

This article was downloaded by: [University of Sunderland]
On: 09 January 2015, At: 11:47
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered
Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41
Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Proceedings of the Musical Association

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rma18>

The Life and Work of Sir G. A. Macfarren

H. C. Banister
Published online: 28 Jan 2009.

To cite this article: H. C. Banister (1887) The Life and Work of Sir G. A. Macfarren, Proceedings of the Musical Association, 14:1, 67-88, DOI: [10.1093/jrma/14.1.67](https://doi.org/10.1093/jrma/14.1.67)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jrma/14.1.67>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with

primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

FEBRUARY 6, 1888.

DR. BRIDGE

IN THE CHAIR.

THE LIFE AND WORK OF SIR G. A.
MACFARREN.

BY H. C. BANISTER.

MORE than fifty years since a violoncellist, who was distinguished for his discernment and the desire to encourage rising talent, gave to a young composer, who, though making his mark, was still little known, and quite in the struggling stage, a commission to write some small works for the violoncello, with pianoforte accompaniment. The means of the violoncellist were but limited, and the *honorarium* was probably of no great amount, though I feel sure the principle was acted on that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." But it was the young composer's first commission, and right proudly did he go home that day at having a commission to write anything at all on any terms. The works produced were twelve Ariettes and three Rondos, very fresh and charming, although little known now. It was from a business point of view the commencement of a long, honourable, and though chequered and marked by many disappointments which had to be patiently borne, an eminently successful career as a composer. He looked back to it and referred to it with grateful recollection of the timely recognition and kindly held out helping hand. The appreciative violoncellist passed away forty years ago, but the young composer lived on, with recognition of his powers gradually accorded to him, and with increasing honour and acknowledgment, not only by his own countrymen, but wherever music is known throughout the world. He also has passed away full of years, and by a pleasant, though melancholy co-incidence, by quite the reverse of what is sometimes termed the irony of events, the son of that violoncellist has been honoured with the commission to offer the first publicly spoken tribute to the memory of him whom his father was one of the first to recognise. The violoncellist was Henry Joshua Banister, remembered by very few here, but remembered with respect and honour ; the

composer was George Alexander Macfarren, and the tribute offered with great diffidence this evening is offered with a desire to be in sympathy with the old injunction—"Thine own friend and thy father's friend forsake not," or, as one may justifiably amplify it, "forget not," for he to whom my father was a friend, was a friend to me all along his professional course, and it is peculiarly grateful to me that in consideration of these facts I have had entrusted to me this task, one of the greatest professional honours ever conferred upon me.

My recollections of the musician whom we delight to honour extend over the whole of the period to which I have alluded. I remember those early visits to my father's house, I remember my own early visits to Mr. Macfarren, when he resided near Bedford Square, and I went to him for a volume or two of Dussek's Sonatas, which he kindly lent to me as a boy, and which I revelled in. I remember his calling in at my father's house very soon afterwards, when a quartet party were playing, and how my father said, "I wish we had one of your quartets here," whereupon Macfarren trudged back to his lodgings. On hearing the suggestion, one of the performers inquired of my father, "Who is he?" Although at that time it must certainly be averred that not to know him was to confess themselves unknown. Then the Quartet in A minor, I think, was tried, with interest I fully believe; with some discomfiture I also recollect. Moreover, that very call was to thank my father for help rendered at one of a series of concerts given in the Princess's Concert Room, by Messrs. G. A. Macfarren and J. W. Davison, the eminent musical critic, at which concerts most of the music was by the two concert-givers, although one of the works performed was Beethoven's posthumous Quartet in C sharp minor, led by Ernst, and at one or most of them the boy Joachim played, Mendelssohn being present, and a set of six songs, dedicated by Mendelssohn to Miss Dolby, were sung alternately by herself and Miss Marshall. I on one of those occasions sat by Dr. Alfred Day, whose theory of harmony Macfarren embraced, and I thought it very odd that he said he did not like Beethoven's Quartet. I remember also reading a paragraph by Mr. Davison about Macfarren's solid powers, prophesying that the day would come when his *dictum* would be universally acknowledged as authoritative, and I have looked out for that day, and I have witnessed its advent. Much else do I remember of that stainless artistic career, and of generous personal appreciation and kindness; and as these memories crowd upon me, my only fear is that I may be led into some personal references which may lay me open to some charges of egotism; but, if so, as they will all tend to illustrate the open-hearted, generous, artistic character which

is my theme for the evening, I must run that risk. You have not asked me to read up a subject for a lecture, but to speak of a man I have known long and known well, and I will do it reverently and gratefully.

And now, how little will it avail for me to recount the facts and details of Macfarren's life, such as are readily accessible in the ordinary summaries of such information ; but to give completeness to my sketch, and as the necessary prelude to such remarks as I shall make upon his characteristics, and upon the lessons to be learnt from his career, I must just briefly summarise those facts, supplementing such as may be very well known by a few that are not quite such common property.

He was the son of George Macfarren, dramatic writer and manager, whom I remember as a blind gentleman ; but it is gratifying to remark that by oculistic treatment he recovered the enjoyment of his sight for the last two or three years of his life. He was for a while editor of the *Musical World* at the time when my father wrote in its pages a series of letters entitled, "Domestic music for the wealthy." Some years ago, while the *Musical World* was under the editorship of James William Davison, an interesting account appeared in its pages of George Macfarren, Sen., penned by his eminent son. He was for a while manager of the Queen's Theatre, Tottenham Street, now in the hands of the Salvation Army, and brought out Handel's "Acis and Galatea" on the stage, with additional accompaniment by Cipriani Potter. He was a man of very great vigour and of considerable literary attainments. He wrote the libretti for several of his son's operas, and other works. George A. Macfarren was born in London in 1813, March 2nd, and commenced the regular study of music when about fourteen years of age under Charles Lucas, well known and remembered as an excellent violoncellist, a solid composer, a versatile musician, an efficient conductor, and subsequently Principal of the Royal Academy of Music. In 1829 Macfarren entered the Royal Academy of Music, of which national institution, the *alma mater* of so many eminent musicians, he was destined to become one of the greatest ornaments. Composition was his principal study, but he also practised the pianoforte under Cipriani Potter, and the trombone, which latter instrument I believe he used to play in the orchestral practices, which have all along been so valuable a feature in the educational training of the Royal Academy. Either at the same period or later on he also made some practical acquaintance with clarinet playing, and in after years wrote an instruction book for that instrument. He also wrote a little instruction book for the pianoforte entitled, "Little Clarina's First Lesson Book," in the quaint chatty diction which not

unfrequently characterised his conversational lesson-giving. To return, however, to our narrative. He was highly distinguished as an Academy student, and in 1834 was appointed Professor of Harmony in that institution. I had better pursue the subject of that professorship at once, especially as mis-statements respecting it have appeared in popular encyclopædias. In the year 1838 his previously formed acquaintanceship with Dr. Alfred Day, homœopathic physician, "ripened into the closest intimacy" (to quote his own words), and "certain novel theories about harmony," which Dr. Day had evolved and elucidated, were then propounded to him. They were so opposed however to all that he had previously learnt, that he combated them point by point, but as he confessed every one of his own opposing arguments fell under the convincing weight of Dr. Day's novel principles. The newly propounded principles took possession of his mind, and from a conviction of their truth he began to teach them to his pupils. The profession were soon up in arms against the innovation. A non-professional official of the Royal Academy one day found Macfarren using with his class a book other than that then authorised, and exclaimed, "Holloa! what is this book? we cannot have any new-fangled notions here." Mischief was made, a round table conference was held at which Cipriani Potter as principal, Sterndale Bennett, and three others discussed the new theories with Macfarren. Neither side knew when it was beaten—Englishmen never do—but Macfarren, although personally convinced that he was victorious, knew that those whom he considered his vanquished opponents outnumbered him, although, as he believed, they did not outwit him, and with the tough independence which always characterised him he resigned his professorship rather than teach contrary to his convictions. This was about 1843. Within a very few years, however, better counsels prevailed; not the acceptance of Day's theory, but the wise persuasion that it was better to have a musician of unquestioned competence and power to teach that which he believed from his own out-thinking, than that any old traditions should be so stereotyped in an educational system or curriculum as to bar all free thought, and to alienate from the Institution one whose worth was so fully recognised. Macfarren resumed his professional work at the Royal Academy at the instance of Cipriani Potter, his own old teacher, who said to him: "Come back and teach anything you please." This substantially, and I believe literally, is the history of the case, details of which have at different times been told me by Cipriani Potter, my teacher as well as Macfarren's and Bennett's, and by Macfarren himself.

In the year 1860 he published his "*Rudiments of Harmony*," in which the Day theory, with some modifications, was set

forth in somewhat more practicable fashion than in Day's own book. I shall have to recur to this theoretical matter later on.

I again recur to his earlier years. In the year 1834 Macfarren's Symphony in F minor was produced by that highly useful society, long defunct, the Society of British Musicians. An arrangement of this symphony as a piano-forte duet was published. In 1836 Drury Lane Theatre was under the management of Alfred Bunn, the musical arrangements being under the direction of Tom Cooke. A piece of Planché's entitled "*Chevy Chase*" was to be produced on Easter Monday, music was required in it, and Tom Cooke, the responsible conductor, composer, and arranger for the theatre, asked Macfarren only the previous week to write some, adding that if he would write an overture as well as incidental music his name should appear in the bill. The time was very limited, but desirous of publicity Macfarren undertook the task, wrote a hunting chorus, a chorus of nuns, and perhaps some other vocal music. He planned, moreover, to introduce into the overture the fine old tune of "*Chevy Chase*," but could not remember it, nor could he at first procure it, notwithstanding diligent search and enquiry. He meanwhile planned the overture, and still employed a relative to seek after the tune; and at last on the Friday it was discovered, and proved to be an old acquaintance, although not known by its name. He then set to work, being pressed by the copyists for the score, and succeeded in writing it in one sitting, and, being ready by Saturday morning, it was copied in time for rehearsal. In going down to the theatre with the score to have it tried, he found the bills of the approaching performance, but the music was announced as composed, selected, and arranged by Mr. Cooke. Highly indignant at this breach of faith, he complained to Tom Cooke, who interviewed Bunn about the matter. Bunn, however, said: "I know nothing about this young man, and have engaged you to provide the music; if his music is not done, find another overture which can be done easily." The consequence was that Macfarren left the theatre taking the score with him. I have related this incident as illustrating an all important matter—Macfarren's rapidity of production, as well as his independence of character. The overture to "*Chevy Chase*" was produced six weeks later with great success by the aforementioned Society of British Musicians. In 1873, when there was some talk about performing a Symphony of Macfarren's at the Gewandhaus Concerts at Leipsic, under Mendelssohn's direction, Mendelssohn wrote to Macfarren suggesting making a beginning with an overture instead, and asked for that very overture of "*Chevy Chase*," though by mistake under the name of Rob Roy. In a letter, dated

Leipsic, November 20th, 1843, he wrote to Macfarren: "I must tell you that your overture went very well, and was most cordially and unanimously received by the public; that the amateurs hailed it as a work which promised them a great many treats to come, and which gave them such a treat already in itself; that the orchestra played it with true delight and enthusiasm; in short, that it is sure to be a favourite with all of them. I rehearsed and conducted it with the greatest care, but now I am going to Berlin, and shall not have the pleasure of introducing some of your other compositions to the public this winter, but I left the whole of your music with the concert directors, who will forward it back to you after the end of the season, and have promised me they will bring out at least one of your other works, if not several, in the course of this winter; most probably it will be the Symphony. God bless you, my dear sir; yes, God bless you from all my heart, and be as happy in your life and in your art as I shall always wish you to be.—Very truly yours, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy."

All this is specially interesting in showing that the esteem in which our countryman has been held by ourselves was long ago entertained by the great genius, the accomplished artist who wrote so fervently, and moreover, that the undeniable power evinced in the Englishman's work compelled acknowledgment even where, as I have understood, it has been customary to say: "English composer, no composer."

In 1838 Macfarren's first opera, which one can well wish had a more inviting title than "The Devil's Opera," was produced at the new opera house or Lyceum Theatre, conducted without book by the composer, and with such success, I have been told, that it revived the waning fortunes of the establishment, besides at once bringing the composer to the front. His tendencies and aims seem ever to have been towards dramatic writing. I believe it is stated somewhere that even as a boy his amusements indicated these leanings.

In 1840, when Drury Lane Theatre was under the management of Hammond, the various theatres were to be thrown open to the public free on the night of the Queen's marriage, and at Covent Garden Theatre a special piece by Planché, with music by Bishop, was in preparation for many weeks. On the Thursday morning preceding the Monday on which the piece was to be produced, George Macfarren, Sen., called on Hammond and said, "Why do not you do something special on Monday night, like Covent Garden?" "But there is no time," responded the manager. "No time! there is plenty of time. I will write the words and my son George shall write the music." An "emblematical tribute" was projected, and although our composer had teaching at Shooter's Hill on the Friday, he afterwards set to work and produced

music enough to last half-an-hour in time to be copied ready for rehearsal on Monday morning or mid-day, when the assembled company were told by the manager that they would not leave the theatre until it went well. After the rehearsal, Macfarren, Sen., said to his son: "Now you must go and sell the music." He called a cab, put his son into it, and bade him go to the publishers. He sold the piece to Lavenue. An energetic father, with determined character; a hard-working and quick-working son!

In this same year, 1840, the Musical Antiquarian Society was established—Macfarren, Mr. E. J. Hopkins, Sterndale Bennett, Moscheles, and other eminent musicians were on the council. For that society Macfarren edited Purcell's "Dido and Æneas," besides arranging or compressing the scores of a number of other works issued by the society during its too brief career of seven years. I well remember being invited by the late Dr. Rimbault, the hon. secretary, to one of the meetings for choral rehearsal, through the interest, I believe, of Macfarren himself, as I had my boy's voice at the time. I doubt not that Macfarren's interest and zeal in musico-historical research, which afterwards was so prominent amongst his characteristic accomplishments, were developed in connection with the interesting work of that society. Only three years later Mr. Macfarren was mainly instrumental in establishing the Handel Society, although the first suggestion, I believe, emanated from his father. The original prospectus, I remember, was signed by G. A. Macfarren, Secretary, Mr. Macfarren, Sen., having died in April of that year, and the prospectus was issued from 73, Berners Street, where our friend then resided and where I was a frequent visitor. This society, like that previously mentioned, had also a too short existence. For it Macfarren edited "Belshazzar" (two parts), "Judas Maccabæus," and "Jephtha," and with his sadly imperfect eyesight such work must have been very exacting and laborious. He had very conscientious ideas as to the nature, responsibility, and duties of editorship, as was evinced not only by his own painstaking work of the kind, but in the article on musical editing which he wrote for a musical periodical not many years ago. It is, moreover, indicative of the artistic aims which animated him that he threw himself into comparatively unfruitful and certainly unprofitable work of this or any other kind which tended towards the highest advancement of the art to which he had devoted himself.

In 1845 the "Antigone" of Sophocles, with Mendelssohn's music, was produced at the Covent Garden Theatre with very great success, having a run of thirty nights, terminating only with the close of the season. The direction of the music was entrusted to Macfarren, who conducted without

book. Mendelssohn was much gratified with this arrangement, writing to him then from Prague in December of the preceding year: "Have many thanks for the interest you took in bringing out my music to the Antigone choruses. I am very glad it is in your hands, because it wants a musician like you to make it go as intended, quite as a subordinate part of the whole, as a mere link in the chain of the poem, and yet perfectly clear and independent in itself." Then follow a number of minute directions about the manner of production and the performance. I was not present at any of the performances, although I well remember the sensation they caused in the musical world, and how thoroughly Mendelssohn's verdict was endorsed, it being felt that such thoroughly classical music required for its performance the guidance of such a high-minded musician as Macfarren. Time would fail me to recount in any detailed manner the successive and, in most cases, successful production of his operas: "*Don Quixote*," or rather an adventure of *Don Quixote*, at Drury Lane in 1846, including the well-known song, "Ah! why do we love?" "*Charles II.*," produced at the Princess's Theatre in 1849, with its quaint madrigal and its merry Maypole dance and hornpipe, its tuneful ballad, "*Nan of Battersea*," preceded, I remember, even at this distance of time, by a lovely anticipatory orchestral prelude; "*Robin Hood*" at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1860; "*She Stoops to Conquer*" and "*Helvellyn*" in 1864; besides the operettas "*Jessy Lea*" in 1863, the "*Soldier's Legacy*," 1864, both composed for the German Reed operetta venture, which, I believe, was not a success commercially, notwithstanding the acceptableness of the works produced; and it is interesting that more recently he composed an Italian opera which has not been submitted to public hearing. But for circumstances which cannot now be stated this would seem a singular incident (we must not call it a retrogression), when we consider how thoroughly English his proclivities were how he liked English subjects and English words for his work, and that he wrote years ago a series of papers on the evil effects of the Italian language on music, or on English music; I quote from memory.

It must have been regarding the "*Don Quixote*" that Mendelssohn wrote in 1845, just before its production: "Many good wishes for your opera; may it succeed and give you and your friends many happy hours in '46, '56, and so on." Besides these operas, Macfarren also produced several interesting cantatas. "*The sleeper awakened*," termed a serenata, was brought out at the national concerts at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1857. In the same year "*Leonora*" was composed; "*May-day*" for the Bradford Festival in 1856; "*Christmas*" in 1859; and "*The Lady of the Lake*"

at Glasgow in 1877; also the charming little cantata for female voices, "Songs in a Cornfield," with words by Miss Rossetti. Another, also for female voices, was performed for the first time at a concert by the students of the Royal Academy of Music only a few days before its composer's lamented death. Besides these he wrote for performance at Cambridge the music to "Ajax." Of his organ music organists are better able to speak than myself. I believe it is an open secret that his musical sympathies with the instrument were never entire. All the more honour to him that, conceding that the loss and the defect were his, he nevertheless so thoroughly sympathised with all that tended to consolidate the musical brotherhood that he allowed himself to be made President of the College of Organists, and all honour to the College that it sought as its President, not necessarily an eminent organist, but the most notable musician of his time.

With his later years Macfarren, so to speak, renewed his youth by opening out to himself a new career as a composer, entering on the composition of oratorios, thus making quite a new departure. "St. John the Baptist," composed for the Gloucester Festival, was, however, not performed at it, but owing to circumstances not necessary to relate, although redounding to Macfarren's honour, was performed first at the Bristol Festival on October 23, 1875, and achieved a great success, being afterwards performed, and equally well received, in London. This was followed by "The Resurrection," for the Birmingham Festival in 1876; "Joseph," for the Leeds Festival in 1877; and subsequently "King David." I believe the general verdict has been most in favour of "St. John the Baptist," at all events until the production of "King David." Personally, from the imperfect acquaintance I have been able to make, I have been inclined to place "Joseph" higher still; but this is only an impression, not a formed opinion. By this series of oratorios I suppose Macfarren is best known as a composer by the present generation, and perhaps will continue to be so. In addition to all these works that I have enumerated there are several symphonies, one an early work in C sharp minor, another a comparatively recent production in E minor, composed for the Philharmonic Society; also a violin concerto, a pianoforte concerto, a flute concerto, and also various overtures. His chamber compositions moreover must by no means be overlooked, consisting of quartets, a quintet in G minor, for the pianoforte and strings, including a double bass; a trio for the pianoforte and strings, originally performed by Madame Dulcken, and recently revived by Mr. Ernest Kiver at one of his chamber concerts; besides several small pianoforte pieces, three solo sonatas, one in A major, another in

E flat, and a more recent one in G minor, composed for his eminent pupil, Miss Agnes Zimmermann. The first, named "Ma Cousine," was played by Mr. W. H. Holmes at one of my father's concerts in 1844. I think it was this one which was to be performed by him at one of Macfarren and Davison's Concerts, but he, failing for some reason, Mendelssohn was asked to play it; he, however, declined also, although in a letter dated June 26, 1844, he says: "I need not tell you with how great pleasure I would have played your sonata to-morrow if I possibly could, for I hope you know this, and you also know that it is with very sincere regret I must say I am not able to undertake the task you propose to me." He then proceeds to explain that his many engagements prevented him making himself acquainted with the sonata at such short notice so as to do it justice, though the same night he played his own Trio in D minor.

Macfarren's smaller works are innumerable: songs, duets, part-songs, glees, church services, &c. Some of his small vocal pieces have great spontaneity and charm, such as his well-known duets "Two Merry Gipsies," and "The Fairies' Tryst"; the part-song for female voices, "Ye Spotted Snakes"; the part-songs, "The Troubadour," "Orpheus with his Lute," and many others.

And be it remembered that for many years before his death he was totally blind, and had to give forth his productions by the tedious process of dictation to an amanuensis, sufficient one would think to evaporate all inspiration. When I first knew him, indeed, his sight was very imperfect, as it had been from his boyhood, and he used to read with his face close to the paper with the help of a powerful magnifying glass. I think his total blindness dates from forty years back, although he took a voyage to America in 1847 or 1848, and remained there for some months, mainly to be under special oculistic treatment in the hope of regaining the precious sense, but all in vain. Yet he was most minutely painstaking in the indication of all details with regard to manner of performance, organ registers, and so forth, never scamping any work; rarely, I think, has been discovered any slip or mental oversight. He did, indeed, attempt to master the very ingenious system of embossed notation, the same as we use at the Royal Normal College; but he told me if he learnt it he forgot it within a week, the only thing I ever knew him to forget, and the only feat I knew him to acknowledge he had failed in, except, indeed, politics, which he told me he could never understand. Also there was one other thing he acknowledged in my hearing to have failed in, and that, moreover, a musical task—the analysis with a pupil of Gounod's "Redemption," which he said he gave up after a line or two.

But I have by no means exhausted my record of the work accomplished by this marvellous worker. He had a prodigious capacity for hard work and seemed never to flag. I have rapidly sketched with scarcely a hint of criticism his doings as a composer, and the bare enumeration may well indicate his fertility. There remains to speak of his literary work, closely associated, moreover, with his lecturing work. He wrote many articles and series of articles in the *Musical World* and the *Musical Times*, and these, not the familiar papers on current topics such as the habitual press writer can throw off with facile pen, but thoughtful, critical, analytical little treatises on such subjects as Bach's Church Cantatas, the outcome alike of careful thought and discriminatory judgment. Macfarren never did anything carelessly. Of a like quality were the many analyses he produced for the programmes of the Sacred Harmonic and Philharmonic Societies, and some other concerts; the prefaces of such works as Bach's Passion Music, Handel's "Messiah," &c. He also produced a series of interesting biographies of musicians for the Imperial Dictionary of Biography. At the time of the first Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace, it being thought expedient to prepare for sale on the opening day a succinct biography of Handel, Macfarren was commissioned to prepare one, which he did at considerable expenditure of time and research. By some mischance the manuscript was lost in transit to the printer, and in order that the *brochure* might be ready in time for its purpose, he re-dictated it entirely from memory, and when subsequently the original manuscript was recovered, it was found that the two versions only varied in some half-dozen slight instances. I relate this incident as it was at the time related to me by one closely connected with him. Including so many dates as the pamphlet did, this was a marvellous feat of memory, but not by any means the only such feat to be recorded of him. In the years 1880 and 1881 he delivered two lectures on the lyrical drama before this Association in this room, of considerable length and full of facts, names, and dates, seldom faltering for a moment, at least in the first of the two, which only I was fortunate enough to hear. More recently his delivery was somewhat marred by increasing hesitancy, but even then was marked by much occasional fluency and power.

In 1875 he succeeded Sir Sterndale Bennett as Principal of the Royal Academy of Music and as Professor of Music in the University of Cambridge, that succession being hailed with acclamation, satisfaction, and expectation by all musical England. I remember an intelligent man saying to me at the time: "I am afraid it is too late," meaning, I suppose, that the recognition of his great attainments had come too

tardily to draw much work from one so advanced in years, in whom ambition, if not energy, might be expected to have died out. But the speaker knew not the man. It is tolerably notorious how completely he made his mark in both offices. The ambition to do solid work never died out of him. His energy and courage never quailed before work, his enormous personal influence at the Royal Academy of Music is well known, and in Cambridge University we are not likely to witness any relapse into nominal, easily-passed examinations for degrees. The courses of lectures which he delivered in his professorial capacity at Cambridge he repeated year by year at the Royal Academy: a course on Beethoven's ninth Symphony, two courses on the Symphonies of Mozart, one on "The well tempered clavier," and another course on the second volume of twenty-four preludes and fugues, which he refused to include with the others as the forty-eight, because the two sets were not composed at the same period, and were not issued as one work by Bach, and, as Macfarren considered, but represented different phases or developments of the composer's genius. There were also two courses on Beethoven's Sonatas, the third course being on the Academy Calendar for this very year, 1888. Alas! we are doomed to disappointment. There was also a course on the "History of the Overture," which he delivered, not, I believe, at the Academy, but at the Royal Normal College and Academy of Music for the Blind, an institution in which, both as a musician and a blind man, he was much interested, believing in the entire practicability of highly educating those suffering—although he repudiated that word—from the same deprivation as himself. He repudiated also the popular fallacy that to such there is a compensation in the quickening of the other senses by the loss of one. He was good enough to express his thorough satisfaction at the appointment of your humble servant to the Professorship of Harmony and Composition in that College, and specially commended a specimen of improvised counterpoint by one of the pupils at a recent meeting at Grosvenor House. At the commencement of each academical year he delivered an inaugural address to the students and professors, always brimfull of kindly sympathy, wise counsel, and shrewd remark on current musical topics. One of them consists of an outline sketch of the history of music, evidently the result of the special thought which he was then bestowing on the article "Music" in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," afterwards republished in volume form as "Musical History, briefly narrated and technically discussed," about the most readable and instructive book on the subject in existence. It were much to be desired that his miscellaneous papers scattered among periodicals and similar publications could be collected, and, with some judicious

editing, issued in convenient form for the benefit of musical students. His critical opinions as expressed in some of those papers, in his analytical programmes, and in other ways, are of course open to discussion. He, in my hearing, almost reproached himself for having in any way co-operated in the production of analytical programmes. I hardly know why. I may mention that he would insist on the word being spelt "program," similar to monogram and telegram, I suppose to prevent people pronouncing it, as some do, "programmy." It has often been thought that he was dogmatic, and even obstinate, but in reality he was singularly open to conviction, and ready to change his views and his *dicta* if increased acquaintance with the subject or the composer's work warranted such change. An old writer has said: "No wise man will be ashamed to own himself in the wrong; it is simply to acknowledge that he is wiser to-day than he was yesterday"; and Macfarren was marked by much of that wise readiness. Although he did not change on slight ground, he endeavoured, I believe, to keep himself free from prejudice. I have spoken of his abandonment of all attempts to satisfactorily analyse Gounod's "Redemption." I particularly remember when I was by his side at a performance of a strangely popular bit of hideousness by the same composer, how he turned to me with the exclamation: "What dirty music"! On the other hand, the day after the performance of Gounod's "Mock Doctor," he spontaneously said to a little company of professors: "What beautiful music that was last night." It was no inveterate prejudice against the composer that he cherished.

When a young man he, like some young men now-a-days, thought somewhat slightly of Mozart, saying to his and my master, Cipriani Potter: "Do not you think he is often puerile?" But soon afterwards, hearing one of Mozart's symphonies and some music by other composers, Beethoven's amongst the number, whom he had fancied greater, he exclaimed enthusiastically to the same valued friend: "Oh, sir, I think Mozart is the finest of all." In his later years he was never tired of dilating on the incomparableness of Mozart, often alleging that Beethoven owed very much to Mozart, as the foundation on which he built. Would that all young men of the present day, who talk depreciatingly of Mozart, would similarly, as they mature their judgment, come to a better mind.

Again, many years ago, I was credibly assured by a most intelligent musician, who was very intimate with Macfarren, Henry Gattie, the violinist, that he highly admired Clementi, considering his Sonata in B minor one of the finest in existence. Not many years since he said to me: "There is one composer I cannot tolerate, that is Clementi, his awkward

modulation, awkward counterpoint, and so on; exception might, perhaps, be made in his favour of the B minor Sonata, but even that"—and he then proceeded with some animadversions. He could express his admiration, however, very tersely, and once during the performance by a student of the gigue from Bach's French suite in G said: "It is so jaunty." I believe there is evidence that he was at one time by no means as enthusiastic as he afterwards was about Sebastian Bach, but advanced as he became more acquainted with his works.

In like manner, I believe he expressed himself favourably at one time concerning the Tonic Sol-fa system of teaching, but was somewhat strong in his opposition to it in later years, notwithstanding his great and deserved esteem for its energetic promulgators, the Messrs. Curwen, father and son. I remark on these matters of opinion not to insinuate that Macfarren was fickle or unsettled in his judgment, but to indicate that there was a healthy element in his mind, a readiness to re-consider, and, if need be, on sufficient grounds to his thinking, to reverse or amend those judgments. In fact I may say to the last his seemed to be a growing mind, ever ready for new impressions, and he was all along, as he insisted on it that every true artist should be, a student. I well remember a little incident illustrating this. It fell to my lot to express thanks to him on behalf of the Academicians at the close of one of the courses of analytical lectures, and in doing so I spoke of his kindness in permitting us to become fellow students with himself of the noble works he had been discussing. He started, and his face lighted up with pleasure at this way of putting it, and he afterwards thanked me for what he was good enough to term my felicitous way of stating the matter. He liked just to be thought of as one with us all, only perhaps a little further on through favouring circumstances, and knowing a little more about some things. He was never like some, knowing everything, but was always ready to learn from anyone. Yet how much he knew! What vast stores of information were packed in that receptive, retentive, and reflective brain! I think I never knew anyone who might be more properly termed a walking Encyclopædia, and this was so wonderful when one remembers the sad hindrance to knowledge which would have seemed to be in his way, as so insurmountable. Yet his constant readiness and certain competence to impart knowledge from his own acquisitions caused one well nigh to forget that he was not all eyes as well as all ears and all brains. In the preface to my recently published "Lectures on Musical Analysis," I mentioned the fact that after preparation, and even putting into the printers' hands some of these lectures, I was gratified on hearing Professor

Macfarren lecture on some of the same works to find my own views confirmed by so eminent an authority. He wrote to me thanking me for the book, and said: "I am glad that you allude to me as a fellow worker in the same subject. I am sure that the more all of us give our best energies to its exposition the more will it gain the respect it deserves, since each writer helps to confirm what may be said by his friends." Such a letter exhibits entire absence of jealousy from the mind of the single-purposed Professor, and it is one of many which I doubt not could be discovered, manifesting the same trait in his character. When, several years ago, I had the honour of reading a paper before this Association "On some underlying principles of structure in musical composition," he was unable to be present, but on the paper appearing in print he wrote to me: "It pleases me very greatly. I hope it may have many readers for the sake of the good effect it is capable of producing. I concur fully in your views, which are so happily expressed as to make them interesting even to readers who have small knowledge of the subject, &c. Let me then thank you for casting a bright light on an important matter.—Yours, with friendly regards, G. A. M."

This unsolicited and spontaneous expression was peculiarly gratifying and valuable, and shows not only the kindness of the man, but how deeply interested he was in any effort to promote elevated views of art.

Again, on the other hand, when he himself read a paper here on the life and work of Cipriani Potter, I was greatly disappointed at being prevented by illness from being present, especially as being among the now comparatively few and fast diminishing number of Potter's pupils, it would have been expected that I should add some reminiscences of the dear old man in conversation after the reading of the paper. I wrote to the professor to that effect, and received the following reply: "My dear Banister,—It would indeed have been a pleasure to have had the interesting additions you might have made to the too little I could say of our dear friend Potter. I regret as much the loss of this as the illness that prevented your presence at the meeting. I deplore that the master is at present less represented in his own works than in those of his pupils, and the persons who knew not himself have now small chance of knowing his merits. On this ground it behoves us who retain a vivid recollection of his work to do all that we may to imprint our memory on the consciousness of others." I must be forgiven if these extracts from the professor's correspondence seem to be too personal in their references, clustering round myself, but I presume that the reason why I have been so singularly honoured as to have the present task committed to me, is that it is known that I am able to furnish personal reminiscences such as

these. Even these I would not care to quote but for the light they help to cast on his mind and friendly character.

In my enumeration of the learned professor's literary labours, I have omitted all reference to those which must be considered by far the most important of them—viz., his theoretical works. I purposely deferred all mention of these, partly because it is not their literary character which claims attention, and still farther because the consideration of them comes under a much more comprehensive head, and one of the most momentous in his career and work—that of his position as a theorist and theoretical educator. His books of a purely theoretical and educational character are—(1st) "The Rudiments of Harmony"; (2nd) "Six Lectures on Harmony, delivered before the Royal Institution"; (3rd) "Eighty musical Sentences: Illustrating the use of Chromatic Chords"; (4th) "Counterpoint, a Course of Study"; to which may be added the annotations and appendix to the new edition of "Alfred Day's Treatise on Harmony." Mention may also be made of a short treatise on the construction of a sonata. He told me he once began a book on the elements of music, but that when my little text-book treating of this, and of advanced matters likewise, appeared, he abandoned his design as no longer needful to prosecute. He assured me of the sincerity of this compliment. The "Rudiments" were designed as a text-book for students, on the basis of the Day theory, the "Lectures" were delivered at the instance of Mr. G. A. Osborne, and the theory is elucidated and defended with copious justificatory illustrations from the works of various acknowledged composers, with the view of showing that, although often unconsciously, they have, so to speak, written in accordance with the Day theory, which is therefore not in reality a heterodox novelty, but the only theory which adequately explains and justifies much in music which is accepted unchallenged, if not fully recognised. The "Eighty Sentences," written at the instance of the late Reverend John Curwen, are elaborately minute illustrations of that portion of the Day theory referred to in their title, an integral part of the whole theory in fact. A still further exposition, with some modifications of the theory, resulting from years of experience and independent thought, are presented in the editorial matter in the republished book by Dr. Day. It will not be expected on this occasion that I should enter with any fulness or in any controversial way upon so vexed and much discussed a question as this greatly opposed, and at one time wholly discredited, theory. It has received much severe handling three times in this very room, before our Association, in papers by Mr. Stephens and Mr. Gerard F. Cobb, marked, I need not say, by how much ability; but the theory has, notwithstanding, seemed to possess such vitality as to survive

—even as though it were the fittest—the polemical cannonades to which it has been subjected. It is at this moment widely, although by no means universally, accepted as a theory, both by the explanation of the phenomena and as educationally a practical guide to the actual musical structure of composition. I doubt not that when next month the subject of the Day theory, with suggested modifications, is made the theme of a paper by one so able to deal with it as our friend Mr. Prout, he will breathe a little more freely, perhaps, than if he had to be subjected to so powerful an antagonist as the departed theorist, and considerations of great interest will be advanced. But it must be borne in mind that whether the theory be accepted or not, the combinations and progressions which, for want of a better word, I have termed “phenomena,” in the works of the great masters, which the theory professes to explain and justify, *exist*, and that, moreover, in as it would seem too great a number to be dismissed as exceptions to rules, or vagaries of the particular composers; so that it is not a question as to what is allowable in music, but of how that which is unquestionably accepted is to be most logically accounted for, and, in fine, how it is to be expressed. With reference to this latter point it is well known that the theory affects notation very considerably. Unquestionably as the result of the wide dissemination and authoritative inculcation of this theory by a musician of such distinction as Macfarren, many progressions and combinations which were formerly considered doubtful, and were therefore timidly used, have become, I had almost said, common-places of musical writing. Though some of them may be regarded or felt to be somewhat startling, the majority are unhesitatingly used and listened to. The Macfarren discipleship of more than one generation has become so numerous that no retreat or retrogression in this matter seems possible, even if it were desirable. The influence of the theory has stamped certain qualities on the music of those who accept it to so great an extent that it is impossible even to deny that it has enlarged the range of the acknowledged, the allowed, and given rise to phases of thought in music and musical idioms, which, at all events, were informal previously. I have heard certain applications of the theory sneered at by its being said that certain themes have been *Macfarrenised*, and I have even heard it hinted that some of the originality claimed for Macfarren’s own compositions has really sprung from a vigorous, unstinted application, and an abundant infusion, of his theoretical methods. With regard to the various petty sneers and criticisms which we have heard concerning him, we may do well to remember the saying of an acute writer: “A great man will always pay deference to a greater; a little man will not, because little

men are ambitious, and the weaker they are the more obstinate and crooked."* But in considering and estimating the work he has wrought as a theorist, let all acknowledgment be made if he has, in connection with theory, drawn attention to certain idioms, or whatever they may be termed, which may have the effect of extending the range of harmonic usage, whatever the theory; if he has, for instance, emphasised the consistency with good effect of the resolution of either dominant, supertonic, or tonic discords, to either of one another's roots; and of the upward progression of chromatic discords, in addition to the downward progression prescribed of old. All this must be placed to his credit, and no tribute to his work would be complete without this recognition.

Leaving theory, however, and coming to rules, a very different matter, let it be remembered that rules given to students are educational and disciplinary provisions, and moreover, that rules are, theory apart, expressions of the individual opinion and feelings of the law-giver, as to what is firstly good as music, or, secondly, desirable for the student. Macfarren's rules are indeed numerous and stringent, and although the exceptions may ease the difficulties of the worker, they do greatly add to the burden upon his memory. Some of his terminology may with all respect be challenged, as also some of his objections to conventional terminology. I could give examples of both these, but must forbear, lest tribute to the memory of a man of such remarkable power should diverge into technical argument. I have never found myself differ from him in judgment without sincerely questioning the validity of my own, and I never spent even a short time with him in conversation without having a spirit of inquiry aroused within me, and rarely without the gain of some actual knowledge by being quickened into some fresh insight into the mysteries of our beautiful art and its theories. I think I must forbear further enlargement on this important topic lest I should weary you, interesting as the discussion might be. I must also waive with regret any remarks on his book on Counterpoint, which has been attacked on different grounds from his other works. Dr. Alfred Day greatly desired to explain and unfold his theory to Mendelssohn, little doubting that it would commend itself to so great a mathematical as well as musical master. For that purpose he induced Macfarren to arrange for an evening meeting to converse upon the subject. He reckoned, not without his host, but without the visitor to his host. Dr. Day had proceeded with his expositions only a few minutes when Mendelssohn's countenance exhibited signs of a recent dose of nauseous medicine, and to prevent unpleasant

* Landor.

consequences the host was compelled to interpose and cut the discussion short, prematurely and peremptorily. As Macfarren said to me, Mendelssohn was such an opponent of all theorising; in one of his letters he says: "Why do people talk so much about music, instead of writing good music?" And Macfarren said he could well believe the story of Mendelssohn, which he had not heard until I told him, that when asked the root of the first chord of the "Wedding March" he said: "I do not know, and I do not care"; even as his friend, Sir Sterndale Bennett, when asked to account for a certain progression said: "I cannot account for it; let us have a cigar." No such expression ever fell from the lips of Macfarren. You do not know the root of that chord and you do not care, and you cannot account for it? then do not go up to Macfarren to be examined!

When Macfarren's "Rudiments" appeared the late Dr. Gauntlett meeting him in a music warehouse and going up to him said: "Ah, Macfarren I have read your book, but I do not agree with you." "Then you are like Christmas pudding" was the rejoinder of the supposed hard pedant and polemic. And although his convictions on theoretical matters were deeply rooted, he did not treat with contempt the opinions of others, though I have heard him speak of the binding of one theoretical book as being the best part of it. On the other hand, I have heard him say that musicians whom he respected differed from him about this point of the supertonic root.

It was shallowness, fussiness, slipshod expediency which he despised in any dealing with so serious an expression of truth as beautiful music.

How simple and forbearing he was, often remaining silent when dissentient, and although called so radical, as indeed he was theoretically, his views having so much reference to the roots of chords, yet so reverentially did he cling to those methods of structure, which have been accepted, that he came to be thought narrow by certain modern musicians, or, as he expressed it to me, "I know they think me a rabid old Tory." In private life he was most lovable, highly estimating domestic affection, which I could illustrate by instances of too personal a nature for such an occasion as this. How generously he liked to praise other musicians! During the last railway journey I took in his company from Cambridge to London he was talking about various musical matters and men, and speaking of a series of papers on orchestral instruments by Mr. E. H. Turpin, he said that they seemed to him about the best of the kind he had ever seen. In his "Musical History" he is careful, just after treating of the organ, to add a foot-note: "These facts are drawn from the excellent writings of Dr. E. J. Hopkins, to which the

reader is referred for details." For himself he only valued the distinction of being esteemed by his professional brethren. That he did greatly value. He implored them as marking their friendship not to address him by his titular distinction, upon which I hope it is not unloyal to say he set about as much value as he did on his Doctor's robes, which he said made him look like first cousin to the knave of hearts. When I dedicated to him my *Fantasia in F minor*, he not only wrote of the work in terms that I must not repeat, but specially thanked me for styling him on the title page "my friend." Of his ceaseless, untiring activity one final and affecting instance may be given. On Sunday, October 30th last, he had a fall which shook him very much; on the Monday, however, he dictated three letters, one very complicated; and in an hour and a-half he passed away, in harness to the end. At the last Academy dinner, in response to the toast of his health, he assured us that the truest mark of friendship would be at once to give him an intimation when his health was so failing as to unfit him for the efficient discharge of his duties. Who would have had the courage or the heart? We have been spared that pain.

And now, who shall succeed him? I do not mean in any honoured position, such as the Presidency of Societies: they will have to ask and answer that question. I do not mean in the Principalship of the Royal Academy of Music—I mean who is to succeed him as the all-round, universally revered Nestor and head of our profession, whose attainments and honesty, and knowledge and judgment, and high-mindedness shall win such perfect and deferential recognition from all ranks and parties. We have all been proud of him, we are proud of our countryman, and we feel proud of a profession which has been ennobled by having enrolled amongst its numbers one who has laboured harder than any of us probably, with such dignified persistence, such indomitable energy for our professional dignity in such wise as well may stimulate our energies to correspondingly indomitable vigour. His example remains to us. We may not emulate with any hope of attainment his almost Machiavellian memory, his almost Crichton-like culture; but we may all emulate—and this is the great lesson which his example furnishes to students—his single-minded directness of aim, his perseverance, his unflagging industry; and that, moreover, with the certain assurance that honest work, thoughtful work, with no scamping, and none of what he called "dissolute" evasion of difficulties to be seriously encountered, must have its reward, must issue in the natural result of such working causes. I heard him say once—"‘Trouble’ is not a word in my vocabulary." Of course toil, work, labour, fatigue, all these he knew, and you must know, if you are to win any

prize, but not trouble as something to be shirked or minimised. Still I repeat the question which I cannot answer—Who is to succeed him as the all-round musician? All here, especially the younger generation, may say each one—I will; I may not ever succeed him in that fashion, but, coming after him, I will succeed like him in his fashion by a stainless course of devotedness to the highest in art, never swerving from the path of unsullied purity, aim, and endeavour.

THE CHAIRMAN.—At this late hour it will not be your wish that I should detain you with any observations of my own. I should only like to say I could have wished someone else had occupied the chair this evening than myself. I yield to no one in my admiration and respect for the late Professor Macfarren, but I had not the opportunity of knowing very much of him, for one reason, of course, that my musical education was not received in London, and I did not in fact come to London until I had approached the sear and yellow leaf; but I had the privilege, which I look back upon with great pleasure, of helping to pay probably the last public tribute to him in arranging for the musical service at Westminster Abbey. From the official position which I hold there it fell to my lot to do what I could in that way, and I am glad to think the friends and pupils of the late Professor were satisfied with what we were able to do on that very interesting but mournful occasion. I am sure it would be your wish to tender your best thanks to our friend Mr. Banister for this very admirable paper. It is not a controversial paper, and I believe it is not necessary or right that I should ask for any discussion. One would have been very glad to have had it supplemented from those friends of the Professor who may be here, and who also knew him well; but I venture to think few of them could add anything of interest to the remarkable paper Mr. Banister has read. I will, therefore, with your permission, at once put the motion that our best thanks be given to Mr. Banister.

The motion was carried unanimously.

MR. BANISTER.—Allow me just to add one thing in acknowledging this vote of thanks. I am engaged upon a still harder task than that which I have undertaken this afternoon, which is the very onerous and difficult but honoured one of preparing the complete biography of Sir George Macfarren. It is utterly impossible for me to make that the kind of book that it should be, unless all those who possess either letters or documents of any kind bearing upon his artistic and musical career will kindly let me have some access to them as far as possible, with the assurance that they shall receive the most careful supervision and

preservation, and shall be returned in as good a condition as they are lent. I shall be very greatly obliged by anything of that kind in order that I may render the book worthy of our departed friend.

Mr. C. E. STEPHENS moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which concluded the proceedings.
