

A DISTINGUISHED MUSICIAN.

MR. GERALD WALENN IN
ADELAIDE.

Adelaide has gained an enthusiast in music in Mr. Gerald Harman Walenn, and students of the violin in particular should benefit greatly by the association of this cultured artist with the work of the Elder Conservatorium. Mr. Walenn, who recently accepted an appointment as teacher of the violin at the Conservatorium, arrived by the express from Melbourne on Tuesday. He was accompanied by Mrs. Walenn. A long journey from London—the voyage was begun on April 5—was thus concluded.

A conversation on the subject of his art reveals Mr. Walenn as a great lover of music, and one who is earnest in the desire to impart his knowledge to those who are willing to work hard in the development of any talent they may possess. He is one of a very musical family. He was born in London in 1871, a son of the late Mr. W. S. Walenn, a scientist, who interested himself in electrical engineering, and who was for many years engaged at the Patent Office, London. The violinist's mother is musical, but she did not adopt the art professionally. Mr. Charles R. Walenn—a brother of the musician—made the family name well-known in Australia by his fine performances of Gilbert and Sullivan comedy roles, in the recent revivals of the famous Savoy operas, under the direction of Messrs. J. C. Williamson. Another brother—Mr. Herbert Walenn—is a distinguished violoncellist, and a member of the staff of the Royal Academy of Music. An elder brother is a prominent organist, and a sister is an accomplished violinist. Two other brothers adopted the sister art of painting. One is now in the Flying Corps, and the other is the head of the St. John's Wood Art School.

The thoughts of Mr. Gerald Walenn were turned to music early in life. As soon as practicable a quartette was formed in the family, and much attention was devoted to



the performance of chamber music. When eight years of age Mr. Walenn took up the violin, and studied under Miss Kate Chaplin. Four years later he met Mr. John Rutson, of Yorkshire, since dead, whose memory Mr. Walenn holds in the highest esteem. Mr. Rutson helped many young artists to complete their musical education, and Mr. Walenn became one of his proteges. "I am extremely grateful to this gentleman," the musician remarked to an interviewer, "for giving me the opportunity of proceeding with my studies at the Royal Academy of Music." Mr. Walenn became the pupil at the Academy of the late Professor Sainton—a famous violinist, who led the orchestra at Covent Garden for many years. Upon the death of his distinguished master Mr. Walenn studied under M. Emile Sauret, a violinist well known throughout Europe, and during periods of this teacher's absence from the academy, he directed the work of certain pupils. Since 1900 the violinist has done much teaching in a private capacity, and at the academy and Queen's College.

Mr. Walenn has gained fame on the concert platform. He made his first appearance, when 14 years old, playing the Moskoweki Ballade on a three-quarter violin, at the huge St. James' Hall. "When I was at the academy," he stated, "I had a command to appear before Queen Victoria,

and I played the Mendelssohn Concerto. This experience I regard as one of the greatest privileges I have had." For some time he played with his brother, Mr. Herbert Walenn, and they formed the Walenn Quartette, a body which played much chamber music in London, and produced a number of works for the first time in that metropolis. When properly embarked upon his career as a soloist, Mr. Walenn toured extensively in the British Isles and played on the Continent. In 1902 he visited the United States and Canada, and made concert appearances. He has appeared on the same platform as Madame Melba. He was one of the first violinists to play at the Sunday concerts at the new Queen's Hall. He did not tour outside Britain after 1902, and in 1904 he married. As a teacher, Mr. Walenn believes in a pupil working hard, but he is not an advocate of the mechanical repetition of phrases for the purpose of gaining technique. Of course, he is insistent upon the development of technique, but holds that in practice with this object in view, the musical intelligence should also be awakened. "Mr. Rutson," he explained, "bought many violins, and I had the use of the finest of these—a Stradivarius bearing the date 1718. Upon his death he bequeathed the instrument to the Royal Academy, with the provision that I should have the use of it during my lifetime. I did not bring the instrument with me, owing to the high insurance premiums required, but it is to be sent out after the war." The violin is valued at about £1,500.

In addition to his work of teaching, Mr. Walenn hopes to take a prominent part in the performance of chamber music in Adelaide.

The Mail 11.6.17
DROWNING ECHOES

**PROFESSOR COMPLAINS
ABOUT OUR PUBLIC HALLS**

**AN EXPERIMENT WITH
WHEAT BAGS.**

Much concern has been caused to architects by the faulty acoustics that exist in many of our public halls and auditoriums. The prevalence of echoes and reverberations, with consequent difficulties in hearing and understanding on the part of listeners, have proved a serious defect at public gatherings.

The Elder Hall, which is practically in nightly use for the University extension lectures, is a case in point. Its acoustic properties have proved to be most unsatisfactory. A reverberation or undue prolongation of the sound exists, and in addition, because of the large size of the hall and the form and position of the walls, echoes are set up.

Professor Kerr Grant has made a special study of the subject, and in an interview with a "Mail" reporter pointed out the necessity that at present exists for obviating the confusion that results from these re-echoes.

"The acoustic properties of the Elder Hall," said the professor, "are very bad. Its bare walls and high ceilings leave nothing whatever to break the waves of sound. There is not enough material in the building to absorb them; hence it persists in re-echoing the sound backwards and forwards for several seconds."

"Can you suggest any remedy?" the reporter queried.

"Yes. The remedy would be to modify the design of the building, and to put in the hall material of an absorbent nature that would be sufficient to drown the echoes.

"Of course, a lot depends on the quality of the voice of the speaker. When the late Chancellor of the University spoke he could be heard in every corner of the hall, whereas some of the best public speakers fail lamentably. Although no actual test has yet been made in the matter, it seems probable that the clear, high-pitched feminine voice may be heard at much better advantage than that of a male speaker, especially if the speaker be practised in the art of oratory or is the possessor of a clear, deliberate articulation."

Professor Kerr Grant, continuing, stated that further experiments were being made with wheat bags. The sound may thus be partially absorbed, and the acoustic properties substantially improved.

"Other public halls suffer in the same way. There is a crying need in Adelaide for an auditorium capable of seating several thousands of people and of the best acoustic properties. Our local theatres

sorbing material in them.

"Professor W. C. Sabine, of the Harvard University, has made a special study of acoustics, and has given six years solely to the subject. His opinion is that reverberation can be eliminated by the use of sufficient absorbing material. The Baltimore University Assembly Hall has been so designed that in every seat in the house sounds of a sigh, a kiss, or even the simulated breathing of the somnambulist's sigh can be distinctly heard, and all the effectiveness of the various speakers duly appreciated.

"I attribute these faulty phases of the buildings to the architecture," said the Professor. "Very little attention is paid to the acoustic properties of buildings. All attention is directed towards the appearance of the structure. With the present growth of education there will soon be a demand for a university hall to accommodate a thousand or so students, and it will be most important for the building to be so designed that none of the lecturers' remarks will be confused or lost to the students. Wheat bags will be placed on the floor of the Elder Hall next Tuesday night, when Lady Garway will deliver a lecture, and it is hoped the experiment will prove successful."

Advertiser 13.6.17

Sydney Morning Herald 16.6.17

ORIENTAL LANGUAGES.

An indirect result of the war, which has already become apparent, is the increased interest in the study of modern languages. Generally speaking the Australian has inherited the proverbial British indifference to any tongue except his own, but he is now beginning to realise that this attitude imposes a severe handicap on him in many important relations of life. There was no need of a war to show us that much of Germany's commercial success was due to her recognition of this, but war has more forcibly brought home to us our own limitations, and we are now convinced that this is an aspect of German education well worthy of imitation. Already something has been done. The Modern Language Association has been working hard to popularise, not only French, but Italian and Spanish as well. It is understood that the University of Sydney proposes to establish a new lectureship in the two last mentioned languages; and, what, perhaps is most significant of all, there is evidence that the educational authorities both in this State and in others are making serious efforts to provide some adequate training in modern Oriental languages, particularly in Japanese. The lead has been taken by the Royal Military College, Duntroon, which has been fortunate in finding one of such attainments as Professor Murdoch to fill the chair, while the University is believed to be considering a scheme which will enable students to include Japanese as a subject in their course. The need of some such arrangement is urgent. It is not suggested that these studies can or should form any part in a school curriculum; but it was a great gap in our educational system that no provision whatever was made for them at any stage. The neglect was less important in Italian and Spanish, for in these it is at least possible to find a teacher. But with Oriental languages the case is different. Here the most eager aspirant seeks in vain for instruction, for the simple reason that there is no one qualified to give it. It has been authoritatively stated that in the whole of Australia there are not a dozen men with an adequate knowledge of Japanese scripts and forms, and even if this estimate is not exaggerated, it shows that facilities for learning the language are for practical purposes non-existent. So we have a paradoxical situation. Japan and Australia are the two nations whose interests are most immediately centred in the Pacific. They are bound by an alliance and by innumerable business connections which will increase in the years

to come. And yet while the individual Japanese is careful to secure for himself the advantages in personal and commercial intercourse that a knowledge of English gives, the Australian neither speaks Japanese nor has the opportunity to remedy his ignorance.

The benefits to be derived from a language may be classified, broadly, as cultural and utilitarian. In Italian and Spanish both of these elements are present. There is a rich field of literature awaiting exploration, and there is the more material inducement, the prospects of trade, which, especially in the case of South America, is capable of enormous development. With Oriental languages the cultural aspect is perhaps of less importance. Those who know declare that their literatures will never become "popular" in the ordinary sense, that is to say, will never appeal to the intelligent man in the street with a knowledge of the language in the same way that occidental literatures appeal. The conventions of literary art are so different that the Oriental classics strike the average person as curiously exotic, and will for long remain the preserve of the savant. But after all, the

cultural benefit of a language does not depend simply on the capacity to enjoy its literature; that would be to construe the term too narrowly. Anything that promotes sympathy and understanding is in its essence cultural. If a traveller, even the casual tourist, can speak the language of a country he is at once in a position to form a more truthful idea of that country than one who surveys it as a virtual deaf-mute. And, apart from these considerations altogether, the practical value of a knowledge of Japanese is so vital to Australians that it is extraordinary that we have had to wait so long for any direct recognition of the fact. Ten years ago Mr. Currie Elles, of Sydney, in the course of a Fisher lecture delivered to the University of Adelaide, spoke of the importance of systematic commercial education, including modern languages, and laid particular emphasis on Japanese; for the geographical factor, he prophesied, would bring us into the closest trade relations with Japan. Sooner, perhaps, than he thought, his words have been justified by the event. Many European markets have been closed to us by the war; even among the Allies many of our former customers have their hands too full for trade with Australia, and Japan has filled the breach. Yet this development found us quite unprepared. We had not deliberately, perhaps, but through some strange lack of foresight, or through stranger indifference, failed to equip ourselves with the thing which, more than any other thing, facilitates negotiation and smooths friction. Trade is not all, but it is much; it is a form of association which removes ignorance, and makes for friendship. But unless there is the solvent of a mutual familiarity in language, trade by itself can accomplish little. There was never so much need as there is to-day for the knowledge that can alone enable us to appreciate each other's ideals and problems, and to understand that they are not necessarily irreconcilable. To take a point that immediately suggests itself, what opportunities have these two nations of learning each other's point of view? How many Japanese and Australian papers have correspondents in the other country? How many Japanese and Australians are able to read each other's newspapers? A strange situation, when we remember that, despite the leagues of ocean, we are almost neighbours in the Pacific. Speaking of America Mr. Roosevelt once said:—