

WHY MUSIC MAY BE A LUXURY FEW CAN AFFORD

An Item in the High Cost of Living That Has Far Reaching Results.

A FEW years from now there will be no more singers produced in New York City, unless the vocal teachers stop putting up their prices," said a social student who had been making a round of the vocal studios in town.

"In all this discussion of the high cost of living," she went on, "there has been not a word about music; and, you know, there are so many of us who simply cannot exist without it. Even now the man of average wealth in this city can scarcely afford to pay the singing master's fee, which comes to about the same figure as his rent. When a New York man engages singing lessons for his daughter or son it is about the same as though he had to pay his rent bill twice over every month. Time was when the middle-class dweller on Manhattan Island could take vocal lessons or send talented members of his family to the studio without fear of bankruptcy. But that good time is of the past. To-day the young man who would like to study vocal culture after office hours, hoping to follow in the footsteps of a Bispham, has scarcely the ghost of a chance. There are settlement movements for the training of the very poor and studios wide open for the rich. It is the man or woman of moderate income who is really up against it."

The social student drew forth a small notebook in which she had jotted down her observations in the course of a day spent among the studios; and began to read extracts as follows:

"Vocal teachers in New York City, like Caesar's 'Galla,' are divided 'in partes tres.' All those I saw teach singing from start to finish, so you can't grade them like school teachers. You classify them according to the price they charge for lessons.

"Division No. 1. I call those in the first division the Double Eagle Professors, because their price is \$20 an hour or over. They usually live in style, keep secretaries, take European trips every year, and have their pictures exhibited wherever and whenever possible. No doubt they

teach well. At any rate, they have acquired big reputations in one way or another, and their pupils have to pay for all this. They do pay, and from all appearances feel honored in so doing.

"It is not so easy to see any of the Professors Double Eagle. They are all extremely busy, but you may talk with their secretaries, and, sometimes, if you are in luck, you may catch a glimpse of one of them through a crack or half-open door. If, in your mad desire to cultivate your voice, you feel a lurking suspicion that, perhaps, you haven't a voice to cultivate, the secretary will graciously arrange an audience for you; when for a trifling \$5 you may have the counsel of the Double Eagle himself, who will hear you sing and advise you regarding your future.

"Division No. 2. I call those in this division Eagles, from the noun 'eagle,' meaning a ten dollar gold piece. The Professors Eagle charge about \$10 an hour, sometimes a little more. When an Eagle becomes fastidious, he slides up the price a way just for effect. Or, perhaps, he says to the student, who is beginning to groan under the \$10 strain: 'My price has gone up to \$14 an hour. That's what I am charging my new pupils this year, but I will keep the price just at the old figure for you. Only you mustn't mention it to any one.' You don't. A clam is garrulous in comparison.

"From the New York viewpoint, Eagles are thought to be reasonable in their prices. Some have gorgeous studios and some haven't. Some give frequent pupils' recitals, some offer to place pupils in positions, some charge for voice trial, and some do not. But the Eagles rarely have secretaries. They are accessible to ordinary mortals and you may talk with them. You will find them affable and

genial; and they hardly ever speak of themselves as representatives of any of the well-known singing methods, for that has gone out of fashion. The teacher who formerly advocated the Italian method or the Marchesi method, who talked of Lamperti, William Shakespeare, or Julius Hey, has vanished from New York City. The methods are used the same as ever, only they are not labeled. It's like the homeopath who drops a lot of little tablets into a glass of water, and you never know what you have been taking. 'Yes, I have evolved a method of my own, but I never talk about method, you know,' is all you can induce them to say on the subject nowadays. All of the Eagles can give you the names of noted singers in concert, or opera, who have been their pupils. They are not overfond

of displaying their own likenesses, but some of them decorate their studio walls with pictures of their successful pupils, singers and operatic folk.

"They make you feel at home, and you would like to engage lessons with them. If undecided, however, you may attend their pupils' recitals or call again. Some require payment for a term of lessons in advance, saying they cannot correctly judge of your capabilities and future prospects before the expiration of ten weeks; others can read your fate after a single hearing.

"Division No. 3 includes those vocal professors whose price is less than \$10 an hour. This class is not yet sufficiently well known to have earned an appellation or manifested any of those distinctive characteristics shown by the preceding classes; and each member of this division must be judged on his own merits as an individual.

"In a treatise of this description, where empirical knowledge and observation have led to the deductions herein contained, it is necessary to observe the vocal students of New York City and their characteristics; for it may easily be seen that the pupils of this city may be divided into separate groups, just as their teachers are. I do not differentiate them according to the proficiency of the students as primary, elementary, and advanced, but according to the price paid per lesson. I shall call the pupils of the Professors Double Eagle, Students Double Eagle; and, for convenience, the \$10 pupils will be designated as Students Eagle. The characteristics of these pupils are quite as marked and as distinct from each other as those of the teachers themselves.

"The Student Double Eagle, for example, are all wearing their Summer mil-

linery now. They are all chic and stylish in their dress, which is of the latest mode, and while waiting for their lesson period they wear a reverent and worshipful air, as though attending church or a funeral. They talk in low tones, or sit with wrapt expressions, as near as possible to the Sanctum Sanctorum, until the Great Being within dismisses the 'Oh—Ah' person who has been disturbing the ether. The door opens slightly, the motionless face (the portrait you have seen so often) appears in dignified silence in the aperture, and the Worshipful One whose turn has come arises, stops breathing and noiselessly glides toward the open door. She disappears within, the door closes gently behind her, and the Adoring One without, whose respiration has also been 'temporarily disconnected,' breathes freely once again.

"Digression: Why is it that a man, even a great man, can hardly ever overawe his secretary? Any way, the secretary does not seem to remain in an exalted or rapturous frame of mind very long at a time, but always gets back to earth again. That brings me back to the incident I was just relating. After the Worshipful One (a beautiful, poetic-looking creature) had gone in for her music lesson, the secretary turned to the Adoring One outside with the following observation:

"Did you see that young woman who just went in? She has developed the most remarkable diaphragm under the Professor's instruction. Why, her diaphragm has gained such force that she could almost knock a person down with it."

"To resume: Some of the Students Eagle are still wearing their Winter hats and their gowns are occasionally homemade. They are sensible, practical people as a whole, free from affectation, not subject to frequent fits of hero worship. They are believers in the doctrine of common sense, paying a fair sum for value received, in accordance with the New York standard of prices."