

PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION.

SIXTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

AT

THE PORTMAN ROOMS, BAKER STREET, W.,

May 6th to May 9th, 1902.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS.

(Continued from page 570.)

THURSDAY, *May 8th.* 11.30 a.m.

MRS. HUSBAND then introduced MRS. HOWARD GLOVER, who read her paper on

OUR RELATIONS WITH MUSIC AND ART.

Music and Art have been the inspiration of the prophets and poets of all time, and one would fain linger with them on the heights—but my task this morning is a humbler one. It is to speak to you in a simple and practical manner of the necessity for bringing our children into relationship with music and art; to consider with you how we may best promote a wise development of those yearnings after beauty, with which all children are naturally endowed.

We cannot

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all be poets, painters, or musicians, but we may all say with the Greek poet, Cleon:—

“I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend.
I am not great as they are, point by point,
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each other's art;
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?”—*Browning.*

I speak to you, not from the teacher's point of view, but from the standpoint of the parent who aims at making the home a centre of culture, where a first acquaintance with the arts shall be formed, an acquaintance destined to ripen with the years into a close intimacy, colouring and ennobling the whole of life. Many people give their children every advantage in the matter of music and painting lessons, but there the relationship with these arts too often ceases. This instruction, though most important, is a one-sided training, for it is a talented minority alone who can find satisfaction in the executive faculty. Though an acquaintance with the technique of the art is most valuable, unless there is real proficiency, we find invariably that the music or painting is thrown on one side as soon as school days are over. Looking the matter fairly in the face, it must be admitted that the majority find their need for art amply satisfied by an annual visit to the Academy, a few stray concerts, and attendances at *The Shop Girl*, *The Belle of New York*, and other musical extravagances now so much the vogue, on which they

expend an intense admiration—a sign of the low level at which we take our recreation. Yet most people have a latent appreciation of beauty in its many forms; this appreciation exists potentially in little children, and if the taste can only be quickened and enthusiasm kindled in those early impressionable years, a discriminating love of the Best will never disappear, and the Mediocre will cease to appeal.

Some there are in whom the artistic taste is so strong that it will find its vent even in an uncongenial environment, and without outside encouragement, but in a great many cases the priceless treasures of art will never be unlocked, without a key to open them and a loving guide to point the way. The atmosphere of a home and the bent of the people with
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whom we live, have far more influence on our tastes than heredity.

We are daily awakening to the need of cultivating a love for Nature in our children, but we do not recognize that it is quite as important to foster a love for Art, though music and pictures appeal just as strongly to a little child as Nature does. I cannot help thinking that by this neglect we lose a very valuable adjunct to education. The Greeks fully understood the formative power of music on the young citizen.

Plato says in his *Republic*:—

“What shall be the education of our heroes? Can we find a better than the traditional sort? And this has two divisions, gymnastic for the body, and music for the soul. . . . Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-educated ungraceful; and also because he who has received this true education of the inner being will most shrewdly perceive omissions or faults in art and nature, and with a true taste, while he praises and rejoices over and receives into his soul the good, and becomes noble and good, he will justly blame and hate the bad, now in the days of his youth, even before he is able to know the reason why; and when reason comes he will recognize and salute the friend with whom his education has made him long familiar.”

In our own day, Thring, the famous headmaster of Uppingham, was the first to recognize the great educational value of music in the school curriculum, and this was the more remarkable from the fact that he was in himself quite unmusical, and had not even an ear for music. He had a true love and appreciation for painting, especially for the early Italian masters; looked on art as a great moral and spiritual force, and speedily recognized the analogous power of music. He estimated rightly the refining and stimulating influence of serious classical music on those who were able and trained to appreciate it, and was greatly attracted by the idea of an art, which appealed at least as much to feeling and imagination as to the intellect. Before Thring's day, music teachers and music lessons took a very subordinate place in

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school programmes; the time for practice had to come out of play-time, and was generally scamped, and an organized school choir was a thing almost unknown. But Thring put musical education on an altogether different basis, it was recognized as a serious study, and attendance at singing classes, music lessons, and music practice was compulsory and subject to ordinary discipline. He engaged an enthusiastic staff of first-class masters, to whom he gave liberal salaries, and what was even more valuable, his personal support and sympathy. A complete

quartet or quintet party was always to be found among the musicians of whom the staff was composed, and chamber concerts of about an hour were given every week, at which the whole school attended, and thus had an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the best music. The school choir worked at the *Messiah*, the *Elijah*, and other great oratorios, which they sang at the school concerts, and the annual visit of Joachim (a great friend of Mr. David, the chief music master) to play to the school, was the red-letter day in the musical year. Those choir practices and those school concerts must be golden memories in the mind of many an old Uppingham boy. Thring's influence did not end here, for the example of Uppingham left an impress on school music, which is felt more or less in all our great public schools of to-day.

I have dwelt at some length on what was accomplished by Edward Thring, because it is exceedingly interesting and encouraging to see what can be done even by an unmusical person to establish the relation with music, of which this paper treats. A mother's devotion can overcome many limitations, and in home life one meets the parent, not musical in herself, but full of ambitions for her children, who chooses good masters, engages a governess to superintend the practice, and herself brings her school-girl daughter up from the country to attend Saturday Popular concerts through a period of years. How much greater, however, must be the opportunities of those parents who are more richly endowed, and who can themselves sing and play. Let me here urge all fathers, and particularly mothers, for the sake of their children, as well as for many more obvious reasons, not to drop their accomplishments after marriage. It is doubtless

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difficult for the mistress of a household and the mother of a family to make time for regular practice, but she will find it worth a good deal of sacrifice.

The wonderful inventions of the 19th and 20th centuries supply all our deficiencies, and I might suggest the purchase of a Pianola to those who do not play at all, and who can afford to expend about £50. It is not a mere mechanical and expressionless contrivance, but in the hands of a person with musical taste, becomes a medium for interpreting the compositions of our great masters, so as to satisfy the most fastidious, and give real artistic enjoyment.

You can begin to play to your baby literally from the cradle; lay him in a big chair by your side, and you will find that his ear responds to the sounds of harmony just as readily as his eye notices all the objects in his wonderful new world, and he will lie there happy and content and want no more amusement. As soon as he can sit up, put him on your lap, letting him place his tiny fingers on yours, and he will enjoy all the sensations of playing himself. Do not imagine that you must play down to your little child; as in everything else, give him the very best from the commencement, though you may do well to select simple and melodious compositions with well-marked rhythms. Let your repertoire take a wide range, embracing operas and oratorios, as well as pieces specially written for the piano. I might suggest the March from *Faust*, the "Harmonious Blacksmith," Schumann's *Kinderscenen*, Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, the prelude to Act III. of *Lohengrin*, among many others. Do not, however, bewilder him by too many new things at first, but let him learn to recognize a few, and then gradually extend the list. Next comes the astonishing discovery that the baby has an ear, and can sing and hum the tunes you have played to him, weeks before he can speak. I believe from my personal observation, (and many parents present will bear me out) that most children who have a musical ear and are not tone deaf, can sing before they talk.

As soon as he can speak, and takes a delight in learning new words, tell him the names of the composers or of the compositions which you play, and let him link them together in his memory as early familiar friends. At last the time comes when, in addition to appreciating his mother's performance, the little child can sing songs for himself to her
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accompaniment. All babies have been brought up on nursery rhymes; there is no reason why yours should be deprived of this common heritage, and they will naturally lead on to other and more ambitious songs. Elliott's *Nursery Rhymes* are deservedly popular; less known among children's songs are Cécile Hartog's *Barbara's Song Book*, Stevenson's *Garden of Verses* set to music by Natalie Davenport, and Grieg's *Children's Songs*. Thence you can work your way on to some of the songs out of *Hänsel and Gretel*, *Gaudeamus* (an excellent collection of time-honoured English songs), Liza Lehmann's *Daisy Chain*, Schumann's *Nussbaum*, *Two Grenadiers*, and many others. Continue to play regularly to your children, so that as time goes on they know and love a wide range of classical compositions—Bach's Preludes and Fugues, Beethoven's Sonatas, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Wagner. Play through the notable parts from the scores of operas, threading them together by means of the plot, which it is always possible to make into a suitable story, and here you will find a large store-house of mythology and legend to satisfy the ever-increasing demands of a child's imagination. Wagner's music dramas may be introduced by Constance Maude's *Stories of Wagner's Heroes* and *Stories of Wagner's Heroines*, which you can illustrate on the piano, and give to the principal personages their own "motiv" and phrase. This kind of musical description or motto will awaken ready interest.

A child who has lived in this sort of musical environment will be quite prepared at seven to enjoy a fine concert, and yet I would begin very cautiously, and make it but an occasional treat, an event to be looked back upon as something of an epoch in life. One dreads to anticipate the pleasures of riper years, and our desire in these days of rush and excitement is that our children, at any rate, shall lead quietly-regulated lives, where work alternates with simple pleasures. Let us therefore be content for the most part with the music at home, adding a red-letter day in the shape of a concert at distant intervals, to stimulate and give fresh enthusiasm, until the age of twelve is reached, then attendance at good concerts will take its place in the regular order of a musical education. On these rare visits to musical performances of early years, you must take some trouble to
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ascertain the programme beforehand, and familiarize your child with at least a part of it, making him acquainted with the chief subjects of the symphony or concerto, so that he may understand the "working out" to a certain extent. (It is always quite easy to get arrangements of symphonies, &c., from a musical library.) Otherwise you may be disappointed to find that a sense of bewilderment and confusion is the only result, and no real educational value is gained; many older people with untrained ears, who listen to a programme of unfamiliar music, would experience just the same baffled sensation, and say they needed a second or third hearing for real enjoyment.

It has always seemed to me a pity that in England we have so little of the *ensemble* music, which is such a feature of homes in Germany, where the bulk of the population have a much keener feeling for good music than here. Up to a certain date all our children were taught the piano; in the next generation about a quarter of them learned the violin, but we have yet to

see the complete family string quartet or piano quintet, which would bring such a strong extra attraction into the home circle. It would form another link of interest between parents and children, brothers and sisters, in these days when our young men and maidens are inclined to seek their pleasures outside. The choice and suggestion of an instrument lies to a great extent in the parents' hands. I think it very advisable that everyone should learn the piano to the age of nine or ten, as it is a better medium for studying the general theory of music than perhaps any other instrument. After that stage, if your children show any promise of musical capacity, do not be content to let them all swell the crowded ranks of pianists and violinists, but induce one or two in the family to take up the viola, 'cello, clarinet, or other instruments, which are so sorely needed for amateur chamber music and orchestra. It is quite common for school-girls, and even school-boys, to attempt two instruments, but unless the general education is to suffer, it is impossible to do justice to both. When we remember what an exacting mistress instrumental music is, the time would be far better employed in working seriously at *one* instrument.

As I said at the beginning, I do not propose to trench on the question of musical instruction, but should the mother

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herself wish to teach her child the piano, I might incidentally mention with gratitude, the great help that Mrs. Spencer Curwen's *Method and Teacher's Guide* may prove to one who plays herself, but has no experience in teaching beginners. I take it for granted that all parents will do their utmost to select good music masters and mistresses, but they often fail to realize the necessity for supervising the practice of a small child, also that a weekly lesson is not sufficient to prevent the formation of bad habits, unless the parent or governess co-operates by daily care. When we turn to the musical education of our public-school sons, it must be admitted that in spite of Thring's example, the prospect is not so promising for them as for their sisters. Having imbued them with an enthusiasm and love for music at home, all we can do further is to bring pressure and influence to bear upon their head masters. Surely this can best be done by a body representing organized opinion like the P.N.E.U.

In all that I have said above, I have ignored the existence of that class of children, who are hopelessly unmusical and without an ear. Singing teachers tell me that it is possible by persistence to train such children to distinguish and reproduce gradations of pitch, but I have always been rather sceptical as to the value of such efforts, and think it would be more practical to give the time to other studies. It must, however, be conceded, that unmusical and tone-deaf people can often derive immense pleasure from listening to music, and I have several quite unmusical friends who are devoted to Wagner—whether it is a compliment to Wagner or not, I have never been able to determine.

Let us now turn to the second division of my paper, Art considered apart from music, as portrayed for the world by the brushes of the great painters and artists of all time. How are we to prepare our children to love the best in art, to respond to the touch of the great masters, and to enter into their thoughts?

Some of you heard Canon Lyttelton's amusing sketch of the people to be met in picture galleries, going round and sedulously ticking off the pictures one by one in their catalogues, with a sigh of relief at the close of "something accomplished, something done." Everyone who travels in Italy must be struck with the attitude of the average tourist,

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and the perfunctory manner in which he accomplishes his sight-seeing. He experiences a good deal of pleasure no doubt at the novelty of it all, and feels a certain admiration as he stands before the masterpieces of the world, but returns home just the same individual as he went. His pulses were not stirred by the magic of Italy, the glamour of association meant nothing to him, because his previous life had not prepared him to woo that "woman-country," and lay her to his heart. Many of us who had passed our youth among people caring for none of these things, wistfully imagined ourselves also outside the charmed circle. A chance visit to Italy, however, may give the artistic impulse, and open a new interest in life. We discover further that it is possible by study and training to fill in the gaps of our neglected education, and learn to understand and enter into our inherited kingdom of beauty. Walter Pater, in speaking of works of art and all æsthetic influences, has said:—"Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety." Personally, I think it must be a far more grateful task to train the eye than to train the ear, where natural deficiencies must prove an almost insuperable barrier. Therefore, to all parents who are not naturally endowed by nature with either a musical or an artistic temperament, I would say:—Content yourselves with cultivating a love for good pictures, a knowledge of the conditions under which the great painters worked, and an understanding of the media through which they gave their message to mankind. I leave on one side altogether the question of personal culture, in addressing such a society as the Parents' Union, where our first consideration is primarily the training of the little ones entrusted to our care. We must all become periodically conscious of our own limitations, and the way in which our children suffer loss through deficiencies in ourselves, but it is the P.N.E.U. to which many of us look back as the motive power, which first gave the incentive to educate ourselves for the children's sake. We want them to waste no time, as we perhaps have done, in struggling through unnecessary difficulties and lack of comprehension, but to become susceptible from the beginning to all manifestations of beauty, and to establish at an early period in their education the relation with art. It is

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nowadays scarcely necessary to suggest that we should cover our walls with engravings and photographs of really fine pictures, and thus by early association train the eye, and more than that, connect the picture in the mind of the child with the artist, teach it to lisp his name, and tell it something about his story. Members of the P.N.E.U. are also members of the Art for Schools Association, where and elsewhere it is possible to buy very inexpensive reproductions of the great masters, so that the question of cost need not enter into our calculations. I can recall at this moment one charming nursery, whose guardian angels are Luca della Robbia's "Babies," and Filippino Lippi's "Boy Angel," from the "Vision of St. Bernard." You should take your children back in imagination to "the Season of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy." Tell them stories about Cimabue, who broke away from the old Byzantine traditions and first thought of painting a Mother of God, who bore some living likeness to a mother of men—about his famous Madonna, which was carried in solemn procession from the painter's house to Santa Maria Novella at Florence, in the days when art meant so much more to the people than it does now. Never mind whether Vasari is inaccurate or not, but go on to relate how Cimabue found the little ten-year-old shepherd-boy on the hills outside Florence, drawing sheep on a slab of stone, and took him into his studio as a pupil, and how this same boy Giotto finally exercised

more influence on the development of the art of painting in Italy, than any other man. Tell of Giotto's friendship with Dante, and describe his frescoes illustrating the great St. Francis of Assisi, such a prominent figure in art, whose whole life again is full of attraction and inspiration to a childish intelligence. (You will find the story of St. Francis charmingly told as "the little Bedesman of Christ," in Canton's *Child's Book of Saints*.) Trace the course of the Renaissance by means of its most striking characters, until the main outline of that picturesque and glowing period stands out vividly in your children's mind. Recall the brilliant court of the Medici at Florence, broken in upon by the grand prophetic figure of Savonarola, and let your children enroll him as one of their heroes. And so on to the culmination of Art in the Golden Age of the Four Archangels, Lionardo da Vinci the Magician, Raphael the Melodist,

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Correggio the Faun, and Michael Angelo the Prophet of the Renaissance—as J. A. Symonds has called them. Illustrate all your stories as profusely as possible with photographs and recollections of the pictures you have seen, and welcome such books as R. C. Gillie's *Story of Stories*, where all the pictures of the life of Christ are reproductions of works by great artists. Albinia Wherry's *Stories of the Tuscan Artists*, with photogravures of their works, which appeared last Christmas, met a real need, and is very suitable to put into the hands of children over twelve, or to read to children from nine upwards.

In our Protestant reaction and in our dread of superstition, we have almost entirely rejected the lives and legends of the Saints and Martyrs of the early Christian Church; yet in the Dark Ages, those traditions of the heroic lives of Christianity kept alive in men's hearts the purest and most ideal principles of religion. Many people will agree that we lose some powerful illustrations in the religious training of our children, if we shut away from them these legends, which all had some basis of truth to rest on, and which are so typical of the age which produced them. From the point of this paper, it is assuredly quite impossible to understand and enter into the spirit of the early painters, if we are ignorant of the subjects of Mediæval Art, and have no idea of the characteristic figures which meet us at every turn. When you show a picture to your child, you must first make clear to him the story which it is intended to tell, and the personages who are therein introduced. This is the most elementary necessity for his understanding, if the picture has been painted in a by-gone age, and amid unfamiliar associations. After a while the child will be keenly interested in picking out St. Peter with his keys, St. Lawrence with his gridiron, St. Catherine of Alexandria with her wheel, and many other saints with their symbols. He will recognize at a glance the beautiful and oft-repeated subject of the Annunciation; he will delight in the charming Hebrew romance of the youthful Tobias, led by his guardian angel Raphael; also in the touching legends of the meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate, and the birth and childhood of the Virgin. All these traditions and details can be verified from Mrs. Jameson's useful books of reference.

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When you want to take your child to the National Gallery, if you feel you are not properly equipped as a guide, you cannot do better than fortify yourself with Cosmo Monkhouse's book, *In the National Gallery*, which gives a most excellent chronological survey of the Italian masters. A child who has been nurtured on the lines indicated above, so that he feels a sympathetic interest both in the painters and in the subjects of their works, will find himself among well-known friends when he first visits our National collection. He will grasp in

his simple way some conception of the evolution of Art; he will not turn from Cimabue's Madonna in disgust, and though he looks on it without admiration, he will treat it with reverence, as a glimpse of the dawn of art which it recalls, when told of its similarity to the more famous example at Florence. Botticelli, Giovanni Bellini, Raphael, and the other great masters will appeal at once, and fill him with pure delight.

To some of you it may seem that I am giving a counsel of perfection, when I suggest that the highest things in Art and Music are literally "meat for babes." I think not. We are all capable of appreciating beauty as it appeals to sound or sight, and whether we love the best, or are satisfied with the second best, will depend very much on what forms or types of beauty were held up to our awakening intelligence. Beauty and Simplicity have ever walked hand in hand, and a little child may enter the kingdom of Art as readily as the kingdom of Heaven. The greatest things are not those most difficult to grasp. Little ears may be attuned to catch the harmony of which the poets sing, underlying all manifestations of Art, for—

"One music maketh its occult abode
In all things scatter'd from great beauty's hand;
And evermore the deepest words of God
Are yet the easiest to understand."—*Wm. Watson.*

MRS. HUSBAND: I am sure we have all enjoyed to the fullest extent the very helpful paper Mrs. Glover has given us. But, as we listened to that lovely programme laid down for our children to follow, the question occurred to us—how are we ever to fulfil the bill? The atmosphere of the home does more to form character than anything else can possibly do, but if the home is to have the atmosphere that

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has been suggested to us, a great deal is demanded of the mother who creates the atmosphere. It was delightful to have the quotation from the *Republic* as to the value of music in the education of the young. Nothing more beautiful, more profound has ever been said. It is particularly desirable to have that point brought forward, for there is a danger of education being too purely intellectual nowadays; the whole view of the *Republic* is the opposite one. She also said that the thought of a child of seven appreciating Wagner was to her amazing; she should have thought the plots too were not quite suitable for children. She would like to ask Mrs. Glover whether she would really wish all children to learn the piano till the age of ten. This seemed a weary drudgery to many children, and the moral discipline could be got in other ways.

MRS. SAN CAROLO said that as regards the teaching of music as a factor in the development of character, no one could appreciate more than herself the value of music. But she would like from the point of view of a teacher of voice production to point out the danger of allowing children to sing at school such works as the *Messiah* and the *Elijah*. The moral development thus gained was at the risk of spoiling an instrument by preventing the child from using its voice naturally. She also thought it was enough for a child to study one good work at a time; to listen intellectually to a long concert was a great mental strain even for an adult.

MRS. GRANVILLE, referring to the question of teaching the piano till the age of ten, said that in spite of the drudgery it seemed to her desirable and likely to foster a love of music in

later years. Moreover, the drudgery could be lessened in many ways.

MRS. MARKS quoted the case of her own apparently unmusical daughter, who, after being taught by Mrs. Spencer Curwen's method and going abroad in the care of a very musical friend, was now filled with an intellectual enthusiasm for music. Being interested in music is an important factor in ear training altogether. And for an unmusical child the mere drudgery is valuable as showing that success only comes with effort.

MISS STALEY, speaking from her experience as a teacher, said that the love of music can be developed in children who

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appear at first to have no ear whatever. She had found the Tonic Sol-Fa and Virgil Clavier of great value.

MRS. MORRIS asked whether it would not be as well, besides introducing children to the beautiful by means of pictures, to give them at the same time a knowledge of architecture. She recommended books by Parkins and by Smith on this subject, and as a guide to the National Gallery for girls of fifteen or sixteen she could recommend the shilling *Pall Mall Guide*, which was written in a particularly graceful and interesting manner.

MISS WAERN spoke of the value of suggestion in education by good pictures. In American and Sweden too much value was attached to the reproduction for children of certain famous pictures with their names only. She wished to see this mistake avoided in England. She would have names of painters and pictures given as an afterthought, the beauty of the pictures as such should be allowed to appeal to the mind of the child.

MRS. FRANKLIN: I am rather afraid that in dwelling upon some of the smaller points raised in discussion we should forget some of the beauty of the opening paper. The question was rather how to establish the right relation with music and art in our children. With regard to the interesting addition of Mrs. Morris, one feels perhaps that architecture is rather more difficult to introduce to quite young children in such an interesting way. I think that in letting children become familiar with the great masters and with the legends and stories which they depict we help them to get that relation to art which we particularly desire, and if only we can find a way to carry out the programme offered to us by Mrs. Glover, we shall be able to develop in our children more joy in music and art than is usual in the British public; we shall no longer have the English tourist enquiring whether Botticelli is a cheese or a wine. We can do a great deal for our little children by making them familiar with the names of pictures. We shall find that they will gain a personal feeling of gratitude towards the men who have helped to make the world beautiful. Excellent photographs of famous pictures can now be obtained for 6d. or so. We must not be appalled at the magnitude of the programme. Mrs. Glover advocated the establishing of right relations

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with art and music as with other fields of knowledge, *but as occasion offers*, otherwise we should have a worse system of cram than ever. Let us sometimes read an art book with children, sometimes a book about animals, sometimes a fairy tale, and so children are offered a varied diet of living ideas. Picture talk as recommended in the *Parents' Review School*, and discussed at last year's conference, is a most helpful means of continuing such relations in the schoolroom.

MRS. GLOVER said that in speaking of teaching the piano till the age of ten, she was

thinking of musical children who were to learn some instrument, and for them she thought the piano was the best way of beginning their musical training in general. With regard to voice production, her remarks applied to boys rather than girls, and she understood that it was not considered unwise for boys to sing during their growing period. She had left the subject of architecture out of her paper, as she had felt her subject so large that it would be best to keep to that side of art which could be best insisted upon in the nursery period. In answer to the objection that the plots of Wagner were not suitable for children, she said that if they were presented in the form given in *Wagner's Heroes* and *Wagner's Heroines*, by Constance Maud, all undesirable matter would be found to be eliminated.