

MUSIC TEACHERS.

FIFTH DAY'S CONFERENCE.

"MUSIC IN THE STATE SCHOOLS."

The conference of music teachers was continued at the Elder Conservatorium on Friday. A large number attended.

Professor Harold Davies, Mus. Doc., stated that the Public Examinations Board had recommended that in future both in junior and senior grades of the colleges music be recognised as a subject.

Mr. F. L. Gratton, Supervisor of Music for the Education Department, delivered an address on "Music in the State Schools." He said in the primary and high schools they had about 80,000 children, who were taught by about 2,000 teachers. In addition to the usual school subjects these children received regular instruction in singing and musical theory. It was of the utmost importance that the training in music should be on correct lines from the beginning, also that those who taught it should be properly equipped for their work. In teaching music in the schools they endeavored to accomplish the following aims:—1. To train children to sing sweetly and tunefully, and to develop their voices by suitable exercises. 2. To use singing as an aid to physical development, and as a means of brightening the daily routine of school. 3. To inculcate a love for music and a desire for further study of the "divine art." 4. To give children such a knowledge of music as would enable them later on to take part effectively in the work of church choirs and choral societies. And 5. To familiarise children with the best national songs, as an aid to the development of a spirit of patriotism. In order to achieve these aims, they gave the teachers a comprehensive training in music. Student teachers had necessarily so many subjects to study that only a limited amount of time could be spent in musical work. Still, much could be accomplished, even in the little time available. Many teachers had been educated at public schools, where, amongst other things, they were taught the correct use of the voice, the theory and practice of tonic sol-fa, and staff notation, part singing, and musical interpretation. That training was continued as far as possible in the State high schools, and was supplemented later on by a more detailed course in music at the Teachers' College.

At that institution there were at present about 300 students, all of whom received instruction in the essentials of music. They were prepared for several examinations in music, and instructed in voice culture, and the teaching of singing. Special attention was given to the practice of unaccompanied part-singing. It was impossible at present to combine all the students for part-song practice (except on rare occasions), but even in small groups effective work was being done. A collection of part songs for mixed voices recently published by the Education Department, was most helpful in connection with that work. In order to encourage teachers to reach a higher standard in music and in teaching of singing a special course was inaugurated a few years ago. That was divided into four groups, each of which was considered equivalent to a pass in one or more University subjects. The requirements of those groups included advanced examinations in the theory and practice of sol-fa and staff notation, harmony, composition, instrumental music, and school choir training. The adoption of that scheme had enabled many teachers to qualify for promotion by specialising in their favorite subject, and had also caused a considerable improvement in the musical work of many schools. Lectures were given from time to time in various centres, and classes of instruction were held at frequent intervals. At those meetings practical demonstrations of correct methods of voice culture, &c., were given, usually with the aid of a class of children from the nearest school.

The teaching of music was largely on a tonic sol-fa basis, but children in the higher grades were also taught to sing from the staff by sol-fa-ing the notes on the "movable doh" system. The constant use of the sol-fa syllables was of great assistance in voice-training, as those syllables were naturally vocal, and helped to produce clear, open tone in singing. By means of modulators of various kinds, charts, and manual signs, &c., the children were taught to sing any of the ordinary intervals used in music, and to recognise the various tones of the scale (in relation to the key-note) when sung or played by their teachers. In the matter of voice training they aimed at the production of clear, pure tone, free from all harshness or straining. Breathing and voice exercises were practised regularly, and the children were shown how to use the "head voice" for all the higher tones of the scale. The sweet and tuneful singing of the thousand voice children's

choir at the annual decoration concert afforded fine evidence of the good work done by the teachers. In all the schools attention was given to the development of the rhythmic faculty of children. That training was begun in the kindergarten department, where the children practised suitable games and other rhythmic exercises, and were taught to "keep-step," beat time, and to give the proper degree of accent to each note. Children in the higher grades were taught to use the time names for all ordinary rhythms, and were trained to beat time correctly while singing their songs and other vocal exercises. In that matter an attempt was made to counteract the somewhat pernicious influence of the "ragtime" and "jazz" music which was heard so frequently nowadays. During the last few years special efforts had been made to encourage children to sing alone, without undue self-consciousness or embarrassment. Children had also been induced to try for easy examinations in singing at sight from sol-fa and the staff. More than 4,000 music certificates of various kinds had been gained by children attending the primary and high schools. Many beautiful voices had been discovered in that way, and much unsuspected talent for music had been revealed. The chief feature of the musical work in the schools was the practicing of songs, which were freely used for recreative purposes, and as a means of expression.

Suitable songs were published in the "Children's Hour," and many others were easily obtainable. In most schools those songs were rendered with much sweetness and expression, with due attention to light and shade, pure tone, and clear enunciation. The children were encouraged to identify themselves as far as possible with their songs, and to endeavor to interpret the composer's meaning intelligently. In the upper grades rounds and other part-songs were practised. Those songs were often used as a break in the daily routine. Special attention was given to the maintenance of pitch, and the children were trained to become independent of instrumental accompaniments, as far as possible. The singing of the well-known "Thousand Voice Choir" at the Exhibition Concerts, might well be termed the highest achievement of the musical work of their schools. Those concerts were generally regarded as one of the most important musical events of the year. The results achieved were a splendid testimony to the skill and patience of their teachers and the musical ability of the children. It would be an excellent thing if a conference of those who directed the musical work of public schools in the various parts of the Commonwealth could be held as soon as possible. At present there was not much uniformity in the matter. Each State had its own music curriculum, and its own methods of training school teachers. Those methods coincided to a certain extent, but it would lead to much greater efficiency if some uniform system were adopted. One result of such a meeting would probably be that within a comparatively short time the teaching of music in Australian schools would prepare children much more adequately than at present for the vocal or instrumental music which many of them took up after leaving school.

It was resolved that "This Conference is of opinion that the system of tonic sol-fa should be applied at the earliest possible stage of the pupils' training to the staff notation."

Uniformity of Pitch.

Mr. W. H. Foote delivered an address on "Uniformity of pitch," and suggested that the following resolution be passed:—"That the Conference of Music Teachers, in the interests of musical education, strongly recommends the adoption of a uniform low pitch, and that the music houses of this State be asked, as a first step, to authorise their tuners, as soon as possible, to bring all instruments under their hands to the standard of A. 435 at 60 degrees."

The motion was agreed to.

Registration of Music Teachers.

Professor Davies, in opening the afternoon session, said they were to have a discussion which would be introduced by Mr. E. E. Mitchell, on the question of the registration of music teachers. At present they had no system, no form of organisation, and no recognised legal status. If they could get a well-considered system of registration they would secure those things, and would also have the strength of unity. Valid qualifications would then be insisted on. At present there were all kinds of credentials, valid and invalid. With such a system as they desired all degrees, diplomas, &c., would appear in their right light. He referred to the advantages of a chartered as compared with an unchartered institution. At present irresponsible and unauthorised bodies of "colleges" could grant diplomas. Some examining bodies were not worthy of the respect of any teacher of music. Here Dr. Davies read an extract from a musical periodical to show that one institution granted the use of certain letters after the name, with the right to wear

a hood and gown, for the payment of 10-6 a year or £5 5/ for life, provided the subscriptions were not in arrears. (Laughter.) He commended to their notice a little book entitled "Music Examinations" (Curwen), and assured them that if they read it they would get "an eye-opener." A musical magazine, referring to a certain class of "guilds" and "colleges" mentioned that one such institution turned out 1,400 "examinees" to teach "in their respective districts, bearing after their names letters indistinguishable by the general public from those indicating diplomas conferred by the Royal Academy or the Royal College," and that was but one of many such colleges. Dr. Davies pointed out that the Royal Academy and the Royal College of Music were chartered institutions, and that Trinity College worked under the aegis of the London University. Their diplomas represented valid qualifications, and they decreed that all musical diplomas should have the stamp of some properly-authorised institution behind them. (Applause.)

Address by Mr. Mitchell.

Mr. Mitchell, in dealing with the questions of registration, said in other directions the need of registration was amply recognised, as for instance in the medical and the dental professions. An attempt to practise either of these callings without due registration would be not only illegal, but would cause the offender to be regarded by the better informed and more discriminating of the people as outside the pale of recognition. That, however, was not always so. For many years a long-suffering public endured severe disabilities and discomforts, including loss of money, ruined health, and sometimes sacrifice of life itself, because of misplaced trust in incompetent and unworthy practitioners. Gradually the bitter lessons of experience led to a more enlightened public opinion, and the flagrant abuses so grievously endured could be tolerated no longer. Legal enactments were framed and carried into effect by which it first became necessary for those desiring to practise, to show the requisite knowledge, and to demonstrate sufficient skill in its exercise. Unquestionably the results had been the betterment of the people. At first it must have seemed that the new restrictions entailed some hardship and loss to certain individuals, whose freedom of action was thereby limited, but, notwithstanding that, all would agree that the greatest good of the greatest number was wisely served under the new regime. The legal profession, too, was not so easy of entrance as once it was, and in schools and colleges, as a rule, the necessary qualifications must be possessed by those who would be teachers. Indeed, it might be averred

with regard to education, as in many other matters, that the trend of public opinion was toward the insistence upon a certified capacity to do those things which were professed to be done. Surely music, also, the queen of the arts, was worthy of the highest degree of efficient service.

In the interests of those who were to be taught, it would be conceded that the educational equipment of the teacher was imperative. Never before had there been so many who had sought at least a nodding acquaintance with music. Nor had there been so many earnest students of the glorious art, whose insistent demand for higher musical culture called for special qualifications on the part of those who should provide it. Music ranked as one of the greatest arts, if not the greatest of all the arts, and its high priests had taken place with the foremost of the world's geniuses. A wisely-framed statute would ensure that fully trained teachers would be available throughout the student's course, and would remove the anomaly of young students, who had themselves only passed one or two elementary or intermediate examinations, undertaking the responsible task of instructing beginners. Unfortunately, it was often found that so-called teaching had resulted, not only in pecuniary loss, but in irremediable sacri-

fice of time, so that an entirely new foundation had to be laid before any edifice of educational value could be erected. Suitable registration should obviate this. All who sought to enrol would be required to demonstrate their ability to teach music, not only to perform it. Such an Act of Registration would result in the improved status of capable teachers of music, whose equipment necessarily had cost large expenditure of time and money; and who, under present conditions, often experienced difficulty in securing adequate remuneration. Registration would give improved standing to the competent, and would minimise inefficient instruction.

A few years ago some of the more prominent music teachers of the State had discussed the matter fully, and decided to ask Parliament for an Act of voluntary (in preference to one of compulsory) registration. Nothing was gained just then beyond the opportunity to state the position, but it was thought by many that the present was an opportune time to revive the question. The enforcement of a compulsory Act, with penal clauses, would no doubt be too drastic a measure; possibly it would entail some hardship. They did not desire that. The proposal, therefore, was for voluntary registration on the two-fold basis of knowledge and ability to teach, both of which must eventually be the subjects of examination at the hands of a Registration Board, to be appointed by the Government. Further, there should be two grades of registration—"certificated teacher" and "certificated teacher, advanced grade"—so that it might be possible for younger teachers, recently out of studentship, to qualify more quickly for the right to practise in an elementary way. The first operation of the

Act would be the enrolment of all teachers who had previously been in practice for a period of, say, six months. No examination would be required for that, but it was suggested that the right of free enrolment should be limited to a period of 12 months, and that all who availed themselves thereof should be ranked as duly registered teachers. From that time onward, however, none would be entitled to register without first submitting their qualifications to the board, and, if necessary, undergoing the examinations prescribed to test their fitness. The fullest grace would thus be extended to all who desired to be included in the Government registration list, so that no one could with fairness make complaint on the score of injustice.

Mr. Mitchell dealt with the possible objections to the proposal, and pointed out that if voluntary registration should prove after trial to be less advantageous than was hoped it would prepare the way for a more vigorous measure. (Applause.)

Dr. Davies said all those who had been actively engaged in the work of teaching music should be entitled to enrol without examination, but in the case of persons under, say, 25 years of age, who had not already duly qualified, the registration should be provisional. They should be allowed three years in which to prepare for examination, and at the end of that period they should be required to show that they possessed the necessary qualification for their work. That would not be a hardship, and it would be an advantage to the young teachers themselves. (Applause.)

On the motion of Mr. Brewster-Jones, seconded by Captain King, it was resolved, "That this conference of music teachers affirms the desirability of closer association and organisation for the purpose of furthering the matter of registration and other interests of the teachers of music, and that a committee be formed for this purpose."

The following committee was elected:—Dr. Ruby Davy, Misses Angelita Davy, Mrs. Bae, Miss E. Willmore, Mus. Bac., Miss Agnes Sterry, Mr. Brewster-Jones, Captain King, and Mr. W. H. Foote, A.R.A.M.

Violin Recital.

The closing concert of the series was given in the Elder Hall during the afternoon by Miss Sylvia Whittington, A.M.U.A., who was accompanied on the piano by Mr. George Pearce. The popular young violinist opened a programme of considerable artistic merit by a performance of "Sonata in D major" (Handel) the two movements, largo maestoso-allegro and larghetto-allegro, were presented in the accomplished style which always characterises Miss Whittington's work. The Mendelssohn concerto in E minor, opus 64, for violin, made an educational as well as a pleasing contribution, and served to illustrate the player's artistic perception as well as her executive skill. In the final bracket an equally meritorious standard was maintained. The items were:—Allegretto (Bocherini-Kreisler), Siciliano (Bach-Auer), Serenade (Perger), Berceuse (Mendelssohn), and Tambourin Canotier (Kreisler). Cordial applause indicated how highly the audience esteemed the performance of each number.

This morning Miss Agnes Sterry will deliver a lecture, with demonstrations, on "Aural Culture."



Mr. E. E. Mitchell.