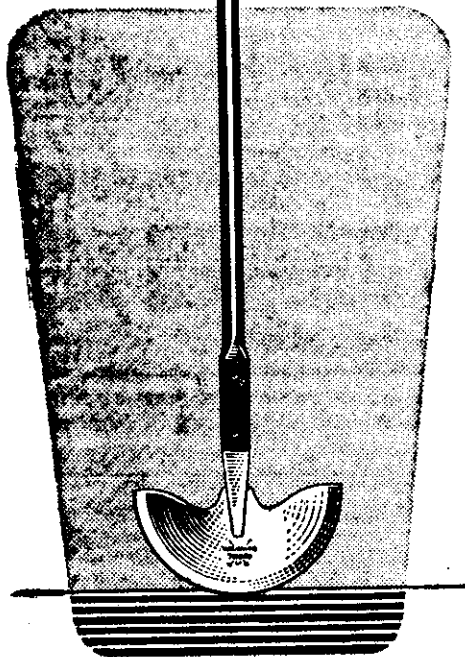


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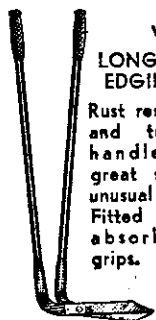
W.32
ROSE PRUNER

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Parents Should Not Force Their Children to Learn Music

It is seldom possible to find space in "The Listener" for youthful opinion; but this cry from the heart could not be resisted. DAVID LYONS, who wrote it, is 14 years of age, and is senior organist at St. Bede's College in Christchurch. His advice to parents comes from a boy who loves music, and who obviously believes that music is not served by children sent unwillingly to the keyboard. No doubt he understands that his cry will not be heeded; but a man must speak out sometimes, and there is certain to be applause from at least 5000 fingers before practising is resumed.

Chapter 1: My Experience on the Subject

DURING the past few years of my life, I have seen some very unhappy children. This is brought about by the parents of the children concerned. The child goes to school—dislikes music of any kind—and is forced by his parents to learn the subject.

In this chapter I will give a few examples:

(1) A boy asks his music teacher to write to his parents, so as to stop him learning music and to make his school life happier. The teacher does her best, but it is no use. The boy writes to his parents himself and the reply reads:—

Dear —, Your mother and I have received your letter and we have agreed that you are to continue learning music, whether you like it or not. (Signed) Dad.

It was no use. The teacher tries to help him, but it seems to go in one ear and out the other. He would cry bitterly while practising. He didn't understand it at all. This is the cause of unhappiness in many schools. The parents should have enough sense to realise that God didn't make us all to be musicians, but He most probably made the boys and girls concerned to be an office-clerk or an engine driver. This example should be a lesson to some parents.

(2) A young lad did his best to please his parents when they forced and bribed him to learn the piano. He was sent to be a lawyer, and to study well as he could at school, but being forced to learn music, he could not concentrate on his proper studies. In Latin class he would think up excuses to avoid going to a music lesson—thus the study in preparation for the degree of Bachelor of Laws was unsatisfactory.

If these two brief examples apply to any parents in particular they should let their child stop learning music at once. Let him or her learn when they want to. . . . I don't think that they will regret it in any way—all you have to do is to think how many adults you know that hate the sight or the hearing of music. As I have said before, everyone is not born to be a musician. If he likes music it is the parents' duty to see that he learns, but under no circumstances should a child be forced or bribed to learn music.

I hope this chapter has been helpful to some parents to whom this applies, and I hope that they will have the sense to let the child stop if

he hates it. Parents—remember your children are sent to school to work and be happy. Music, when not appreciated by a young child can ruin his school work and make him very, very, very unhappy.

Chapter 2: The Parents' Attitude

The parents who force their children to learn music are usually parents who have learnt music between the ages of 18 and 20, and wished that they had learnt sooner, and so they want their children to learn at a young age even if they hate music (the children). If they were left alone now they might begin to appreciate music.

Some parents force their children to learn music because they cannot play any instrument themselves. They are now too lazy to learn and so they take it out of the children and make them learn music. The parents want to keep up with the Joneses by having parties twice a week and forcing little Johnny to learn all the popular songs.

Others think they might get their children a bit of money. LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT. In a musical career you must be prepared to live on barely anything. If a lad can't stand music and is forced into giving a piano recital, people will not bother to listen, as he will not put his best into it. If he is not suited for this career he will starve practically and also be very unhappy. Good musicians don't choose a musical career for the money which they MIGHT get, but they do it for their love of music. How can a person who hates music even learn to compose or to play any instrument well?

This chapter I hope will help the parents and unhappy children to whom this applies.

Chapter 3: The Teacher's Attitude

A music teacher is usually kind, helpful and patient. It is very hard for a

(continued on next page)



"It is very hard for a music teacher to practise the virtue of patience on an unhappy child"