

THE MUSIC EXAMINATIONS.

To the Editor.

Sir—In "The Advertiser" of July 31 appeared a letter addressed by Professor Ives to the University Council, dealing with the music examinations. That communication is characteristically specious so that those not fully cognizant of the facts may perhaps regard it as meriting the council's approval. However, it would be easy, if I had nothing better to do, to show the fallacy of many of the statements contained therein. This, I think, is worth neither time nor trouble, for it is too obvious that the council, as at present constituted, will listen to no one but to Professor Ives. The members of the musical profession in Adelaide have gone out of their way to obtain a better understanding with the University, and the general consensus of opinion seems to be that we have established an incontrovertible case. We asked plainly for the removal of an examiner necessarily interested in the candidates who were prepared by the institution, for which he is responsible. Professor Ives did indeed assert at the recent so-called "conference" that he never hears the students of the Conservatorium play; that he does not know them individually; that he knows nothing of their progress, and only signs their terminal reports because he has confidence in the accuracy of the memoranda certified to by their individual teachers. If these statements be true, your readers will agree with me that the director's supervision of the working of the staff is hardly as keen and thorough as might be desired. They will also agree that if he is not interested in the success of Conservatorium students at examinations, he certainly should be. But this is by the way. If our request for the removal of an examiner especially interested in the students referred to is not admitted by the council to be an equitable and just request, then that body affords an excellent illustration of Professor Ives's Spanish proverb, "Every weak man finds someone to tyrannise over him." It appears indeed the professor of music can have his own way, whatever the board of musical studies may or may not advise. Why do they trouble to make a recommendation? Is not such a board superfluous? Is not Professor Ives sufficient? Evidently more than enough, for the council ignores the board's recommendation, and accepts the plausible letter as perfectly satisfactory. The retirement of the director of the Conservatorium from this year's tests is of course the correct thing, but it has come too late to enable many candidates to change their intentions as to the particular examination for which they shall enter. How many school-girls could in the three available months prepare the requisite music? Probably, as the result of the director's withdrawal, the number of entries will be somewhat increased this year, but if some definite assurance is not soon given by the council that the future examinations will be conducted under such conditions that full confidence in them is restored, the University authorities will find that their grave blunder has resulted in the widening of the breach, and in an increasing annual loss of some hundreds of pounds. If they will not provide a system of examinations such as to meet with general acceptance, that is their business, but we teachers will find what we need elsewhere.—I am, &c.,

ERNEST E. MITCHELL.
Woodville, August 1, 1900.

THE UNIVERSITY MUSICAL EXAMINATIONS.

As a result of the conference with the local teachers of music, held at the Adelaide University on Tuesday evening, July 3—a full report of which appeared in "The Register" of the following day—the Council of the University has decided upon a course of action that it is believed will remove the chief objections to the system of musical examinations pointed out on that occasion. This decision will, in all probability, be forwarded to the teachers to-day. We understand that after the conference the Board of Musical Studies discussed the suggestions put forth by the local profession, and decided that it would be wise for Professor Ives to retire from his position of examiner in practice of music while he was connected with the Elder Conservatorium. The Professor, however, differed from his colleagues in this matter, and addressed a long letter to the Council, in which arguments are set forth to justify his retaining the office. He states that in the examinations conducted by the Royal Academy, Royal College of Music, and the Guildhall School members of the teaching staff are called upon to act as examiners, and that in each case students of the various institutions are at liberty to attend for examination, and that the conditions are exactly the same as at the public examinations in music. The Professor's chief contention, however, is that those teachers who took a leading part in the conference were actuated by another motive—"That of undermining the influence of those thought to be responsible for the starting of the Elder Conservatorium, and thus striking a blow at that institution which is groundlessly thought to be in rivalry with the personal interests of music teachers. This was shown by the spirit of bitter antagonism to the Conservatorium displayed by the chief speakers at the conference, by their seeking to impose conditions limiting the usefulness of the Conservatorium to young musicians, and by their request to be represented upon the Board entrusted with the management of its affairs." Later on he observes—"You have already tied the hands of the Director of the Elder Conservatorium by saying he shall not teach in the Conservatorium, thus shutting off from music students the advantage of instruction from him. You now threaten to cut off from yourselves the advantages of his higher powers of discerning between the good or indifferent in the abilities of others, thus establishing the principle that the services of the Professors in this University shall not be available for examinations." We understand that at a meeting of the Council at which the matter was considered it was decided to adhere to the decision of 1898, which practically affirmed that every confidence was felt in Professor Ives, and that he was to examine as heretofore. On being acquainted with this decision the Professor wrote to the Chancellor desiring that the Council would refrain from asking him to examine in practice of music this year, and "thus afford teachers of music opportunities to show the sincerity of their expressed desire to use the University scheme of public examinations in music in preference to those of other foreign and less responsible institutions."

The agitation—that of undermining the influence of those thought to be responsible for the starting of the Elder Conservatorium, and thus striking a blow at that institution which is groundlessly thought to be in rivalry with the personal interests of music teachers. This was shown by the spirit of bitter antagonism to the Conservatorium displayed by the chief speakers at the conference, by their seeking to impose conditions limiting the usefulness of the Conservatorium to young musicians, and by their request to be represented upon the board entrusted with the management of its affairs. Was it wise, then, for the board to comply with demands made in such manner, and with such ultimate purpose? Will the concession of principle made rather from fear of a more serious than from sense of right (in the light of the precedents to which I have alluded) be likely to lead to that peace which the board evidently seeks for? I have no hesitation in affirming that the adoption of such a policy will be equally ineffective and mischievous. An old Spanish proverb says, "Every weak man finds someone to tyrannise over him," and you may be sure that a weak concession to demands proved to be unreasonable and obviously prompted by an unfriendly spirit towards a certain department of the University, will only encourage those who have been successful in forcing it, to further demands in the near future. Much as we may regret it, I fear we must always expect some opposition from teachers, who, unfortunately, regard the Conservatorium as their established rival. Would it not have been more dignified for the Board of Musical Studies to have recognised this fact, and while lamenting it, to have decided to do that which is right, and not merely that which seemed expedient—to have openly met public opinion upon the point, to have shown the fallacy of the reasoning upon which that opinion may have been formed—and to have insisted upon following procedures that are established by the chief musical institutions of England? I am not unmindful of the good feeling that evidently prompted the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor, and other members of the Board of Musical Studies to seek to persuade me to make peace by agreeing to this surrender. On the contrary, I would assure you that I highly value the friendly sentiments expressed towards me by the members of the board. It is only because I am sure that peace will not ensue that I feel it to be my duty to protest vigorously against a policy that I hope will reveal itself to you as weak and unworthy of adoption. You have already tied the hands of the director of the Elder Conservatorium by saying he shall not teach in the Conservatorium, thus shutting off from music students the advantage of instruction from him. You now threaten to cut off from yourselves the advantages of his higher powers of discerning between the good or indifferent in the abilities of others, thus establishing the principle that the services of the Professors in this University shall not be available for examinations, and, worse still, you also threaten to take from the whole University one of its highest functions, that of conducting examinations in music and exerting an influence among those who are working in the field of musical education outside the walls of the University, by handing over to a foreign institution our scheme of public examinations in music. Will the outside world regard these departures from long established customs and functions as indicative of progress in our University life, or will it regard them in a different light? It is because these considerations give me ground for grave apprehensions as to our future that I venture to trouble you with this long epistle.

The council at its last meeting resolved to adhere to the resolutions it passed in 1898, and Professor Ives has virtually ended the difficulty by writing to the Chancellor as follows:—

"I am much pleased at learning that my letter to you protesting against certain resolutions lately passed by the board of musical studies has not been written in vain, and that by refusing to adopt those resolutions the council has affirmed the views I expressed as to the principles involved. The protest I felt it my duty to make having attained its object, I feel it equally incumbent upon me now to help the council to meet a difficulty which the re-affirmation of its former resolution involves. I have therefore to ask the council to refrain from asking me to act as examiner at the next examination in the practice of music, and thus afford teachers of music opportunity to show the sincerity of their expressed desire to use the University scheme of public examinations in music in preference to those of other foreign and less responsible institutions."

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MUSIC AND THE UNIVERSITY.

In the spirit in which the English Supreme Court once dismissed an appeal from a County Court Judge on the ground that while the verdict was sound the reasoning upon which His Honor arrived at it was altogether wrong, Professor Ives may be congratulated upon his determination not to act in connection with the University examinations for music. As a matter of public principle, the question should be discussed calmly and without personalities. The point to which the University Council does not seem to have paid sufficient attention is that while it may be unobjectionable for a Professor to be a member of a Board of Examiners in respect to his own students while they are not in competition with aspirants from rival institutions, it is far from desirable that he should occupy the position in other circumstances.

Though it is a pity that Professor Ives did not adorn his act of self-denial with a little more of the charm of magnanimity and the grace of tact, yet his excellent resolution calls for a redress of what now becomes a just grievance—that he is precluded from giving his students the benefit of his personal tuition and skill and experience. Unfortunately, the withdrawal of the Professor from the examining body comes too late this year to affect the entries for the ensuing examinations, and before the sincerity of the private teachers can be tested in the matter it is necessary that the note of discord should give place to more harmonious relations

between the official head and the members of the profession. Obviously the right thing to be done is for the University Council to translate the true sentiment of Mr. Ives into a declaration of consistent principle, by which the singular position which the Professor of Music occupies as the Director of a competing school is properly differentiated from the University Professors generally. Otherwise it may be found the settlement of the difficulty is upon too uncertain a basis to be productive of a permanent peace within the musical borders, while the relation of the Board of Musical Studies may be misunderstood outside.