

School of English Church Music

QUARTERLY NEWS SHEET

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A YEAR'S WORK.

The first objective of the School of English Church Music is now reached: a property has been acquired and the College of St. Nicolas, Elmstead Lane, Chislehurst, will be opened almost immediately.

This most important step has been taken by the Provisional Council largely as a venture of faith, and because they believe that the interest in the aims and objects of the School, which has been shown in all parts of the Country as well as in the Dominions overseas, is no mere matter of good wishes but will result in the practical support needed. It must however be clearly stated that the financial support which has actually been given so far is not nearly sufficient to place the affairs of the School on a sound footing. Many have doubtless been withholding their subscriptions and affiliations till they could see "whether anything would come of all this talk": it has now come!

An urgent appeal therefore is made to all who are interested in the welfare of Church Music to come forward without delay and help to bear the burden. Those choirs that are already affiliated are asked to try and get others to follow their example: they are the accredited leaders of music in their Churches, and they should learn to regard the School as their own, and to feel that each individual member of each affiliated choir has an interest and an obligation in making its activities as widespread as possible.

Space will not permit the printing of a list of affiliated choirs in this issue, for it is already a long one; but it includes several of the leading choirs of the Country, such as those of St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, York Minster and many other Cathedrals, as well as of parish churches from large towns and remote villages.

The net-work is widespread, but the meshes must be made smaller.

The College is established at a property formerly known as "Buller's Wood," and is approached by a private road from Elmstead Lane, Chislehurst, about 10 minutes' walk from three stations, Chislehurst, Elmstead Woods, and Bickley, served by a frequent service of electric trains.

By the principal entrance gate is a large building which is now being converted to a hostel for students. It was originally intended to use this for the Choir School, but alternative plans showed the present arrangement to be preferable. The students will be provided with separate bedrooms of varying size with ample bath-room accommodation. The Secretary, Mr. H. L. A. Green, will be in charge of the hostel. The building is capable of easy extension when the accommodation required exceeds that which can be provided immediately. The hostel will be entirely ready for students by Easter, but a few might be accommodated sooner.

A short distance from the hostel is the main college building. This is a very fine house designed by the eminent architect, Ernest Newton, and built about 1900. The situation above a terraced garden is most attractive.

The large room on the right of the entrance hall is being fitted as a temporary Chapel, for which it will be most suitable. There will be space for about forty or fifty people besides the choir; the small organ, given by Mrs. Cleverly and rebuilt by Messrs. Harrison & Harrison, will be at the "West End." The Altar will be furnished with specially designed Cross and Candlesticks which have been given by "Those who served Westminster Abbey as Choristers from 1918 to 1928."

Adjacent to the Chapel is a music room, with two grand pianos, which will also serve as a music library and vestry.

On the other side of the hall is the dining room, which is to be hung with very fine old French tapestry, presented by Sir Charles Nicholson.

Beyond this is the billiard room, furnished with a full-sized billiard table.

On the first floor is a large reading room for quiet study, with the nucleus of a good musical and general library.

The eastern wing forms the resident Choir School, the provision of which has been made possible through the generosity of Mrs. E. B. Wright, in memory of her husband, the late Precentor of Chester. Here ten or more boys will live with their master, Mr. E. H. Barnes, and on a lower floor they will have a delightful common room, changing room, etc., approached by a separate entrance. The boys will receive their general education at Bickley Hall Preparatory School, close by.

In the western wing is the Warden's "flat," and underneath this the general office of the School, which will be removed from the temporary premises so kindly lent hitherto by Mr. A. K. Nicholson, at 105, Gower Street.

The grounds consist of about 11 acres, largely woodland; but there are an excellent tennis-court and delightful gardens, besides a small farm. The lodge in the lower part of the grounds will be used as a Guest House, unless it is found advisable to sell some of this portion of the property and to build elsewhere.

It will not be possible at first for the Chaplain to be permanently resident, but the post has been accepted by the Rev. G. H. Salter, Precentor of Winchester Cathedral, and until provision can be made for him to devote his whole energies to the work of the College, the Dean and Chapter of Winchester have most generously allowed him to spend as much of his time there as his Cathedral duties will permit.

A start will be made about the middle of January, and the first arrivals will be the choristers. Several of them have been at the late Duke of Newcastle's Choir School at Clumber Park, which is being closed at Christmas, so they will start with a school and choir tradition ready formed. The trustees of the Estate are kindly sending much of necessary furniture and equipment for the use of the boys in their new surroundings.

As the centre of the College life is to be the Chapel, it is intended that regular daily Services shall be instituted at once; the Bishop of Rochester has authorized the Warden to take ordinary Services in the absence of the Chaplain or other Clergy; but it is hoped that it will be possible to arrange for one Celebration of the Holy Communion each week.

By Easter we hope to be in full working order, and that all vacancies for students will be filled up. Full particulars cannot be given here, but a Prospectus can be obtained on application to the Secretary. Briefly, however, it may be said that the fees have been kept very low, and for permanent residents will be from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ guineas a week, to include board, lodging and tuition.

