

MUSIC STUDENTS AND THEIR WORK.



CELEBRATED teacher of singing was recently asked by one of his pupils whether he would advise her to adopt singing as a profession and to appear in public. The lady who asked the question had a

fine voice, a very correct ear, she sang with taste and feeling and—a not unimportant item—she had a very good appearance. But in spite of all these advantages the answer she received was not encouraging.

“I should not advise anyone to adopt music as a profession,” said her master, “unless it were the case of a Patti or a Rubinstein. A lesser star may succeed or may not, but success is assured for none, unless they are of the first magnitude and brilliancy. For one singer who is paid well for performing at a concert or a party, there are five who are badly paid or who are not paid at all. Many are willing to sing or play for five shillings, and have to bear their own expenses of dress and cab hire. Others appear without a fee just to get known, and some actually pay for the privilege of performing. If they fail as public performers, the means by which they may earn a living are very limited, far more so than is the case with art students.”

Up to the present the pupil has taken her master's words to heart, and whilst delighting her friends with her charming singing, has not ventured to appear before the cold critical public.

A single lamp would not be equal to lighting up the Albert Hall, but it can illuminate a drawing-room very creditably, and whilst thus fulfilling its moderate vocation, it cannot be accused of hiding its light under a bushel. The general public is not sympathetic. Before most people go to a concert or an oratorio, they arrange in their own minds a certain standard for the performers, and if they do not meet with all they expect, they are coldly supercilious if not actually indignant. That the performers may need helping with friendly interest, careful attention, or due appreciation is a matter that does not concern them. That they may be suffering from ill-health, nervousness, fatigue, is again of no moment.

A few weeks ago I was horribly annoyed all through a very good concert by two people in the row behind. They kept up a continual chatter of dissatisfied criticism. In vain, as far as they were concerned, did a pianist of world-wide reputation perform magnificently. In vain did one of the most charming soprano singers of the day exert her talents. All fell flat on the bored, exhausted young man and the affected little woman with whom he was talking. The lady was evidently much impressed with the scathing criticisms of her companion, and encouraged him from time to time with admiring giggles. When he had at last condemned a famous baritone as “utterly wanting in soul,” the lady gave him a playful tap with her fan and said, “I don't believe you admire anything.”

“No, I don't think I do,” assented the bored being listlessly, as his heavy eyelids drooped over his lack-lustre eyes. “My life is a continual series of negative impressions!”

Mercifully, all listeners do not express their dissatisfaction with such inconsiderate discourtesy, but are content to remain silent, if they do not trouble to applaud. Those who are thinking of a public career should think well of what they may have to endure, and consider whether their confidence in their own powers will lead them to control the nervousness which such treatment as I have described

will accelerate. There are several well-known performers who declare that they always feel a certain nervousness on first facing the audience, but this wears off as they proceed, because they forget themselves in their work. In most cases nervousness is overcome after a time, and those who can sing or play to a roomful of people without embarrassment, are able to do so before a large audience.

Very great nervousness is a distinct bar to success, as, even if it is overcome sufficiently to allow the performance to be given satisfactorily, the continual effort of suppressing it is too great a strain. A certain lady pianist, well known amongst musicians for the talent and charm of her performances, has had to give up playing in public as she finds it impossible to overcome the paralysing terror that besets her when she faces a large audience.

Similar instances might be mentioned. If a child shows sufficient promise, it is best to arrange for the possibility of a public career when it is quite young and so familiarise it with the idea, and to plan its education with this end in view. Those who have the charge of musically-gifted children should not omit to provide as good a general education as possible. A lack of general knowledge is a great obstacle in any career; and a want of mental balance is unavoidable where one sense alone is under cultivation. Artistic training stimulates the imagination, but it should be accompanied by other forms of culture, or all the faculties are not duly trained. An education that is arranged solely from an artistic standpoint will have the same effect on the mental faculties that would be seen in the physical if one were continually to exercise the arms with dumb-bells, but were to tie up the feet and go about in a bath chair instead of walking.

Again, youthful talent should be cultivated but not overstrained, or the mental and physical energies will be worn out before they are matured. A grown person will often accomplish results in one hour which it would take a child three to produce. The mental powers of the latter being immature, it is not capable of continued intelligent effort, but after a time works mechanically, and in this way instinct and taste become dulled.

Infant prodigies are generally the comets of a season or two. Whilst many musical geniuses have been infant prodigies, it is certain that all infant prodigies are not musical geniuses. The case of “Master Betty” has had many parallels in the world of music.

Excellent musical training can be had in this country, and there is no longer any necessity to go abroad for tuition. The Royal Academy of Music, Tenterden Street, Hanover Square, is the oldest and best known of our music colleges. It was founded as long ago as 1822. The present principal is Sir Alexander Mackenzie, successor to Sir George Macfarren. Sir Alexander is well known as a composer.

All students wishing to join the Academy have to pass an entrance examination in whatever subject they wish to pursue as a principal study. If they are not up to a certain standard, they are not admitted. This is the only musical college in England that makes this stipulation, the reason being that the Academy is intended for those wishing to adopt music as a profession, and not for amateurs.

The greater number of the many scholarships awarded are intended for those who have been students here for some time; but some are entrance scholarships and entitle the successful candidate to free tuition. Candidates for the latter must never have been pupils at

any school of music; all enter the competition as amateurs. Amongst such are the Parepa Rosa Scholarship for singers, which entitles the winner to two years' tuition; the Sir John Goss Scholarship for chorister boys, the examination for which is held at the Royal College of Organists and gives the holder three years' tuition; the Welsh Scholarship founded by the Queen's celebrated harpist, John Thomas, and named after him. Candidates for this may be either vocalists or instrumentalists but must all be of Welsh birth or parentage.

The Erard Scholarship is also amongst those open to amateurs. It was founded in celebration of the centenary of Messrs. Erard's business, and offers three years' tuition to any candidate of either sex who may be considered by the examining board likely to become a successful pianist.

For the examination for most of these scholarships a fee of half a guinea or a guinea is required. The ages of candidates must in all cases be under twenty-two, and in some cases eighteen is the limit.

Amongst the openings for students at the Academy is the Westmoreland Scholarship, founded in memory of the Earl of Westmoreland, by whose exertions the Academy was instituted.

The amount offered is about nine guineas, which will be appropriated towards the cost of a year's instruction. It is for male and female candidates in alternate years.

The Potter Exhibition for piano-playing, the Sterndale Bennett Scholarship for male students in any branch of music, the Thalberg Scholarship for pianists of either sex, the Henry Smart Scholarship for organ-playing and composition, are all open to students, some every year and others biennially or triennially.

Ordinary students who are not trying for entrance by means of a scholarship are examined on the day before each term begins, the fee for this being a guinea. They are examined in the order in which they arrive, so those who go there early act wisely, for, as they will not have long to wait, their courage will not have so long a time to ooze out of their finger-tips. Oddly enough, relations of candidates are often more nervous than the candidates themselves. I remember seeing the father of a girl turn so white when he heard his daughter begin to play in the adjoining room that everyone thought he was going to faint, but the lady herself came to and returned from the ordeal with perfect self-possession.

If the applicant is successful, the fee is considered as part payment of her first term's tuition. Paying students are admitted at any age. The term fees for the ordinary routine of study are eleven guineas a term. The ordinary curriculum includes two lessons a week of half an hour each in the principal study and one in the secondary study; one lesson a week in class on the elements of music or in harmony, or in composition after attaining the requisite grade in harmony; one hour a week of sight singing and musical dictation and of choral singing. Elocution for vocalists and orchestral playing for those considered sufficiently advanced are also included in the curriculum. There are also classes for stage dancing and deportment, dramatic and operatic classes; fencing, languages and English literature are also taught, but for all these subjects there are extra fees varying from fifteen shillings to four guineas a term.

Students' concerts are held every fortnight. Morning dress is worn both by performers and audience. The concert-room of the Academy is on the plan of a concert hall, with a good big platform and a gallery round it. The

annual performances of the operatic class are held here also.

During his last visit to England, and shortly before his death, Abbé Liszt visited the Academy and played to the students, to their extreme delight.

It was a charming sight to see the old musician responding smilingly to the enthusiastic plaudits of the students. His appearance on the platform was the signal for a perfect shower of primroses which were thrown from all directions; these were gathered into big heaps and piled on each side of the piano before he sat down to play. He gave a never-to-be-forgotten performance of one of his own pieces and those of his admirers who had not already heard him, realised the beauties of his work as they had never done before.

Besides the scholarships offered at the Academy, there are no less than twenty-four prizes which are competed for annually by the students. Amongst these there are the Charles Lucas Prize for composition, Messrs. Tubbs Prize for violin-playing, and the Ridley Memorial Prize for teaching. These prizes are all in money and are accompanied in some cases by a medal as well. Medals and prizes are all given away at the annual distribution, which takes place in Queen's Hall at the end of July.

H.R.H. the Duchess of York graciously consented to give away the prizes for 1898. In an admirable speech the Principal alluded amongst other matters to the steady progress which the "Student's Aid Fund" was making. This is an admirable institution, which other colleges would do well to imitate. I shall venture to quote a few words addressed particularly to those students who were about to leave their Alma Mater; in their shrewd, kindly common-sense they are an invaluable guide to those about to adopt music as a profession.

"You enter the Academy," said Sir Alexander, "so to speak as clay—very fine clay, I doubt not; you leave it as vessels—of graceful form and shape, I believe—bearing upon you still the marks of the potter's thumb—first-rate potters, I know. But the baking process in the fierce heat and experience of public opinion you have yet to undergo, and it is our earnest wish that you may bear it without—cracking!"

The list of professors is a long one, and includes such well-known and honoured names as Randegger, Tosti, Shakespeare, Béringer, Walter Fitton, Sauret, and many others too numerous to mention. Amongst very excellent teachers of singing, Madame Agnes Larkcom's name stands high for the skill and perseverance with which she develops the voices of those under her care and the excellent style and method which she imparts to them.

Amongst old students of the Academy whose names are now famous are Hilda Wilson, Mademoiselle Bauermeister, Ben Davies, Edward German, Fred Cowen, and many others. It is not generally known that Miss Julia Neilson was for some time at the Academy before she went on the stage. She has a very lovely mezzo-soprano voice and was the Westmoreland Scholar of 1886. Amongst present students who bid fair to do honour to their place of training, Miss Elsie Horne has won many distinctions for her admirable pianoforte playing and composition. Miss Lilian Coomber, recently a pupil of Madame Larkcom, sang with great success at one of the Crystal Palace concerts. At the latest "Students' Concert" Miss Marguerite Elzy, a pianist, played Liszt's Concerto in E flat for piano and orchestra, and proved herself a pianist of merit. She has an admirable touch and plays with much feeling, and her technique combines delicacy, strength and fluency. The Associated Board of the Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music hold local examinations annually in instrumental music, singing

and harmony. Those who pass these examinations with honours are eligible for the six exhibitions founded to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee. Three of these grant tuition at the College of Music and three at the Academy.

The Royal College of Music was founded in 1884. It is a handsome building in Prince Consort Road, South Kensington. The director is Sir Hubert Parry, and he is assisted by an admirable teaching staff. Amongst the professors we find Signor Randegger, Mr. Garcia, Mr. Visetti, Miss Anna Williams and others. The celebrated composer, Dr. Villiers Stanford, conducts the orchestra and trains the students in composition. Sir Walter Parratt, Dr. Gladstone and Mr. James Alcock teach the organ. Signor Arbos and Mr. Gompertz the violin, and so on.

The full list is too long to detail, but it comprises many of the best known teachers of the day.

The scholarships of the College of Music are of two kinds, free open scholarships and free close or local scholarships.

The former are open to all within certain stated ages. Candidates are selected at local preliminary examinations, and only those who attain a certain standard will be allowed to go in for the final competition which is held in February or March at the college. Close scholarships are limited to the residents of certain specified localities. Some of the close scholarships are for Colonials; such are the Victoria and Montreal scholarships and so on; in these cases the local examination is final.

Scholarships at the College of Music are not limited to certain specified subjects as at the Academy. That is to say, pianoforte, singing and violin students here often compete together, and the one who is considered to show the highest measure of excellence is selected, whereas at the Academy a particular scholarship will be limited to either vocalists, instrumentalists, or composers. Certain exhibitions have also been founded which are competed for annually; these are mostly in the form of money, which is applied to the reduction of fees.

The entrance examination fee is two guineas. Anyone can become a student at the College; the examination is only held with the view of ascertaining under which professor you will study and how you will be "graded."

The fees are twelve guineas a term for the first three years, and after that eight guineas a term. There is an upper school and a lower school. Many of the students in the lower school are very young indeed. Lessons are taken in conjunction with two other pupils and are individually twenty minutes each; this rule applies to both primary and secondary studies. Class lessons are given weekly in choral singing, orchestral practice, harmony and so on, as at the Academy of Music. No pupils at the College of Music or at the Academy are allowed to accept any public engagement without the sanction of the Principal.

A very gifted young composer, whose work has been received with warmest approbation by the most severe musical critics, was, until recently, a pupil of this college. I allude to Mr. Coleridge Taylor, who studied composition under Professor Villiers Stanford, and whose beautiful cantata, "Hiawatha's Wedding," was given on a recent festival with brilliant success. The work was given for the first time in London at a students' concert held at the College of Music on November 11th, 1898, before a large audience, amongst whom were Sir Anthur Sullivan and many celebrated musicians. The music is most fascinating and seizes the imagination at every turn.

The orchestral practice is a very special feature of the college work and meets with well-deserved admiration. The fame of Dr. Stanford as a composer and conductor is well

known, and all students privileged to work under him appreciate their good fortune. His personal magnetism has its due effect on the playing of those under him, for he contrives whilst directing their efforts to impart to his pupils a considerable share of enthusiasm which he guides with unflinching taste and judgment.

The students of the operatic class perform an opera once a year. They gave Wagner's "Flying Dutchman" at the Lyceum Theatre on December 9th, 1898. Both orchestra and singers won great praise for the successful way in which they mastered the difficulties of the intricate music.

The Guildhall School of Music, established by the Corporation of London in 1880, is conducted on principles that are slightly different from those of the two institutions we have been considering. A complete musical education may be obtained, or it is possible to take up one subject only if desired. There are no inclusive fees, but each subject is paid for separately, and the fees vary according to the professor chosen and the length of the lesson, which may be either twenty or thirty minutes. Various scholarships and prizes are competed for annually, the Corporation of London and various City companies having been very generous in these matters.

Examinations are held at the end of each term for those who desire them. Examinations for the associateship are held in each July; only those who have been in the school for nine terms are eligible for this degree. All examinations are both practical and theoretical. Frances Allitsen, the composer of many well-known and beautiful songs, won the Lady Knight Prize in 1882. The composer of the cantata "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," Mr. Walthew, was a pupil of this school and won the Mitchell Prize in 1889. Classes are held here for all the subjects taught at the Royal College and the Royal Academy. The list of professors includes many well-known names, amongst which we find that of Professor Prout for harmony and composition, Mr. Ganz, Mr. H. Sims Reeves, and Mr. Frank Moir for singing, Mr. Claudius Coudery and Chevalier E. Bach for pianoforte, Mr. Hollander, Mr. Johannes Woolf, and Mr. A. Gibson for the violin, and so on. Amongst professors of singing special mention must be made of Madame Bessie Cox, who is well known amongst musicians for her admirable method of voice production. There are special professors at the Guildhall School and the Royal College for accompaniment, a fact of which many intending students of music should take note. Many excellent pianists make poor accompanists, and as in the end many of them are obliged to earn their living by playing accompaniments at concerts, it is as well to master the difficulties of the work in good time.

At Trinity College, Mandeville Place, students can be prepared for the public examinations at the universities and for the diplomas awarded by the College itself. These are as follows:—(a) The diploma of Associate and Licentiate in Music of Trinity College, London (A.Mus. T.C.L. and L.Mus.T.C.L.); (b) Higher examinations for certificates in separate subjects, both theoretical and practical, including the positions of A.T.C.L. and L.T.C.L. (pianist), ditto (organist), ditto (vocalist); (c) Local examinations in musical knowledge.

Scholarships are competed for annually as at the other musical colleges. Students have the option of taking a single subject or of paying a compounding fee entitling them to four studies. Organ teaching and composition are the special features of Trinity College, and these subjects are taught by Professor Turpin, the leading organist of the day.

Trinity College was the first music school to send examining boards to the colonies.

FLORENCE SOPHIE DAVSON.