

# THE MUSIC CONFERENCE.

## AN INTERESTING DEBATE.

Friday morning, the fifth day of the Music Teachers' Conference, was devoted to the discussion of various points related to the art of music teaching. An interesting paper was read by Mr. F. L. Gratton (supervisor of music).

Professor Harold Davies, Mus. Doc., prefaced his answers to questions by saying that he hoped that members of the profession understood the difficulty of obtaining complete list of teachers, so that if any one had been left out it must be understood to be quite unintentional. He then dealt in a lucid manner with various technical questions, especially that of training a dull ear to proper appreciation of tone. The matter of choosing a time for a future conference was mooted with reference to the difficulty over holidays occurring at different times. Touching on the need for more prominence being given to the place of music in education, Dr. Davies quoted the opinion of Sir Henry Hadow, Chancellor of the Sheffield University and Chairman of the consultative committee of the Board of Education, who, in an address at the annual meeting of the Manchester High School for Girls, made a special plea for the inclusion of music as a properly recognised part of the educational system. He said that some people did not understand what a musical education really was. Many thought that it consisted of teaching reluctant people to play the piano rather badly. He would gladly sweep away 90 per cent. of the piano lessons now given. What was wanted was an appreciation of music rather than executive ability. Music ought not to be regarded as something which foreigners made and England paid for. It had exactly the same appeal as great literature, and everything that could be said in favour of the inclusion of Shakespeare in an educational system could be urged equally for great music. It was to be noted, also, that music was most prominent in these periods of history which were the most splendid and full of life and happiness. In introducing Mr. Gratton, Dr. Davies said that the question of music in schools was of the greatest importance.

### —Music in Public Schools.—

Mr. Gratton said:—In our primary and high schools we have about 80,000 children, who are taught by about 2,000 teachers. In addition to the usual school subjects, these children receive regular instruction in singing and in musical theory. It is of the utmost importance that this training in music should be on correct lines from the beginning; also that those who teach this subject should be properly equipped for their work. In teaching music in the schools we endeavour to accomplish the following aims:—To train children to sing sweetly and tunefully, and to develop their voices by suitable exercises; to use singing as an aid to physical development, and as a means of brightening the daily routine of school; to inculcate a love for music, and a desire for further study of the "divine art"; to give children such a knowledge of music as will enable them later on to take part effectively in the work of church choirs and choral societies; to familiarize children with our best national songs as an aid to the development of a spirit of patriotism. In order to achieve the aims we give our teachers a comprehensive training in music. Student teachers have necessarily so many subjects to study that only a limited amount of time can be spent in musical work. Still much can be accomplished, even in the little time available. Many of our teachers have been educated at public schools, where, among 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. This training is continued as far as possible in our State high schools, and is supplemented later on by a more detailed course in music at the teachers' college. At this institution we have at present about 300 students, all of whom receive instruction in the essentials of music. The students are prepared for several examinations in music and are also instructed in voice culture and the teaching of singing. Special attention is given to the practice of unaccompanied part-singing. It is impossible at present to combine all the students for part-song practice (except on rare occasions), but even in small groups effective work is being done in this delightful form of vocal music. A collection of part-songs for mixed voices recently published by the Education Department is most helpful in connection with this work.

### —Teachers' Music Course.—

In order to encourage teachers to reach a higher standard in music and in the teaching of singing, a special course in music was inaugurated a few years ago.

This course is divided into four groups, each of which is considered equivalent to a pass in one or more university subjects. The requirements of these groups include advanced examinations in the theory and practice of sol-fa and staff notation, harmony, composition, instrumental music, and school choir training. The adoption of this scheme has enabled many teachers to qualify for promotion by specializing in their favourite subject, and has also caused a considerable improvement in the musical work of many of our schools. Lectures on the above subjects are given from time to time in various centres, and classes of instruction are held at frequent intervals. At these meetings practical demonstrations of correct methods of voice culture, &c., are given, usually with the aid of a class of children from the nearest school. The teaching of music in our schools is largely on a tonic-sol-fa basis, but children in the higher grades are also taught to sing from the staff by sol-fa and notes on the "movable doh" system. The constant use of the sol-fa syllables is of great assistance in voice training, as these syllables are naturally vocal, and help to produce clear, open tone in singing. By means of modulators of various kinds, charts, manual signs, &c., the children are taught to sing any of the ordinary intervals used in music, and to recognise the various tones of the scale (in relation to the keynote) when sung or played by their teachers. Much importance is attached to this branch of musical work, but unfortunately only a small amount of time can be devoted to this helpful study.

### —Voice Training.—

In this matter we aim at the production of clear, pure tone, free from all harshness or straining. Breathing and voice exercises are practised regularly, and the children are shown how to use the "head voice" for all the higher tones of the scale. Excellent results are achieved by many teachers, who, without much musical knowledge, have grasped the main principles of voice training, and know how to apply them. The sweet and tuneful singing of the thousand-voice children's choir at the annual decoration concerts affords fine evidence of the good work done

by our teachers in this important branch of musical study. In all our schools attention is given to the development of the rhythmic faculty in children. This training is begun in the kindergarten department, where the children practise suitable games and other rhythmic exercises, and are also taught to "keep step," beat time, and to give the proper degree of accent to each note. Children in the higher grades are taught to use the time names (taa, taa-tai, &c.), for all ordinary rhythms, and are also trained to beat time correctly while singing their songs and other vocal exercises. In this matter we try to counteract the somewhat pernicious influence of the "ragtime" and "jazz" music which is heard so frequently nowadays. Much of this music is catchy and attractive, but it tends to destroy the feeling for rhythm, especially in children. During the last few years special efforts have been made to encourage children to sing alone, without undue self-consciousness or embarrassment. Much excellent work has been done in this matter especially in country schools. Children have also been induced to try for easy examinations in singing at sight from sol-fa and the staff. As the result of this more than 4,000 music certificates of various kinds have been gained by children attending our primary and high schools. Many beautiful voices have been discovered in this way, and much unsuspected talent for music has been revealed.

### —School Songs.—

The chief feature of the musical work in our schools is the practice of songs, which are freely used for recreative purposes, and as a means of expression. Suitable songs are published in "The Children's Hour," and many others are easily obtainable. In most schools these songs are rendered with much sweetness and expression, with due attention to light and shade, pure tone, and clear enunciation. The children are encouraged to identify themselves as far as possible with their songs, and to endeavour to interpret the composer's meaning intelligently. In the upper grades rounds and other part-songs are practised. These songs are often used as a break in the daily routine, and they also furnish excellent material for school concerts and other entertainments. Special attention is given to the maintenance of pitch, and the children are trained to become independent of instrumental accompaniment as far as possible. The singing of the well-known "Thousand Voice Choir" at the Exhibition concerts may well be termed the highest achievement of the musical work of our schools. Much fine music has been heard at these concerts, which are generally regarded as one of the most important musical events of the year. The results achieved are a splendid testimony to the skill and patience of our teachers and the musical ability of the children. Nine additional schools have re-

cently been included in these concerts, so that 33 schools will be represented in the "big choir" this year. The concerts will be given on three successive nights, but the personnel of the choir will be different on each occasion. The value of the training received by the children who take part in this effort can scarcely be over-estimated, and if the present high standard is maintained there should be no lack of capable vocalists for church choirs and choral societies in Adelaide and in other parts of the State.

### —Uniformity in Musical Education.—

It would be an excellent thing if a conference of those who direct the musical work of public schools in the various parts of the Commonwealth could be held as soon as possible. At present there is not much uniformity in this matter. Each State has its own music curriculum and its own methods of training school teachers in this subject. These methods coincide to a certain extent, but it would lead to much greater efficiency if some uniform system were adopted. A conference of this kind has been suggested on several occasions. 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 take up after leaving school.

### —On Splendid Lines.—

At the conclusion of Mr. Gratton's paper Dr. Davies expressed his appreciation of what was being done. As far as it went it was going upon splendid lines, an appreciation of music was being taught, and children trained to understand pitch, rhythm, and time, and best of all music was being given its place. It was for all members of the profession to help the movement forward.

### —Pitch.—

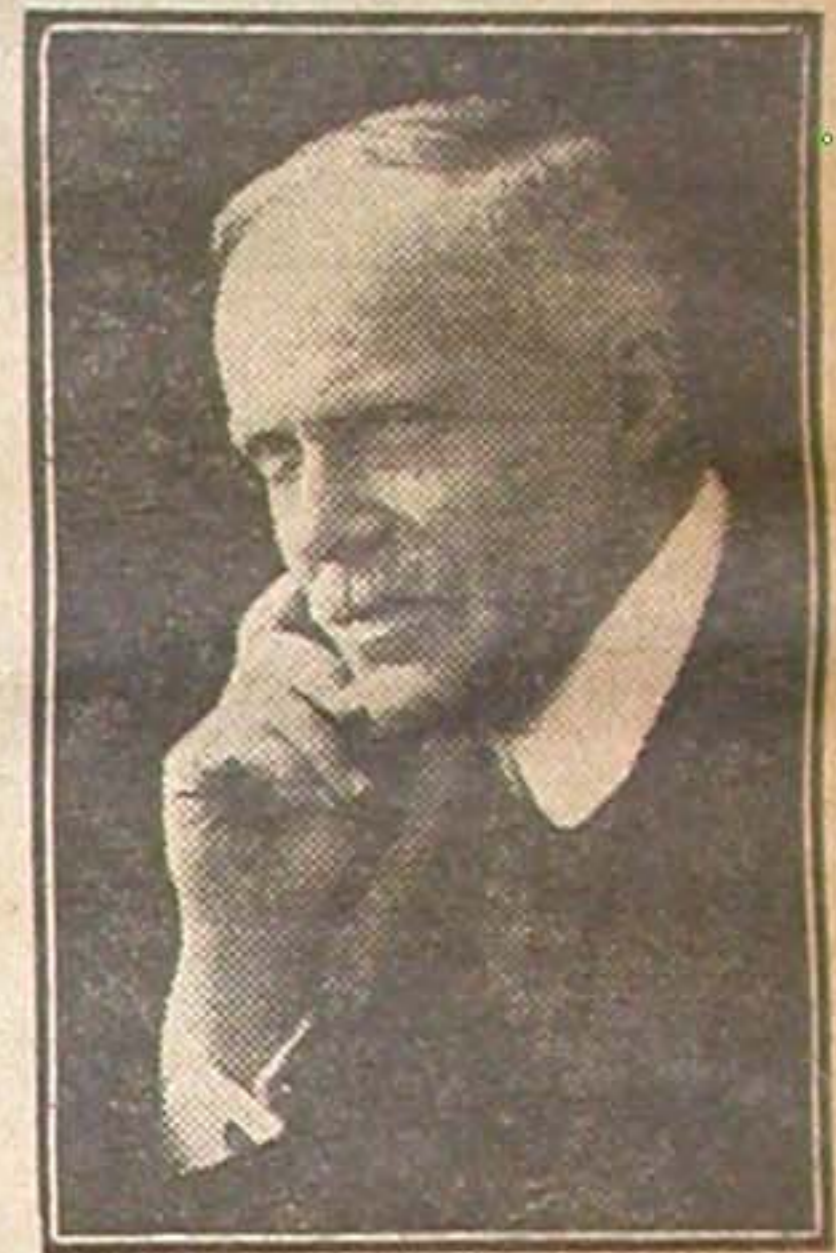
The question of pitch came up for consideration. In a short but practical and forcible speech Mr. W. H. Foote, A.R.C.M., went into the difficulties of the high pitch, especially in Australia, where, owing to high temperatures the pitch rose so that a singer singing as she thought C above might really be singing E. Dr. Davies supported, explaining that the high pitch made the performance of some of the greatest music impossible unless it was practically transposed. He related difficulties he met with. Other speakers agreed that real oral training was practically impossible with the uncertainty of pitch on different pianos. A uniform pitch was necessary for the real education of the ear. A resolution was proposed by Mr. W. H. Foote, A.R.C.M., seconded by Mr. Gratton, and adopted:—"That this conference of music teachers in the interest of musical education strongly recommend adoption of a uniform low pitch, and that the music houses of this State be asked as a first step to authorize their tuners to as soon as possible bring all instruments under their hands to the standard of A 435 at 60 deg."

### —Status of Music Teachers.—

In the afternoon the subject under discussion was the status of music teachers and the advisableness of some form of registration. In introducing Mr. E. E. Mitchell, Dr. Davies pointed out the dangers of certain unchartered, so-called musical colleges which held examinations and awarded degrees. The Royal College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music were chartered, and held authority. Trinity College, though not chartered, worked under the University of London. The extent of the operations of unauthorized colleges was shown by the fact that, while the whole number of people holding professional diplomas from the London College of Music was 700, one unauthorized college issued 14,000 in one year, and another offered members for a subscription of 10/ a year the right to put four letters after their names, and wear "gowns with red silk facings and college caps."

Mr. Mitchell spoke in interesting fashion of the registration of music teachers. In other directions, he said, the need of registration was recognised—for example, by the medical and the dental professions. At first it must have seemed that restrictions entailed some hardship and loss to certain individuals, whose freedom of action was thereby limited, but the greatest good of the greatest number was wisely served under the new regime. The legal profession 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 that with regard to education, as in many other matters, the trend of public opinion was toward 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 that glorious art, whose insistent demand for higher musical culture called for special qualifications on the part of those who should provide it. What had already been said clearly indicated the advantages that a wisely framed Bill for the registration of music teachers would provide. In its ultimate operation fully trained teachers would be available throughout the student's course, and there would be removed the anomaly of young students, who had them-



MR. E. E. MITCHELL.

selves only passed one or two elementary or intermediate examinations, undertaking the responsible task of instructing beginners. Unfortunately, it was often found that this so-called teaching had resulted in loss of time and money. An entirely new foundation had to be laid before sound teaching could proceed. A suitable registration Bill should obviate this, as all who sought to enrol themselves would be required to demonstrate their ability to teach music, not only to perform it. A few years ago some of the more prominent music teachers of this State discussed these matters 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. That was not desired. The proposal, therefore, was for voluntary registration on the twofold 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 student-ship, 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 this, but it was suggested that this 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. In consequence of this obligatory provision, it was apparent that the full benefit of the Act could not be realized for several years. The personnel of the musical profession was constantly changing, and as, after the initial year of the Act's operation, all applicants for registration would be called upon to conform to the standard fixed by the board, those qualified teachers would be a steady leaving influence, and many of those who without qualification claimed registration in the first instance, would ultimately prefer to submit themselves to examination rather than continue to teach as though by courtesy. It may also be objected that if the Act were voluntary many would shirk registration altogether, and prefer to teach as they pleased. Such as these would reap their own reward, for, in the ultimate