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The Evolution of the Movable Do

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DECEMBER 8, 1896.

CHARLES VINCENT, ESQ., MUS. DOC., OXON.,
IN THE CHAIR.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MOVABLE DO.

BY JOHN TAYLOR

(Organist to H M. the Queen at Kensington Palace).

THE Movable Do! Words pregnant with meaning, instinct with reality to the musician! The text of the sermons in sounds expounding the universal message which the world calls music.

Take the words separately, in the quaint manner of the old theologians.

I. *Movable*.—Plastic, adaptable to, and expressive of the whole of music, its collective agencies, its historical record.

II. *Do*.—Euphonious concept-name—king of the modern scale. Prefigured by the Greek *mese*, the mediæval *Final*, the *Ut* of Guido, with its attendant mnemonic satellites; but fitly assuming its regal throne, six centuries still later, the last and greatest of the whole tonal procession.

III. *Movable Do!*—In other words, *Relation*—*Tonal Relation*, beyond which music neither does nor can extend.

Is there, then, anything fanciful or exaggerative in the enunciation of the Movable Do as, indeed, the very motto and text of music?

It is the general belief of the civilised world of to-day that in common with all human affairs art, too, is regulated by universal principles, which are themselves evolutionary manifestations of one great, supreme, and paramount law. And these principles are, in the case of art, by virtue of a long historical induction, well defined.

Unity, variety, fitness, individuality, proportion or relation design, of which, perhaps, as entering into the very conception of all the rest, *relation* is the most typical and

characteristic—these form the everlasting pillars of the fane or temple of art. These, too, are the attributes of the *Movable Do*.

Art, then, has its evolution; and in the inductive voyage it is incumbent, in tracing the stream of development, to seek diligently for the *beacons*—the successive *landmarks* of this evolution. All human effort—research, thought, practice—is but the sequence of tentative essays, often unconscious, to *unveil* this evolution—to reveal more closely the omnipresence of these eternal underlying laws.

If, then, music as an art, structurally and in the first instance, consists of a progressive unfolding or exposition of the great art-principle of *relation* (tonal and rhythmical), it is to be expected that some evidence of this revelation should be more or less traceable in the historical record.

THE CLASSIC PERIOD.

Flashing, then, the torch of tonal relation upon the dim cave recesses of the historic past, we find in the accentuation and *tuning*, so to speak, of oratorical declamation and recitation into regular musical sound—of speech into song—embodied in the tetrachordal lyre system of the Homeric age—the *germ* of the future *relational scale*, and renderable in Guidonian vernacular by the syllables *Ti, Do, Re, Mi* in its *major*, or *Mi, Fa, Sol, La* in its *minor* aspect. Fig. 1.

Tetrachordal Lyre System or Scale (Fig. 1).

NOTE.—The *dynamic scale tones* are shown in *italics*.

Here, although in all probability the evolution proceeded, primarily and scientifically, by way of the minor plagal tetrachord, towards the complete subsequent establishment of the diatonic or relative *minor* scale (viz., *La* to *La*), yet lying embedded therein we find the *major* order, suggested in the major key of the under 5th (here F) by a pair of, respectively, *static* or *consonant* and *dynamic* or *dissonant tonic relations*—viz., *Do Mi, Ti Re*—in fact, the psychological protoplasmic tonal *germ*. There is here clearly both a *major* and a *minor* suggestion, and regarding the minor as *psychologically*, although not, bookwise, *technically* as a dynamic or relatively *dissonant* tonality, by comparison with the *major*—in fact, its

complement—behold the prototype, the epigrammatic formula of the play and after-play of music itself.

It is, indeed, inconceivable that with the artistic sensibility and soul of the ancient Greek the alternation of minor with *major*—for, at least, purposes of *relief*—should not have been commonly resorted to throughout the ages during which this system was in vogue.

Passing on from the *four* to the original *seven*-stringed lyre system. Lo! the extension of this prefiguring hemi-scale into the complete *relational scale*, beginning with the *sensitive* and expressible by the syllables *Ti, Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La* (Fig. 2), or, in the Egyptian octave system, by *Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do, Re, Mi*, to which the remarks just made apply with increasing and irresistible pertinency and force. (Fig. 3.)

Original 7-stringed Lyre System or Scale of Terpander (Fig. 2).

A musical staff with a treble clef and one sharp (F#). The notes are F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G, A, B, C.

KEY F Ti Do Re Mi } Fa Sol La
KEY A MINOR }
OF C MAJOR } Mi Fa Sol La }
KEY B♭ Ti Do Re Mi

(*Egyptian or 8ve*) 8-stringed Lyre System (Fig. 3).

KEY A MINOR } Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do Re Mi
 or C MAJOR }
 KEY F MAJOR Ti Do Re Mi
 KEY E MINOR Mi Fa Sol La

Reaching yet a *third* stage in the *lesser perfect* or eleven-stringed lyre system, we have evolved, in the three conjoined tetrachords of this, the complete diatonic scale, emphasised by its presentation in the still more developed relational form of a principal key with its under 5th (Fig. 4); while, in the

The Lesser Perfect, or 11-stringed Lyre System (Fig. 4).

KEY A MINOR
or C MAJOR

KEY D MINOR
or F MAJOR

La Ti Do Re Mi Fa Sol La

La Ti Do Re Mi Fa Sol La

greater perfect or *two-octave system*, this relational element culminates in the presentation of the entire diatonic series, displayed throughout the range of vocal pitch (Fig. 5), and

The Greater Perfect System (Fig. 5).

KEY A MINOR	{	La	Ti	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Ti	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La
or C MAJOR		Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Ti	Do	Re	Mi			
KEY E MINOR																
KEY F MAJOR																

which, although it would appear, taking the academical garb of the relative or diatonic minor, yet embodied therein the modern *major* order, for free use, by way of modulation, as prescribed by distinct canon.

Apparently, a still mightier effort to evolve the *major* series as *normal* is to be found in the identity, during the later Greek periods, of the *enharmonic genus* with the cosmopolitan, *pentatonic*, or five-toned *scale*, avowedly more *major* than *minor*—to wit, the familiar melody “Auld lang syne.”

Now, taking the classic systems as a whole—what is disclosed as their vivifying germ, their tonal trend? Clearly not the recognition of acoustical pitch as the paramount and guiding principle. Like ourselves, the ancients had no absolutely fixed standard of pitch. Everything was in relation to the voice, and all voices are different. Where, then, was and is the principle of the *Fixed* or *immovable Do*?

The stringing, tuning, and fabrication of the lyre and lute; the unchangeable *relative* scale of any several *system*—whatever the size of the instrument, and hence length of the strings; the absence of any indication of anything but an approximate tuning pitch; the attribution of unvarying qualities to musical sounds, as consonant or dissonant, as the inevitable outcome of their geometrical ratios of vibrational production—a theory still substantially, and equal temperament notwithstanding, at the root of our most modern development; the entire absence of fixed pitch *names*; the use of the tonal coinage comprised in the historically established *string* or *scale* names for definite relational scale tones—all these and many other verified facts prove, incontestably, that the *ancient* or *classical* system was essentially another and earlier form of the *Movable Do*.

Mese, the middle string, was, unquestionably, the *Movable tonic* or *Do*, the scale a modal order of the common scale of to-day, attended by its *hypo* and *hyper*—its relational *over* and *under fifth*—into which, and the embodied *major* order, modulation was pre-eminently enjoined.

Passing on through the ages to the next great period or field of evolution, what message does it record?

THE GOTHIC OR MEDIÆVAL PERIOD.

The classic scene dissolves upon the screen to evolve the Gothic. Scattered to the four winds the musical learning of the ancient peoples is alone preserved traditionally and typically in the Pythagorean treatise of Boethius. The historical induction is again renewed by new races in new lands.

Insensibly the rhetorical inflections of the Christian priest become transmuted, during a long *pneumatic* probation, into regular musical tones. Terpander is transmigrated as Hucbald. Neumes become *notes*, and after a renewed travail of centuries the great STAFF of Christendom is, at length, uplift for the future gaze of all the coming times. The inspiration is now first breathed upon the world that visual *height* best pictures tonal or relational *pitch*.

Gradually, by dint of the bodkin of relation, the STAFF receives its full emblazoned *screen*—the warp of *Tune* knit into the weft of *Time*—the finer touches of the needle prick into the design, in following sequence, the tonal strands of modulation into new keys, the deepening chromatic shading of the primal or *original* key. Yet further, by the marvellous art accommodation and device of equal temperament, the entire varied tonality, at once diatonic and chromatic, is worked into one still more beautiful whole within the encircling, climactic, welding frame or border of *enharmonism*.

Looking somewhat more closely into the mediæval evolution as a whole, we are confronted by the successive great landmarks presented in the Gregorian or Plain-Song System, the age of Hucbald, Guido, and the Hexachord, the establishment of the Sol-fa syllables, and, finally, the complete evolution and recognition of the common scale in its present major or normal form.

As far as may be ascertained, the so-called Gregorian system represents the inductive effort to fuse the traditional musical recitation of the Jewish and Christian priest, as caught up by the barbaric Western races, with the ancient, academical, or classic systems as transmitted primarily by the antiquated treatise of Boethius.

This resulted in that marvellous *modal* development of tone forming the *Cantus Planus* of the Catholic Church, and in which the modern major series, now fast developing from the secular or minstrel side, is ever present *negatively*, or by *suggestion*, and in all shapes but its own; this trend having been apparently taken at the outset, through the misunderstanding of the Greek terminology as applying to a *Relational*

or *Movable* and not a *Fixed Do*. Hence, in considerable measure, the great backing of the musical development of this period, till the time of the giant Hucbald, who again constructs the tetrachord with the embodied *mnemonic* of a middle semitone, building up his system into a circle of five tetrachordal keys, by over-fifths, the foreshadowing of the modern system of the generation of keys, *mnemonically expressed*, known subsequently as the *Movable Do*.

The mnemonic principle of the association of ideas, once recognised and established, seems rapidly to have spread. Hymns, coloured lines, and other expedients develop at last into the more or less used *major hexachord*, illuminated for all time upon the historic page by the order of sacred syllables, whose first perception is attributed to Guy of Arezzo.

"Where there's smoke there's fire," and this grafting of the melodious mnemonic syllables upon the relational staff, which we love to attribute to the monk of Arezzo, in the sweet and solemn season of Midsummer eve, has shed its euphonious and roseate fragrance from the garden of song through all the ages down.

Tonic Sol-faists, who, by virtue of their name and principles, should be the first to maintain and defend these syllables, may carp at *Sol* as not good enough for them, and cavil at *Si*; but the fact remains that the relational Sol-fa staff system, known commonly as the *Movable Do*, as inaugurated by the hexachord of Guido, has, action and re-action notwithstanding, practically held the past and must needs hold and guide that which is to come.

As might naturally be expected, this marvellous hexachordal peep into the vista or horizon of the modern major tonality of the then future—fast being swept by the instrumental telescopes of the secular minstrels, constant in practice as a Crystal Palace orchestra—this fusion of Science with Art attained by the canonical recognition of the hexachord and its syllables—secured for the Guidonian—i.e., the first *literal Movable Do* system—that undisturbed observation of the musical firmament necessary to the complete ushering in of the normal modern major scale.

Embosomed within the conservation of the Catholic Church, the Sol-fa syllables, with the necessary relational development of the *mutations* or rules for Sol-faing *transitions*, held universal sway for over five hundred years—viz., from the eleventh to the sixteenth century.

Towards the end of this latter century, however, and as the result of the long probationary epoch, science and art again met together. The Church dictum, "*Mi contra Fa diabolus est*," was written out. Transformed into, indeed, an angel of light, the devil with his tritone at length entered into music and the scale was complete. The new or seventh scale note

received an appropriate syllable name—*Si*—perhaps in completion of the beautiful thought of Guido, and, henceforward, with the increasing vocabulary of vocal and tonal relations which ushered in the earliest dawn of the instrumental age, the partial six-note series was found inadequate and more and more out of joint for the Sol-faing of the eight-note octave scale.

A more formidable wave of the development, and one which in its successive subsequent *rebounds* has since told with powerful effect upon the evolution of both sound and sign, now discloses itself in the reactionary tendency to restrict and misapply the *relational* syllables to the denomination of fixed *pitch*, notably, at this incipient stage, in the ephemeral system of Waelrant the Fleming.

A sharp answer was given to this by apparently the vigorous Genevan criticism of the Protestant movement in the form of a more manipulable *tetrasyllabic* mnemonic—something rough and ready—now put forward to meet the emergency in what is known as the *Fa-Sol-La* method, more *movable*, *mnemonic*, and *relational*, be it observed, than ever.

This formula, as comprised of the three notes *Fa*, *Sol*, *La* of the tonic and dominant, together with the additional note *Mi* of the latter—viz., the *dominant hexachord*—and containing the newly admitted scale-determining *tritone* invariably denoted by the syllables *Fa*, *Mi*, formed a signal advance in Sol-faing as applied to the octave scale.

While the keys were growing and the enharmonic circle was being gradually described, the use of this movable *Fa*, *Sol*, *La* system alternated with that of the complete movable series *Do* to *Si*; *Do*, the first syllable of its name-giver, *Doni*, taking the place of *Ut* about the middle of the seventeenth century, and the syllabic series, thus at length consolidated, becoming speedily and universally diffused, although with a reactionary and partial *pitch* use from time to time.

THE MODERN PERIOD.

The ebb and flow of the relational development is still maintained during the progressive unveiling of the mighty modern masterpieces—each use of the syllables, whether *movable* or *fixed*, having its corresponding “set-off”—the concentration upon instrumental creation and development necessarily distracting attention from the scientific gauging of the endless outpour of the new phenomena of tonal art—until, with the equal tempered keyboard, the idea of a fixed pitch *répertoire* or vocabulary of its twelve semitones rises, like an *ignis fatuus*, to beguile o’er the marshes of the new created tonal landscape the, as yet, *unwary* modern artistic intelligence. Germany gets rid of the syllables altogether, while in France,

and even to some extent in Italy and other Continental countries, they become more and more *debased* as mere non-mnemonic names for approximate pitch.

These characteristics of a wayward recession towards the *fixed*, with the preponderating mightier rebound towards the *relational* use of the syllabic signs, increase in volume and momentum with the progress of the modern period, until, in the near past, the opposing waves reach the dimensions of, on the one side, the *fixed Continental* (notably *French*) syllabic use culminating in the *Wilhelm-Hullah* or *Fixed Do Method*; on the other, the baulked orthodox *Relational Movable Do* methods of England—the work of a hundred hands—finding their extreme and unwilling expression in the *figure* systems and the *Tonic Sol-fa*.

The cardinal mistakes made in what are known as the *Fixed Do* and the *Tonic Sol-fa* methods respectively are now almost historical. The authors of each were, probably, in a sense, worthy of statues. Both systems marred the musical escutcheon by the taint of a bar sinister.

The ignoral of the relational force of the syllables on the one hand led to their reactionary divorce altogether from the universal, visual, relational staff on the other. Action is succeeded by re-action, both, in this case, of grave and momentous import to the musical education of the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

But action and re-action must needs evolve the middle way, the course which the characteristic obstinacy of our island race has led us, as in other matters, to uphold, that, viz., in music, expressed by the words—the *Movable Do*.

Having now traced historically the play and after-play, the bound and re-bound, the action and re-action of the waves of the evolution of the great art-principle of *Relation* as applied to *Tone*, it only remains, as succinctly and temperately as possible, to assess the contribution, if any, effected towards this great development in the only distinctive *Staff Movable Do Method* recently projected on any considerable scale—and for which I am responsible—known as the *Stave Sight Singing Method*.

THE STAVE SIGHT SINGING METHOD.

Externally, the method may, perhaps, be best described by the following extract from the Sixth Report on Army Schools by the Director-General of Military Education (1896):—

“ Since 1888 instruction in singing has been made compulsory, and a system of teaching sight singing, originated by Mr. John Taylor, has been adopted with very satisfactory results. There was a public demonstration of this system at the Duke of York's Royal Military School in July of last year, in which

all the boys of the school took part. Most of the tests and exercises were very searching, and several of them were impromptu tests in time and tune combined, written on the blackboard by strangers interested in the subject. In every case the tests were correctly sung, and afforded independent and conclusive evidence that the boys of this Institution had been taught sight-singing up to and even beyond the requirements of the Education Code. A pleasing quality of voice had been cultivated, and the part-songs were correctly sung in regard to time, tune, pitch, and expression. Each of the two upper schools sang a part-song successfully at sight. These results are highly satisfactory, and prove the thoroughness and simplicity of the method of teaching singing that is being followed, with varying degrees of success, in all Army schools."

Internally, the method may fairly be defined as the first complete attempt yet made to elicit from the Staff, from the most rudimentary to the most advanced stage, its total capacity—nay, more, its singular aptitude for the exhibition and transmission to the sight singer of the great principle of *relation* as indeed the sole guide to and explanation of its general structure, character, and signs.

While conceding to the full in the published expositions of the *Stave Sight Singing Method* the necessary suggestive part played by other educational systems, I would beg to be allowed to claim distinctly for the method the following original and definite positions, viz:—

1. The discovery of a law of tonal and notational *grouping* embodied in a relational *modulator*, in the two forms termed respectively the *Stave* and the *Key Modulator*, Figs. 6 and 7, and based upon final and elemental musical and notational laws.

2. The self-contained and complete development for the first time, upon modern and universal principles of teaching, of a method of staff study, with the direct object of placing the ultimate tonal conceptions of both the vocal "part" and the complete score in the power of the average pupil, juvenile or adult.

3. The complete, though minimised enunciation, also for the first time, of the laws of direct sight singing, deduced from the analysis of the typical composers, ancient and modern.

4. The provision of a sure guide to the sight singing of *any* vocal passage whatever, expressible in notes.

5. The restoration of the staff as a whole for vocal purposes on its own universal lines.

This "confession of faith" may perhaps best be substantiated by a few words upon successively—

1. The Stave Modulator.
2. The Sol-fa Syllables.

The (Movable) Stave Modulator (Fig. 6).

NOTE.—The notes *R*, *F*, *L*, *T* are printed in *red* in the Stave Modulator.

1. The Stave Modulator (Fig. 6).

This is the central figure, the "outward and visible sign" of the Method, and it embodies a *discovery* which I cannot but regard—more especially after its practical probation under crucial conditions since 1889 in the Army Schools of the British world—as second only in importance to that of the Sol-fa syllables themselves.

I say this advisedly and, I trust, soberly and temperately. But the fact remains that, whenever used by a teacher who recognises the truth and force of the *relational principles involved*, it never fails, even in the case of very young children or under the trying conditions of common school or philanthropic class work.

The Stave Modulator consists essentially of a well-defined notational note-grouping, directly translating to the *eye* the great, two-fold psychological *ear*-grouping of scale tones (as the resultant of the relationally graded vibrational forces at work), into typically consonant and dissonant, *static* and *dynamic*, the alternation of which, at various planes of pitch, as rest and unrest, action and re action—call it what you will—is known as *music*. It is, therefore, probably the most epigrammatic *formula* in existence of music itself. This primary *æsthetic tone grouping* is shown by a difference of both colour and form.

Notationally the notes likewise arrange themselves into a well-contrasted *threefold* grouping, forming a sharp, visual *mnemonic*, whereby each scale note is seen to occupy a definite *place* in one of the three *groups*.

This scale-grouping is projected upon a *slide* or movable *slip*, upon which these fixed groups may be *moved up and down* anywhere on the staff—*i.e.*, into any space or line *key* desired.

By this means it will be seen that if any clef or signature whatever be prefixed to the universal modulator or group *formula*, the recognition, and hence, naming and *singing* of any note, is reduced to a single and simple process. Whatever the key or clef any scale-note is at once recognised by its group *place*. Thus all clefs, keys, signatures are rendered uniformly easy. There is the *one* key of the Tonic Sol-faists, but it moves into any and every staff *place*.

Seizing hold of the phenomenon of *verticality* as the simplest *eye*-translation of relative *pitch*, it is a veritable "slice out of the staff itself." No need here to set up a vertical and even then incorrect modulator to keep knocking it down again in a horizontal *notation*.

Passing on to the *second* great stage of tonal development—

modulation as expressed by *accidentals*. How is this provided for in the stave modulator?

By means of the parallel columns immediately enclosing the movable slip, *chromatics*, *enharmonics*, and *modulations* into any key whatever (by means of the *coupling* or *link-tone*) may be pointed, analysed, and taught, as shown by the several accidentals (*♯, ♭, ♮*). Moreover, an extension of the mnemonic *grouping* is effected for *all accidentals*.

Any selection desired may be introduced in graded order, of the fourteen *chromatic*, which, with the seven *diatonic* and the several *link* or *bridge-tone* relations, constitute the whole substance and body of music, tonally considered.

Provision is further made in the extreme *blank* columns to left and right of the Modulator for the, at this stage, appropriate pointing in *blank* of *transitions* into the several subordinate keys—however numerous and Wagnerian in character—through which a movement may pass; the principal key, meanwhile, being ever *present*, for purposes of *comparison*, in its one fixed seat of pitch, in the concrete, visual grouping of the central *slip*.

The ultimate disposition of all *melody* as *plagal* or *authentic* is specially indicated *notationally*—an important point—by the filled black crotchet *points*, by which any such succession may be easily handled.

By means of a careful manipulation of the pointer upon the *Stave* and *Key Modulator*, the *accents*, *durations*, and entire *figurations* of any but *bravura* passages from the simple psalm-tune onwards, and limited only by the possible speed of the pointer in tapping, can be taught by direct personal imitation of the teacher, and hence more effectively than in any other way. Thus the Method lends itself completely to the teaching of *time* or *rhythm*, the *second* great element in music.

General indications of vocal *register* and *break*, essential to the proper *control* of the voice in sight singing (but subject to the private marks of individual professors), are found in the *voice marks* on the left side of the Modulator.

Thus *voice training*, a cardinal factor of *expression*, the *third* great element in music, is for the first time systematically pressed into the service of sight singing.

The (Stationary) Key Modulator (Fig. 7).

NOTE.—In the KEY (which is a stationary form of the STAVE) MODULATOR, the threefold grouping, viz.—

Gr. II.	Gr. I.	Gr. III.
<u>T^D</u>		<u>L</u>
	S	<u>F</u>
	M	<u>R</u>
	D	

is necessarily repeated in the several line and space keys,* instead of being actually moved up and down upon a central slip.

* Keys—i.e., where lower Do comes on either a line or a space.

2. The Sol-fa Syllables.

As considerable and persistent criticism has been extended from responsible Tonic Sol-fa quarters as to the particular way in which the syllables have been developed in the Stave Sight Singing Method, it may be well to define the position taken up in this respect.

This method is pre-eminently one of restoration and development upon true evolutionary principles. No alteration is effected in nomenclature unless absolutely *necessary*, and then only in the spirit of the old and matured works of the *past*, although in perfect accord with the evolution of which that work was the fruit.

The same spirit which prompted the admission of *Si* and the substitution of *Do* for *Ut* after several centuries, and as they were *required*, has led me to retain the *old, universal, Italian* series *intact*, with the exception of Miss Glover's *Ti*, for which time may probably prove a case. The same spirit which led to the employment of the Italian *i* (whether as *Si* or *Mi*) to indicate the *upward semitone*, has led to the uniform *extension* of this to the *whole* of the sharp *chromatics* (as *Di, Ri, Fi, Sil, Li*), while, for the corresponding *flat* series, with like *uniformity*, and to utilise still further this only once heard scale vowel *e* (viz., in *Re*), the Italian *e* has been retained (as *De, Te, Le, Sel, Fe, Me, &c.*).

Yet one word more! Having traced the stream of song from its primal, aboriginal, tetrachordal rills; bearing too in remembrance the dangers of the way—the Scylla and Charybdis, typified in this our day by the Fixed *Do* rock—the Curwen pool; contemplating the infinity of the vast harmonious sea beyond; fingering the wondrous rounded pebbles of its mighty strand; in harmony with the great creational design, ere borne irresistibly along by the cosmic evolutionary tide; waiting to cross the bar—nail we in music's name to the stout, though storm-beaten mast of the relational *STAFF*, the venerable, the beautiful, the unfading colours of *the Movable Do*.

Mr. Taylor then proceeded, with the aid of a number of young army school pupil teachers, to give various illustrations of his method of sight singing from the staff.

DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIRMAN.—It seems to me to be difficult to keep out of this discussion the respective merits of the Sol-fa and the Staff Notations for sight singing purposes. If we once enter upon that question we may go on all night, and even if all the arguments are introduced that might be urged we shall very likely remain of the same opinion still. Mr. Taylor has given us a very exhaustive and learned history of the Movable Do and has claimed that the Staff sight singing method is its first complete development. That was exceedingly interesting. He omitted any reference to the Chev method in France, in which figures are substituted in place of syllables. They use the syllables there as absolute pitch names, but for sight singing purposes the figures are employed. I think that the alphabetical letters ought to be retained in this country for absolute pitch, and the Movable Do should be used for relative pitch. We have in England probably more Staff sight singing teachers who use the Fixed Do than the Movable Do. It is my lot, as examiner for Trinity College, to test pupils in sight reading, and eight out of ten use the Fixed Do.

A MEMBER.—Solo singers?

THE CHAIRMAN.—Yes. That is one great argument in this matter. Most singers can be useful if they are taught to read from the Staff, while few ever become really solo singers.

MR. W. HARDING BONNER.—There is one word I should like to say. If you retain the letter "l" after the fifth degree name it is the only one of the syllables that does not end with a vowel, and consequently children will be inclined to sing it with the tongue at the top of the mouth. Take away the "l" and you get "So," which is productive of a better quality of tone. The retention of the letter "l" I object to for singing purposes. And then as to the spelling which is intended to teach the children the Italian sounds. If I write on the board "Do" and then say "how do you pronounce that?" the answer will be "doo." If I write "Mi" they pronounce it "my." An Italian would, of course, pronounce it "me," but our English children do not learn it in that way. Then if I write "oh" everyone would give the usual English pronunciation, and hence we get "Doh, Soh," &c.

DR. MCNAUGHT.—If I were disposed to be cynical I might say that Mr. Taylor's scheme is an insidious attempt to convert us all into out-and-out Tonic Sol-faists. All the technicalities of the Staff, the lines, spaces, clefs, flats and sharps, &c., are collated in order to ascertain the Sol-fa syllable to be used. If the singer cannot find out the

Sol-fa name he is done for. This being so, the man in the street may be excused for thinking that a notation that provides him with the indispensable syllable will at least suit him best. But we all want to get the people to sing from the Staff. I agree with Mr. Taylor that for this purpose the Movable Do method is the best. I am sorry, however, that he gives little or no credit to methods and plans other than his own in pursuit of this aim. For many years I have become personally familiar with the results of excellent teaching upon the Movable Do principle all over the country, from Aberdeen to Truro. The use of this method is largely increasing. If it needs an extra shove forward, by all means give it one, but do not let us ignore the efforts of numerous teachers who have been working successfully on these lines. Mr. Taylor says that the Movable Do principle has never before been carried out fully. Here again I think he fails to give credit where it is due. The late Mr. John Curwen, in his pamphlet *The Staff Notation*, published in 1870, carries the principle out to the most difficult passages. The Chev method also similarly elaborates it; and many other teachers and singers up and down the country have applied the method to modern music. It would be very easy to find tribes of young people to sing at sight such of the tests that have been correctly sung to-day. Although I believe the Movable Do method to be on the whole the most practicable, I am unable to go so far as Mr. Taylor in depending entirely upon it in reading at sight from the Staff Notation. The complications of modulations, the accidentals of the minor keys, the use of chromatic notes that do not change the key make it very difficult for even an expert musician to determine tonality at a glance. Yet Mr. Taylor professes to be able to make ordinary pupils do this! There are many musicians in this room who would find it difficult to decide keys off-hand. I believe that you must supplement the method by an observation of intervals and a feeling for their characteristic effect. You must know that you are singing a perfect fourth, a major sixth, &c. Each interval has an effect of its own. Some of the finest sight singing I have ever heard is on this principle. I have often examined the sight singing at the Royal Academy of Music, and have frequently heard passages of extraordinary difficulty rendered perfectly on the Fixed Do method by singers entirely dependent upon the observation of interval. I feel a little puzzled as to the attitude of some musicians to the method of Sol-faing the minor mode.

THE CHAIRMAN.—Excuse me, that matter is not before the meeting.

DR. McNAUGHT.—But Mr. Taylor's method involves the

minor key-note being called "La," and we are asked to criticise this method.

The CHAIRMAN.—Not his method, but his paper.

Dr. McNAUGHT.—The paper explained the method. But I leave the point. We have heard a good deal about determining the name of the syllable, but, after all, the real difficulty is the building up of a proper association of effect with the name. Then, again, we have to take care that on a method depending for its success upon its association of name and effect, that this association shall not depend upon the utterance of the syllable. Many Tonic Sol-faists will fail to sing at sight to "laa," or words, the passage they could quite freely sing if allowed to use the Sol-fa names. This is a case of the syllables becoming masters, not slaves. I conclude by again remarking that the Movable Do method must be supplemented by a study of intervals.

Dr. MACLEAN.—There are one or two round me who would like to know when the practice of the modulator passes into the reading of the ordinary Staff Notation.

Mr. TAYLOR.—At the first lesson, taking each scale tone separately, and incorporating the whole scale in, say, from ten to twenty lessons. Why should the schools in England be starved and not allowed to practise from the first on some such simple Staff plan as this? It is done in the Duke of York's Army School. The boys there can sing from the Staff directly what boys three or four standards above them in the Board schools seldom, if ever, reach. Dr. McNaught says we do not give credit for the work done by Tonic Sol-faists. Now their system has had, through force of circumstances, a certain use, but we still find that the bulk of the children in the common schools are kept practically to the Tonic Sol-fa. Where the Tonic Sol-fa is the accepted system of Board or Government schools, in very few cases indeed do you get anything like sight reading even in the letter notation in the fourth standard and very few at the leaving standard above. Tonic Sol-fa has had an innings in Government schools for some twenty-five years, and more than £200,000 per annum is now being paid out of the public money for teaching singing in the schools. Yet the great bulk of the children, who learn the relational scale tones at seven years of age, go out of the schools even as late as twelve or thirteen years of age without even having seen the Staff at all—so far as the school is concerned. I question if many ever see even a music blackboard in the schools of the London and other Boards. Then, with regard to the *limits* of sight singing. I do not know that we should be expected to sing *any* passage at sight. We cannot always understand the meaning of involved sentences at sight, and there is a similar stage in sight singing. There is a point-

where sight singing becomes musical gymnastics. I believe every passage within the physical, vocal, and aural capacity of an individual singer can be sung, after the requisite training, at *sight*, and I further maintain that the training, when based upon the stave sight singing method, is reduced to a minimum of time. I hope I shall soon have an opportunity of bringing a choir that can sing any test.

Dr. McNAUGHT.—An individual will do.

Mr. TAYLOR.—Then I hope we shall soon be able to settle it. Now with regard to intervals. Dr. McNaught is always "coming down" upon me about intervals. The word interval is only a technical synonym for *relation*. In this sense, of course, we believe in and teach intervals. The surest way of doing so is by teaching tonal relation. The old-fashioned way of teaching abstract intervals is giving place to this wider view. Curiously enough (for a Tonic Sol-faist), Dr. McNaught maintains that the major sixth has always the same effect upon the ear; but it is not so.

Dr. McNAUGHT.—They all have the same effect of major sixth.

Mr. TAYLOR.—No, Sir; *acoustical* effect but not *musical* effect. Of the four major sixths contained in the major scale—viz., *Do-La*, *Re-Fi*, *Fa-Re*, *Sol-Mi*—each has a widely different effect from the others, owing to their mutual relation to each other and to the Tonic or Do. I do not say I do not teach intervals. Indeed, as a matter of fact, I may mention that I have written somewhat extensively upon intervals. Teach them by all means, but in a true and systematic way. The main thing is to teach the *relations*. With regard to the higher sol-faing, without doubt the great burden is thrown upon the *accidentals*. I contend that it is quite possible to sing any executable passage at sight by training based upon the study of the original semitonal (or C) Staff places, and their subsequent re-arrangement by means of the accidentals. If in my book "How to teach Sight Singing" I have omitted the theoretical study of abstract intervals in favour of the exposition of the function of the accidentals as part of the Staff structure, I have taken up that position because this theory of intervals as such, and considered without reference to scale and tonic relation, had grown so out of gear that my book was a necessary protest in this direction. I do not say I would not teach intervals *theoretically*. All that you want to teach sight singing pupils for *practical* purposes is the gradual introduction of the accidentals as chromatic or transitional notes, as effected on the "Stave modulator," and expressible in some half-dozen simple rules. With regard to the Sol-faing of the minor mode or key—there are two ways of looking at this: Tonic Sol-faists adopt the *La*, or relative minor as a basis, and no doubt the relative minor is more

simply related to the relative major than is the tonic minor to the tonic major. Ancient music seems to have been based upon the diatonic minor series containing the embedded relative major. This is evidenced by the whole bulk of musical literature up to the seventeenth century. Then when the third flat key was introduced, the effects of the alternation between major and minor upon the same tonic or *Do* were so peculiar and beautiful that the transition was seized upon and became perpetuated. We teach the *La* minor at once in the early lessons with the *Do* major. Then, when we arrive at the *chromatic* tones, the depressed third and sixth of the modern minor (viz., *Me* and *Le*) are easily taught in the ordinary course, like the other chromatic tones. Provision is thus made in the stave sight singing method for both forms, but the easiest is that of the *La*, or relative minor.

(A vote of thanks to the Chairman closed the proceedings).