

MUSICAL DEGREES FOR OUR GIRLS.

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F professions open to women, perhaps none is so eminently suitable to a refined and imaginative feminine temperament, given the natural endowments, than that of music.

And to qualify thoroughly for the calling, so as to obtain an indisputable standing therein, and to be capable of executing the best work—to be hall-marked as it were—there is no more commendable course than for the really earnest aspirant, laying minor distinctions aside, to work for the highest guarantee of competency that can be obtained, namely, a University Degree in Music.

To begin with, the intending musical "girl graduate" needs not only to cultivate her specific art by means of assiduous practice under the guidance of able teachers, but there requires also that the general education should be carefully attended to. This, because at all universities, before candidates are permitted to enter for examination in their particular "faculty," a thorough, and often severe and lengthy "arts" test must be passed; thus it is a part of the musical graduate's qualification that he or she should not be in ignorance, as so many mere musicians are, of the wealth of classic and modern literature and history, nor be deprived of that symmetrical mental development which mathematics, logic and physical sciences so well tend to promote. That the mind is enlarged and the intelligence quickened by these preliminary studies goes without saying. Nor is such knowledge lost when the attention is turned entirely in the one direction of music; for composers, thus previously cultured, will doubtless, whether in the evolution and arrangement of musical themes, or even in the choice or adoption of *libretti*, show a more advanced and widened judgment than those whose necessarily stunted perceptions are devoid of the imagery, recollection, and mental power of order and sequence which are the almost invariable results of a liberal education. Indeed there is small doubt that, were a preliminary general culture compulsory in the case of all professional musicians, the entire body would be considerably raised and exalted thereby, and would certainly command more respect and attention from the world at large than is, perhaps, gained at present by a large proportion of the devotees of the divine art.

There are now in the United Kingdom some eight universities that confer musical degrees, namely: Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, London, Durham, Royal University of Ireland, Victoria (Manchester) and Edinburgh. Schemes are in prospect with regard to the encouragement of a musical faculty at the universities of Glasgow, Aberdeen and Wales. Honorary degrees in music have been conferred by the University of St. Andrews (Scotland), and the so-called "Lambeth degrees," *honoris causa*, are in the gift of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but honorary titles do not come within the scope of our present consideration. It should be mentioned also that the Royal College of Music (incorporated by the Royal Charter in 1883) has the right of granting

degrees in music, but so far the power has not been availed of.

As to choice, although there are distinctive points in the workings of the several universities specified above, yet the respective curriculum of each tends to cover the same ground, therefore the student, individual circumstances being of course taken into account, will most probably be wisest in selecting that which is nearest home. In the case of intending women graduates, however, this is not always possible; as, for instance, the University of Dublin (Trinity College) stands alone among the universities in not admitting them to degrees; and at Oxford and Cambridge, although women may enter for and pass the musical examinations (under similar conditions prescribed for men), yet degrees are not conferred upon them, no matter how high the standard of excellence to which they attain. With these somewhat unreasonable exceptions—which we shall doubtless see obliterated in time—all the other universities that grant degrees in music admit both sexes to these titles on precisely the same footing; and with such facilities for distinction as are offered by London, Durham, Edinburgh, the Royal University of Ireland and Victoria (Manchester), our girls have really small cause for complaint.

With regard to the time that is occupied in working for a university degree in music, the period varies from five to seven years. For instance, at the University of London, the "Matriculation" (or literary entrance examination) must be passed at least ten months before admission to the "Intermediate Examination in Music;" and this latter again precedes that for Bachelor of Music by one year. Two so-called "academical" years must come between the passing of the B. Mus. and D. Mus. examinations; so that, calculating for, at all events, one year's preliminary study, a London degree means, at the smallest computation, five years' work. Nearly always candidates will, moreover, of their own accord, take one or two extra intervening years for study in this as in other universities. Again, at the Royal University of Ireland (which took the lead in conferring musical degrees upon women, and has since honoured them to the fullest extent by admitting them to examinerships and fellowships), one year must intervene between the passing of the "Matriculation," the "First University Examination in Arts," the "First examination in Music," and the "Degree Examination" (Bachelor of Music), and a candidate cannot qualify for Doctor of Music until three years after obtaining the Bachelor's degree. The Durham, Victoria and Edinburgh examinations also extend over periods varying from five to six years.

To the enthusiastic, and often impetuous young musical tyro, five or more years' study seems an unending delay towards a much-desired goal; but then it must be remembered that the very fact that the obtaining of a university degree involves such a period of steady, earnest work, practice and experience, is, in itself, a pledge of the solidity and genuineness of the title; and who will deny that the honour once gained is not worth toiling and waiting for? Moreover, to the really devoted student, this time of apprenticeship—if we may so design it—passes all too quickly; and, as we have said before, they are many who voluntarily extend their term of undergraduateship in order to be the more assured of ultimate success.

With regard to the specific regulations touching musical candidates and the details of the respective "courses" at the different universities, all information may be obtained by writing direct to the authorities of the various bodies themselves; but it may interest our girls to know that the usual subjects which form the programme of study for a musical degree include (a) for literary tests, English, and one Classic as well as a Modern Language and Literature, Mathematics (Arithmetic, Algebra, Euclid and Trigonometry) and Physics (Natural Philosophy, experimentally or otherwise); (b) for the musical work proper, Harmony and Counterpoint (up to eight real parts), Canon and Fugue (vocal and instrumental), History of Music and Musical instruments, Orchestration and the acquaintance with standard full scores, Practical Playing, Acoustics and Composition.

The latter department, Composition, is, perhaps, the chief stumbling block in the way of obtaining a university distinction, as the possession of a "musical ear" and aptitude for executive work are not always combined with the "creative" gift. Indeed, to be endowed with this inventive ability in its highest sense falls to the lot of but few, as the world knows, and these few we call geniuses. But there are some who, although they may never reach the supreme heights, will still, with culture and practice, do much really good work, and to these we would say, do not despair! If the first attempts at original composition are disappointing, by all means try again. Master theoretical rules thoroughly, hear the best music that is to be heard, study the *chefs d'œuvre* of the great "tone poets" and watch how they weave their woof of sound-forms; and then, be the amount of the inventive faculty great or small, do the best possible with experience gained, and the result can in no wise be stigmatised an effort made in vain.

In this connection we would remark that although hitherto men rather than women have shone in this creative branch of the art, yet it must be remembered that musical science, as we understand it to-day, is of comparatively recent development, and is but on the borderland of future and, perhaps, undreamt-of possibilities; and moreover, that, until quite lately, the musical training of girls was conducted upon very limited and restricted lines. Still the past has had its Miriams, its Sapphos and its St. Cecilia; and the present, teeming with advanced thought and generous views on the subject of the higher education of women, holds much promise of a future wherein our girls may show themselves as competent to clothe the fancies of the brain in musical garb, as they have already been apt to depict the inner working of the human heart through the medium of word painting.

Although it is incontestably true that composers, as poets, are born and not made, yet, before any work can be produced that will claim attention from connoisseurs, it is absolutely necessary that the grammar, so to speak, of music must be thoroughly mastered and assimilated, a process that undoubtedly requires a good expenditure of time and patience, given the indispensable accessories of musical talent and the means and opportunity to improve it. Few girls, if any, have been privileged to receive the juvenile drilling that fell to the lot of Handel, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and hosts of others; and the fact that the excellent training of the cathedral choir is, as yet, only open