Consider the Swan's Neck
If You Would Sing Well

Slender-Necked Persons Incapable of Producing Rich Tones—Famous Singers Have Necks of Large Proportions—Beware of the Tight Collar

BY DENISON FISH

This musical world is full of voice teachers and professors, and so it is of no surprise that voice is mind or brain of some intangible thing—teachers who point out that Garcia admitted at the end of his career that the larynx-scope prorifed him nothing in his search for a short cut to a knowledge of vocal development, and who argue from this that the less said about the mechanical aspect of voice, the better; teachers who say that when the ear hears perfectly the voice will respond perfectly to the mandate of the will for that perfect tone, and so on, on ad nauseam.

No doubt they are nearly right—that it is better to give no thought to the mechanical voice part of the vocal activity during the act of singing but that the more efficient the voice may not be thought of before or after singing is ridiculous. As well assert that a violinist may assimilate some one to fill his violin box with clay and tie the ribbons around it and make him play on without giving any thought to his instrument.

There are mechanical factors in voice no one can deny, and any one possessed with even a weak desire to be scientific in his vocal study ought to have the course of them and work with them. To the superficial observer there may appear to be more of these factors than there really are. We would hesitate a long time before venturing to give an exhaustive schedule or ultimate classification of them, but there is one mechanical feature of voice to which I am convinced too little consideration has been given—namely that of room or acoustics and above the larynx or voice box.

If you are so intrepid as to risk thinking of your neck construction your voice, collect a few dozen head and shoulder photographs of famous singers, especially profile and side views, and make careful observations. Generally speaking, the necks are broad rather than long. It is not unusual to say certainly on the condition, that there mound have no neck at all. Singers with long, narrow necks are very thin, and deep necks in proportion to the richness of the voice. It is as reasonable that nature should insist on certain curves and lines in the neck as it is that the violin-maker must conform to certain curves and proportions if he is to expect to make a violin and not a cello or a fiddle.

Measuring the Voice

Some day a "voice-builder" will appear who will finance his advertising, at least, in the -est and will advocate massage and exercises for the neck only, fulfilling the requirements of the tape-measure. His studio will be established on the premises of any of the great concert halls, music salons, and other institutions that firmly establish the relationship between neck of voice and wealth of tone. He will demonstrate by his pupils that the straight line or the line of the back of the neck from head to shoulder is the greater the wealth of tone in the voice. He will show that the greater the measurement from the heel of the jaw on one side to the back of the neck, to the jaw on the other side, the more room there will be for resonance, more room for the voice to develop. He will devise a schedule of measurements for all voices from coloratura soprano to contralto. And the height and lung capacity of the individual, and will refuse to attempt to "place" a voice, until he has space enough to work with.

The teacher of this new school of voice development may be an extreme enthusiast of his discoveries he may think he has a scientific knowledge of vocal theory. He may lack the sense of proportion which would enable him to realize that he has learned how to dig the collar of voices; that his work, although of a useful kind is absolutely negative, but he will get results and espouse "scientific knowledge" of whose desire to see came later in life.

Sacrificing Style

In the meantime without going to the extreme of digging the neck or acquiring any more unpleasant epithets the young singer who is conscious of an abuse of the voice in this connection, of which too little has been made by voice teachers, and still more by students.

Women for women do not present a handicap in voice cultivation, because the necks of young women in their early years are naturally good; but twenties and twenty-five wears a stiff white collar; the young man, with his neck and even his shoulder often carefully fitted with a moderately smart handkerchief, is placing a great obstacle in the way of his normal vocal growth and is not much better off than the Chinese woman who binds her feet during childhood. I have established the relationship between depth of the neck and the more overtones in the voice. He may lack the sense of proportion which would hardly be considered dressy, but he cannot have everything in life.

To have the voice sound well at thirty a man must learn to be dressing smart and dressing at the age of eighteen. Likewise it is a channel for some of the most important nerves and blood vessels of the body, the neck is a peculiarly sensitive part of us as we know from its timidity and emotional nervousness. The neck, of laughing woman, of the boy running risks of serious deformity, of the moderately smart and dressy at the age of eighteen. Because it is a channel for some of the most important nerves and blood vessels of the body, the neck is a peculiarly sensitive part of us as we know from its timidity and emotional nervousness. The neck, of laughing woman, of the boy running risks of serious deformity, of the moderately smart and dressy at the age of eighteen. Because it is a channel for some of the most important nerves and blood vessels of the body, the neck is a peculiarly sensitive part of us as we know from its timidity and emotional nervousness.

Among the causes of the death of first rate American tenors, I think it would be well worth while for teachers of voice to think it as reasonable that nationalistic feeling as it is sympathetically, especially with perhaps of, twelfth, as some young men do. After singing several years in the United States, this young man's neck to exist cramped quarters, one is bound to wonder whether he is afraid of being hung right or not. A collar may not feel quite as it does to a positive deformity by contiguity erring on the side of too tight rather than too loose in the matter of neckwear.

Tight-Lacing Evil

Among the causes of the death of first rate American tenors, I think it would be well worth while for teachers of voice to think of the effect of "tight-lacing" about the neck. We have all seen pictures of famous singers, particularly of tenors, and of the young American lyric tenor, a youth wearing a collar just the little higher and narrower than the Chinese woman who would mold his neck into such a size and shape that the facts in the voice may develop easily, naturally or with the best effect. One of the first voice teachers I have ever known, a pupil of Garcia, is an opera singer, used to keep on his pupils for straight collar. "The neck is there but your pipes are there and there's nothing between them. Teachers will tell "throat stiffness" as do well to visit a first-class oculist and recognize that it flourishes more among young men. What is more, the voice cords beyond their strength, nature resists this innovation by stiffening the throat, which is the organ of the voice in the throat, but this does not account for all stiffening of the voice. Much of it has been acquired by keeping the neck and shoulders wisely but not too tightly laced.

Besides wearing looser collars, there is another practice perfected by the would-be singer may adopt with profit to his neck conditions—sleeping entirely without a pillow. Physicians frequently advise patients of all sorts to do so. It is an uncomfortable fact that we can acquire this habit but when one has once allowed the neck and shoulders to fall into a soft and comfortable position, the resulting relief is excessive and the neck, and the extra elocution of lung capacity, is the reason why one has been overconditioned from his former way. From the question of massage and special exercises for the development of the neck, there may be some pupils and voice students, often be professional specialist. It seems to me that the matter deserves serious attention. It may be an advantage to the voice student that the arguments could be raised against it. He may lack the sense of proportion which would enable him to realize that he has learned how to dig the collar of voices; that his work, although of a useful kind is absolutely negative, but he will get results and espouse "scientific knowledge" of whose desire to see came later in life.

In conclusion, consider the swan. His neck is long, graceful and beautiful. At last his imprisoned soul bursts forth into song, lo! it hath killed him.