) To develop musical taste, by the singing of appropriate melodies, aided by suggestion from the teacher.

Notation.—It is most important that the teaching of singing should include instruction of a progressive character in the elements of musical knowledge, so far as is necessary to enable the pupils to read music and to sing by notes instead of by ear. No training in singing by ear, however good the songs may be, can lead to any development of the power of musical expression, or to a growing comprehension of music ; and in so far as pupils are unable to read music their elementary musical knowledge must be regarded as incomplete. For the special purpose of teaching children to read simple music, the value of the tonic sol-fa notation can hardly be placed too high. In the upper classes of a school where music is made a special feature and where the lower stages of the work have been mastered, the tonic sol-fa notation might merge into the staff notation. It should be observed that the two notations do not conflict with each other. Wholly to discard the tonic sol-fa notation is inadvisable : if both are used, the one should be made to serve as a stepping-stone to the other.

Breathing-exercises.—Breathing is the motor power of singing, and correct breathing should be the first step, for upon it good tone largely depends. Systematic practice, therefore, should be given in breathing-exercises, which should be preliminary to other forms of musical exercise until fair power of breathing-control has been gained. The chief points to be observed in these exercises are that the breathing should be diaphragmatic, that the shoulders should not be raised, and that the waist should not be unduly distended. In the upper classes, practice in the power of the retention of the breath should be developed. The pupils may be instructed to take a slow inspiration, and to make a slow expiration, while the teacher counts, say, to six. After a little practice, the time may be extended. In all cases the breathing should be through the nostrils. Care must be taken not to confound breathing-exercises for the purposes herein stated with breathing-exercises as prescribed for a course of general physical training.

Voice Exercises.—The purpose of these exercises is to produce a tone that is clear, mellow, and resonant, and the power to sing without strain. A "forward" production of the voice should be aimed at. The tone must be produced from the front part of the mouth, against the upper teeth, as it were. In these exercises the pupils should sing the scales downwards to the syllables *coo, loo, aw*, practised softly and slowly, the most suitable scales being E, E flat, D, D flat, and C, practised in that order. In the higher classes, the syllable *ah* may be used. This, the finest of vowel sounds, requires to be introduced carefully, for unless the tone is properly "placed"—that is, well forward—it will show a nasal quality. The teacher must listen carefully for any faulty production, which will manifest itself in a nasal, "throaty," or "woolly" tone, and in faulty intonation.

The position of the body has a great deal to do with good tone-production. The lungs must have freedom to work, therefore the position should be upright. A cramped position, feet crossed, or lounging, are quite out of place ; the head should be upright with shoulders back. The mouth and throat should be freely open, and the tongue should be trained to lie flat : there should be no gasping, or heaving of the chest, when breath is required.

The "Break" in Voice.—The voices of almost all children have a "break" about the middle F. This is due to the change of register. Below the middle F all children's voices are, in their "raw" state, in the chest register. Generally speaking, children, when singing, should never use the chest register. If they are allowed to do so, the chest register will be carried, probably, far beyond its safe limits, and will bring about a condition of vocal strain. For this reason, as well as that the tone from the head register is better and free from risk to the voice, the head register should be exclusively used by all pupils in the primary schools.

If the "break" is not properly treated, voice-strain, poor tone, and inability to sing in tune will result. By the foregoing voice exercises on