

A MUSICAL REVOLUTION.

ADOPTION OF "NORMAL PITCH."

IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS.

On Thursday morning Dr. Matthew J. Ennis (Elder Professor of Music at the Conservatorium of Adelaide), accompanied by Professor Franklin S. Peterson (Director of the Conservatorium at the University of Melbourne) interviewed the Acting Director of Education (Mr. M. M. Maughan) in order to urge upon him the adoption of the "normal pitch" in music, which is universally acknowledged throughout the Continent of Europe. At Mr. Maughan's suggestion Mr. A. Clark (headmaster of Sturt Street State School and director of State school concerts) attended the interview, and he was able to give valuable support to the arguments of the professors. At its conclusion a representative of The Register waited upon Professors Ennis and Peterson.

—Australia Leads the Way.—

Dr. Ennis said he had informed Mr. Maughan that the Minister of Education in Victoria (Mr. A. O. Sachse) had agreed to Professor Peterson's suggestion to adopt the "normal pitch" throughout all institutions under the control of the department, thus taking the first step within the British Empire toward a desirable, and actually inevitable, reform. Professor Peterson told the reporter that the reform is one which will undoubtedly be recognised at once by all musicians, especially by teachers of singing.

—What is the "Normal Pitch?"—

To explain the matter briefly to the lay mind, the pitch of musical notes has been gradually raised since the days of Handel, until we are now singing and playing fully a tone above musicians of that date, and yet calling each note by the same term. For instance, the faraway D in alt., to which so many aspire to shriek, was a much easier task in the old days, because, although called by the same name, it was in reality pitched a full tone lower. Even in Beethoven's time the pitch was at least a semitone below our present concert pitch. As the result of a series of conferences in Europe, ranging from 1856 to 1898, unanimity has at last been arrived at, so far as the Continent itself is concerned. A uniform pitch has been adopted. Technically, it is that A is to equal 435 vibrations to the second at a certain temperature. That must, without question, become a universal point. Yet Great Britain has officially turned its back upon it. Only officially, however, for all the best orchestras in the United Kingdom have adopted the "normal pitch," despite the ultimatum of the War Office that the "normal pitch" is not to be taken up by military and other official bands. As a matter of fact, the reason is almost certainly that the question of cost stands in the way. It would mean that the bands would have to purchase new instruments. Brass and wood-wind instruments cannot be accurately reduced to the lower pitch as is possible with the pianoforte and stringed instruments. New instruments will have to be purchased. That is a matter of national evolution, however, and it cannot be expected that the "normal pitch" will be everywhere recognised for orchestras and bands as readily as for the human voice. In the latter case it is merely a question of the official recognition of a "normal pitch" tuning fork. Music teachers and some unfortunate top-note-straining pupils will be glad of the change.

—The Cost.—

Victoria, as has already been indicated, has adopted the normal pitch. All the State institutions have lowered their basis by the required full tone from concert pitch. The cost of the change to the University of Melbourne (in new instruments, among other ways) was over £200. Of this £56 has been contributed by an English firm of musical instrument makers, and no better proof of the way in which the subject appeals to practical musicians could be given than by emphasizing the fact that Madame Melba has just given, unsolicited, a cheque of £50 for the same purpose. The cost to the Education Department in South Australia, as in Victoria, will be absolutely nil. The reform

will not be so drastic here either as in the neighbour State, on account of the general use, under Mr. Clark's direction, of low-pitched tuning forks in State schools. Undoubtedly the change is one which every person interested in music will hail with great satisfaction, for surely no such important reform was ever instituted with so little dissension or strife.

—The Practical Effect.—

Mr. Maughan eventually expressed himself to Professors Ennis and Peterson as thoroughly satisfied of the desirableness of the reform, which he assured them would be carried out as far as his regime was concerned. The practical effect beyond the State school circles will assuredly be that all important musically educational institutions must adopt the "normal pitch." Teachers, students, and private citizens generally may now insist upon having their instruments tuned to the same pitch which prevails—or soon will—in all other parts of the musical world.

Register Sept. 25th. 1907

DEATH OF MR. JOSEPH FISHER.

General regret will be felt at the announcement of the death of Mr. Joseph Fisher, one of the pioneer colonists of South Australia. During the past few days Mr. Fisher suffered from an attack of influenza. On Thursday the malady assumed a serious form, and he passed away on the evening of that day.

The late Mr. Fisher was born at Brig-house, Yorkshire, on September 14, 1834, and came with his parents to South Australia four years later in the Pestonjee Bomanjee, in which Governor Gawler arrived. His father took up his residence at the corner of Hindley and Morphett streets, and it was his son's pride to the end of his life that he had lived within five miles of Adelaide ever since his arrival in South Australia. After his education at Mr. J. W. Disher's School, in 1846 Mr. Fisher obtained a situation in Mr. Anthony Forster's mercantile office in Tavistock street. He afterwards joined the commercial department of The Register and Observer, under Mr. John Stephens, who was at that time sole proprietor. In May, 1853, The Register was purchased by a proprietary, of which Mr. Fisher was a member, and he remained at the head of the commercial department until September 30, 1865, when he sold his interest to Mr. John Howard Clark, who subsequently became editor of The Register. Since that time Mr. Fisher had not been actively engaged in any business, but had managed his own affairs and for some years attended to numerous agencies, notably that of Mr. John Ridley, the inventor of the reaping machine. He visited England five times, and spent holidays in New Zealand and the various States of the Commonwealth. In 1868 Mr. Fisher was elected to represent Sturt in the House of Assembly, but did not seek re-election after Sir James Fergusson dissolved the Parliament in 1870. Three years afterward, however, he was chosen by the whole province as a member of the Legislative Council, and retained his seat until 1881. When the term expired he sought re-election, but was defeated, and never again attempted to re-enter public life. Mr. Fisher was connected with a number of public companies and financial institutions, having been a director of the Bank of Adelaide for about 20 years, and during part of the time its Chairman. He had also been Chairman of the Port Adelaide Dock Company and the Adelaide Marine Insurance Company. At the time of his death he was a director of the South Australian Gas Company, and had a seat on the directorate of the South Australian Company. Mr. Fisher was Chairman of the local board of the Mortgage Company of South Australia. The company went into liquidation in 1905, and Mr. Fisher acted for it until the appointment of an attorney in March, 1906. He was always greatly interested in cricket, and was a Vice-President of the Cricketing Association for nearly a quarter of a century. A particularly interesting fact in Mr. Fisher's life was that he was part owner of the ship *Hesperus*, one of the finest clippers that ever traded between Australia and England, which was subsequently sold for use as a training ship for

the sons of English gentlemen. In 1857 Mr. Fisher married Miss Farrar, a daughter of a highly respected Melbourne merchant, and the home which he formed at Woodfield, Fullarton, had been his chief delight since. In his later years he spent several hours daily in his garden, and was never happier than when tending his roses and fruit trees, or enjoying the companionship of his wife and family. The plain but substantial house which Mr. Fisher purchased over 50 years ago is still in good repair, and constitutes a portion of the larger structure, which was erected more than 20 years ago. Mr. Fisher was always a patron of local art, and numerous South Australian artists are represented in his collection of paintings. In 1903 the deceased gentleman sent to The Register a cheque for a number of philanthropic donations, which he had decided to give to charitable and other public purposes. He said he had made provision in his will for these, but had been led by several considerations to anticipate the date on which effect could be given to that document. One of them was the deduction of 10 per cent. succession duty on moneys left to charity, which he regarded as an unjust and unwise exaction, and one tending to check the flow of public spirited benevolence. The list amounted to £3,315, and was headed by £1,000 to the Adelaide University and £500 to the Public Library Art Gallery. The late Mr. Fisher was a man highly respected in business and private life, and though in recent years he had taken little active part in public affairs, in his earlier political career he expressed himself as sternly opposed to many of the political ideals which have since found favour in certain quarters, and refused to shirk what he deemed to be his duties and responsibilities merely to retain his seat. He was at all times plain spoken, and was not the man to make compromises of principle for the sake of securing any private advantage. He always manifested a deep interest in the district in which he dwelt, and progressive municipal movements found in him a warm supporter. The deceased has left a widow, two sons—Messrs. F. J. Fisher and Harold Fisher—and one daughter—Mrs. W. Culross. At the meeting of the Sturt Club on Friday evening it was decided to send a letter of condolence to Mrs. Fisher on the death of Mr. Fisher, who was one of the trustees of the club.

Register Oct. 1st. 1907

MUSICAL EXAMINATIONS.

From "Wanborough Fisher":—"I have read the report of an interview with Professor Peterson, of Melbourne, which appeared in The Register of September 28, in which the professor is said to have made certain statements regarding the musical examinations held in Australia by the Associated Board of the Royal College of Music and other kindred societies. The purpose of these criticisms is so evident to an unbiased mind as almost to call for no comment. I should, however, fail in my duty as local representative of the Royal College were I to allow them to pass unnoticed. It is perhaps sufficient, however, to draw attention to the fact that prior to the present year these examinations were held under the auspices of the Adelaide University, and bore the name of that body. Professor Peterson pays but a poor compliment to the intelligence of the outside musical profession, and incidentally to the directors of the University itself, who countenanced the examinations in the past. Nothing but praise can be accorded to the Conservatorium authorities of Melbourne and Adelaide for their efforts towards unity and a high standard of efficiency; but the professor will not add to his reputation by wholesale denunciations and scathing criticisms of other institutions, whose merits are recognised by the whole community, and whose standards of efficiency are supported by men of intelligence and attainments equal to his own. I do not think the Associated Board examinations will suffer in the least from the remarks attributed to Professor Peterson. Public sense of justice may always be relied upon in such cases; indeed, as a rule it rather aids than otherwise in the recognition of merit."