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CHAMBER MUSIC AT CONSERVATORIUM

Last Of Afternoon Series

By DR. ALEX. BURNARD

The last of this year's series of afternoon chamber concerts was presented yesterday in the Elder Hall by the Conservatorium String Quartet. It has been a wonderful experience, if only for the nodding acquaintance that we have gained of Beethoven's last essays in this medium, and I know that each enthusiast who has followed the series is truly grateful to each member of the ensemble.

The first two movements of the Mozart G major (K. 387) employ the most direct speech, and were played with an absolute spontaneity of ensemble. The slow movement was strangely touched by artifice, and for this master lacking in definite continuity of inspiration—but how rarefied and exquisite that afflatus when it came! The feeling for it was beautiful. The Presto, with its merry fugato episodes, saw scintillating bowing and a fine unanimity.

In Beethoven's op. 132, the A Minor, we had the full-bodied wine of his ripest maturity. In this last great period of efflorescence he takes us all the way with him; the depth of thought is so provocative of answering effort on our part, even the physicality of it so much the more vital. The first Allegro was full of strength and impulse, the excitement produced by wildly leaping intervals, and the keenest of dynamics. The Scherzo's rhythmic force was well presented—a movement specially interesting for a kind of lofty turbulence incorporated in it, and the idiosyncrasies of its hornpipe trio. The slow movement embodies a "thank offering for convalescence," its quiet passages, of beautiful harmony and texture, like some reverent chant. The mood was intensified and underlined by yearning upward sweeps of an octave from the cello, and the occasional touches of the Lydian mode gave it a feeling at once archaic and solemn. Here is no light "thanksgiving service," with an orgy of extravagance to follow, but one really and sincerely meant. A noble restraint was in the playing. The Finale expressed pure joy. It was one benevolent and god-like smile, and moreover there were no bounds to its action: it was for ever moving, and one became caught up in the bigness and generosity of its spirit. The one adverse remark about the playing of this work is that at odd times during its course the intonation gave or momentary feeling of tension.

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Mr. Peter Bornstein will leave by the East-West train on Friday on his return to England. He will break his journey at Kalgoorlie and Perth to give violin recitals. Mr. Bornstein will also, while in Western Australia, carry out duties as a member of the Australian Examinations Board, and will join the Mongolia at Fremantle on October 15, for London.

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Conference Of Physicians

Several medical men from Melbourne, Sydney, and Hobart arrived in Adelaide yesterday by the express from Melbourne to attend the annual conference of the Associated Physicians of Australasia at the Adelaide University. The conference will mostly be concerned with a discussion of cases. Last night the visiting physicians were entertained in the University Refectory, and afterwards adjourned to the conference. Those present from other States include Drs. S. V. Sewell, O. Cowan, J. Chambers, P. E. Hurley, M. D. Silverberg, H. I. Maxwell, A. Walker, H. F. Maudsley, A. MacKeddie, K. Hiller, L. S. Latham, and Sir Richard Stawell, of Melbourne; Dr. C. B. Blackburn, of Sydney; and Dr. J. Sprent, of Hobart. Dr. N. H. Fairlie, of London, is also attending the conference. Most of the physicians will return to the eastern States today.

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ONCE TEEMED WITH LIFE

Gibber Plains Of The North-East

EFFECT OF EROSION

The gibber-strewn plains of the far north-east once teemed with animal and vegetable life, says Mr. Frank Fenner, a member of the recent University anthropological expedition, in the following article. Although, geologically, this "driest part of the driest continent" is uninteresting, he found it of great interest from a physiographic point of view.

By FRANK FENNER

Sand—gibbers—sand—gibbers! One's first impression of the geological features of the vast stretches of level country between Marree and Birdsville, as seen from the stock route, is an everlasting succession of gibbers and sand, with the broad flood plains of the Diamantina at the northern end of the track, and a few isolated flat-topped tent-hills to relieve the monotony of the journey. Little, indeed, to gladden the heart of the geologist. One soon realises, however, that the country, although geologically uninteresting, is of great interest from the physiographic point of view.

The stock route from Birdsville to Marree lies completely within the Great Artesian Basin, to which fact, indeed, it owes its existence. Before bores were put down, cattle used to be driven down along the courses of the Diamantina and Warburton, but this route was practicable in wet seasons only, and even then there was a long dry final stage. At one time seven years elapsed without any cattle passing down to Marree.

Nowadays cattle travel down the Diamantina to Goyder's Lagoon, and then from bore hole to bore hole to Marree, whence they are trucked to Adelaide. The bores are placed between 20 and 30 miles apart—two days' travelling with stock. There are 11 bores along the line, all fairly deep, and the water from the majority is quite hot. The water from the "seven-mile" bore has a temperature of about 210 degrees F. In this arid country—the driest part of the driest continent—the sight of clouds of vapor rising from the water as it spurts forth hot from the ground into the chilly morning air is striking in its unexpectedness.

From Marree to Goyder's Lagoon only one rock series is passed over, the lower tertiary sandstones and shales of the "Eyrian" series, with their desolate mantle of gibbers and sand. At Goyder's Lagoon the recent alluvium of the Diamantina flood plain is encountered and is followed right through to Pandy Pandy, where the chief camp of the expedition was located.

The surface layers of the Eyrian series have been hardened by silicification, and it is the weathering of this hard crust (the duricrust) which is responsible for the characteristic gibber (boulder) plains and the tent-hills of this part of South Australia.

Once Teemed With Life

Fossil ferns and the bones of great extinct animals suggest that the region was once an area of heavy rainfall, with a remarkable plant and animal population.

For the past few thousands of years the climate has been dry, and at present the average rainfall is about five inches, and the average evaporation about 100 inches a year.

Erosion is carried on solely by sun and wind, and the greater part of the duricrust has thus been broken down to gibbers. Once the crust is gone the softer underlying sandstones are rapidly eroded and broken down to sand. All stages of degradation of the crust can be seen. In parts low, flat-topped hills occur, the upper surface formed of the duricrust; in other parts one can see the earlier stages of the breakdown of the crust—large angular boulders on the surface of a disintegrating tent-hill, while further down the slope the stones diminish in size until on the plain the characteristic gibbers, with desert polish and desert varnish, are strewn over the red iron-stained sands formed by the disintegration of the softer beds. The gibbers themselves vary in size, but on the average are about as big as one's fist.

The gibber plain itself presents a never-to-be-forgotten sight—a hot sun and cloudless sky overhead, a long, almost endless N.W.-S.E. sandhill on the one hand, and all around a level expanse, at times a shimmering purple-black, but usually the red of a fallowed field, stretching away until lost in mir-

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age in the distance. Close at hand the gibbers appear red, owing to their coating of iron oxide.

Here and there are patches of ironstone concretions, some up to 20 feet in diameter, and partly eroded. Smaller concretions are used by the aborigines as a source of ochre for ceremonial occasions. On breaking these concretions open one finds a hollow core containing a yellowish dust, yellow ochre or limonite. From this red ochre may be obtained by baking.

Aboriginal Mourning Caps

Occasionally, also patches of kopi, a gypseous clay, are found. The aboriginal mourning caps, worn by the widow on the death of her husband, are made of this kopi; a simplified phase of this custom was seen at Pandy Pandy. Gypsum also occurs in the form of gypsumised tree roots, which are found in great numbers in some parts of the country. Here and there one also finds specimens of silicified tree trunks which show beautiful preservation of woody structure.

Among other interesting features of the gibber country are the sandhills. These stretch for miles as long, narrow, parallel ridges in a north-west-south-east direction. They appear to be advancing in a north-westerly direction, as is strikingly illustrated by engulfed coolebah trees, and in one place by the progressive covering of the road at the northern extremity of a sandhill. These dunes are fruitful hunting grounds for native implements.

Old native camp sites are to be found on almost any sandhill, for here they had a soft floor, and an easy soil in which to erect their shelters, while water could generally be obtained from a soak at the bottom of the sandhill, or from a nearby waterhole. The quality of the stones used for implement-making varies, but most are "imported," often from long distances. A remarkable uniformity in the kind of rock used for grinding-stones was noticed. It is a coarse-grained sandstone, and specimens of it were found in every camp site visited, from Marree to Pandy Pandy. This particular rock does not occur locally, but we were told that it may have come from the eastern slopes of the Flinders Ranges.

A remarkable difference exists between the beds of the two rivers running through the area, the Cooper and the Diamantina. The Cooper is bounded on each side by a vague line of sandhills, whereas at Pandy, on the Diamantina, there is a deep channel, 30-40 feet deep and 50 yards across, cut through greyish alluvium. The banks and flood plains of each river are covered with coolebah trees, but about 80 per cent. of those in the Cooper are dead, whereas the majority on the Diamantina are living.

Last Flooded 17 Years Ago

The last flood on the Cooper occurred 17 years ago, but a big flood on the Diamantina is usual about every seven years. During a flood the waters of the river extend for miles across the flood plain, and on the retreat of the water and subsequent drying of the soil, great cracks are produced in the ground; some of those at Pandy were up to four inches across and two or three feet deep.

A remarkable transition from the gibber country was seen in a short run out from Marree to the Picnic Grounds, about six miles away. For the past two weeks our travels had been confined to hundreds of miles of the tertiary and the recent deposits of the Great Artesian Basin, very flat and comparatively low. A short motor run brought us amongst the ancient rocks of the Willouran Range, an old worn-down east-west ridge of highly-folded rocks. Beautiful scarps and dip slopes could be seen, the reddish rocks jutting out almost bare of soil or vegetation.

At the Picnic Ground itself we were shown a face of rock covered with aboriginal carvings, representing human feet and various animal tracks. A little searching showed that almost every suitable face in the vicinity was so carved; and scattered over the ground were a large number of quartz and flint implements, most of them of somewhat crude workmanship.

The most arresting feature of the country traversed in the train journey to Adelaide, apart from the gorgeous colors and magnificent scenery of the North Flinders Ranges, was noted after passing Hawker southward. This was the strange unreal green of the grass-covered landscapes, unreal because of its contrast with the prevailing reds and blue-greys to which our eyes had become accustomed.

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ANTHROPOLOGY IN PAPUA

Adelaide Man's Part In Welfare Of Natives

After having studied in London and Oxford for a year under a Rockefeller Fellowship, Mr. F. E. Williams, a graduate of the Adelaide University, returned on the Mongolia on Saturday. He will leave for Sydney by train this afternoon to resume his duties as Government Anthropologist in Papua.

While he was in England Mr. Williams was awarded the Welcombe Gold Medal for an essay on the application of anthropology to practical problems of native welfare, and as the thesis for his B.Sc. degree he wrote a new book, "Papuans of the Trans-Fly," which is in the course of publication by the Oxford University Press.

In Papua Mr. Williams publishes a paper called "The Papuan Villager," which is widely read among the native population. The material used is written in the simplest English, and deals mainly with affairs of interest to the natives, who contribute much of the news and many of the articles and stories published. The paper is published to encourage the natives to read and speak English, and to provide them with interesting reading matter. As many of the native customs as possible were being retained, but it was impossible to perpetuate the whole of the native culture, added Mr. Williams.

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ALL THAT ARE LEFT

Vanishing Tribes Of Arunta Desert

COMING OF WHITE MAN

The pathetic subject of the following article by Mr. Norman B. Tindale, ethnologist at the S.A. Museum, who was a member of the recent University anthropological expedition, is the vanishing tribes of the Arunta Desert and Lake Eyre basin. In describing the life history of a full-blooded aborigine, he says that that it may be regarded as "an epitome of the natives' contact with Europeans, their gradual weaning from the nomadic life, and their transmutation into the hangers-on about the cattle stations of the North-East."

By NORMAN B. TINDALE

It is often asked, "What does an ethnologist do on a trip whose principal purpose is the making of anthropometric measurements of the aborigines?" First and foremost, he photographs each individual studied, numbers, him, or her, marking the person's shoulder with green paint. In the case of semi-civilised natives, he affixes a number tag to their clothes. He then asks a routine of some 50 searching questions, regarding the person's name, tribe, place of birth, parents, children, and so on. Surprising sidelights appear during this enquiry—fathers who have forgotten the names of their daughters; sons whose real fathers have been dead so long that it is with difficulty they recall that the man they call father is only an adopted one; infants who have not yet been named, resulting perhaps in a fond father sending an urgent message to the mother asking her to let him know at once what she is going to call the child. "To waye we call him;" the result may be Pon-Pontanun, and his "white fellow name," Little Johnny, after father. So "Johnny," as whites call him, becomes "Big Johnny."

In all 49 individuals were recorded in this way, so that the relationships of the people could be traced. The kinship, terminology, tribal distribution, and other features are touched on, and alluring lines of investigation into births, marriages, deaths, and migrations appear. The delay owing to the breakdown in transport, so galling to the organiser of our party, Dr. T. D. Campbell, was welcomed by Dr. H. K. Fry and myself. For three and a half days we delved into the recesses of the minds of the few remaining old men of the tribes, finding out details of tribal wanderings, legends, and songs.

Before the coming of the white man.