

*The Register* 27<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1898

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### THE ELDER CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC.

A happy augury for the success of the Elder Conservatorium was furnished by the bright and genial weather in which the ceremony of laying its foundation-stone was conducted on Monday. His Excellency the Governor, who declared the stone "well and truly laid," according to the time-honoured formula, remarked that he could have wished the task had fallen to a relative of the late Sir Thomas Elder. This was a graceful allusion, but during his lifetime Sir Thomas effaced all personal elements in his benefactions to the cause of education in South Australia; and, while the institution will rightly bear the name of its founder, its inception was only fitly marked by the official act of the highest dignitary of the State—the representative of the Queen. The proceedings on Monday were an unqualified success. From the overture and the felicitous speech of the Chancellor to the graceful rendering of the National Anthem by Madame Amy Sherwin, everything was well worthy of the occasion. The Conservatorium is already a large department of the University, with 300 students, and much difficulty will doubtless be experienced in continuing the studies efficiently while the permanent building is in course of erection. The bold step which has been taken by the Universities of Adelaide and Melbourne in reintroducing executant music into the scheme of collegiate study was ably defended by the Chancellor in his thoughtful speech. Mr. Way evidently realized that upon him devolved the duty of speaking what may be termed the "apologia" of the Conservatorium—of stating succinctly the reasons for its existence—and he rose to the occasion.

Music, as he remarked, was one of the seven principal studies in the Universities of the middle ages, and rather through accident and oversight than through deliberate intention have musical studies—excepting on their purely theoretical side—been banished from the collegiate halls during the past three or four hundred years. When degrees in arts and in divinity were practically the only distinctions conferred by the Universities, and when rules became consolidated to exact a certain minimum of proficiency from candidates for those degrees, music was necessarily dropped out of the system, because some men are absolutely destitute of any musical sense. In those days was provided, so to speak, only one road in University culture, and all students had to travel along that highway. Thus the old ideal of the "Universitas," or school of universal learning, was for a long time lost. In modern ages, however, a truer conception of the duty of encouraging special talent has pervaded the schemes drawn up by all collegiate authorities. Almost every student is not only permitted but encouraged to specialize. This process in the older Universities has not by any means reached finality, and within the next few years the example set by the Australian Universities will almost certainly be followed in other parts of the British Empire. The apologist for a University Conservatorium might reasonably take higher ground if he were to probe deeply into the essentials of his subject—a task which, of course, could not be undertaken by speakers on a festive occasion like that of Monday. Almost a platitude in these days is the saying that it is a great mistake for any nation to neglect the moral side of the student's nature by confining attention exclusively to intellectual studies; but few people fully realize how immensely wide is the scope of the human faculties which they sum up under the term "moral." The word implies practically the whole range of those multifarious means whereby noble emotions may be produced in any human heart. In a highly cultured person the emotional thrill evoked by a finely performed piece of music is of the same character as that which accompanies the perception of a beautiful truth or the assent to a true and just moral exhortation. This fact is not based upon any accidental physiological coincidence, but upon the fundamental fact that music is an art intended in the scheme of creation for man's moral improvement.

The age which tried to dissociate the emotions from religion and convert it into a mere system of dry theology was also that which drove music out of the

Universities. Even Lord Kames, liberal educationist as he was, placed music on a very much lower level than the more purely intellectual studies, and remarked that "Harmony, although it aspires to inflame devotion, disdains not to improve the relish of a banquet." The traditional teachings of the English Universities in the same direction have evidently influenced to some extent the ideas of one of the speakers yesterday regarding the functions of music. That gentleman views the Conservatorium rather as an institution intended to minister to the pleasure and gratification of the people than as one meant to be a potent means of education. Of course there is a broad distinction between the different classes of music, just as there is between extreme types of oratory. The kind of harmony which is not good enough to be heard and which disdains not to "improve the relish of a banquet"—or, worse still, to provide a background for a general hum of conversation—should not be reckoned with in any serious consideration of the subject. But when he is really listened to, and when he aspires to stir the emotions, the true artist in music is a preacher, whose sermon may possess vast influence for good. Indeed, nearly the same observation may be applied to every branch of true art. The painter who never feels that he has a message of truth to convey to the minds and hearts of those who shall look at his pictures had better lay down his brush; he will never make an

artist though he should cover a square mile of canvas. The students of the Elder Conservatorium ought to feel that their art has a high mission, and that it is worth studying for its moral influence as well as for its power of ministering to the gratification of the senses. This loftier province of the art of music, however, cannot be adequately reached unless the Conservatorium devotes itself exclusively to what His Excellency terms the higher branches of musical study. The field is so vast that it cannot be covered by a very limited staff of teachers if the latter should be required to undertake elementary work which so many outsiders are perfectly competent to perform.

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27<sup>th</sup> September 1898

### CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC.

The foundation-stone of the Elder Conservatorium of Music was set in position by the Governor on Monday afternoon. The weather was fine and the attendance large, and every success attended the ceremony. The Chancellor of the University gave an eloquent address, expressing the hope that the Conservatorium would be the centre from which musical culture would radiate throughout the land, and that voices as sweet and of as great compass as that of their distinguished visitor Madame Amy Sherwin would be therein trained, and as genius was not the monopoly of any race or time that by-and-by its students might produce works to take rank with those of the great tone poets in that musical language which speaks to the whole world and for all time. After declaring the stone well and truly laid His Excellency thanked the public for their many kindnesses extended to him during his three years' stay in South Australia, and promised to do his best to "stick up" for the colony during his forthcoming trip to England. The Minister of Education made a telling speech, and then the Chancellor announced that although His Excellency might think he was Governor of South Australia and the Minister of Education and the Chief Secretary great powers on the land yet on occasions such as this a temporary dictatorship was established under the rule of the photographer. Then for a few minutes the assemblage submitted itself to the photographer's art and the rays of the sun, and was made beautiful for ever. After this Mr. Way announced that Madame Amy Sherwin had consented to sing the first verse of the National Anthem as a solo, and that they would all—if they were not frightened at his inclusion—have the opportunity of joining in the second verse as a chorus. This having been successfully carried out—Madame Amy Sherwin being presented by Miss Minnie Torode, a daughter of the contractor, with a bouquet of Australian wild flowers with the University colors attached—and cheers having been given for the Governor, the Conservatorium orchestra wound up the proceedings with an appropriate selection.

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