

Reg 24th Oct. 1900

Reg 25th Oct. 1900

Advertiser 26th October 1900

ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

Mr. Bryceson Treharne, of the Elder Conservatorium, is probably the first pianist to give a recital in Adelaide wholly devoted to the works of Brahms. Of all the great writers Brahms is undoubtedly the least known in this colony; few amateurs include his writings in their repertoire, and visiting professionals have only favoured us with an odd pianoforte piece or two, or some of his incomparable lieder. The thanks of the musical community are therefore due to Mr. Treharne for enabling them to make a further acquaintance with the works of this gifted, if somewhat austere, composer, and on Tuesday afternoon a large audience of music lovers, mostly ladies, assembled at the Elder Hall to hear Mr. Treharne interpret a number of representative pieces. As might have been expected, there was but little appreciation or enthusiasm manifested, except at the conclusion of the songs given by Miss Hack, for the majority of the selections were written in a language not familiar to the majority of those present, and Mr. Treharne's somewhat too vigorous style of playing forte passages, which were considerably in evidence in most of the selection, does not conduce to a clear understanding of the works at a first hearing. In some of the quieter movements, notably the lovely andante from the sonata, op. 5, a much better impression was created, and anything more artistic than the pianist's interpretation could scarcely have been desired. Mr. Treharne also did good work in the "Intermezzo, op. 117," and "Ballade, op. 10," which were bracketed with the "Capriccio, op. 116," and "Scherzo, op. 4," as his last selection, and all the best features of his playing were displayed to advantage. It is to be feared, however, that the two "Rhapsodies, op. 79," with which he opened the programme, conveyed only the idea of noise and a cathartic display to the majority of the house. Miss Guli Hack, A.R.C.M., sang three songs by Brahms, entitled "O, that I might retrace the way," "Youthful lays," and "Rest thee, my lady," with an artistic conception of their many beauties, and her sotto voce effects in the latter song call for special praise. Mr. Treharne accompanied with great taste and brilliancy.

tions of readers found it difficult to penetrate. Washington Irving, in his delightful essay on "The Mutability of Literature," makes the old tome from its place on the library shelf exclaim with a heavy sigh—"Ah! I see how it is—these modern scribblers have superseded all the good old authors. I suppose nothing is read nowadays but Sir Philip Sidney's 'Arcadia,' Sackville's stately plays, and 'Mirror for Magistrates,' or the fine-spun euphemisms of the unparalleled John Lyly!" but the answer is that even most of these "new-fangled productions of the Press" have lapsed into obscurity. It is, however, worthy of mention—in the light of what has been said regarding the recent growth of a popular taste for standard literature—that the "noble thoughts, delicate images, and graceful turns of language" to which Irving referred as the saving merits of Sidney's "Arcadia" have rescued it from the neglect of his day, and have placed it in its rightful niche among the classics of English literature.

Dr. Samuel Johnson had the poorest opinion of Chaucer as a poet. Indeed, throughout the so-called "golden age of literature"—when the courtiers of Queen Anne were the patrons whose smiles or frowns decided the fates of aspirants to literary fame, and right on until near to the close of the eighteenth century—the artificial taste of the time prevented a proper appreciation of the "Canterbury Tales" or of any of the other poems in which Chaucer displayed his genius and drew upon his "well of English pure and undefiled." Gray stood almost alone among his contemporaries in his just and generous estimate of the first great master of English literature. It has, however, been reserved for modern editors to fully elucidate the true virtues of Chaucer's poetry and the melodious quality of the verse in which he wrote. Professor Skeats's little book on "The Chaucer Canon," published last year, presents a compendium of the researches which have conduced to this result. The author of the "Canterbury Tales" possessed what Holmes calls the "great sun-kindled, constructive imagination," and presented a strong contrast to those whom the same writer classed as the "sweet albino poets," many of whom die young, and all of whom are tinged with melancholy." Of the latter class, Cowper, Keats, and Kirke White are cited as examples. Beautiful as is some of their work, it is nevertheless partly a product of diseased nervous conditions, and cannot furnish entire satisfaction to the minds of men and women whose blood is warmer, and whose pulses are stronger, than those of the poets. Much of the distaste for standard literature which pervaded the popular notions during the middle of the nineteenth century seems to have owed its origin to the prominence given by many religious writers to the more morbid works of the "albino poets." The rebound from the pressure applied by such authorities produced on the other side a degree of licence which shocked and distressed right-thinking people.

Between these two conflicting literary forces the public at last acquired a dislike for poetry of any class, and betook itself with avidity to the sensational novel. The tyranny of this type of literature has for years been almost absolute, and the great majority of the volumes issued from the press have been works of fiction without any pretensions to the higher attributes of literature. But the tide of public taste is turning. It was computed that the number of actually new books issued in 1898 was 6,008; but last year this total was reduced to 5,971. During the present year the volumes published will probably be fewer still; but the reprints of standard classical works and of novels by really great writers have been largely augmented. This augurs well for the establishment of a popular demand for literature of the highest merit, although it threatens to greatly curtail the prospects of second and third rate writers of modern fiction. English literature during the last 500 years has passed through many transitional periods, but probably none has been fraught with more momentous issues than the era preceding the close of the nineteenth century. Essentially, and as an element of national thought, it owes its inception to the grand old English Bible, which was the first medium through which English men and women learnt to understand the ideas and feelings of a widely different race—the ancient Israelites—and became therefore capable of appreciating literature as art. The highest tribute is paid to the artistic

"CHAUCER: THE MAN AND HIS ART."

On Thursday evening Professor Douglas lectured at the Adelaide University on "Chaucer; the man and his art." The lecture was delivered before an audience, which filled to overflowing the large basement room in the Elder Conservatorium, and which was composed largely of ladies. The chair was taken by Sir S. J. Way, Bart.

The lecturer began by quoting Lowell's words 30 years ago, that nothing new or fresh could be said on a subject so well worn as Chaucer. Since then many enquirers had been at work on the Chaucerian era, and the words had still greater force to-day, on the 500th anniversary of his death. His life might be divided into three periods, which had been called the French, Italian, and English periods. The first was that of his life as a courtier, a diplomatist, and as an original poet. The last period was his greatest and best, but in it his fortunes were on the decline. It was, however, the time which set the seal on his fame as a great Englishman, for in it he first became an originator, and ceased to be a translator and copyist. This was the period of the Canterbury Tales. Lynda had claimed to be his birthplace, but it was almost certain that he was a native of Cocksaigne, having been born in Thames-street, London. Passages from the poet's works showed that he was very unhappy in his marriage with his wife, Philippa, who was probably a connection of John of Gaunt. Chaucer was a man of the world, and though a "good fellow," was not one of the stock of which reformers were made. Milton also was unhappy in his marriage, but the standpoint from which the two men looked on marriage was entirely different. Chaucer was above all else an artist, and when trouble came he buried himself in his books, and the trouble merely added a spice of bitterness to his writing. The two great systems of poetry in the days of Chaucer were the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin. The latter was taken from the Arabic, and adopted by the Troubadours. Before Chaucer, the latter came to England with the Normans, and it was Chaucer who finally decided the contest between the Anglo-Saxon and the Anglo-French styles in favor of the latter. In his early works he was merely an imitator and a translator, and he showed promise, but not fulfillment. His second period was largely influenced by his visits to Genoa, Pisa, and Florence. At the latter place it was quite possible that he may have met Boccaccio and Petrarch. However this may have been, his Italian trip was fruitful in its effect on English literature, and he soon after wrote his great work, "Troilus and Cressida," and about this time he was given a pension equal to £200 of our money. The height of his prosperity was when he went to Parliament as a knight of the Shire of Kent. After this came a period of adversity for the poet owing to political changes. John of Gaunt, his patron, left England, and the Duke of Gloucester, who replaced him as regent, ousted Chaucer from his official positions, and until his death the latter was almost always in financial straits. His last year of life was marked by a brief period of moderate prosperity, owing to a pension of £100, which was granted to him. Speaking of Chaucer's great work, "The Canterbury Tales," Professor Douglas said their plan was better than that of any similar collection of tales, and was far better than that of its great counterpart, Boccaccio's "Decameron," inasmuch as it included all classes of society, and every character was thoroughly defined. His tales had no moral purpose, but were told for their value as stories, and they were the crowning achievement of his career—they gave him his splendid place in the world's history. Chaucer had a kindly, genial temperament, mellowed and saddened somewhat by disappointment, but he was no grumbler and no coward. He had a deep and tender love for mankind—a manly love, entirely free from sentimentality, a love according to knowledge. His view of human nature was broad and deep. He had a keen eye for character, and was much amused at little affectations, foibles, and petty hypocrisies. His satire was, however, never cruel, and underneath it all there was a profound pity for and a deep sympathy with humanity. Although a lover of mankind he lived much alone. Chaucer personified the revolt of the middle ages against conventionalism and the feudal system. He refined and enriched the language, and gave the country an adequate system of versification. He helped on the dawning national movements, and in a word, he was the great national poet. There were grave reasons why such writers as Chaucer should not be neglected in Australia. We had no really great examples of the best kinds of architecture, sculpture, and painting, but we could as fully enjoy the masterpieces of literature as any of the favored dwellers in the homes of art in the old world. Yet too many people had not got them or neglected them in favor of tinsel things, which some literary cheap-jack, male or female, dangled before their eyes. The art of poetry was the art of England. (Cheers.) The land of Chaucer and Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, Keats and Shelley, Wordsworth and Tennyson was second to none in pride of place as the land of poetry. (Cheers.) The lecture was admirably illustrated by passages from the poet's work, and most entrancingly interesting. At the instance of the chairman Professor Douglas was heartily thanked by the audience.

Reg 29th Oct. 1900

MUSICAL NOTES.

[By Musicians.]

Mr. W. H. Wale, Mus. Bac., F.R.C.O., of Sydney, who has several times acted as assistant examiner in theory of music for the Adelaide University, has again been appointed for this year's Mus. Bac. examinations and the public examinations in theory of music, which are to be held next month.

Reg 25th Oct. 1900.

FIVE CENTURIES OF LITERATURE.

Two divergent streams of popular literary taste are observable at the present day. On the one side is an immense demand for merely sensational novels—books in which the interest is hardly of a literary kind at all; and on the other side is a prevalent disposition among thoughtful people to search for those true literary treasures which the "mighty minds of old" have left as legacies. The strength of the current which is now setting in towards a fuller appreciation of standard works cannot be fully understood until the lists of reprint issues during the last few years are considered. About 20 years ago one or two London publishers tentatively announced an intention to produce republications of some classical masterpieces of English literature, reserving to themselves the right to discontinue the series as soon as the public demand might flag. So great was the success of this venture, however, that at least a dozen eminent firms have entered the field of competition, printing and binding reissues of the best books in a handsome form and at a price which makes them available to practically everybody. The value of the good work thus begun can hardly be over-estimated by any one who understands the elevating influence of pure literature. A duty of all entrusted with leading positions in the educational world is to co-operate zealously in extending the popular taste thus evinced, and in this connection we hail with pleasure the announcement of a free public lecture by Professor Douglas on "Chaucer, the Man and His Art," to be given at the University to-night. The time is specially opportune for extending the popular taste for good classical English literature in Australia. With this object "The Register" recently published an article on the quincentenary of Chaucer's death; and with a similar purpose His Excellency the Governor has provided at the University annual prizes, to be called by the illustrious name of Tennyson, and awarded to those who gain the most distinguished positions in the literature subjects of the public examinations.

Standard literature is independent of the whims and changes of fashion. Appealing to the common humanity of all generations, it does not lose its potency to move the feelings and the imagination after the lapse of years. Many books which were popular during their day have owed their success almost entirely to some piece of affectation; while others that contained the germ of much that was good have suffered greatly owing to their having been encrusted with a hard shell of mannerism, which succeeding genera-