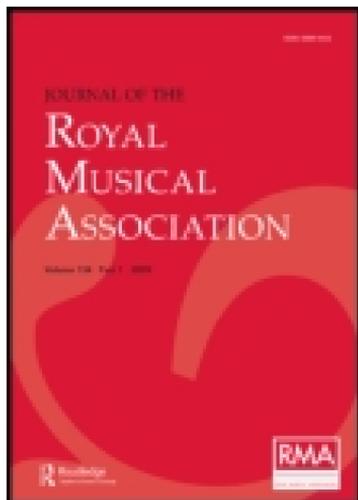


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W. G. McNaught A.R.A.M.

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JANUARY, 1893.

THE HISTORY AND USES OF THE SOL-FA SYLLABLES.

BY W. G. McNAUGHT, A.R.A.M.

THE object of this paper is to draw attention to a bye-path of musical history. The Sol-fa syllables now play an important part in elementary musical education. It may, therefore, be worth while to give a brief account of their birth and adventures.

Since the eleventh century the syllables have been used for three distinct purposes:—

1st. As names for the scale position of sounds apart from any particular pitch (as musicians use the terms Tonic, Dominant, &c.).

2nd. As pitch names (as in English speaking countries the letters C, D, E, F, &c., are used).

3rd. As voice training aids (by Solo-singing trainers in Vocalises, &c.).

We know, and our ancestors must often have felt, that one set of names cannot without confusion be used simultaneously for these three purposes. It is lamentable to observe that even to-day we seem to be remote from the time when logic and common sense will rid musical study of this incubus and inconsistency.

In the eleventh century, Guido, an Italian monk, first struck the rock from which the varied uses of the Sol-fa syllables have ever since flowed. In Guido's day there were only the beginnings of a Staff Notation. The rise and fall of sounds had been pictorially, and it would seem very indefinitely shown by neumæ placed above the words to be sung. The admitted chief use of these signs was to remind singers of passages and tunes which they had already acquired by ear. Knowing, as we do, that even to-day the Staff Notation is used in precisely the same way, we can readily accept this statement.

Then the upward and downward progression of tones and semitones in the order of our modern system was fully recognised, as far as pitch relations only were concerned, and the old Roman alphabetical nomenclature—

A, B, C, D, E, F, G,

noted the same relations, if not precisely the pitches that they do to-day. But the pitch-naming was limited to

"natural" notes, except that B flat was also noted and named. The pitch scale in use was, therefore, as follows :

A, B \flat , B, C, D, E, F, G, A, B \flat , B, C', &c.

The modern octave scale with all its inter-relations, however really *potential* in these pitches, was only dimly understood. The view of the successive pitches within an octave, that they formed so many conjunct or disjunct tetrachords—a view inherited from the Greeks—still oppressed the theory of music, and the Gregorian modes erroneously supposed to be a restoration of Greek usage were still looked upon as a sort of finality in music. Then briefly we have :

1. Mere beginnings of Staff Notation.
2. Passages of naturals, plus B flat.
3. Hexachordal views of the scale, notwithstanding the recognition of the octave system in the pitch symbols.

In this, to us, confused musical environment, Guido, anxious apparently to find some means of fixing relations of tones by the principle of association, either fitted, or, as some say, found already fitted, a hymn tune and words in which the initial notes of successive phrases of the melody ascended step by step in the hexachord C up to A. The syllables of the Latin hymn that happened to fall upon the initial notes of each line were then chosen to name the corresponding pitches. The hymn is as follows :—

HYMN TO ST. JOHN.

Ut que - ant lax - is Re - so - na - re fi - bris

Mi - - - ra ges - to - rum Fa - mu - li tu - o - rum

Sol - ve po - lu - ti La - bi - i re - a - tum Sanc - te Jo - han - nes.

Now, whether the hymn and tune already existed in this allied form, or whether Guido himself deliberately and intentionally fitted them together for the purpose of providing syllables to name the successive steps of the hexachord, it is in either case clear that the choice of particular syllables was purely accidental. Whether the syllables suggested the division into hexachords or the previously conceived hexachordal system called for only six syllables, it is beyond my purpose to discuss. No matter how it arose, the hexachordal system was a welcome advance upon the tetrachordal system, and marked an emancipation from a narrower

view of tonal relations. A point to observe here, is that the Guidonian hexachords represent a fixed *succession* of tones and semitones. Tetrachords may be of various shapes, but the Guidonian hexachords represented the tonal succession, illustrated by the first six tones of our major scale. It was an object, therefore, to express this tonal succession from as many pitches as possible, without using inflected notes. The B flat, however, was, as I have said, admitted. This permitted a hexachord to be expressed from F. By recognising a pitch below A, the relations shown by the syllables could be expressed from three different pitches—viz., (1) from the pitch below A; (2) from C; and (3) from F, the latter hexachord, of course, requiring the B flat, just as that from G required the B natural.

GUIDO'S OVER-LAPPING HEXACHORDS.

Super-Acute	}	e*	la
		d	la sol
		c	sol fa
		b ^h	mi
		b ^b	fa
		a	la mi re
Acute (middle C)	}	g	sol re ut
		f	fa ut
		e	la mi
		d	la sol re
		c	sol fa ut
		b ^h	mi
		b ^b	fa
		a	la mi re
Grave Octave (Gamma)	}	G	sol re ut
		F	fa ut
		E	la mi
		D	sol re
		C	fa ut
		B	mi
		A	re
Γ	ut		

THE COMBINATION OF LETTERS AND SYLLABLES TO NAME PITCH.

The fact that each alphabetical pitch name was one Sol-fa name in one hexachord and another Sol-fa name in another

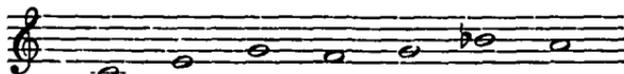
* This "e" in the super-acute part of the scale is an addition made in the fourteenth century.

hexachord, led to a curious system of identifying pitches by their alphabetical names, and all their possible Sol-fa names, a custom that was maintained up to the seventeenth century. Thus we read in Morley and other old English writers of *C-fa-ut*, *G-sol-re-ut*, &c. The note added below A was called by the Greek alphabetical G—viz., *Gamma*, and as in Guido's time, at least, this was the lowest theoretical pitch recognised, this note could only be *ut*, and in accordance with the practice of combining pitch and Sol-fa names, was, therefore, called *Gamma-ut* and the word *Gamut* was also afterwards adopted for the scale series generally. It is curious to observe that this term *Gamut* was used to describe the key of G for some time afterward. Dr. Blow, for instance, published an anthem described as being in *Gamut*.*

MUTATIONS.

It will thus be seen that in order to name what we now regard as a complete scale, or to name the notes of a melody that did not happen to be restricted to any one hexachord, it was necessary sometimes to draw upon a contiguous hexachord. The study of where, how, and when to make a change was called the study of mutations, which are practically an anticipation of Tonic Sol-fa bridge notes.

GUIDO: Ut mi sol fa - ut re fa mi



TONIC SOL-FA: d m s t d r f m

I need not describe the rules that were laid down to govern the choice of the place for a mutation. It will be enough to say that the mutations were considered a most difficult study, and it is said they were regarded by choristers as "a cross of tribulation."

THE GUIDONIAN HAND.

The process of Sol-faing was said to be simplified to some extent by the use of what is called the Guidonian Hand, although it is not at all certain that Guido invented it. I do

* Sir William Hunter, in his "The Indian Empire: Its People's History and Products" (pub. W. H. Allen, 1893), says, p. 152; "The Indian art of music (*gāndharva-veda*) was destined to exercise a wider influence. A regular system of notation had been worked out before the age of Pānini (350 B.C.) and the seven notes were designated by their initial letters. This notation passed from the Brāhmins through the Persians to Arabia, and was thence introduced into European music by Guido d'Arezzo at the beginning of the eleventh century. [Von Bohlen, "Das Alte Indien." II., 195 (1830); Benfey's "Indien" (Erche & Gruber's Encyclop., XVII., 1840); quoted by Weber, "Hist. Ind. Lit.," p. 172, footnote 315 (1878)]. Some indeed suppose that our modern word *gamut* comes, not from the Greek letter gamma, but from the Indian *gāma* (in Prākit, in Sanskrit, *grāma*), literally 'a musical scale.'"

not propose to fully explain the Hand system, because Guido's overlapping hexachords have been sufficiently dealt with for my present purpose. But it may be just as well to warn students not to take in too trustfully the first explanation of the Guidonian Hand they may light upon, because two of the most widely circulated and deservedly popular histories explain the Guidonian Hand in two contradictory ways. In "Grove's Dictionary" (p. 660, Appendix), Mr. Rockstro gives a diagram with the hexachordal syllables read in one way, and in Cassell's edition of "Naumann's History," edited by Ouseley (p. 213), the syllables are made to read in another way.

SOL-FAING AND SOLMISATION.

I now leave Guido and pass on to some later periods. I shall use the expressions "Sol-fa" syllables, "Sol-faing," and "Solmisation." Who first suggested these expressions I do not know. The fact that in mutations as in modern music *sol* and *fa* frequently become *ut* may account for the choice, but it might easily have been that to-day we should have to speak of "Sol-re" syllables and "Famisation" or "Utresation." The word "Sol-faing" was certainly in use late in the sixteenth century.

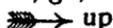
Christopher Simpson, in his "Compendium of Practical Music," dated 1677, says, apparently with indignant surprise: "I have seen songs with a flat standing in A, in B, and in E all at once; but such songs are irregular (as to which we call the *Sol-faing* of a song), being designed for instruments rather than voices."

During the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries the Church spread far and wide the practice of Sol-faing; but as the idea of the complete octave scale with its specialty of a leading note became fixed, the inadequacy of hexachordal Sol-faing became increasingly apparent. We now begin to hear of proposals to alter or add to Guido's syllables; but perhaps the most notable proposal (emanating, I believe, from Geneva, towards the end of the sixteenth century) was that the whole scale should be Sol-faed by the syllables *fa, sol, la, mi*. In that famous old book "A plain and easy Introduction to Practical music," by Thomas Morley, published in 1597, although Guido's movable overlapping hexachords are taught, it is clear that the writer has some inclination to do away with the *Ut* and to use *Fa* in its stead. Of this restricted Sol-fa system I shall speak again presently. It seems clear that on the Continent, at least, the Sol-fa names were now being freely used not only as mnemonics, but as pitch names, and as pegs on which to hang vocal exercises. The most radical change, that threatened for a time to oust the Guidonian syllables,

was that proposed by the Belgian Waelrant (known to many Choir conductors by his part-song "Hard by a fountain"), who was born in 1517, and died in 1595. He proposed an entirely new set of syllables, and his system was called Bokedisation or Bobibation. The use of this system was strongly advocated in Italy, France, and Germany, but all in vain. It was used extensively by Waelrant's countrymen, but, I believe, it is now entirely forgotten :—

WÆLRANT'S BOBIBATION OR BOCEDISATION.

be, ce, di, ga, la, mi, ni.

 up

HITZLER'S BEBISATION.

The partial success of Waelrant's Bobibation led to the proposal by Hitzler, a German musician, of a rival system called Bebisation or Labecedation. It does not, however, seem that Hitzler's plan had much success :—

HITZLER'S BEBISATION OR LABECEDATION.

la, be, ce, de, me, fe, ge.

 up

It will be observed that the various plans for new syllables make no provision for other than naturals, and that they are intended simply as pitch denominators.

Si.

About this time—viz., the end of the sixteenth century, *i.e.*, 500 years after Guido—an addition that has survived to this day was proposed and gradually accepted. The seventh syllable, Si, was added to the Guidonian six. Whether this syllable was to name a pitch or to name a scale relation is not clear, but in any case for either purpose a name was needed. The syllable is formed from the initial letters of the last two syllables of the Guidonian Hymn already quoted. The credit of suggesting it is claimed for a Netherlander, Puteanus, by some, and for a Frenchman, Lemaire, by others. Mer-sennus, the celebrated historian, who died in 1648, supports the claim of Lemaire, and he also mentions that *Za* was often used for B flat, the Si being reserved for B natural.

Ut. C'.

Si. B.

Za. B \flat .

La. A.

Sol. G.

THE FA-SOL-LA-MI METHOD.

The next development was the introduction of the method of Sol-faing known as the Fa-sol-la method. This was in use

in Geneva late in the sixteenth century, and in the early part of the seventeenth century was making way in England especially, and to some extent in Germany. In this system *Ut*, *Re*, and *Si* are entirely abandoned, and the whole scale is Sol-faed by *Fa, sol, la* twice repeated, with a *Mi* for a leading note. It is easy to see how this limitation arose out of the Guidonian tetrachordal system. Placing the hexachords side by side, they overlap just so as to lead to the choice of *Fa, sol, la*, the *Mi* showing the necessary leading note after every second hexachord. Therefore the rule was a *Mi* between twice *fa, sol, la*.

Morley's "Introduction to Music," dated 1597, makes no direct mention of this method—although, as I have already noted, his practice was tending towards its adoption—but teaches simply the six Guidonian syllables. Christopher Simpson, in his "Compendium of Music," published in 1667, makes no mention of *Si*, but alludes to the six syllables as having been used in former times, and he adds that most modern teachers consider *Ut* and *Re* superfluous, and that, therefore, they are now laid aside. The edition of John Playford's "Introduction to the Skill of Music," edited by H. Purcell, dated 1694, says that the "four syllables are quite sufficient and less burdensome to the practitioner's memory." Even in the latest of these books, while the rules for Sol-faing in keys up to three flats are given, no mention is made of sharp keys. A rhyme in Playford's book gives what seems to affect to be exhaustive rules for Sol-faing in the following words :—

If that no flat is set in B,
Then in that place standeth y' mi.
But if your B alone is flat,
Then E is mi ; be sure of that.
If both be flat, your B and E,
Then A is mi, here you may see.
If these be flat, E, A, and B,
Then mi alone doth stand on D.
If all be flat, E, A, B, D,
Then surely mi will stand in G.

In England, in 1650, it is clear from the evidence of many contemporary writers that *Ut*, *Re* had completely died out, *mi, fa, sol, fa* alone being used.

It is well known that for some time composers did not care to place more than three flats or three sharps in the signature, even when a piece was in E or A flat, and it has been conjectured that the *fa, sol, la* plan of Sol-faing may have had something to do with these omissions. In the case of a piece really in A flat, but written with the signature of E flat, the newest essential flat would have to be plainly shown, and the unusual place for *fah* strongly emphasised.

Playford's rhymes provided no rules for sharp keys. This omission was striking, because the music of his time was certainly sometimes written in sharp keys.

Later than Playford an addition was made to his rhyming rules to meet the case of keys with sharps in the signature. The new rhymes are as follows :

Learn this, and learn it well by rote,
That mi is aye the sharpest note,
For if a sharp on F be set
To call that mi do not forget.

And if another on C be found,
Remember there your mi to sound,
And if one more be set on G,
Then in that place will stand your mi.

If all be sharp, F, C, G, D,
Then mi alone will stand in D.

Another point worth observation is, that in all these books no provision is made for accidental sharpening or flattening beyond the calling a new flat "*fa*," and a new sharp "*mi*." In 1686, however, a curious book was published in London, anonymously, called: "A New and Easie Method to learn to Sing by Book," in which a new set of syllables compounded from the alphabetical names and the Guidonian syllables is used, and modified names for sharps and flats are proposed, so far as I know, for the first time in the history of a Sol-fa system. The writer says: "That so few persons (out of cathedrals) understand Prick-song, a main reason is the obscurity and confusion in the method commonly taught, wherein the following particulars make it a long drudgery to attain proficiency :

"1. At first sight we have presented a long bead-roll of hard and useless names to be conned backward and forward in the Gam-ut.

"2. When this drudgery is over, follows a worse, to learn the differing names of the notes, according to the several places of Mi, which in each cliff hath three several stations, being one while in B, another while in E, another while in A, the other names (*Fa*, *Sol*, *La*) attending its motions.

"3. When you are past these two, and can name your notes three manner of ways, you are yet to seek for the chief thing, the tuning of them, if you have not a master at hand to lead you with his voice or instrument.

"4. A fourth difficulty arises from the many cliffs, which no less than seven ways change the places of the notes upon the lines and spaces, and makes it a most tedious thing to be perfect in all, or but some of them."

Further, Fa \sharp is to be called *fay*, and C \sharp *cay*. But these modifications wholly referred to pitch, the whole system

being the earliest Fixed Do method, with inflected syllables for sharps and flats, I am able to trace.

I now turn to the Continent, where during the latter part of the seventeenth century the complete Guidonian syllables, plus Si, were again in almost universal use, but chiefly to name pitch and not scale relations. Numerous systems of syllables were proposed only to be rejected. But one proposal made, it is said, by G. B. Doni, a learned Italian theorist who died in 1669, was lucky enough to command so much support that to-day many millions of persons are perhaps more familiar with the one syllable proposed by Doni than any of the original Guidonian syllables. The proposal arose out of the objection that was felt to the sound of *Ut* in vocal exercises. As a substitute, Doni, or his friends for him, proposed the first syllable of his name *Do*, and it is said that the second syllable *Ni* was suggested as a name for the seventh of the scale of C. It is interesting to reflect that if the last proposal had been as successful as the first, Tonic Sol-faists would to-day most probably be using *Ni* for the seventh of the major scale, and *Na* for its flat, because their sole reason for altering Si to Te is to avoid the initial S already used for the fifth of the major scale.

Do was soon adopted in almost every country in Europe, the only notable exception being France, where to this day *Ut* is generally used as a Sol-fa name for C, and as a name for the major key-note in the Chev  system. But Raymondi, a Frenchman, who has distinguished himself by his writings on the notation of music, constantly uses the syllable *Do* in his "Critical Examples of Musical Notation," published in France in 1856.

The next fact to notice in the history of the syllables is the employment of only initial letters.* This practice is found in the old black letter Bibles of the early part of the seventeenth century, the initials being shown under the Staff Notation notes in order that the singer might know what syllable to use in Sol-faing.

The most notable incident of the early part of the following, *i.e.*, the eighteenth century, was the proposal made by Graun (1701—1755) to substitute another set of syllables altogether—viz.,

da, me, ni, po, tu, la, ba,
 up.

The use of these syllables was called *Damenisation*. Their practice, however, was purely local and soon died out. That they were invented at all in the interests of vocalisation is a renewed proof that for this purpose the Guidonian syllables

* See extract from Sir William Hunter's "The Indian Empire," quoted on p. 38.

were not considered to be adapted. Did they serve any sight-singing purpose at this time? I think they were very little used in this connection. To the extent sight-singing was cultivated on the Continent in these days the syllables must have afforded aid in only the most elementary exercises. When they had served this purpose, attention was given to intervals and pitch, and reliance was placed upon natural abilities and abundant experience. In the conception of an interval the singer no more relied upon a mnemonic connection between syllable and sound than any of us do when we sing to words.

All this, systematised, instead of being picked up at random, is practically the Hullah method and the Hullah treatment of the syllables. The syllables are theoretical names for things, but they are not, and are not intended to be aids to conceptions, such, for instance, as Tonic Sol-faists make them.

Consequent upon the use of the syllables as pitch names, the need for the differentiation of naturals, flats, and sharps was felt—not so much in the interests of vocalisation, in the course of which the singer would have only more to remember, without gaining any compensating advantage, but chiefly in the interests of musical theory.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the alphabetical names for pitch, A, B, C, &c., were dropping out of use in Italy and France, but Germany and England still retained them: Germany gradually abandoning altogether the Guidonian syllables, and England using them concurrently with the alphabetical series.

In 1746 an anonymous writer in Italy suggested names for pitches between the naturals:

Pa	Bo	Tu	De	No
C—D	D—E	F—G	G—A	A—B

and the scheme was approved and adopted by eminent musicians, but it did not long survive its proposal. In 1768 Serva advocated a new set of names distinguishing sharp from flat, and abolishing Guido's names entirely,

\natural	Ca	Da	Ae	Fa	Ga	A	Ba
\sharp	Ce	De	E	Fe	Go	Ao	Be
\flat	Ci	Di	Oe	Fi	Si	Au	Bi

but this again failed to obtain support, and so the old syllables continued to do duty for naturals, flats, and sharps.

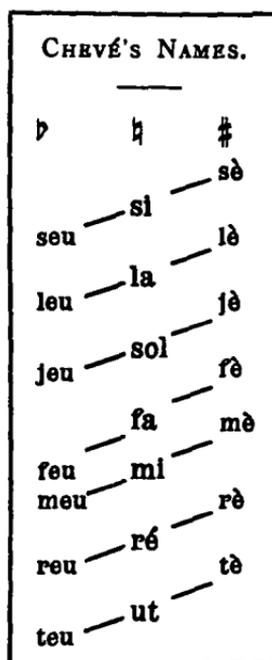
In England, at this time, the complete series *Do—Si*, movable and fixed, was being used, side by side with the movable limited series (*fa, sol, la, mi*), and numerous other plans, mostly movable in principle, were advocated and practised.

The next event of importance, measured at least by its ultimate effect, was the introduction, by Wilhem, of a method of practising singing in class, in Paris, about 1815. Wilhem's method brought no new usage of the Sol-fa syllables into vogue. The current use of the syllables in France as fixed pitch symbols was adopted just as it was found. The specialty of Wilhem's method was not the employment of syllables, but rather in the details of the organisation of the classes, each pupil helping less competent pupils, and in a systematic arrangement of the musical facts to be taught. Wilhem died in 1842. But far more important in its after results than even Wilhem's method, was the comparatively obscure publication, in 1835, of Miss Glover's "Scheme for rendering Psalmody Congregational." The leading points of Miss Glover's system were: 1st, The complete divorce of the syllables from the ordinary Notation and the construction of an independent Notation formed from the initial letters of the syllables; and 2nd, The use of a diagram displaying the scale pictorially, just as in these days Tonic Sol-faists show scale relations on their modulator. Amongst the other alterations in the syllables proposed by Miss Glover it will be observed that TE is substituted for SI in naming the seventh of the scale:—

MISS GLOVER'S NAMES.	
	Doh
	Te
(b7 th) Cole	<i>Minor.</i>
	Lah Lah
(b6 th) Gah	Ne
	Sole
(#4 th) Tu	Bah
	Fah
	Me Me
	Ray
	Doh

Another highly systematised use of the syllables was also being evolved in France during the early part of this century

on the system known as the Chev  method. This method is founded upon the figure notation suggested by Rousseau. The major key tone is shown by the figure 1 and the other tones of the scale by successive numbers descending. The most curious point, however, is that the figures are named not as numbers, but by the Sol-fa syllables, and in accordance with the usage of France the old syllable *Ut* is retained. The figures form a purely tonic notation and all the chromatic tones of the scale are specially named :—



In order that some later developments of the use of the syllables may be more easily understood, the publication in Paris, early in the present century, of a book entitled "Music Simplified," must be noted. It was written by a French professor of music named Berneval, and an English edition is dedicated to Lord Burghersh, who was one of the first promoters of the Royal Academy of Music. I believe Berneval was for some time a teacher in the Academy, but I cannot vouch for this. The great features of Berneval's simplification of music were the prominence he gave to the study of the peculiar properties of scale sounds and his contention that it was quite unnecessary to burden the attention and memory of a beginner by studying intervals. He says :—

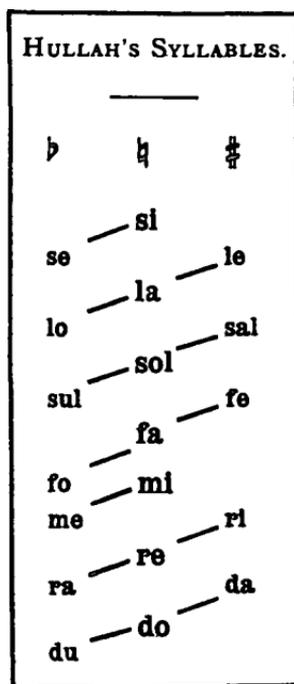
“The Monogamic method is distinguished from all others by several characteristics. The first that will strike you is, that, instead of beginning, as other methods generally do, by the study of the *Intervals*, our system commences with the *Properties* of sounds. . . . The pupil is generally taught the *Intervals* when his ear is yet unprepared to appreciate or retain them. . . . There are only seven sounds. Each of those sounds differs from all the rest in its manner of affecting the ear; therein consists its *property*. There are consequently only *seven* properties to study, and we in no wise trouble ourselves with the intervals, whose number of major and minor combinations are interminable. The properties of the sounds are to the ear what those of colours are to the eye. . . . There is but one gamut or scale, for all are constructed after the same model. Our knowledge of one applies to all the rest. Once acquainted with the properties of the tonic, the mediant, the dominant, the sensible or leading note, &c., you know all the scales, since, however burdened such scales may be with sharps and flats, the same *seven* properties are therein reproduced at corresponding degrees. Music contains no more, and change the name as you please, the fact remains the same.”

Here then we have the Tonic Sol-fa doctrine of mental effect. It is true that Berneval did not systematically ally these effects with the Sol-fa syllables, and it might appear, therefore, to be out of place for his theory to be explained in this paper. It will, however, be seen presently that Berneval's ideas were very materially connected with the syllables at a later period.

I have now to consider the use made of the syllables by two of the best known musical educationists of the present century—viz., John Hullah and John Curwen.

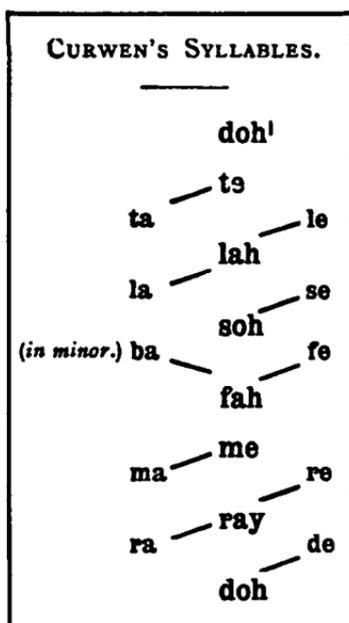
The influentially supported scheme of John Hullah, dating from 1841, was intended to popularise music by means of singing classes. The method employed set aside all the previous movable Do usage of the country and substituted a systematic development of the somewhat indistinct Continental usage, in which the Sol-fa syllables were only roughly used as mnemonics, the independent characterisation of intervals being the guiding principle. The syllables were simply something to say and became practically merely the names of lines and spaces or of pitches. Mr. Hullah, in his “Time and Tune,” says that the syllables “are now useful in enabling the singer to concentrate his whole attention on the musical symbol before him, and in naming it to give his teacher the only possible guarantee that he is doing so.” In fact, so completely are the syllables, as it were, degraded, that no attempt was made in Hullah's earlier books to differentiate the names for naturals, sharps, and flats. *Do*

to *Sol* might stand for several different pitches and several different intervals. But later, in 1875, Hullah thought fit to add a set of names for the sharps and flats. They are as follows :



If the Hullah or Fixed Do system may be considered to involve the degradation of the syllables, the system advocated by John Curwen may be described as their apotheosis. Curwen got the first suggestions of an independent letter notation and of the upright diagram of the scale and its relations direct from Miss Glover. To this he added the doctrines of the properties of scale sounds or of mental effect taught as already described by Berneval. The syllables were now to stand for the names of conceptions and sensations—the Tonic Sol-faist living, moving, and having his being by their means.

It is not part of my present design to describe the notation adopted and partly invented by John Curwen. It is enough to point out that the law of association of syllable and effect is utilised by Tonic Sol-faists to the extreme point of its availability. Each diatonic note and each chromatic inflection has its own special name, and changes of key of every conceivable degree are expressed by a blend of syllables.



The new spelling was adopted because it was considered the best means of conveying to English speaking people the pronunciation intended. The original selection of Guidonian syllables was entirely arbitrary and accidental. There seemed, therefore, no good reason why the modern spelling should not be altered if the alterations proposed could be shown to be useful.

Many other new schemes of naming or of modifying the old Guidonian syllables have been from time to time proposed, but as they have had so little vogue they may as well continue in obscurity. It is not at all likely that any fresh usage of any practical importance will gain popularity. Considering how extremely difficult it is to alter habits of nomenclature, it is too much to hope that musical Europe will some day agree to separate pitch-denominators from scale-tone denominators. Both facts must in some way be named by the advanced as well as by the elementary student. As it is we find that the Sol-fa syllables are used to name both absolute pitch and position in scale. In this country, at least, where movable Do is so extensively used, it would certainly be a great advantage if we could agree to allow the alphabetical names to stand for pitch and the Sol-fa names for scale-sounds.

DISCUSSION.

AFTER a few remarks from the CHAIRMAN, Mr. CUMMINGS said: It is an extremely interesting task this tracing back the history of the Sol-fa Notation. I quite agree with the practical solution which Mr. McNaught proposes and suggests, that of retaining the Sol-fa syllables for the scale and keeping the letters for the pitch. It is a curious thing that there seems to be nothing new under the sun. As in everything else, so in music. We look back, and I venture to say the farther we look back the more we are astonished. In this book, published by John Day in 1576, we have a movable Do, but using the old Ut of the time, and we find in the preface a very early use of the word Sol-faing. The curious part of this book is this, it contains a process which I think we consider absolutely modern; I refer to the letter note system, for here we have the Sol-fa names against the side of the notes. We think that the use of numbers for the notes is rather new. Mr. McNaught mentioned it just now. In 1560 there was published a book in Lyons, using the Sol-fa system, together with the actual notes and the numbers. The book of 1567, which I have here, is interesting as showing that the movable Do has always been common in this country. And the little seventeenth century book Mr. McNaught referred to, "A new and easie method to learn to sing by book," very clearly shows this. On page 29 it says: "The names of the lines and spaces are easily remembered, without the trouble that arises from the confused shifting of sol, la, mi, fa, *in the old way*." It is worthy of note, in passing, that this book suggests that the best way of learning to sing is by listening to bells, and tuning the voice to the bells. I am afraid the bells in these days would land us into some difficulty if we had to tune our voices by them. I may remark that it is very doubtful what Guido did invent or discover. Then, again, as to the re-discovery of the movable Do and Tonic Sol-fa System—I went to St. Paul's Cathedral about 1840—I received my first lessons on the Gamut, though I confess it was not until recent years that I understood what it meant. I learnt it by heart, but knew very little about it. I may also say that up to the time I left St. Paul's School, in 1842, I was taught Tonic Sol-fa from Dr. Nares's book, with the movable Do, so that the thing had never really died out.

Mr. Cummings then proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. McNaught, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. McNAUGHT, in acknowledging the vote of thanks, said: I should not like it to be thought that I have said one word to disparage Mr. Curwen's work. Mr. Curwen

did not invent a great deal. But his insight was so practical, that he gathered together all that was useful, and his great work consisted in the methodising of the arrangement of the educational material. He did not invent the movable Do, he did not invent the theory of the mental effect of scale sounds; but he made it possible to express everything in modern music by means of the syllables. Since I have been in the room I have been told that Mr. Curwen invented the name *Te* for the seventh of the major scale, and that Miss Glover used it at the suggestion of Mr. Curwen. I have never heard or seen this stated before, and I desire to mention that fact.*

* The statement that Mr. Curwen invented the name *Te* was made in error, and was afterwards privately withdrawn by the gentleman who made it at the meeting.
