

Government Singing. No. II

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have already signified their intention of acting voluntarily on the occasion, and there is every reason to believe that in all respects the meeting will be far superior to any of its predecessors. If some new work could be produced, or one of the forgotten treasures of the past revived, an additional interest would be given to the selection; and, after the recent controversy on the continuation of the Festivals, it certainly would be highly beneficial to show a desire on the part of the promoters of the undertaking for the performance of compositions unknown to the usual frequenters of the Cathedrals on these occasions. We also live in hopes of seeing every concession made to those who ground their objections to these meetings upon the interruption which they cause to the ordinary services; for, much as we advocate the presentation of great sacred works in Cathedrals, we have no desire that they should in the slightest degree interfere with the worship of those who dissent from us. The feelings of each party may be treated with equal delicacy and consideration; for true religion ceases when its professors fail to act towards each other with mutual forbearance.

In the course of the year we shall also have Musical Festivals at Bristol and Glasgow; and it is gratifying to announce that for the latter Professor G. A. Macfarren has accepted the commission to write a secular Cantata on the subject of Scott's "Lady of the Lake," the libretto by Madame Natalia Macfarren. We have not yet heard of any new composition at Bristol, but should imagine that the unprecedented success of "St. John the Baptist" would encourage the directors to continue the policy adopted at their first Festival of engaging some eminent composer to write a work for the occasion.

We have said nothing about the Chamber Concerts and Pianoforte Recitals which will most certainly form a portion of the season's music, our only fear indeed being that the supply—especially of the latter—will immeasurably exceed the demand. Confining ourselves solely to those events which have a real bearing upon the progress of art in this country, we have briefly drawn attention to a year's programme which, both for interest and variety, has certainly never been equalled. We have now only to hope that the seed thus plentifully sown may produce a rich harvest of results.

GOVERNMENT SINGING.—No. II.

By J. POWELL METCALFE.

SEC. FOR MUSIC TO THE YORK DIOCESAN CHORAL ASSOCIATION.

HE who finds the fault should name the remedy. It is fair enough that those who indulge in the luxury of fault-finding, should hold themselves ready to answer the natural question—"How else would you have it?" We propose in this paper thus to supplement what we said in the last number of the *Musical Times*. We there ventured to animadvert somewhat strongly upon the Government plan for what is officially designated "teaching singing." We pointed out that to encourage the ordinary schoolmaster or schoolmistress to attempt to teach the whole of a school, or even the two-thirds required to be operated upon as condition for any grant whatsoever for "teaching singing," is nothing more and nothing less than the systematic deprivation of ear and destruction of voice, and that not only in the scholar, but in the teacher as well. This disastrous process is gradually, but surely, "untuning the land"—paid for as it is, moreover, by public money voted for just exactly the opposite process. Shall we propose to give up this public money altogether, cruelly per-

verted in its purpose as it is? If the present system must remain in operation, by all means—of course, of course—there is discord enough in this wicked world without fostering it by educational codes. Let the grant for "teaching singing" go to the submarine navy; there it will be only simply flat loss, it will not, at any rate, go to increase the enemy's fleet.

But can nothing really be done—and that without any radical changes—so to arrange matters that this grant, so well in intention, shall really be the means of effecting its proper purpose? Let us see.

Now two conditions must assuredly be observed before we can hope for this:

1st. That the scholars shall be capable of being taught;

2nd. That the teacher shall be capable of teaching.

With reference to the first, we repeat that one-fifth is as large a proportion of children as an ordinary school can be expected to supply capable of being taught to sing in tune and produce proper tone, *at present*—mark, we say *at present*—for by keeping the four-fifths seated and attentively listening to the true notes of the singing one-fifth—the ears of the listeners will be gradually trained in accuracy, and a taste for sweet sounds gradually developed, till we may hope the proportion capable of being taught to sing will be largely increased—so that "not more than one-fifth" may be relaxed—never, never, however, to be changed into "not less than two-thirds."

And now, secondly, how are we to find teachers capable of teaching? In spite of "My Lords," we must be allowed to adhere to the old-fashioned idea, that a man must know a thing himself before he can teach it to another. The question then comes pretty much to this—first, how can we prevent schoolmasters and schoolmistresses attempting to teach singing when they cannot sing themselves? and then—how can we get the one-fifth of our schools "taught singing" when the ordinary teacher is unable to sing?

Now, for one thing, at least, we must give "My Lords" credit, namely, for putting the right man in the right place, by making Professor Hullah Inspector of Music. Much might be done by duly utilizing his vast experience. In discharge of the duties of his office, the Inspector visits every training college in the country once during the year—and at these visits each member in training is passed before him. Short as this personal inspection must needs be, it must be amply long enough to enable one of his immense experience to decide positively on competency or incompetency to teach singing. Let the Inspector give his certificate to the competent, and in the coming supply of masters—the incompetent may be prevented from teaching discord at 1s. a head. Is it not monstrously absurd that the one certificate now granted should be supposed to cover all? As if, because a man can teach arithmetic, geography, and the rest of it, he should necessarily be able to teach singing. Why, even "My Lords" separate the 4s. grant from the 1s. singing grant. And surely it is not requiring too much of those who now have charge of schools, that they should present themselves before the Inspector of Music at the nearest Training College and prove themselves. If competent, their certificate, of course, will entitle them to ask a higher salary; if incompetent, as honest men, they cannot wish to obtain money under false pretences.*

* No teaching power varies so much in the teacher as the power of teaching singing. Why should there not be, then, the usual three progressive third, second and first-class certificates, entitling to teach an increasing proportion of a school, say one-fifth, one third, and one-half—in very exceptional cases even more. This would, of course, necessitate the adjustment of grant per scholar—probably 3s. a head would still keep all within the amount of the present grant.

But what must become of all our little country schools that cannot afford these higher salaries? Must all the music-grant be monopolised by the big town schools? Surely, it cannot—it ought not—to matter to “My Lords” who helps a school to earn its singing shillings; so long as real singing be taught, it cannot matter who teaches. What a vast help it might be to the promotion of true singing, if the Professor would allow others beside schoolmasters in being, or to be, to present themselves before him as candidates for his certificate. What a blessing to small choirs, so often the sport of ignorance, thus to have efficient teachers selected for them; and how much teaching power might thus be brought into use that now is thrust aside by bustling incompetency.

Suppose a school in charge of a teacher incapable of obtaining the inspector’s certificate, might there not be someone at hand who, for the shillings of the present and possible future, might be inclined and able to qualify himself, by a certificate, to act for the schoolmaster in the singing half-hour. Or ladies might be forthcoming who, for the hope of happiness to future homes, might undertake the office. “And do you mean that ladies should obtain certificates as well?” Yes, truly. Why not? True metal will never object to the stamp being put upon it. And surely Professor Hullah may safely be left to deal in this matter with musical ladies who desire to help dear music. Certificate there must be; there must be due check to prevent a school taking singing-money when discord only is taught. The Government now says—and fairly enough—“We must be assured by a certificate that your teacher is competent to teach before we give you the 4s. or 5s. a-head, as the case may be.” There is no more unfairness in saying the same of the singing shillings.

There is just one thing—while we propound our scheme, we seem to hear a soft professorial remonstrance: “I have quite enough to do already, without turning Examiner-General of All Comers.” Well, there are such things as Assistant-Inspectors. Why should not the Professor, if he needed it, have the help of some other experienced musician? If salary were needed, amply enough would be saved by ceasing to pay for the promotion of discord. If any difficulty arose in the manufacture of another educational official, plenty of most ready volunteer assistance might be had in helping forward so important a national movement.

And this plan of certificates, moreover, would, to some extent, resolve that knotty point—the annual school inspection. Forbid the attempt to teach an unteachable number of children, ensure the competency of the teacher to teach, and, without fear of much harm accruing, we may leave the results to be adjudicated upon by the present Inspectors. They can, at least, judge whether or no the sound goes on uninterruptedly in its verses—that is, whether or no the song sung is “got up.” The Professor will have taken care beforehand that if it goes at all it will go aright; at least, that it will not be made the means of depraving ears, destroying voices, and eradicating musical taste. Of course, if we could obtain in this matter of singing the double check against the waste of public money that is thought absolutely necessary in the matter of reading, writing, arithmetic, and the rest—namely, both certificate and also efficient inspection—we should hail the boon with delight and thankfulness. But the great obstructor—want of money—stands in the way of this; though, if fairly tried, it is just possible it would be found both much less expensive and easier to arrange than it seems

at first sight. But we will not enter on this question here. This only do we claim, and that on the broadest ground of taxpayers’ right—that so much of precaution as is most rightly taken to prevent waste of public money for five-sixths of the school grant, so much of this precaution as can be taken, without entailing further public expenditure, shall be extended to the other one-sixth.

THE sales of “important” musical copyrights continually taking place would lead many to imagine that some of our greatest works are in the market, and that it would be essential, therefore to watch into whose hands they eventually fall. A glance down the auctioneers’ lists will, however, usually convince such persons of their error, and when we see the prices realised by songs and pieces which bear about the same relation to music that children’s books do to literature, it requires a sanguine person indeed to speak hopefully of the public taste. It must be remembered, however, that music has now become so general that everybody is presumed to be either an executant or a willing listener, and the extensive spread of ephemeral compositions, therefore, does not prove that the party of progress is not rapidly increasing. True believers can always afford to wait, and who knows but that before long a well-considered and elaborate musical work may become as valuable as a “Royalty” song, and that when copyrights are termed “important,” the word may have some reference to art as well as to commerce?

THAT, whatever opposition may be offered to the spread of Gregorian music for the service of the Church, there is a large and increasing party resolved to uphold it, may be proved by the proceedings at the meeting of the London Gregorian Choral Association, which took place on the 9th ult., at Sion College, London Wall. Earl Beauchamp, the President of the Association, occupied the chair, and the report showed that highly satisfactory progress had been made during the year, the efforts of the Society being materially assisted by the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul’s Cathedral. We may also mention that the candidates for the Organ Scholarship of £100 a year, at Keble College, Oxford, which is to be competed for during the ensuing month, must show real efficiency in Gregorian music, so that we may reasonably presume that the partisans of this movement in Oxford are resolved to have one important practical representative of their views, even where the “ancient tones” have hitherto been considered obsolete.

It appears from the report of a meeting of the City branch of the Committee for Promoting a National Training School for Music, held at the Mansion House during the past month, under the presidency of the Lord Mayor, that as sixty scholarships have been subscribed for, and from forty to sixty others promised, some information should be afforded as to what persons are to form the professional staff of the school. It might be imagined that this important matter should have been settled before the scholarships were founded, but faith is perhaps better than conviction; and when the pupils arrive in the building, no doubt somebody will be found to teach them. Meantime it is good to know, on the authority of Mr. Ball, one of the speakers at the meeting, that the Directors of this Institution are *not* a “clique,” and that they are *not* “acting in opposition to the Royal Academy of Music.”