
The
Legitimate Use of the Imagination
and its Value to the
Music Student

By MRS. CROSBY ADAMS

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It is a widely accepted fact that "the imaginative asset is given us in the child at the outset of his mental development." Granted that such is the case,—and who will disprove it—it is our duty as educators to furnish the child for his every stage of development with literary and musical food of the highest standard, that this rare imaginative faculty shall be carefully nourished with what will minister to his needs, and thus form for him finer ideals. We all know those natures, who are utterly lacking in the power to imagine the beauties of nature, those whose lives are more or less colorless because no "star-dust" has clung to their eyelashes, those whose minds are so matter-of-fact that a poem of appealing beauty leaves them untouched. It is impossible for them to enter upon much that life holds because of this very lack of fancy. The child who comes to his music lessons, without any of this imagination of which I am speaking, will be quite likely to play his piano studies and pieces without a trace of beautiful tone-coloring and go through all of his music in a more or less mechanical way. Such natures need most careful and sympathetic direction that new avenues to their souls may be opened.

This booklet is not a dissertation on this subject, but rather, the assembling of a few poems, that, at various stages of the pupil's development have been found of great value in stimulating and quickening the imagination, and thus helping the child to more truly interpret his message of music.

First of all, let us consider the child's early territory of pure imaginative ground—the realm of the fairies. It is not so many years ago since the direct question was put to us by Maude Adams in "Peter Pan," as to whether we believed in fairies! Do you not recall the waving of handkerchiefs indicating the affirmative answer? No one was the worse for this retracing of adult steps back through the childhood days when all the world was lighted with true imagination.

I recall trying to bring into a little pupil's experience, a certain musical quality of playing. She was a very undemonstrative child, whose home duties in the care of other children had crowded out very much real playtime delights. Her tone was colorless and the work quite mechanical. I said to her one day, "Margery, could you write me a little essay about "Puck?" At once her eyes brightened and she said she would try. At her next lesson she brought the following.

"Puck was one of those little fairies that every one loves. He was as quick and nimble as a little squirrel. He loved all the wood-folk and all the wood-folk loved him.

The little sprite was more like Ariel than any other fairy, but unlike Ariel he was not