Musical Education in England

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CHIN-RESTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—Regarding the use of chin-rests, I think that violinists should certainly experiment a little for themselves, and not take too rigidly the accepted views on any matter. The difference of opinion seems to me to arise principally from one cause, viz., the failure to recognise that a violin can be held in several ways even under orthodox conditions.

For instance, most of us have been taught that it should be held *entirely* by the chin, and this certainly necessitates both chin-rest and pad for the majority of players. Still, from a mechanical standpoint there are certainly other possible ways of holding the instrument which are worth consideration. The most useful of these, perhaps, is, balancing the violin on the left hand and shoulder, i.e., *supporting* with both, but *gripping* with neither. It is obvious to me that some of our greatest technicians vary the method of support, even in the same solo, according to the passage; sometimes holding entirely with the chin, sometimes with the left hand, and alternating these with the balanced support, which rests both.

I wonder if it has struck many of your readers that the muscular condition of the arms and body when playing the violin should be the same as when performing balancing feats of the Cinquevalli type! I state it in all seriousness, and have just started a new 'school' with this as the foundation-stone.—Yours faithfully,

PERCIVAL HODGSON.

Birmingham.

MUSICAL EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—The April number of the *Musical Times* contains some crushing indictments concerning musical education in this country from the able pens of Messrs. Clutsam and Newman. On the Continent, where the Conservatoires are mostly State endowed, the fees are very low, and the courses of study in each branch very long; and no one is accepted as a student who does not demonstrate that he or she will eventually make a better musician than, say, a bootmaker. I have before me the regulations of the Naples Conservatoire. The annual fees payable by students vary from 25 to 80 francs. Every student on joining must take a course of 'rudiments' and 'sol-fege' (ear-training). The fee payable for the 'Corso normale' in wind-instruments and double-bass is 25 francs per annum; for the same course in theory, pianoforte, organ, singing, violin and violoncello, 60 francs; for the 'Corso superiore,' in the above subjects, 50 and 80 francs respectively.

The length of the courses is worth noting:

Harmony, Counterpoint, Composition 9 years.

Singing 4 „ (minimum).

Pianoforte, Violin, Viola, Violoncello 9 „

Double-Bass and Wind-Instruments ... 6 „

Harp 8 „

Not long ago a musician said to me, 'If we were to exclude all the unmusical students from our Institutions we should have to shut up shop; our "bread and butter" would be gone!' Dr. Buck, in his fairly recent (1911) book on 'Unfigured Harmony,' says: 'To my regret I have found myself obliged to keep examinations in view more than I wished to do,' and throughout the book there are dark hints as to the fate of luckless candidates who cannot dish up melodies, &c., harmonized as he (Dr. Buck) lays down.

If this country is to progress musically, all this nonsense must, as Mr. Clutsam says, be 'scrapped.' To be able to solve examination problems and puzzles (such as the adding parts to an 'inner' part extracted from a 'whole' conceived by an examiner) undoubtedly requires hard study and a considerable amount of ingenuity—but it does not necessarily make a musician. To read anything at sight (both vocally, and instrumentally) and to extemporise—such are the tests of true musicianship; and these evidences are lacking in the majority of people who study and practise music in this country.—Yours sincerely,

CLAUDE LANDI.

BRITISH COMPOSERS.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—Will anyone explain why it is that many of our great music schools continue to adopt such an anti-British policy? For instance, in a syllabus for 1913, out of sixty-three pieces there are only three by British composers; in 1914, out of forty-five pieces, there are five, which is a little better; but in 1915, out of eighty-one pieces, only nine are by Englishmen. The good the Press is evidently doing, others apparently try to undo by almost excluding anything British when they can. The result is that schools and the public are having the idea forced upon them, whether they like it or not, that everything foreign is superior, and that British composers are not worth playing or listening to. I do not mean that we should exclude the foreigner, only that we should be fair to ourselves.

H. C. TONKING.

CARILLONS.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—Many readers will be delighted with the interesting articles on 'Carillons' in the April number of the *Musical Times*.

I remember reading in your issue of August, 1910, the announcement of a series of carillon recitals to be given at Malines, but none of my musical friends could give me a word of information on the subject. I even consulted the editor of a musical journal, but his reply was 'No! they are bells, and we hate 'em.' So off I went to Malines to hear for myself, and found a great 'international contest' had been arranged. The sound of the bells did not impress me at first, but as the day wore on, my ear got accustomed to them, and the evening recital by the famous master M. Denyn revealed a new world to me in the art of music. I have been many times since to hear this fine carillon, but the *Musical Times* is the first musical journal to give a practical description of this fascinating branch of music; and the splendid reproduction of Malines Tower, showing the largest clock-face in the world (forty-three feet in diameter), will be appreciated by many who had seen it before its introduction to 'German frightfulness.'

Mr. W. W. Starmer, the writer of the article, and, so far as I can discover, the greatest authority on the tuning of bells, mentions the English carillons of Loughborough and Bournville. I have heard M. Denyn's recitals on both these instruments, which certainly show wonderful improvements in the matter of tune; and the local interest displayed at these concerts makes one feel that it is a pity that we have no National carillon, where unlimited numbers could enjoy this fascinating music under such a great artist as M. Denyn, who appears to be 'wasting his sweetness on the desert air.'

Perhaps there may be other unknown carillons in this country waiting for the magic touch; at any rate, we hope one day Mr. Starmer will give us a full account of what is being done in this way at home.

G. KIRBY.

April 19, 1915.

[We have in hand an article by Mr. Starmer on English carillons, which will appear in our June number—ED., *M.T.*]

At a meeting of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, at the Regent Street Polytechnic on April 10, a lecture on 'The Clutsam Cradle Keyboard' was given by the inventor, Mr. F. Clutsam. By means of models, the lecturer convincingly supported his claim that the Cradle Keyboard reduces the resistance of the old system by one-half, and provides equality of touch-weight on both black and white notes. Miss Winifred Christie gave an enjoyable recital on an instrument fitted with the Clutsam Cradle Keyboard. We hope soon to give a full account of this invention.

The Novello Choir announces a Nautical Concert to be given in co-operation with the Arundel Male-Voice Choir on May 15, at the Wesleyan Central Hall, Westminster. The programme will include Stanford's 'The Revenge' and his 'Songs of the Fleet.' Miss Elaine Birch, Mr. Charles Saunders, and Mr. John G. Dean are the soloists. The band (leader, Mr. Thomas Fussell) and choir will number 160 performers. Mr. Harold Brooke will conduct.