Reg. 15th Sept. 1903

Register. 15th Sept. 1903.

ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

The fourth chamber-music concert for the year by the staff of the Elder Conservatorium was given in the Elder Hall on Monday evening in the presence of a rather small audience, which included Sir Samuel and Lady Way. In accordance with what is now almost a recognised rule at these performances only two important items figured on the programme. Mendelssohn's melodious trio for pianoforte and strings, op. 66, which is dedicated to the famous violinist Spohr, and a quartet for pianoforte and strings, op. 18, by Bungert, a German composer of good powers, though his works as yet are little known in Australia. The performers in the trio were Mr. G. Reimann (pianoforte), Mr. H. Heinicke (violin), and Mr. H. Kugelberg (violoncello). In their playing of the refined and effective music these instrumentalists gave every evidence of careful and adequate preparation. The second movement, "Andante expressivo," was particularly effective and admirably balanced, and in the final "Allegro appassionato," there was no lack of spirit and vivacity. Bungert's quartet, which is cast in the customary four movements, strikes one on a first hearing as a little heavy, especially in the two opening sections. There is a good deal of rich, sonorous writing in the adagio, but both that movement and the opening "Con brio" rather suffer from a continuity of sombre colour. A considerable improvement is manifested in the finale "Allegro giocoso," which goes with a fine swinging rhythm, and contains many virile and spirited passages. The same three performers, assisted by Mr. Eugene Alderman (viola), presented the quartet, and again there were ample evidences of care and finish, and the closing movement was played with appropriate brilliancy. Messrs. Kugelberg and Reimann gave Chopin's "Polonaise brillante, op. 3," for violoncello and pianforte, with taste and finish, their treatment of the introductory slow movement being sympathetic and refined, while there was no lack of vigour about the polonaise. Miss Guli Hack, A.R.C.M., presented a couple of songs, "The woodland well" and "Where are they?" by Kjerulf, the Norwegian composer who died nearly 35 years ago, with her accustomed intelligence, and displayed an admirable sotto voce in the former number. Miss Hack also contributed a merry little French song by Delibes, entitled "Les filles de Cadix," with much archness and vivacity, and was heartily applauded. Miss Maude Puddy played the pianoforte accompaniments with sympathy and taste.

The Register.

ADELAIDE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1903.

MIND AND MATTER.

Concerning scholastic controversies about man and the universe the famous epigram—"What is mind—no matter; what is matter—never mind!"—crystallizes a general sentiment of cynical indifference towards "the playthings of dialectical sophistry." From Aristotle to Plato, and from Kant to Mill, the problem of intelligence has engaged the attention of profound thinkers; but the results are not flattering to the human intellect. "The mind of man, which can track the course of the comet and measure the velocity of light, has hitherto," says Mr. Lecky, "proved incapable of explaining the existence of the minutest insect, or the growth of the most humble plant. . . . We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the relations of mind to matter, either in our persons or in the world that is around us." Still, in the keenness of the sense of defeat lies the possibility of comparative success. The longest and deepest shadow is thrown by the tallest and thickest tree, and the appreciation of ignorance is the index to potential knowledge; while even the recognition of a limit implies a dim perception of what may be found beyond the boundary line. The growth of the mind, resembling the process of cosmos, begins with a consciousness of chaos—the experience of partly realized and apparently contradictory facts—and leads to self-consciousness and a sense of organized unity—the feeling of individual harmony with diversified but ordered nature. In this light the puzzles and paradoxes of science and metaphysics—as also the trials of everyday life in so far as they awaken consciousness and promote thought—bear an essential relationship to human development; just as problems of arithmetic and exercises in composition are necessary to draw out the mental powers of children. As a culture study, therefore, there is full justification for the inclusion among the University extension lectures of the series upon the somewhat abstruse and not immediately practical topic of "Materialism." The question is capable of popular treatment, and the service rendered by the lectures mentioned extends to the learned lecturers who, in the effort to interest and influence ordinary folk, and to interpret technical terms in common phrases, gain new points of view, and improve their gifts of teaching. It is not inappropriate in a materialistic age to resurvey man's circumstances. At first blush it seems that, if man were wholly destitute of a spiritual principle, the privation would be too painfully obvious for controversy; but it is clear from Professor Mitchell's elaborate but popularly written syllabus of his three addresses on "Materialism," the first of which will be delivered to-night, that the facts present difficulties alike to materialists and to their opponents. The Professor will attack the problem upon the proposition that for every change of experience or mind-process there is a brain change of a specific kind, and he will set forth the explanation in materialism, and "the other explanation" of the coincident mental and molecular movements. If mind is solely a brain product entirely dependent upon external influences—a mere "whistle of the locomotive that shows that the engine is going, but has nothing to do with making it go"—experience becomes useless; and man is no more free to make his music than is the aeolian harp which responds simply to the winds as they blow.

The fact that thought and substance, though opposites, are related is clear from the association of mind with body; but philosophers have never agreed upon the nature of the connection. The notion that the mind is a material thing is disproved by the character of an idea, which is in sharp contrast to the object it images. "Is the idea of a mile longer than the idea of an inch?" The proposition that experience is a product of the brain has been rejected through the idealists and the scientists. Huxley placed himself with the former when he said—"I really have no claim to rank myself among materialists, for I am utterly incapable of conceiving the existence of matter if there is no mind in which to picture that existence." Professor Mitchell points out that the argument from the conservation of energy shows that experience "is not an effect, product, or property of the brain in the sense that everything else is an effect, product, or property. It occurs in addition to the physical effects." No one is now a materialist in the old and familiar sense of the word. The modern materialist, who is either an idealist like Huxley or a spiritualist, has practically adopted Spinoza's compromise, known as parallelism or scientific monism. This doctrine is that of a single "unknown and unknowable" substance with two states, one representing mind and the other matter. These conditions are distinct, and yet vary with one another "like the inner and outer curves of a hoop, or the colour and taste of an orange." This "explanation" is not an explanation so much as an analogue; but in so far as it attempts to account for the facts it leaves out of consideration the influence of experience in modifying action, and in this respect it is contradicted by the theory of evolution, which makes pains and pleasures stepping stones to higher things as denoted in the principle of selection. If the mind mechanically follows the curve of matter or necessity, it is not free in any sense whatever; and the spiritual warfare against and victory over "the flesh," to which men throughout countless ages have united in bearing solemn testimony, are absolute delusions.

"The other explanation," as Professor Mitchell aptly terms it, has to reconcile two apparently contradictory facts—(1) That there is a specific brain change for every mental change; (2) that experience is of service. Materialism is rejected because an idea has not only none of the properties of a physical thing, but it is intangible, indivisible, and untransferable; and monism, which parallels mind and matter, must therefore attribute to one or the other or both qualities which they do not strictly possess. When a physical change takes place the energy employed is spent; when a mental act is performed the mind acquires an experience which exercises an independent influence upon conduct; and the unification of the experiences and influences constitutes individuality. From impressions of particular objects supplied through the organs of sense the artist mind paints a picture of the real world. How far the copy faithfully reflects the fleeting procession of phenomena depends upon the accuracy and fullness of the separate impressions, and the skill with which they are combined. It is impossible to get a perfect reproduction of a part until it is seen in relation to the whole; and, in order to classify and utilize facts and promote investigation, it is often necessary to assume the truth of principles before any proof is available. Thus the spiritual nature of man is postulated to account for facts for which no theory of materialism makes room. In the self-adjusting power of the universe eminent scientists like Lord Kelvin discover the Supreme Intelligence, and in the self-determining power of human experience is a faculty foreign to matter. Materialism fails to explain the existence of the ideas of freedom, God, and immortality. What matter, as matter, could have produced Henley's fine verses descriptive of the indomitable spirit of man?

Out of the darkness that covers me
Black as the night from pole to pole,
I thank the gods, whatever they be,
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I never winced nor cried aloud;
Under the bludgeonings of chance,
My head was bloody but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll—
I am the master of my fate!
I am the captain of my soul!

"Only the rational is real," and the idea of immortality is as reasonable as the duty of a father who has incurred much expense to give his son education and experience to afford him opportunity to utilize these acquirements. Of the purely theological aspect of the subject Tennyson has, in a few striking lines, expressed an ideal relation of man to the organic unity of the universe—

Only that which made us meant us to be
mightier by-and-by—
Set the sphere of all the boundless heavens within
the human eye—
Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro'
the human soul—
Boundless inward in the atom—boundless outward
in the Whole.

Ad. 16th Sept. 1903.

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURE.

Profesor Mitchell delivered the first of three public lectures on "Materialism" to a large attendance at the University on Tuesday evening. In the syllabus it was pointed out that the word "materialism" was used in a variety of applications, but the lectures would deal alone with the primary reference—the connection between mind and matter. The professor gave an account of the nervous system with reference to the "seat of the mind," and examples of the coincident workings of mind and brain. The units (called nerve cells or neurones) of the nervous system were fully described, the lecturer placing the facts clearly before those present by means of a number of slides, prepared by Mr. A. Scott. He spoke of the many millions of neurones, their varied shapes and out-growths, including the nerve fibres. The nerve cells had their different work to perform. Impulses travelled along the nerve fibres from neurone to neurone, until they reached the brain, and then went to other parts of the body; the nerve fibres that carried the impulses to the brain never took them back again, that work being apportioned to others of these fibres.