

THE DEAD HAND IN AMERICAN PROGRESS

What Francis Grierson, the Writer and Musical Genius, Thinks of the Craze of Going to Europe to Study Music and Art

IN the Sunday Magazine of the New York Tribune of April 19 there is a very remarkable, as well as forceful article by Francis Grierson, the musician and writer, whose activities have been exploited in this paper, on the deadening influence which the craze to go to Europe for a musical and artistic education is exercising on American endeavor and American genius.

While Mr. Grierson is an American by birth, and had a notable experience in this country when a young man, he has spent more than forty years in England and other European countries, so that he is well able to discuss the subject as an authority.

In the course of his article in the Tribune he says:

"Why is it that with the best climate, the finest scenery, the richest soil, the greatest culture, and with opportunities unknown in any other nation, Americans are yet unable to work out their own salvation and come by their own in their own country? This is the most vital of questions in America to-day, and sooner or later the people in this country will have to face the facts.

"Shall the writers, the artists, the musicians, the conductors, the social leaders of America continue to trot, like little dogs, behind English mastiffs, Scotch terriers, German dachshunds and French poodles, or shall they break away from the foreign leash and scent out the game that abounds on their own national preserves all over the country?"

Absorbing Foreign "Atmosphere"

"Some people go to Europe," says Mr. Grierson, "because they think the very atmosphere contains a magical element which they can carry away with them, like potatoes or foreign coins or mediaeval bric-a-brac, and others have a vague notion that by frequenting certain salons and mingling with certain groups in certain capitals, they can, by some hocus-focus of the mind, assume certain intellectual traits wholly foreign to their own nature, and tack on to their natural temperament something of the genius of a foreign people.

"The Dead Hand of Europe hangs heavily over American endeavor and American genius. It would not be so bad if Europe were not in the throes of political, social and artistic decadence. It would not seem so futile if Europe offered any kind of ideal superior to any

in America. But I have had forty-five years of European experience without being able to discover any European ideal, without meeting any special stimulus not attainable on American soil.

"In all these years I have never met with people more cultured and intelligent than the people of this country. The truth is, that cultured and gifted Americans do not become more cultured and gifted by going to live abroad. While, on the other hand, ordinary people find nothing in Europe that they can assimilate or take away, except what they can purchase with hard cash.

Latin Quarter a Depressing Place

"Let us consider what writers and artists call 'local atmosphere.' A great deal of this so-called 'atmosphere' is an illusion in the mind's eye. The much advertised Latin Quarter of Paris is one of the most depressing places in the world. Its history is one long wail of disillusioned lives, and its actual influence on the mind of the student is negative when not actually demoralizing. The atmosphere of the Parisian boulevard is still worse. It would be impossible to compute the moral and intellectual wrecks caused by the atmosphere of a boulevard café. In Paris the foreigner seems always waiting for something to happen. This is not at all surprising, since that is what the French who haunt the boulevards wait for every day. It is this wanting something to happen that has made Paris the hotbed of modern revolution. *Ennui* is at the bottom of it all. It is also one of the principal causes of American unrest, and the chronic illusions engendered by the constant seeking for new scenes and fresh excitement.

"But why should Americans leave the most hopeful and promising country in the world to seek solace or inspiration in a part of the globe that, according to every observing traveler with a critical mind, is at the nadir of intellectual productivity? There is now no country of Europe that can offer foreign students anything at all resembling a new form of creative art. Everything there is tentative, even to a much greater degree than in America. Paris is afflicted with twenty different schools of art, music, literature, poetry, and the newcomer can pay his money and take what his whim dictates.

"And this is what the bewildered novice does. There, at the present hour, he will find as many 'masters' as there are fancies and illusions in the mazes of his imagination, all waiting in their little parlors the visit of the curious foreign fly who may walk up the winding stair at leisure—but is often glad to escape, if he can, by the back door.

Americans Who Succeed Abroad

"The few Americans who succeed in Europe do so, not because Europe gives

the power and inspiration, but because they have brought these elements with them. But just here lies the chief danger awaiting the young artist, musician, writer, poet. Someone like Whistler has 'arrived' after untold ordeals of patience, worries, and endurance, and the novice thinks it easy to go and do likewise. The fact that the novice has been furnished with plenty of funds makes his case all the more risky. Americans who go abroad to study fail to take into account the facts in the life development of foreigners who succeed in Europe. The truth is never told in advance. Intellectual snobbery is accountable for much of the prevailing fashion in books and literature. It is getting to be more and more the correct thing for American writers and poets to take up their abode in England. The case of Henry James is interesting; for he seems to have forgotten how to write like an American, and has not yet succeeded in writing like an Englishman.

"As for American musical students, Europe will never give them what their own country has failed to give. It is folly for young musicians to seek inspiration abroad. Perhaps nothing in Germany and France is more decadent than music. The last limit of the Wagnerian methods has been attained, and the composers who mistake imitation for originality know not where to turn for a fresh model. Except among the Italians, melody is rare, and to make up for the lack of it eccentric combinations of sound and a cacophony of orchestral noises are freely indulged in, and with nerve-racking results.

Strife Where Serenity Should Be

"That serenity which young musical students expect to find in Europe is nowhere to be found; but instead, discordant conditions, opposing interests and personal strife. The musical war started by Wagner continues with unabated vehemence; but it is a war without a general. 'Musical anarchy' better describes the state of music in Europe to-day. Nothing like it has ever been known. It is scandalous to expect American students to spend time and money seeking abroad what is not to be found there. As for the art of operatic singing, it is not taught any better in Europe than it is in America. It is another illusion to suppose that the art of singing is easy in Europe, but difficult in this country. All the conditions for music are more favorable in America, and the keenest and most appreciative audiences in the world are here.

"The notion that Americans have to pass some years in Europe to develop their talent as artists, thinkers, and writers is a superstition that is doing a vast amount of harm, not only to American intellect, but to the spirit of independence that was once so marked a characteristic of the people of this wonderful country."

Music Holds Play-Goers' Attention Between the Acts

In the production of Richard Watson Tully's drama "Omar the Tentmaker," which is now ending a long engagement in New York, a feature has been the music under the direction of Maurice Nitke, the New York violinist. Mr. Nitke, who is well known through his solo work, has made an innovation in these performances, playing a number of violin solos between the acts. In order that the audience's attention be held during his playing he faces about while playing, with the result that his playing of compositions by Wagner, Massenet, Wolf-Ferrari, Dvorak and Drigo is listened to with as careful interest as the audience exhibits in the drama itself.

Blind Musicians of Washington in Notable Performance

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 27.—A program of unusual interest was that presented in the concert hall of the Library of Congress last week, when the participants were local blind musicians. The skill in technic displayed was remarkable, and the skill in interpretation at times even more so. Those who performed were Prof. J. Francis Germailler, Katherine L. Grady and Susie I. Duffy, pianists, and French S. Hufty, violinist.

The program was as follows: "Priests' March," Mendelssohn, by Miss Grady and Prof. Germailler; "Romance," Svendsen, and "Hejre Kati," Hubay, by Mr. Hufty; "Polonaise Militaire," Chopin, by Prof. Germailler; "Cachouca Caprice," Raff, by Miss Grady, and "Bolero," Moskowski, and "Country Dance," Nevin, by Miss Duffy and Prof. Germailler. Miss Duffy also sang "The Beautiful Land of Nod," Greene. This was one of the most highly entertaining programs that has been given under Miss Rider's direction. W. H.

BURNHAM IN ILLINOIS

Pianist Is Heard to Advantage in Springfield Recital

SPRINGFIELD, ILL., May 1.—One of the most important local recitals this year was the one given on April 20 by Thuel Burnham, the American piano virtuoso, who was persuaded to take a week away from his classes in New York for the



Thuel Burnham

purpose of giving one or two concerts. Next season, Mr. Burnham is to give a more extensive tour of the United States, under the management of Harry Culbertson. With a program which served admirably to exploit his pianistic powers, Mr. Burnham displayed his mastery of the piano and exceptional interpretative ability. In spite of a somewhat heavy program, Mr. Burnham was liberal with his encores, which were demanded by the goodly representation of the music-lovers of Springfield present. His program included numbers by Schumann, Schubert, Chopin and MacDowell.

KRIENS CLUB CONCERT

Taxing Symphony Program Well Played by Organization of Amateurs

A large and friendly audience attended the concert given by the Kriens Symphony Club on Wednesday evening, April 29, in Aeolian Hall, New York. This body of players, which is conducted by Christiaan Kriens, was somewhat augmented for the occasion and presented a taxing program. Schubert's B Minor Symphony aroused hearty applause, following which Caroline Powers, a young violinist, played the first movement of the Beethoven Concerto, using Mr. Kriens's difficult cadenza. Flowers and an enthusiastic demonstration followed her interpretation.

After a flashlight of the club had been taken, a Handel concerto, for organ and orchestra, was played. Edward Rechlin played the solo part finely. A first performance of Christiaan Kriens's "Suite Bretonne" revealed a brilliant and characteristic score with which the orchestra coped successfully. Grieg's beautiful march from "Sigurd Jorsalfar" concluded the program. Although there was a preponderance of brass tone, this concert demonstrated that the art of true ensemble playing can be imparted to students and amateurs.

Charlotte Glee Club in Attractive Program

CHARLOTTE, N. C., April 24.—The Charlotte Glee Club gave its second private concert at the Academy of Music, on Tuesday evening, before an audience of more than 600. Numbers by Bliss, Sullivan, De Koven, Dvorak-Spross, Parker and Huhn were on the program. De Koven's "Rosalie" and Sullivan's "The Long Day Closes" were the favorite club numbers. Two male quartets sang Cuzance's "The Confession" and Gibson's "Summer Lullaby," respectively. Solos were sung by Walter Scott and John George Harris, who directed the club. There is an active singing list of thirty-five men and a subscribers' list of 75. J. G. H.

New Conductor for Melbourne Orchestra

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA, March 26.—Alberto Zelman has been elected conductor of the Melbourne Philharmonic Society to succeed George Peake, resigned.



Francis Grierson

"The Artificial Music Season"

is about over, but the natural music season has begun. I have just heard a red-winged blackbird whistle." Thus wrote Dr. Caryl B. Storrs to me the other day. It reminded me that Maud Powell will spend her summer in the White Mountains. She will give her New York recital on Tuesday evening, October 27th, in Aeolian Hall, which event will mark the beginning of her eleventh consecutive season in this country. This helps to prove the truth of what I have always maintained, namely, that the best is never too good for the American public.



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