

# PROFESSOR MARSHALL-HALL.

## MUSIC IN MELBOURNE.

### AN INTERVIEW.

(By MUSICUS.)

For some years Mr. G. W. L. Marshall-Hall, the Ormond Professor of Music at the Melbourne University, has been justly regarded as the leading musician in the Australian Colonies. When first appointed his duties were of a comparatively unimportant character—merely to lecture to the students in music at the University; but he speedily widened the sphere of his influence, and by his untiring industry and great natural talents has made music an important feature in the eastern capital. He resurrected the defunct local orchestra, and gave the public some of the best performances of Beethoven and Wagner that had been heard in Melbourne; founded a Conservatorium without any endowments, and made the Melbourne Liedertafel one of the best choral bodies in this city. All these undertakings have proved successful, artistically and financially, and a Marshall-Hall concert is invariably crowded. As a teacher the Professor is said to be unrivalled, and it is certain that he has an extraordinary faculty of attracting around him devoted and enthusiastic pupils. On Friday afternoon I had a chat with him concerning his musical work in Melbourne and the musical talents of young Australia.

In reply to the question "What do you think of musical young Australia as far as you have got?" the Professor said, "There are plenty of magnificent voices in the colonies, enough to supply the whole of Europe for the next 100 years. Australian students, too, are very smart in learning music, and many of them have great natural technical gifts for the piano and violin. I am a firm believer in the 'technical' gift. Some persons' hands are wonderfully adapted to these instruments, and it seems as if Nature intended them to become performers, consequently in a short time they attain a degree of proficiency that others less favoured can never reach. But there are three reasons why many of our Australian students at present do not become thorough artists. First, our local audiences are not all educated up to appreciating the difference between a really first-class performance and one moderately good; consequently when a student has conquered all the elementary difficulties, and has acquired sufficient knowledge to enable him to study seriously to be an artist, he secures so much appreciation that he thinks he has learnt all that is necessary, and forthwith stops work. This is equally noticeable with vocalists and instrumentalists, and is one of the worst features of colonial musical life. Secondly, many parents do not understand the amount of time required to make an artist, and appear to think that two or three years are sufficient, whereas from six to nine years at least are required. Then, lastly, I am inclined to think that colonials are a little lazy; perhaps it is the influence of the climate, or, more probably, the natural effect of transplanting a race used to a cold climate to a warm one. In the colonies, too, it is possible for a person who does not know much about music to make a living at it, whereas 'at home' there is no room for any but those thoroughly qualified."

With regard to the Mus. Bac. course at the Melbourne University, Professor Marshall-Hall said—"Very few students take it up now; the majority prefer to study for the diploma of 'Associate of Music' of the Melbourne University, which is quite as high and, being of a practical as well as a theoretical character, is much more useful. To obtain this degree students must study at the Conservatorium of Music and pass three examinations in practice and theory of music. The work cannot, however, be done in three years; it usually takes six. Students have to take up one principal and one secondary subject, which is left to their own taste, in practice, and they also study harmony, counterpoint, composition, and analysis. For the latter, during the course we should study say a couple of operas by Gluck, a couple of Mozart's works, Beethoven's 'Fidelio,' his symphonies, and some of the principal works by Wagner. When a student comes first we give him Bach—Bach morning, noon, and night. He begins his piano studies with the two-part inventions, then the three-part inventions, the suites, and the immortal 'Forty-eight preludes and fugues.' In short, we saturate our first-year pupils with Bach. Harmony is first studied from his chorales, which," observed the Professor, in reply to an interjection, "teaches one how to write common chords with common-sense. The three examinations are conducted by the professional staff and myself. At present we have about 220 names on the students' roll. The fee for tuition at the Conservatorium is seven guineas a quarter, and this embraces everything. Students' concerts are given about every three weeks, a more important concert takes place two or three times a year at the Town Hall, and we have also an operatic performance annually. At the Town Hall we present some good programmes; for instance, at our next concert Beethoven's E flat pianoforte concerto, Bruch's violin concerto, and Viotti's works in A minor are all to be given, accompanied by the Conservatorium orchestra. We have some very promising students at the Conservatorium, some of whom, I hope, will win distinction."

"What are the principal requirements for your Mus. Bac. degree?"—"Well, in addition to passing the three examinations in harmony, counterpoint, fugue, instrumentation, &c., the successful candidates must write two compositions, one in the second year, and another in the third. The first has to be a string quartet in four movements, cast in the ordinary classical forms, and the second must be a work for chorus and full orchestra. The form and character of this latter piece is left entirely to the discretion of the candidate, so that any originality may be shown, and strict academic work is not required, for we are able to test his knowledge of fugue, counterpoint, and canon at the examinations."

The Professor's orchestra, which has attained such a high position, is composed of from 60 to 75 instrumentalists, selected from Melbourne theatres and local profession. His method of preparation for a concert is certainly very thorough. In all eight rehearsals are held, one each for the first violins, second violins, violas, bass, and wind, and then three full rehearsals. This, no doubt, accounts for the band's splendid performances and great popularity.

Professor Marshall-Hall warmly combats the oft-repeated statement that the Australian public do not appreciate good music. "It is only," he says, "when it is badly performed that they manifest an indifference to it. I have always produced the best music at orchestral concerts, and we invariably have full houses. At the last concert we were crowded out. My experience as conductor of the Melbourne Liedertafel is exactly the same. The programmes have been severely classical, embracing such works as the masses by Bach and Beethoven, Brahms's 'Song of destiny,' and the third act of 'Tannhauser.' In every case we have had large audiences, our singing members have largely increased, and our subscribers have just doubled their numbers."

### LECTURE AT THE TOWN HALL.

On Friday evening Professor Marshall Hall appeared at the Adelaide Town Hall to deliver his lecture on "Life and Art." Professor Ives presided. In a short address the Chairman alluded to the lecturer's appointment as Professor Music at the Melbourne University, and the work he had ac-

complished. He had succeeded in establishing a Conservatorium of Music and an orchestra which had made Melbourne audiences familiar with the beauties of the writing of the greatest modern composers. He also referred to Professor Hall's book of poetry, which was published under an unfortunate title, and the unfair criticisms levelled against it. He was not there to justify a step which was eminently unwise, nor did he wish to be associated with the enunciation of views not only unworthy of a healthy and refined mind, but dangerous in their teachings. Professor Hall had, however, disavowed certain doctrines attributed to him, and had withdrawn the book from publication, and he (the speaker) hoped that the danger that Australia's musical life might lose the services of one of its most accomplished workers might be averted. He trusted that the Professor would again be able from his present high position to denounce that hypocrisy and cant in art thought and art life which were obviously so repugnant to his lofty ideals.

Mr. R. Nitschke gave a true rendering of Schubert's fine song "The wanderer." Professor Marshall Hall, who was heartily received, quickly engaged the attention of his audience. He accepted the Chairman's address, and remarked laughingly that he did not know when coming to Adelaide to lecture that he in turn was to be lectured. In listening to his fine resonant voice one becomes intensely interested in the personality of the speaker. His individuality is so prominent that for a time one almost forgets the subject of the lecture. He laid it down as an axiom that the inner nature of life and art were identical, and that the true artist, with a maximum of energy, did, not what he would, but what he must, and therefore eventually reached the truth. Life was the manifestation of energy, and music, as one of the forms of that energy, expressed the deepest, noblest, and grandest sentiments of the human mind. In that connection a great deal of blame was foisted on the public, which was due to artists who played the notes of classical music but not the sentiment. Rightly interpreted classical music swept away the pettiness of existence and brought its hearers into sympathy with phases of life which before had been as a closed book to them. The Professor depicted in glowing language the beautiful scenes to be pictured to the mind while listening to the works of the great masters, dwelling particularly on the grandeur of Beethoven, whom he described as the Colossus of the age. As he progressed the lecturer was the better appreciated, and he had a capital ovation when he resumed his seat.

A magnificent interpretation of Schubert's "The Inquirer," by Mr. Nitschke, closed the proceedings.

Professor Marshall Hall will lecture tonight at the Town Hall on "Art and Life."

day in spite of all his philosophy. Yet he has to remember, as the Professor in "Sartor Resartus" exclaims, that "Here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual—whereon thou now standest, here or nowhere is thy ideal—work it out therefrom; and, working, believe, live, be free." The formation of the Teachers' Union has distinctly helped to infuse new enthusiasm into the employes of the Education Department by enabling them to realize more vividly than before the nature of their vocation, and its high and important bearing on the growth and development of the nation. In the increase of the spirit of enthusiasm with which the teachers approach their duty Mr. J. Harry, the retiring President of the Union, rightly perceives one of the greatest services which the Association has rendered. The new President, Mr. Donnell, is fully imbued with the same spirit of hopefulness which animated his predecessor regarding the Union and its prospects; and its success thus far may well be taken as a fair augury for its future history, if its managers will only keep it free from the withering blight of party politics.

An important event to which the teachers are now looking forward is the issue of the new regulations. The Minister's remarks concerning the folly of adhering to seniority as the sole basis of any system of promotion warrant the inference that alterations are contemplated under which those teachers who are willing to devote themselves heartily to their work, and who have the special talents necessary to fit them for it, will not be required to wait for promotion quite so long as they have done in the past. There is a general feeling that increased elasticity in the method adopted by the department in dealing with those employed in the service is eminently desirable. Mr. Batchelor—who seems to possess as much practical insight into the true requirements of the teachers and of their schools as any of his predecessors ever did—has admitted that in the number of the direct appeals made from the teachers to him as head of the department his period of office has established a record. He hastened to inform his hearers that he had found it his duty to support the Board of Inspectors right throughout; and Mr. Harry, as a representative schoolmaster, stated plainly that there never had existed a greater feeling of mutual confidence between the teachers and the office than prevails at present. The very fact, however, of an increase in the appeals to the Caesar of the department is significant of a certain mistrust in the system under which the schools are controlled. When the permanent headship of the department was placed in commission under a Board of Inspectors "The Register" raised the question whether the step was hot in the direction of retrogression. Divided authority, however good the directing men may be, provides a good excuse for inaction or lack of progress; and there is a danger that so long as it is continued there will be little hope of entirely replacing seniority by merit as the principle upon which promotions are to be made. The Ministerial head of the department is generally the last man who can be expected to establish such a reform. Whenever merit and political influence come into conflict the latter has the odds all in its favour, and probably would have them even if an angel were Minister. The only chance of improving the system of promotion is to instal a permanent head, and to invest him with the responsibility of acting—in all changes among the staff—to the best of his judgment. But who shall be that head?

The more professional and academic aspects of educational work were admirably dealt with by some of those who addressed the Congress. On the sympathetic treatment of children Professor Douglas offered good advice; and regarding the encouragement of individuality among the teachers Mr. Chapple was equally happy in his remarks. This latter aspect of the educational question has been too much neglected. In every trade the best rule for the employer is—"Get good workmen, and you may then rely upon having good work done." Nothing more pertinent to the subject has in recent years been said than the conclusion of the report of the British Royal Commission on secondary education:—"It is, after all, not so much in the remodelling of curricula as in the improvement of methods, and above all in the supply of more highly educated and skilful teachers, that educational progress must in future consist." This is

ADELAIDE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1900.

### TEACHERS AND THEIR WORK.

It will certainly be difficult to live up to some of the high ideals brought before the Teachers' Union at its annual Conference this week, and many of the teachers will in their everyday work realize this somewhat painfully. Perverse pupils, and cantankerous parents who keep their children away from school on every pretext or on none at all, and then expect them to make progress equal to that of the cleverest and most regular attendants—these and other elements of disappointment constitute, on the whole, a considerable sum total of drawbacks under which the school teacher's work has to be conducted. One of those who heard Inspector Whitham's interesting dissertation on the new education, and the need for carefully examining into the "content of the child's soul," remarked truly that the main difficulty sometimes is to discover whether the wayward little creature has a soul at all—so persistently is the fact concealed. The worries and vexations of a teacher's vocation will force themselves upon his attention from day to