

Concerning Audiences

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days—Dr. Harwood fills the position as if to the manner born. He is also Choragus to the University and Precentor of Keble College. His melodious Evening Service in A flat, his Dithyramb for the organ, and songs, are well known and admired. He has a leaning to the meditative style of the old church music. On the occasion of our visit, the 'bill' contained Farrant's short Evening Service in D minor, and for the anthem Weldon's 'In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.' The rendering of the service bore testimony to his skill as a choir trainer and accompanist; for the concluding



DR. BASIL HARWOOD,
ORGANIST OF CHRIST CHURCH.

(Photograph by Messrs. Hills and Saunders, Oxford.)

voluntary he gave a fine rendering of both the Prelude and Fugue of Bach in E flat, known as 'St. Anns.' It may safely be said that all the best traditions of Christ Church Music are safe in the hands of the present organist.

Finally, best thanks are due and are herewith tendered to Professor York Powell and to Dr. Basil Harwood for so readily affording pleasant facilities in the preparation of this article on Christ Church, Oxford.

DOTTED CROTCHET.

*And let the roaring organs loudly play
The praises of the Lord in lively notes;
The whiles, with hollow throats,
The choristers the joyous anthems sing.*

SPENSER.

CONCERNING AUDIENCES.

I suppose there can be no doubt that Ludwig II. of Bavaria is rightly styled the "Mad King." So far, however, as one particular phase of his aberration is concerned, I am often inclined to doubt if it might not be interpreted as an indication of exceptional sense—or, at any rate, of method underlying the madness. It is not everyone who can emulate a monarch by procuring for himself special private performances of opera, as did Ludwig II., but there are not a few occasions when the behaviour of audiences is such that one wishes one could copy his example.

The necessity of educating audiences—of making good listeners—has often been the subject of comment, but the first requirement of all, though elementary, seems to be hopelessly impossible. This is to make people understand that the primary object of concert-going is to listen to the music. I do not see much prospect of this being accepted as anything more than an academic theory, but it might be possible to make it more generally realised that the minority in any given audience who desire to give an undivided attention to the music deserve some consideration. Just consider what they habitually suffer. Parenthetically, it may be remarked that the frequenter of the cheaper seats has much less reason for complaint than the pampered occupant of the stalls, for the former finds himself surrounded by the keenest of concert-goers, who go to hear music, and who brook no interference with their enjoyment, which they have purchased at a small price in actual coin, but at considerable cost in the inconvenience of waiting half-an-hour or more on cold, stone steps, or in draughty corridors before the doors open.

It is rather in quarters where fashion operates as an important inducement to the concert-goer that one longs for at least sympathy, if not for solitude. First, there are the late-comers. Supposing the concert opens with the Euryanthe overture—a not uncommon choice—you will have just settled down to its enjoyment when, in the middle of the mysterious far-away episode of muted strings, a party of belated ones crowd into their places in the same row, treading on your feet as they pass, interrupting the thread of the music, and rousing angry passions in your breast, which their subsequent conduct does not tend to quell. For, instead of being abashed into silence, they must needs spend the first five minutes in murmured conversation with friends in neighbouring places, or, which is even worse, indulge in an elaborate whisper, as disturbing to those within earshot—and a whisper has remarkable carrying power—as Mrs. Nickleby's exasperating precautions in the sick-room. You could find some excuse for them if the conversation had some bearing, however remote, upon the music, but if a word or two catch your ear, it will probably have reference to Lady Blanche's diamonds, or Maud's engagement, or some other

equally fascinating but remote topic. Not that these pretty prattlers are always inattentive to the music. It is only fair to acknowledge that they will sit as still as mice when a famous soprano gives intense expression to 'Home, sweet home,' or a languishing tenor warbles some sentimental ditty. These, be it noted, are just the occasions when the musician feels at liberty to relax his attention, though it is to be hoped he will not retaliate by making audible demonstrations of his indifference.

In regard to applause, these people are not as a rule conspicuously demonstrative. The men are perhaps too bored, and doubtful whether it may be considered 'bad form'; the ladies, I suppose, don't care to run any risk of spoiling their gloves. But sometimes their enthusiasm is aroused, as, for instance, when a tenor finishes an air with a top note, which the composer somehow neglected to put into his score, and then they will even drown the instrumental ritornel with which the composer foolishly burdened it. This trick of premature applause is the cause of another grievance I cherish. Applause, even in the right place, is apt to be rather troublesome and distracting. It is well that an audience should have some safety-valve for pent-up enthusiasm, and that the performer should have the stimulus of a little encouragement; but to one who is really impressed by noble music, and not merely astounded by brilliant feats of execution, the volley of hand-clappings that is begun the instant a performance is over, and sometimes sooner, comes like a rude awakening from a dream of pure enjoyment. This is one reason why the Three Choirs Festivals have an unique charm of their own, for in the Cathedral one can listen without disturbance or interruption.

If only the people who go to concerts went to hear the music, I make little doubt but that the methods of Bayreuth would, by common consent, be largely imitated in our concert-rooms, for they are all devised with a view to concentrating attention upon the performance. Perfect quiet so long as a composition is in progress, and an auditorium sufficiently darkened to prevent one's being distracted by the appearance and movements of one's neighbours; these are attained at Bayreuth, and in many other theatres where Bayreuth is being more or less sincerely flattered by imitation. Of course, the ideal to attain would be a carefully-selected audience of none but sympathetic souls. This would be even better than to emulate the mad king, and be a solitary listener, for however enthralling the music, the dark, empty theatre would have a depressing effect on most minds. An alternative that has sometimes occurred to me would be to copy the type of prison chapel, where, by means of a series of hutches, like the cells of a honeycomb, each prisoner can witness the whole service without obtaining a view of his fellow-prisoners. The associations would not be agreeable, I admit, but such a plan would for me have

the advantage of making invisible the rest of the audience. And, as I must confess I find more annoyance than gratification in seeing my fellow-man—and woman—on these occasions, I should count the advantages as far outnumbering the disadvantages.

In most well-regulated concert-rooms, the late-comer is combated by the simple means of excluding him during the first piece in the programme. Mr. George Alexander has ventured to carry out the principle to the extent of closing the doors during the whole of the first act of a drama, which seems rather drastic, though absolutely right in principle. 'Another way,' as Mrs. Beeton would put it, is suggested by the advertisement put forth of a recent melodrama, calling attention to the fact that, as the prologue required a darkened stage, the auditorium would be thrown into complete obscurity. The late-comer attempting to find his place under these conditions would probably miss his way, bark his shins, and be greeted with a series of muttered expletives from the people he was inconveniencing, such as would give him a very wholesome lesson, and possibly make him see the error of his ways. Accident will, of course, occasionally mar the plans of the most punctual man, but in the majority of cases it is a constitutional habit of mind that makes people habitually late. Such need a gentle stimulus, and I for one should welcome any method of affording it.

HERBERT THOMPSON.

SAMUEL WESLEY

(1766—1837).

Nearly two hundred years ago—the exact date is December 18, 1707—there was born at Epworth Rectory, Lincolnshire, a boy who received the name of Charles. He was the youngest son and eighteenth child of Samuel Wesley, rector of Epworth, and Susanna his wife; but Charles was not the last of their numerous offspring, as a girl, the nineteenth and last child, was subsequently born. John Wesley, four years older than Charles, is known the world over as the founder of 'The Society of the People called Methodists,' but better known as 'Wesleyan Methodists.' Charles, the writer of some 6,500 hymns, is honoured in all the churches as the author of such favourite lines as 'Jesu, lover of my soul,' 'Hark! the herald angels sing,' and many other sacred songs. Charles, educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford, was an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, but an indefatigable lieutenant throughout his life to his brother John in his propaganda of Methodism. Charles married, in 1749, Sarah Gwynne, the possessor of a fine voice which she used in leading the singing at her husband's religious meetings. Eight children were born to them, but only three survived the period of infancy—Charles, Samuel and Sarah. Charles, eight