

Reg 11th Oct. 1900

Reg 11th Oct. 1900. Advertiser 12th Oct. 1900

Stanley Tuke, Edith Maud Turnbull, Charles Herman Unbehaun, Hilda Marion Vardon, Gladys Antoinette Vincent, Cutbert Viner Smith, Horace George Viney, William Vivian, Ethel Alice Waddy, William Wainwright, Ethel Mary Wallace, Ernest James Wallis, Reginald Horton Wallmann, Percy Hampton Warren, Mary Anna Waters, Charles Thomas Watkins, Floris Ella Webb, Leo Percy Weidenbach, Mary May Weir, Herbert Holland Wheatley, Lillian May White, Myra Lamorna White, Eksh Eliza Whiting, Arthur Onslow Winstington, John Maynard Wilkinson, Vera Euphrasia Wilkinson, Josiah Percival Willmott, Alice Fox Williams, Eirene Mary Williams, Kathleen Agnes Williams, Arthur Burton Williamson, Beatrice Evelyn Louise Wilson, Gladys Mary Wilson, Frederick Howard Wood, Thomas Andrew Young, Horace George Young, Mary Joan Yuill, Margaret Skelton Yuill.

Seriously speaking, one cannot help regretting the mistaken kindness and forbearance which appear to animate the newspaper writer in matters affecting the highest interests, especially of young artists. The critic might well redden more forcibly than he does that in his hands, to a very large extent, lies the welfare of our art; for the publicity of a newspaper report often exercises a more potent influence upon the mind of the performer than all the advice of teachers and friends put together. And this influence would be felt the more strongly if it were certainly known that, in every event, a fearless and judicial criticism might be expected. It would prove itself both as deterrent and incentive, by discouraging hypocrisy and encouraging earnest endeavour.

libraries. It had been said of Italy united that "you have created Italy, but you have not created the Italians." They should not let it be said of them that they had created the Commonwealth of Australia, but that they had not created Australians; that was to say, men who put the general interests of all members of the Commonwealth above the interests of the inhabitants of their own particular State.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The Conference resumed their session at 2 p.m.

EARLY STAMPED LEATHER BINDINGS. The Rev. F. G. Masters, M.A., read a paper on early stamped leather bindings, a chapter in the history of bibliography that had not yet become familiar to antiquaries. Of late years some fine works on historical bindings, with beautiful illustrations, had been published, but without exception those works had confined themselves practically to those gilt-tooled specimens of the binder's art that began in the Elizabethan era, and were the joy of French Kings and Queens, and were the pride of collectors like Grolier and De Thou. The speaker then detailed the gradual advancement that had been made in the art from the earliest date, and illustrative of his remarks exhibited a number of rubbings.

LIBRARY CLASSIFICATION.

An exhaustive paper on "The theory and practice of library classification" was presented by Mr. A. W. Brazier (librarian of the Public Library of Victoria). It was necessary for him to map out a large area in order to ascertain and demonstrate the relative bearings of a problem, or rather several problems, which had only to be systematically stated together to be brought within the range of practical solution. It would be admitted that the primary function of any library system was to give information readily, first as to whether a library contained a work by any given author, and secondly what it contained, if anything, on any specified subject. For practical purposes all other questions could be resolved into these two. No library could be expected to accomplish everything, but it must be practical as well as practicable. He was not advocating any concrete scheme of his own, but was merely laying down the principles upon which any scientific system of classification must be based. The need for a scientific basis increased every year. Edwards, in his "Memoirs of Libraries," tabulated 30 schemes, 19 of which were avowedly drawn up for practical purposes. They were all, however, out of touch with the advanced results of assimilation and discrimination that scientific methods had reached in late years. After dealing exhaustively with the details of the classification of various branches of literature and comparing the various methods which had been invented for the purpose of giving readers a complete and easily understood catalogue, Mr. Brazier said granting that minute classification was necessary the following were some of the more important conclusions that might be drawn from the principles laid down by the inventors of the systems mentioned and their application in practice. 1. That minute shelf-classification was not only impossible, but undesirable and unnecessary. 2. That such classification could be done only by record on paper. 3. That the present dictionary catalogue was too empirical for such a purpose, as it had no scientific basis. 4. That Mr. Dewey's system, with modifications, or some such system, supplied such a scientific basis, and was applicable for record classification, rather than for the purpose for which it was intended, namely, shelf-classification. 5. That so far as Mr. Dewey's system was decimal it was not classification at all, but notation. 6. That some system of notation was indispensable in a library, the shelves of which were open to the public. It was possible, by taking what was best of all that had been done, for them by their fellow-librarians—especially in America, where the conditions generally were more like those in Australia—and by applying it in the best way to get a sound dictionary record, and an accurate, minute classification in the form of what was practically a classed catalogue.

BIBLIOPEGY.

Mr. J. S. Battye (librarian of the Victoria Public Library, of West Australia), who spoke regarding bookbinding in public libraries, said that the question was one the importance of which could not be over-estimated, especially in the case of

large libraries not particularly well endowed with funds. One of the difficulties in a librarian's work was to get books bound in a durable material, giving a presentable appearance, at the least possible cost. After treating of the evils which had to be combated, he compared the relative merits of the various leathers utilised in binding. The cheapest was roan, and the hard-grained quality was preferable. This resisted the action of gas fairly well, but the surface was apt soon to rub off with wear, when it became useless. Calf was elegant and hard-wearing, but was much affected by gas and heat, which caused it to split along the joints after a little while. It was more suitable for a private than a public library. Morocco was, on the whole, by far the most satisfactory material. It took the lettering splendidly, and resisted the action of gas and heat better than other leathers. The speaker had practically discarded the other leathers in its favor, as he felt sure that even in the matter of expense it was cheapest in the long run. Pigskin was undoubtedly the strongest and hardest leather, but it contained too much grease, which not only soaked through the end papers, but even penetrated the first few leaves. Vellum was very durable, and looked well, but was not flexible, and consequently required open backs. Being white, it was also easily discolored, and too frequent use of it gave the library a "spotty" appearance. He had long been convinced that it was possible for the larger libraries, at any rate, to do their own bookbinding, and so save what margin of profit there might be, which was an item worth considering where the annual binding account was tolerably heavy. He had put the idea into operation in his library, and he was now quite satisfied that it was a wise and successful step.

Advertiser 12th Oct. 1900.

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

SECOND DAY.

The second day's session of the Conference in connection with the Public Library Association of Australasia was opened at the Elder Hall on Thursday morning, when the Hon. E. Langton (chairman of the board of trustees of the Public Library of Victoria) presided over a large attendance. Prior to the meeting the members, on the invitation of the trustees of the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery, paid a visit of inspection to those institutions. The librarian (Mr. J. R. G. Adams), acting as guide, pointed out to the visitors various objects of interest to them, and the tour proved highly instructive as well as entertaining.

FACILITIES FOR STUDENTS.

The first paper of the morning session was that of Professor Douglas, of the Adelaide University, who submitted suggestions as to "How the public libraries of Australasia may be made more useful for students." Professor Douglas said he fully expected that the librarians present would consider that most of the suggestions that he was about to make were impracticable, but he would assure them that he was about to advocate only changes which had been tried with success in many of the American and Continental libraries. Dealing with libraries, the speaker said it was essential that students should have open access to the shelves. It was often impossible for a man who was working up any special subject to say from looking at a catalogue what books he would require, whereas if he had free access to all parts of a good reference library he would often find valuable information from books which he would never think of asking for. Time was also as valuable to the student as to any other worker, and much time was necessarily lost when they had to wait for an attendant to obtain the large number of books which sometimes had to be consulted on a single subject. Secondly, he strongly insisted upon the advantage of students being allowed to take their own books into the library. This not only saved time in the copying of references, but was invaluable for reference purposes. He knew that that was strongly objected to by librarians on the ground that it made it more difficult for the attendants to prevent visitors from taking books out of the library. He could state from personal knowledge, however, that the system of allowing students to take their own books into reference libraries had been in operation in some libraries in Italy for a considerable time. The concession was only granted to bona fide students, and they were obliged to obtain a pass from the doorkeeper before they were allowed to take the books into the library. They were liable to be called upon to produce this pass at any time, and could only take out of the library the books in respect of which the pass had been issued. It would also be a great advantage if students could have their books reserved. This could only be allowed in exceptional cases, but it could be done without any great inconvenience to the general reader or the library officials by means of numbered tables, so that a book which had been reserved could be found immediately if required. He also urged that it would be a great advantage if the several libraries in large centres of population could be pooled. In Adelaide, for instance, there were three large reference libraries. He had sometimes found that a particular book which he required was not in either the Public or University libraries, but it might be in the Parliamentary library, or vice versa. In such cases a considerable amount of time was lost in making enquiries for the book at the several institutions, whereas if there was a complete catalogue of the whole of the books on the three libraries, it could be sent for without delay. The practical effect of the limited pooling of the five great libraries of the Australian capitals would be that to the poorest student a library of about 250,000 volumes would be available. At the present time, in the largest library—that of Melbourne—there were 170,000 volumes, and it was impossible for a student in that city to consult a book in Sydney or Adelaide without undertaking an expensive journey. On the other hand, if that scheme were adopted he would be able to consult such a book of reference without any cost to himself. He was hopeful that when Federation was established this system of pooling would be extended to the great central libraries of the various colonies. It sometimes happened that a student in Adelaide required a book which could only be found in the Melbourne or Sydney libraries. If his proposal were adopted all that would be necessary would be to apply through the librarian of the Adelaide Library for the loan of the book for a few days, and it could be returned through the same channel when he had finished with it. At the present time they were rejoicing in the completion of the political Federation of Australia. Should not they as students and librarians strive to make their own union more complete by the federation of

Reg 11th Oct. 1900

In another column appears the pass list for the Preliminary Examination at the University of Adelaide. Out of the 735 candidates who went up 432 passed the examination.

Reg 11th Oct. 1900 (Sep 164.)

MUSICAL CRITICS AND CRITICISM.

[BY E. HAROLD DAVIES.]

The musical critic has been hung, drawn, and quartered! Peace to his mouldering fragments! The "deceased" was first the subject of rhapsodical rallery on the part of a contemporary; and then, to complete his discomfiture, a renowned professor poured the vials of his caustic cynicisms over the victim's head. What wonder, amid such a tornado of verbiage, the poor beggar was condemned beyond the hope of reprieve?

The worst of it is that the professor himself is an art-critic of the most daring type, who seeks to penetrate the very arcana of the composer's thoughts and emotions, and who fearlessly treads the most dangerous of all ground in seeking to reduce to concrete expression those mystic abstractions of which the creator himself was perhaps only dimly conscious. The poor critic is assessed us, at best, a negative quantity. He cannot do anything himself; his opinion is only the opinion of one man, and that a poor specimen of a man; and in his most harmless form he is but a walking vocabulary of equivocal euphemisms; and so forth. But, strange to say, all this sort of stuff is itself of only negative value; so the critic and the criticiser of critics are afloat in the same tub after all, and maybe will one day find the same level—at the bottom of the ocean of oblivion! It is quite possible, however, to discover a legitimate and solid sphere in which the critic may move and have his being; so let us pick up his macerated remains, reconstruct and rehabilitate him, and finally restore to him the scattered remnants of his self-respect.

To be precise, this, it seems to me, is his role—to hear and judge the technical worth of a musical performance. He need not concern himself with the artistic value of the work performed; for, sooner or later, posterity will assign to it its rightful place by that mysterious electric process whose workings often defy analysis. It is said "truth will out;" hence all that embodies and presents the truth in both science and art will endure. So, again one may repeat, the calling and election of the critic is to estimate and set down kindly but fearlessly the value of the performance rather than that of the work performed; and the exercise of this duty is the more necessary in a young community, where public opinion in matters of art is inadequate, and where—sad but true—almost anything is accepted if it be served up with a sufficient degree of eclat. A few instances will illustrate this. A young singer with, it may be, a fine natural voice, aspires to appear in public after two or three quarters of lessons. Technical defects are painfully apparent, yet the glamour of the voice is accepted in atonement, and the budding vocalist rejoices in the inevitable "recall" which is too often the knell of his artistic doom. Is there no room here for protest? Or, it may be, we attend an orchestral or oratorio concert, and our ears are rudely shocked by the persistently false intonation and uncertain execution of the players. The patent fact of insufficient rehearsal and individual study of their instruments stares us stark in the face, and ruthlessly batters its tale upon our tympanic membranes. May not the critic duly enlighten the public on this matter until it insists on having one good concert in place of six bad ones? Or is it too much to hope that our orchestral players themselves will one day awake to the fact that it is worth their while, at any cost, to strive for truer artistic attainment despite the alluring devil of popularity? And one has even been to a piano recital with the same result—to be assailed with wrong notes in dire and distressful frequency, to witness under the cacophonous clattering of wood and wires, perpetuated presumably supposed in the name of virtuosity, but not—Heaven be thanked!—in the name of art. For these things and such as these our much-abused critic may lawfully and with dignity offer protest, firmly and consistently contending for the highest standard of technical attainment, and as consistently denouncing and exposing the meretricious and insincere work which now too often gains a worthless meed of applause at the hands of an indiscriminating audience.