

## Libraries and Music.<sup>1</sup>

"THE librarian who reads is lost" is a saying now grown somewhat musty. It was long since controverted by a playful sarcasm from someone "That the librarian who writes was found." May we now be justified in the hope "That the librarian who sings is saved"?

One might hesitate to connect so closely music with libraries, were it not that many members of the Library Association are devoted to the science of music, and are amongst its most ardent students. We are reminded that one of the best dictionaries of musicians and musical bibliography that has yet appeared in the English language is the work of a librarian, while many of my colleagues have utilised their knowledge and taste for music for the benefit of the many with whom they come in contact.

Mr. Briscoe, of Nottingham, four years ago read a paper on "Book Music in Public Libraries," pointing to the fact that the British people are without doubt a music-loving nation, and that the love of music should be fostered everywhere for the sake of its elevating tendency; while he urged that the supply of printed music should be circulated widely on co-operative principles and by the public libraries.

We find that already many of the principal towns in Great Britain, including Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield, Derby, Cardiff, not to mention several of the Metropolitan free libraries, have been circulating musical works amongst their readers for some years with the best possible results. Taking the last report of the Birmingham free libraries, during the year 1891, the issue of music numbered no fewer than 7,426 volumes. When it is ascertained that the total number of volumes of music in that institution number only 957, it is seen that on an average every book of music must have been issued eight times during the year. In no other class of literature will the number of volumes show anything like such a proportionate issue, while it indicates most conclusively how thoroughly it is appreciated amongst the music-loving section of the public readers.

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<sup>1</sup> Communicated to the Paris Meeting of the Library Association, Sept., 1892.

In the metropolitan free libraries of Paris, which we English librarians have been visiting this week, it is most gratifying to find that the free issue of music has been adopted most effectually. May I quote a passage from the printed report presented to the members of the Library Association by the Minister of Public Instruction?:—"The rule of buying only cheap books for home reading was wisely ignored when the Administration decided to add scores of music to the works of general literature, and popularised science, which formed the basis of the libraries. Risky as the experiment might seem to be, the results have been such that actually all the municipal libraries, without exception, now lend out music."

It is impossible to speak too highly of the benefit of a collection of standard works and classics, so to speak, of our great composers, even if placed only in the reference department of our public libraries. In these days of certificates, and university degrees open to everyone, musical students need all the help they can procure in their studies, and frequently a close acquaintance with some musical authority—otherwise difficult of access—is most desirable. The poor student, unable to obtain such works, fails through no fault, or lack of industry, on his part.

This is the age of co-operation in matters scientific, literary, and artistic, as in other things, and in no more practical manner can this be illustrated than in that sympathy which should be established between library authorities and musicians. We hear of music coming to the aid of some public library low in funds. Were not high-class concerts organised a short time since in connection with one of the free libraries of our metropolis? One large public library<sup>1</sup> at Bristol (not yet municipal property) has three large musical societies meeting every week in its lecture rooms for study and practice, the fees accruing from such accommodation being a substantial help to the not over-burdened income of that institution.

The man that hath no music in himself  
Nor is not mov'd by concord of sweet sounds  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.

I dare to hope, therefore, that few of my colleagues but will be prepared to endorse the remarks I now venture to make, for two reasons, firstly, they will have at heart, I well know, the re-

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<sup>1</sup> The Bristol Museum and Library, since transferred to the City.

quirements of their own borrowers, and, secondly, they will be prompted by the desire to further every plan that will advance generally the study of music as a science.

Do not let us consider the shelves of our library to be completely filled until its musical section has a distinct and recognised position. Those who have not yet made any commencement in this direction, I would remind that a very small outlay in starting would go far towards establishing a worthy collection. The standard oratorios and opera music of the great composers, together with uniform editions of technical works, might first be added, to be increased by instrumental and vocal music, glees, part songs, and church music. For these you will receive the benediction of many an organist and choirmaster.

Then might not the librarian become acquainted with the musical library of the private collector, which may contain either modern or ancient musical literature. The possessor might not be disposed to part with his treasures during his lifetime, but what relief would he not experience to know that in the time to come they would still be cared for and made of service for the good of all?

In regulating all additions to our libraries we have ever to guard against favouritism in making selection; at the same time may one not claim the same attention for musical literature as for that, say, of botany, physics, or archæology? I need not go further to remind you that in the opinion of some, music is a far better educator than even Latin or Greek. For after all—so we are told—"language itself is but an offshoot of music." That may or may not be, but we know there is only one language in which musicians can express their ideas. Let us then secure for our libraries the best musical works, the best biographies of our great masters, the best histories of music, and by all means the best treatises for technical instruction.

Pope spoke less respectfully of the Church of his day than probably he would now of the public library of ours when he said :—

"Some to church repair  
Not for the doctrine, but the Music there."

I am prepared to maintain that there are in the future infinite possibilities of mutual assistance and profit in the closer association of Libraries and Music.

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