

**Sir Donald Francis Tovey, Kt., B.A. (Oxon.), M.Mus. (Hon.),
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PROFESSOR TOVEY came to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1914, and he died in Edinburgh on July 10, 1940, at the regrettably early age of sixty-four, after completing twenty-five years as Reid Professor of Music. His tenure of office thus opened and closed in the dark days of war, when the arts must inevitably suffer severely. This fact tends to throw into sharper relief the brilliance of his professorial career. He came with a formidable reputation as a scholar; Joachim had, indeed, said of him, as a young man, that he was the most learned musician in Europe. His amazing scholarship was, moreover, combined in a unique way with great executive powers as a pianist, and with a profoundly poetic imagination; and this phenomenal combination of gifts was allied to the simplicity and true humility of a great mind. The fact that his genius chose to express itself in music was merely a fortunate accident for music. He might just as easily have been a famous classical scholar, a great scientist, or a distinguished philosopher. Music was to him an aspect of ultimate truth and the great powers of his intellect were focussed on the apprehension of this truth.

Two years after his arrival in Edinburgh Sir Donald commenced the most important undertaking of his professorial career—namely, the founding of a local symphony orchestra which should form part of the teaching equipment of the Faculty of Music. His achievement in establishing the Reid Symphony Orchestra is known to many who have never heard this orchestra play, but who have read the programme notes which he wrote for its concerts. These notes have now been collected and published by the Oxford University Press in five volumes of essays, which are universally acknowledged to be the most brilliant, witty, and learned musical analyses ever written. This important tangible record of his work is, however, eclipsed by the fact that the foundation and training of an orchestra, on the lines of his far-sighted policy, has enormously increased the value of the work done in the Faculty of Music, and has perceptibly raised the standard of music throughout Scotland. It has indeed established a great tradition, and has—musically speaking—“put Edinburgh on the map.”

It is a tragedy that no permanent record remains of his great pianoforte

playing. Valuable and increasingly influential as his writings are, a dozen gramophone records—made when his playing had reached the peak of its eloquence—would have been more valuable still. The loss of this part of his teaching is immeasurably great, and can be assessed only by those who treasure memories of his triple series of concerts—Reid, Historical, and Sunday Evening. His powers of interpretation were without equal, both as a pianist and as a conductor. Through him, music spoke directly to the hearer.

As a composer Professor Tovey was not so widely known as he should have been. His thought expressed itself in classical, rather than in modern, style (though in a distinctive idiom), and his more important works are long—a fact which is against them in an age of speed. Despite this, such fine works as the 'cello concerto and the Gluck variations are already assured of a place in musical repertoire; and *The Bride of Dionysus* will one day be hailed as a masterpiece of English opera.

His greatest contribution to musical æsthetics is an important one: the theory of tonality, which he expounded in the article on "Harmony" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, is the only comprehensive and scientific systemisation of the practice of the classical masters. It is based on living music and not on theoretical treatises, and is as yet both inadequately recognised and inadequately understood. A collection of the more important of the forty-odd articles which he wrote for the *Encyclopædia* is envisaged at some future date, and should provide material for at least half a dozen text-books.

Professor Tovey's lectures were as vivid and as varied as his writings, and were illuminated by his lively wit and by voluminous and apt musical illustrations. Even the dullest student could not fail to catch some of the fire of his enthusiasm, and his teaching remains a constant source of inspiration. He never suffered fools gladly, and was intolerant of humbug, "perkiness," or of makeshift in art. He was, however, patient and generous to a degree in his help, encouragement, and appreciation to every *genuine* musician or music-lover, however humble their attainments might be. Professor Tovey was, to sum up, a leader who inspired devotion and affection alike in students, orchestra, fellow-artists, and a host of friends throughout the world: these remember him with gratitude and with gladness.

He was elected a Fellow in 1917.

M. G.