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UNIVERSITY REFORM.

A MELBOURNE SCHEME.

Melbourne, September 15.

Since April "the Inquiry Committee" appointed by Melbourne University Council to prepare a scheme of University reform has held a sitting almost weekly. A full report has now been drafted, but will be submitted to further consideration by the committee before its final adoption. It is suggested that a president of the University should be appointed at a salary of £1,500 per annum, in addition to house accommodation. He should combine with his office that of vice-chancellor, and should be the president of the professorial board, a member of the council, and chairman in the absence of the chancellor, and should be an ex-officio member of all the faculties.

Concerning the present senate, the committee recommends that its name should be changed to "Convocation," and that it should consist of all graduates, male and female, who are 21 years of age, and who have registered themselves by payment of a registration fee of £1 1/, and by the entry of their names and addresses with the registrar.

The largest section of the committee's report deals in a radical manner with questions of finance. A primary necessity is an increase in the State grant of from £20,000 to £31,000 per annum. Even this increase will not enable the University of Melbourne to compete educationally with the more heavily endowed sister University of Sydney.

A further large sum is required for building purposes. The crowded and insanitary condition of a number of the older rooms of the University, and the urgent necessity for proper offices in connection with the administration of the increased business of the University, demand a large and immediate expenditure, roughly estimated at £80,000. The committee realises that the accumulations of the necessities of the past suddenly placed upon the State Treasury might make a too excessive burden, so it has adopted a scheme which, briefly put, is as follows:—That Parliament be asked to issue by means of a Loan Bill a special 4 per cent. stock at par, in which the University shall and shall alone be eligible to invest its trust funds, as these funds from time to time become available for investment. That as the University takes up the stock the Government shall hand back the money, which it thus receives for the purpose of erecting the buildings required.

"A Free University."

If by the expression "A free University" is meant opening the portals of the University to all and singular without payment of fee, either with or without the passing of an approved examination, the committee is decidedly opposed to the idea, but apart from this aspect of the question, it is of opinion that something might be done even under present conditions for the payment of fees for the assistance of necessitous students, and has decided to recommend that a fund be established from which loans bearing interest may be granted to students of proved ability who are unable to provide the necessary fees and living expenses.

—University Choral Class.—

The University Choral Class, assisted by a full orchestra, gave pleasure to a large audience in the Elder Hall on Wednesday evening. For the presentation of Sterndale Bennett's "The Woman of Samaria," and Barnett's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" Mr. Frederick Bevan had a large and efficient force of youthful, powerful voices. Soprano and contralto sections blended particularly well, while the male sections were sonorous, and lacked only a few light voices in full chorus parts to secure complete balance. The orchestra was led spiritedly by Miss Sylvia Whittington, and did generally satisfactory work, there being, however, two or three conspicuous blunders. Mr. Alfred Bampton (Elder scholar) rendered the organ parts. The two works introduced a somewhat large company of soloists. Bennett's sacred cantata opened rather dully, but became more individual in its mood as it developed. Frequent recitatives, in which soprano, contralto, and bass were associated, comprised some beautifully graceful passages. Misses Hilda Wheeler and Gladys Cilento and Mr. Richard Correll each earned particular merit. A strikingly orchestrated chorus was "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water," in which choir and orchestra combined in rich harmony; and again in "Therefore they shall come and sing." Mrs. Ernest Pickering rendered the solo for low voice, "O Lord, thou hast searched." In the well-known unaccompanied quartet, "God is a spirit," Misses Myrtle Ingham and Winifred Lewis and Messrs. J. Ardill and M. Farmer were associated. A sweet soprano voice was noted, but the ensemble was not enhanced by a touch of flatness in the difficult tenor lines. Stirring choral effects were again achieved in "Come, O Israel," "Abide with me," and the final powerful number, "I will call upon the Lord." Of an entirely different character was John Francis Barnett's setting of the Coleridge poem. This weird and shuddering story lent itself eminently to strange and graphic musical colouring, and the contemporary British composer availed himself of the opportunity. Chorus after chorus throbbed with fire and vitality. Clever orchestration invariably made itself felt. Miss Nellie Watkins, the possessor of a sweet, high, and flexible soprano voice, was entrusted with the solo, "And a good south wind." Mr. Leslie Martin, tenor, had a large amount of work, which was well done. It would be hard to find a more pleasant voice if his production were not so unnatural. This same remark applies to Mr. Correll, whose highly promising bass organ is handicapped by "mouthy" production. Mr. Stanley Gare rendered portion of the story set down for baritone solo, and later Mr. Frederick Booker, a robust singer, carried on the tale. The solos were punctuated by several fine choruses, of which the most remarkable were "About, about, in reel and rout" (with a pizzicato accompaniment, comprising picturesque chromatics), and "The upper air burst into life." Miss Olive Bassnett, a mezzo, sang the air, "Oh, sleep." In a duet for female voices and in several quartet passages Miss Gertrude Wood and Miss Agnes Healy were heard with interest. Miss Wood rendered her lines with particular grace and ease, and, altogether, made a good impression. Miss Eva Close, a flexible high soprano, sang the concluding recit. and air, beginning "And the bay was white." Mr. Bevan conducted throughout a long double performance with conspicuous success.

University Choral Class.

At the Elder Conservatorium last night the University Choral Class gave its annual concert. There was a large and appreciative audience, who speedily recognised the good work done by the vocalists. The full orchestra was ably led by Miss Sylvia Whittington, Mr. Alfred Bampton was at the organ, and Mr. Frederick Bevan conducted with his accustomed skill and energy. Sterndale Bennett's sacred cantata, "The Woman of Samaria," and Barnett's interesting cantata, "The Ancient Mariner," were presented. The sacred work was sung in just the right spirit, an air of reverence throughout showing thoughtful study and preparation. Miss Gladys Cilento's beautiful contralto was heard in several recitatives. Miss Hilda Wheeler's soprano air, "Art thou greater," was exceedingly clear and well phrased. Mrs. Ernest Pickering was entrusted with the contralto air, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me out," which she sang with great expression. The well-known unaccompanied quartet, "God is a Spirit," was taken by Miss Myrtle Ingham, Miss Winifred Lewis, Mr. Jonathan Ardill, and Mr. Melville Farmer. Mr. Richard Correll's rich bass voice gave great pleasure in the air, "Whoever drinketh." Of some difficult choruses fine effects were gained in "Therefore with joy," "Come, O Israel," "Blessed be the Lord," "Therefore they shall come and sing," a fugal number, "Now be believe," and a chorale, "Abide with me." The second work, of an entirely different character, brought out some promising soloists. Mr. Leslie Martin's singing, especially in the declamatory portions and the solos, "Down dropt the breeze" and "The harbor day," was all that could be desired. Miss Nellie Watkins' clear soprano was heard in a difficult recitative and air ably presented. Miss Olive Bassnett's solo, "Oh! Sleep," was interpreted with expressive power. Mr. Stanley Gare should come to the front as a soloist. He showed a musical bass of pleasant quality in two recitatives and a difficult air, "O, happy living things." Mr. Frederick Booker also made a good impression in three numbers, containing some awkward passages. Miss Gertrude Wood and Miss Agnes Healy sang an interesting duet, "Two voices in the air," and in the difficult quartet, "Around, around." Miss Wood was heard with Miss Agnes Healy, Mr. Leslie Martin, and Mr. Booker. Miss Eva Close sang the high soprano solo added to the ladies' chorus, "The Seraph Band." The work abounds in chorus work of a high grade. "The bridal chorus," in three parts, for ladies' voices, sung staccato, was a fine piece of work; so was another presto staccato number for mixed voices, "About, in reel, and rout." One of the most difficult concerted excerpts was the chorus, "The upper air," in which the full strength of the company was heard. In the final chorus, "What loud uproar," an exceedingly strong finish was noticed, the ensemble being of a high order. Mr. Bevan is to be heartily congratulated on another success to add to his long list.