

MONOPOLY IN MUSIC.

On 2nd May, 1887, the chancellor and council of the University of Melbourne received into their hands £20,000. The donor was Mr. (later Sir) Francis Ormond, the purpose of the gift the founding of a chair of music. Two chief stipulations were attached to the gift—that the chair should be called the Ormond Professorship of Music, that the money should "be exclusively applied to the purposes of the chair." After which followed the appointment of the first Ormond professor.

In taking up the work of lecturing, however, the occupant of the chair of music appears to have found his position of too academic a character, with the result that in December, 1894, he brought forward a scheme for the founding of a conservatorium. The council of the University approved, and early in 1895 the University Conservatorium came into being, with the Ormond Professor as its director. The creation of a music school so closely allied to the University was at the time received with a considerable amount of apprehension by the teachers of music in the community, but beyond a muttered protest practically nothing was done as far as these teachers were concerned. Subsequently, however, they received something of a shock. In 1901 Professor Peterson took up the work, and felt it his bounden duty to carry the influence of the Conservatorium to the four corners of the State, both in its work of touting for students and in a scheme of examinations. But in doing that its real character, which had hitherto been less aggressive, became manifest. It was shown to be not so much a University institution as a commercial institution.

Now, it will be observed at the outset the donor's wishes were flouted. Sir Francis Ormond, on very good advice, gave his money for the purpose of founding a chair of music. Which meant that the occupant was to be the central authority on music—not a teacher—one who would elevate the art by real university methods. The founding of a Conservatorium, in which the Ormond professor would very naturally have to undertake heavy administrative duties, and necessarily neglect the purely "chair" work, was therefore a wrongful act. It was further, and what is worse, an un-University act, since it meant that the University undertook to do what no University should ever do—to impart elementary education. For the other courses in the University students have to give proof of a certain proficiency—they have, in fact, to matriculate—before being allowed to attend lectures. The Conservatorium exacts no such test. It takes all and sundry, the duffers and the gifted. Straightaway here is seen its fallacious basis. It is exactly what would be the position if Professor Tucker started a kindergarten!

But this would be a comparatively small matter if real good eventuated. But has it? It may frankly be said that the present work of the Conservatorium is by no means bad. Most of the students learn their technique properly, and if they only get a smattering of harmony, counterpoint and the higher phrases of interpretation, they at least leave with the conviction that there really are such things. But is this quite the level of a University institution? We think not. As a University institution it should be doing, not the every day work of music, but exclusively work of the highest attainable standard. This it finds itself unable to do, and engages for the most part in what might be called primary education in music. Doing that, it perpetrates an injustice, for it comes into serious and unfair competition with the interests and work of the outside teacher

If a young lady can get within the sacred portals of Alma Mater without examination—become to all intents and purposes a University student—the outside teacher, although a first rate outside teacher, in ordinary circumstances will not get her as a pupil. And not only does the outside teacher not get the pupil, he has the further mortification of knowing that the teaching at the Conservatorium is in the hands of a favored few, while he, with perhaps higher claims, is left out in the cold. As a consequence he gives the Conservatorium a wide berth—it is his natural enemy. And as further consequence has grown a state of dissension in musical circles which, if allowed to continue unchecked, may have serious results; for how can the cause of music go on progressing if the private teacher with much potential possibilities for sterling work finds himself fighting against what is virtually a monopoly?

The plain and blunt truth is that the Conservatorium should never have been started—at all events not on its present lines. Its foundations are false, its ideals low, and its effects injurious. In but one way can it fairly continue to exist, and that is as an institution worked on purely University methods, and no other.

To do this, music should at the outset be brought into line with other subjects taught in the University by the creation of a faculty of music, consisting of the leading musicians of Melbourne, the faculty to have control of all work in music in the University, and the power to control through the council the director of the Conservatorium, who at present wields too despotic an influence. (The suggestion of faculty is made because faculty seems part and parcel of university procedure. Of infinite more service would be a board of management.)

Secondly, the allotment of work in the Conservatorium should be reorganised. At present nearly the entire teaching of singing and pianoforte, which absorbs nearly all the energies of the Conservatorium, is in the hands of three or four individuals, all capable, but in no way entitled to such handsome positions above many other musicians in this city. Every first rate teacher of attainments should not merely have the right to teach, but be invited to teach at the University Conservatorium. Again, the apportionment of students should be controlled by the faculty or board. All of which would give the institution what it badly needs—stimulus. It would also raise the whole status of music teaching to the dignity of a profession, and in addition give encouragement to the young musician to perfect himself in his work, with the possibility that in the course of time he would get recognition of his powers by appointment to the Conservatorium staff. Best of all, it would break the present monopoly, and lead musicians to look, as the lawyer, the doctor and the man of letters look, to the University as the head centre of learning.

Thirdly, the policy of selection should be adopted in allowing students into the Conservatorium. That is, there should be a test—a searching test—which, with the other features already suggested, would give the Conservatorium the only fair basis it can be allowed to continue on—as a professional institution. And thus as a professional institution its roll of students would be what it ought to be—limited. Teachers would not be there to make money, but to do the highest work in teaching of which they are capable. Their incomes would never suffer; they would probably increase from the advertisement their connection with the University would give them, and so real University culture in music be attained.

If these things were taken in hand the faculty or board of management would also be in a position to take in hand the conduct of University music examinations. That these are not satisfactory to the general body of musicians or the public is clear from certain sinister rumors of bias, cliquism and erratic judgment afloat, not all of which may have foundation in fact, but which by the constitution of the examination board have a rather ugly look. The statutes of the University state very distinctly that the examination board shall consist of five persons—(a) The director and the vice-director or other members of the University Conservatorium staff appointed for this purpose by the council. (b) Three other persons professional musicians." Yet, in face of this very clear direction that the board shall have "three other persons professional musicians"—that is, outsiders—we find that the board consists, with one exception (and he until recently a teacher there), solely of members of the Conservatorium staff!

Advertiser, May 13/11

ANTARCTIC EXPLORATION.

DR. MAWSON'S PROJECT.

LONDON, May 12.

The "Daily Mail" announces that Sir Ernest Shackleton's appeal for £12,000 to assist the Australian expedition which Dr. Mawson is to lead to the Antarctic, has been an immense success. The fund was only opened on Monday, and large subscriptions were immediately forthcoming, £10,000 being subscribed by Wednesday evening.

Dr. Mawson's ship leaves the Thames at the end of June. She will go first to Melbourne, and thence to Hobart, which will be the final port of departure.