NOTABLE BLIND . . . MUSICIANS

BEING THE STORY OF MUSICIANS EDUCATED AT THE ROYAL . . . DUNDEE INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND . . .

BY COLIN MACDONALD.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY WILLIAM C. I. ENG.

PROCEEDS OF SALE TO BE DEVOTED TO THE MUSIC FUND OF THE INSTITUTION.
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AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.
NOTABLE
BLIND MUSICIANS

BEING THE STORY OF MUSICIANS
EDUCATED AT THE ROYAL DUNDEE
\: INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND \:

BY

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MANAGER,
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With an Introduction by William C. Leng,
President.

DUNDEE:
THE ROYAL DUNDEE INSTITUTION FOR THE BLIND,
MAGDALEN GREEN.

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INTRODUCTION.

In the following pages is given an account of the careers of men educated at the Royal Dundee Institution for the Blind who have won for themselves positions of influence. Many of them, after receiving an initial training at Dundee, proceeded to the Royal Normal College for the Blind, Norwood, London, an institution which is for blind musicians what the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music are for sighted musicians. It is remarkable that from such a small school as that of Dundee so many pupils should be found capable of being highly trained in the art of music.

The interesting narratives prepared by Mr Macdonald show that the men are possessed of diverse qualifications. Not only have they become organists and teachers of music, but they have won success on the concert platform, and have built up a good business as music-sellers. The careers of these men afford a fresh illustration of the fact, so persistently urged by Sir Alfred Pearson at St Dunstan's, that blindness is not a crippling affliction, but only a handicap, which energy and application can largely overcome. The attitude of the outside world to the blind is too often somewhat astray on this point. The blind are looked upon as being physically and mentally weak, and incapable of doing anything for themselves without assistance. Such a notion is at once seen to be preposterous when it is remembered that a blind member of Parliament, the Right Hon. Henry Fawcett, became a Cabinet Minister; that large legal and industrial businesses are successfully controlled by blind men; and that frequently Mont Blanc has been ascended by a blind mountaineer. For the blind, special educational facilities are needed; but, given the necessary mental endowment, once they are trained they can carry on by themselves with wonderful efficiency. Many blind workers are able to thread even the busiest streets of London by themselves; and when they can do this, little wonder if they can also qualify themselves for posts which demand the exercise of skill, judgment, and all-round capacity.

Of course, blindness always remains a handicap; and, however far a blind man may rise, he would doubtless have risen much further but for his blindness. Every reader of these pages will realise that the powers of application, resourcefulness, and perseverance shown by the subjects of these biographies would have carried them into positions of even greater responsibility had they been gifted with sight. So, too, the blind men and women who are employed in various crafts, in our blind institutions, are the very cream
INTRODUCTION.

of their kind. Their patience, perseverance, and unfailing cheerfulness are a reproach, alike to visitors who see them at work and to industrial operatives outside, who so often labour with less spirit and contentment.

The popular attitude towards the blind of compassionate sympathy, as a class apart from the everyday world, is probably the chief reason why employment for the blind is largely regarded as simply a matter of providing special workshops for them. To train a man or woman to make baskets, weave mats, or perform some other simple industrial operation, is most excellent work; but that institution is more successful which educates its beneficiaries to go out into the world and earn a livelihood for themselves on even terms with sighted workers. One effect of the war will be to afford for the blind, in the future, further opportunities of work outside institutions. In Germany, during the war, openings were found for every available blind person in the making of munitions; and in the United States of America the friends of the blind are turning their attention, not so much to the development of special workshops for blind operatives, but to finding odd jobs in large industrial establishments which can be overtaken by the blind. In many industries nowadays work is largely done by machinery, and a blind person, if found, can attend to a machine, or test the work produced by it, as efficiently as a sighted worker. In this direction, I believe, will be found, in the near future, the best means of helping the blind to help themselves.

Whilst these narratives are of general interest, showing how in many cases blind men have been so well educated and trained as to obtain posts of independence in the world of music, they will be specially gratifying to the friends and supporters of the Royal Dundee Institution for the Blind. Mr Colin Macdonald has been its manager for nearly forty years, and has been longer in a responsible position of this kind than any other worker for the blind in Britain. He has been unsparing in his efforts on behalf of his blind friends, and these pages show that he had lost no opportunity of developing to the utmost the capacities of the blind in his care. In this work he has been ably supported by Mr Henry Marshall, subject of one of these notices, and for many years the teacher of music at the School for Blind Children, Dundee.

WILLIAM C. LENG,
President of the Royal Dundee Institution for the Blind.
Notable Blind Musicians: Biographical Sketches.

HENRY MARSHALL.

Mr. Marshall holds a deservedly high place in the musical profession in Dundee. As a Teacher of Music, Organist and Choirmaster, he has taken first rank in his native city.

Born blind, at the age of eight he entered the School of the Institution for the Blind, then located in Dallfield Walk. In the school register under his name we find the following interesting note:

"Knew nothing, but is a clever boy; learnt letters in a week."—19th Dec. 1869.

At the age of 11 he was transferred to the Industrial Department of the Institution, and served a five years' apprenticeship as a basket-maker.

He had a great liking for music, and his ambition was to be an organist. A fund for the higher musical education of pupils who gave evidence of unusual musical talent existed in the Institution, and the Directors gratified young Marshall's desire by sending him to the Royal Normal College for the Blind, London. Here he remained for six years, prosecuting his studies with great assiduity and success. He studied the organ under the famous Dr. E. J. Hopkins, the piano under Professor Hartvigson, and singing under Principal Cummings and Harmony under Professor Banister of the Guild Hall and Royal Academy.
Mr Marshall has also done some good work as a composer, his best known pieces being "March in B Flat" and a "Fugue in G."

Returning to Dundee bearing the highest testimonials as a qualified Organist, Teacher of Music, and Piano Tuner, he entered on the practice of his profession at the age of 22. His first appointment was Organist to St. Enoch's Parish Church, a post which he filled with much acceptance for 7\(\frac{1}{2}\) years. That he was not choirmaster as well as organist was a sore point with him, reflecting, as he thought, on his professional ability. He made several unsuccessful applications for an appointment, but no church would have him in the dual capacity. At this time there was a strong prejudice against the blind as leaders of Church praise, the handicap of blindness being regarded as an insuperable barrier to the efficient discharge of the duties. Keenly disappointed with the prevailing opinion amongst sighted musicians, and with his failure to get an opportunity of demonstrating his capacity in this direction, he organised a Choir of his own in 1891. The venture proved a great success, "Marshall's Choir," as it was then known, became a musical feature of the city, and more than justified the claim of the blind leader as Choirmaster.

Shortly thereafter he became Organist and Choirmaster of St John's Cross Church, and subsequently two years afterwards he filled a similar post in Ward Chapel.

Mr Marshall thus effectively dissipated the prejudice against blind organists, which existed all over
the country at the time, and which had prevented many talented blind musicians from entering into competition with sighted artistes for posts of this kind.

The Choir has survived through the years, and still exists under the title of the "Dundee Select Choir"—surely a striking testimony to the excellency of the training and the ability and adaptability of the gifted Conductor.

The Choir at present numbers 24, all being singers of noted quality. For a series of years it has charmed music lovers in Dundee and elsewhere by its rendering of high-class music. It has given many of the best known Oratorios—Haydn's "Creation," Handel's "Samson" and "Judas Maccabeus," Mendelssohn's "St Paul," and others. Perhaps the most ambitious venture of the Choir is the "Messiah," which, with an augmented choir of 200 voices, is annually performed at Christmas time to crowded audiences in the Kinnaird Hall.

Mr Marshall has been for over 20 years Organist and Choirmaster of the M'Cheyne Memorial U.F. Church, which appointment he still holds. He is also music-master of the Royal Blind Institution School (in which he was originally a pupil), and conductor of the Adult Blind Choir, composed of the workers in the industrial workshops. He has been instructor to most of the subjects of the following sketches, who attribute their success in the musical profession largely to his teaching.
JOSHUA S. BRAND.

Mr BRAND has, for the long period of 26 years, held the post of Choirmaster and Organist of Wallacetown Church. On the occasion of his semi-jubilee in that capacity the Managers and Congregation marked their appreciation of his services by making him a handsome presentation.

Blind from infancy, he was sent at the age of seven to the School for the Blind. A bright, intelligent pupil, he insisted on knowing all about everything his fingers touched. Not content with hearing the sounds proceeding from the piano, he would know how they were produced, and he soon acquainted himself with the construction of the instrument. So decided was his musical talent that in 1885 the Directors of the Institution sent him to the Royal Normal College for the Blind, London, in order to qualify as a piano tuner, and receive higher musical training. The reports of his progress from time to time were very satisfactory. He proved a most painstaking student. Striving manfully to conquer his handicap, he realised that the greater the difficulties the keener the satisfaction when they had been overcome.

After six years training in the College, he returned to his native city. The credentials from his various professors testified to his general character and efficient musical attainments. He lost no time in advertising himself as a music master and piano tuner. To begin with, he had to contend against the prevail-
ing prejudice and distrust of blind teachers. Claiming patronage on the score of professional merit alone and not from motives of sympathy, he only sought an opportunity to demonstrate his qualifications for the work. On every occasion, when such an opportunity came, the blind tuner amply vindicated his claim, and as a result he soon established a good connection in the city.

As a public singer and teacher of singing, Mr Brand has been successful. Possessing a baritone voice of good compass, he is welcome on the platform. When in London, he was one of the prominent members of the College Choir, and frequently was a soloist at the Concerts given by the pupils in the Queen's Hall at the Crystal Palace. On several occasions he had the honour of singing before members of the Royal Family.

As a blind educationist, Mr Brand has taken a practical interest in the various methods adopted for the instruction of the blind, and is an expert in the different types of embossed printing used in this country and in America. Possessing a considerable library of music in Braille (an ingenious dott system invented by a blind Frenchman of that name) he is constantly adding to it by the aid of a Braille writing frame and stylus. Well read in the literature available in Braille, he has also an extensive acquaintance with general literature, as he possesses a circle of literary friends who read to him in his leisure time.

For a long time he has been an enthusiastic Esperantist. He attended the National Congress in
Antwerp in 1911, and took an active part in the proceedings. On this occasion he sang by request at a Concert in the Grand Opera House.

In his younger days he was an ardent cyclist, and has covered over 8000 miles on his tandem. He is interested in mechanics, and it affords him great pleasure to take his machine to pieces and reconstruct it again unaided.

He takes a keen interest in chess and whist, and derives great pleasure from a game. He can enjoy and tell a good story, and is blessed with the saving gift of humour.

Mr Brand has all his life taken an intelligent interest in matters affecting the blind—Educational, Industrial, and Social—and he keeps himself well informed on all that is being done from time to time for the amelioration of their condition.

A fitting recognition of his life-long interest in, and connection with, the Institution was made at the last General Meeting of the Subscribers, when he was elected to the Directorate. The appointment had the approval of the Subscribers, and has given great satisfaction to the inmates of the Institution as also to his colleagues on the Board.
DUNCAN MacPHERSON.

The remarkable achievements of the subject of our sketch have earned for him the title of "Dundee's Blind Musical Genius."

Losing his sight when five years of age, he shortly thereafter entered the School for the Blind, where he remained till he attained the age of 16. He early gave evidence of exceptional musical talent, and astonished his teacher and friends with the acuteness of his hearing and his retentive memory. Possessing the rare gift of "absolute pitch," he could promptly name any note sounded on an instrument.

Attracting at this time the attention of Mr Chambers, the Musical Director of the then Dundee Music Hall, the blind boy got lessons on the violin, and in a short time made remarkable progress. So great was his popularity at this time that he was in constant demand at dancing and other parties. He soon learned to play the piano, and before he was 17 could play the pipe organ. His extraordinary retentive memory, wedded to a very keen and alert ear, enabled him to pick up and reproduce all kinds of music. He could improvise cleverly, and was never at a loss to supply suitable accompaniments to the most intricate pieces. "I can give lots of variety and ornamentation to pieces with which I am not fully acquainted," he said.

For over 40 years Mr MacPherson has been a popular figure in the musical life of Dundee. Perhaps
his most notable achievement is that of a Leader of an Orchestra which he organised many years ago. The Orchestra, composed entirely of sighted players, had a most successful career, its services being much in demand all over the country. The "Scotch" Concerts were particularly popular. The Orchestra was then augmented to 50 sighted performers, who warmly acknowledged their blind conductor's ability and responded to his lead.

Within recent years he has made a unique addition to his repertory. He attached to his piano a triangle, sleigh bells and cymbals which he manipulated by means of a pedal arrangement. Subsequently he introduced an electric drum and Chinese wooden drum and a flutophone, the latter played with the aid of his lips and tongue. This marvellous combination of orchestral effects, attained by his own individual effort, is striking evidence of mechanical and musical genius. The task of getting all the instruments to act as a musical whole presented many difficulties, but they were eventually successfully overcome.

The "One Man Band," as his performance has been termed, has enhanced the inventor's reputation at the same time increasing largely his clientele. He is greatly aided in his achievements by a "prodigious" memory. He has committed to memory 150 sets of Lancers or Quadrilles, and over 500 Waltzes and Polkas, to which he is constantly adding the latest dance music as it appears. But it is as a violinist that Mr MacPherson excels. His command of the instrument, and the effects that he is able to produce
by it, are pronounced by experts to be truly marvellous. Any score of music read to him is quickly memorised, and is retained with perfect accuracy. He has made dance music his "forte," and is always in his element "when the dance gaes roond the lichted ha'."

In Glasgow and Aberdeen, and throughout the principal towns in Scotland, he has fulfilled with much acceptance many engagements. His services too are frequently requisitioned in the "season" for Hydropathics, Cinema, and other places of recreation and entertainment.

Mr MacPherson is still active, and is held in high esteem in Dundee by his numerous patrons alike for his genial and kindly personality and his brilliant musical attainments.
TOM GARVIE.

The areas in which the Royal Dundee Institution for the Blind operates are Forfar, Fife (north part), and Perthshire. The most brilliant pupil from the latter county is the subject of our sketch.

Born in Perth in 1881, Tom entered the school when seven years of age. A bright, intelligent boy, but delicate and of a shy and retiring disposition, he early gave evidence of a keen and alert mind, and made rapid progress in the ordinary School subjects. Possessing a very retentive memory, his lessons gave him no trouble. For music he had a passion, and he was never happy except when sitting at the piano. After he had completed the School curriculum in 1903 he entered on a course of musical training under Mr Henry Marshall, Music-master of the School, with the view of qualifying for the profession of Music. An earnest student, he devoted himself heartily to his studies and made phenomenal progress.

In 1895 Garvie sat the Local Centre Examination of Trinity College, and was awarded a certificate and prize in the primary division. Two years later he entered for examination in the senior division and passed successfully, again being awarded a certificate and prize for piano-playing. His marks on the latter occasion were the highest gained in Scotland. The examiner, Dr Turpin, congratulated Mr Marshall
Tom Garvie.
on his pupil, whom he termed a musical genius. In 1900 he passed the senior examination of the Associate Board of the Royal Academy and the Royal College of Music in Organ-playing. The Directors of the Institution, recognising his exceptional talent, sent him to London to sit for the Degree of Associate of the Royal College of Organists, and he was successful in obtaining the Diploma of the College.

Garvie was appointed Organist of the West U.F. Church in Broughty Ferry in 1900, and occupied this position with much acceptance for nearly six years.

For the past 14 years he has held the position of Choirmaster and Organist in the First U.F. Church in Kirriemuir, a town made famous by the genius of Sir James Barrie, the novelist, under the title of "Thrums." Here Garvie finds ample scope for his musical gifts. He has much success as a Teacher, and is held in great esteem by his pupils and by his Church alike for his professional ability and for his genial and sterling character.

A striking characteristic of most of the blind is their powers of memory. In Garvie this faculty is abnormally developed. Events occurring in his own experience that have impressed him he can recall in the minutest detail, being able to give the exact dates, and even to describe the weather prevailing at the time.

He reads and writes Braille fluently both in musical notation and in general literature, but like most of the blind he prefers being read to.
In addition to his skill as a pianist and organist he is endowed with the gift of quiet and refined humour and he also excels as a mimic. He has a large repertoire of humorous songs. These gifts make him a valuable asset in social circles, in which he is a favourite.

It has been said that the requisite qualifications for a student entering the musical profession are—(1) a fine musical ear, (2) an extraordinary andrap id power of memory, (3) a sincere and devoted love of the art, and (4) unremitting perseverance. All these qualifications meet in Garvie in a marked degree, and, combined with his winning personality, explain his success as an Organist and Teacher of Music.
WILLIAM JACKSON FARQUHAR.

A NATIVE of Kirriemuir, Willie Farquhar at the age of 10 was sent to the School for the Blind in Dundee to continue his education under new conditions. He proved an apt pupil, and early showed a decided talent for music. On attaining his 16th year he took a three years’ musical course under Mr Marshall, the blind music master, and made remarkable progress in piano and organ playing. Shortly thereafter a vacancy occurring in City Road U.F. Church, Brechin, for an Organist and Choir-master, Farquhar applied for the post. He was on a short leet of five (four of whom were sighted), and the blind lad through sheer merit, despite his heavy handicap, was unanimously appointed.

The young organist threw himself with great energy into the musical life of the town. He founded the “Brechin Select Choir,” and at the same time was leader of the “Edzell Choral Society.” These he conducted with much success for a period of eight years, and his numerous friends showed their appreciation of his services by presenting him with a silver-mounted baton and a purse of money.

In 1914 St George’s U.F. Church in Montrose advertised for an Organist, and Mr Farquhar out of a short leet of six was unanimously appointed to the post, which as we write he still holds. In addition to Church work Mr Farquhar engages in piano tuning, and has a large circle of music pupils.
NOTABLE BLIND MUSICIANS:

William Jackson Farquhar.

William Jackson Farquhar.
During the war, when his teaching engagements were considerably reduced, he embarked on a new venture to make up for the deficiency. Taking a small shop in one of the main streets of the town he set up as a music-seller, and has succeeded beyond expectation. Shortly after his marriage his wife joined him in the enterprise, which has still further added to his success. His patrons are steadily increasing, and the venture gives promise of being a signal success.

Always interested in the study of mechanics and electricity, Farquhar takes special pleasure in examining intricate mechanical contrivances, taking them to pieces and then restoring them to their original form. He is a very expert repairer. In connection with his Church organ he introduced an electric blowing equipment, which is a great improvement on the old method. In a small workshop adjoining his saleroom the blind mechanic has fitted up a motor and some ingenious appliances which enable him to deal with the numerous articles sent in to him for treatment. These vary from gramophones and typewriters to bicycles and clocks.

Mr Farquhar is an alert intelligent man. He reads and writes Braille fluently, takes an interest in all that is passing in the town, and is a keen student of the daily newspaper. Montrose holds him in high esteem alike for his musical talent and for his amiable social qualities.
Mr Farquhar attributes much of his business success to the fact that he had for 10 years the advantage of sight, which enables him to visualise what is described to him, and he is thus able to comprehend a situation more readily than a person who has been born blind. He does not believe that the handicap of blindness is an insuperable barrier to achieving success in many employments and professions, which as yet the blind have not attempted to enter.
JOHNNIE BEVERIDGE.

The subject of our sketch is a popular blind comedian, and earns a comfortable living by his profession. Blind from birth, at the age of seven he entered the School of the Dundee Institution for the Blind, where he remained till he attained the age of 16. At this age pupils are usually put to one or other of the industrial departments of the Institution. "Johnnie" however, had no inclination to be an artisan. The chief feature of his school days was an intense liking for stories and a ready assimilation of them. The drudgery of the ordinary lessons was uncongenial to him, but a story in which humour was predominant always "fetched him." He had a strong sense of humour and was regarded by his fellows as the comedian of the School. His sallies of wit, during class hours when the teacher happened to leave the room for a moment used to upset the equilibrium of the pupils, and brought him frequent punishment. Gifted with an excellent memory he retained all that was ludicrous that he heard or that was read to him, and he had great powers of mimicry. Long before his school term had ended he had chosen his career. "I am to be a comedian," he said, and the workshops could not divert him from his purpose. Equipped with a fair general education, some knowledge of music, a full repertory of songs and recitations, with imitable powers of mimicry, at the age of 17, he went out in quest of employment as an entertainer. "It was a stiff business," he said, "at
Johnnie Beveridge.
the start, but soon I managed to catch 'on.'” As a pianist and vocalist, his services soon became much in demand in the city and neighbourhood, and as his reputation extended, Theatres, Cinemas and Music Halls opened their doors to him—and still continue to bestow their patronage.

For over 20 years, "Johnnie Beveridge, the Blind Comedian," as he is billed, has had engagements all over Scotland. He is a great favourite, and his performances are highly successful.

He finds great pleasure in the exercise of his profession and speaks in the highest terms of the kindness of his fellow artistes. The handicap of blindness never depresses him. He takes a keen interest in the life around him, and his radiant mirthfulness is infectious. In the streets of his native city he gets along without a guide, but in other towns and cities the needful assistance is cheerfully rendered. The incidents in his professional career are many and varied. On one occasion, in his lodging, a child came up to him and asked, "Are you blind?" On being answered in the affirmative, the child further asked, "Do you sell laces?"—evidently concluding that this was the only business open to the sightless.

His humour is spontaneous and irrepressible, and it was the regret of his life that he could not get to France during the war to enliven by song and story our brave boys in the trenches. On one occasion when fulfilling an engagement in Invergordon, he had the satisfaction of performing before some of the jolly tars from the fleet. He took an intelligent
interest in the war, and kept abreast of its progress by having the newspapers read to him daily.

A friend whom he had not met for a year or more came up to him one day. "Why," said Beveridge, "I thought you were doing your 'bit' in France," "They won't have me," was the reply, "I'm in Grade 3." "I'll beat that," said Johnnie, "I'm in Grade C.0."—(see nothing!)

An expert reader of Braille in which happily there is now considerable literature, Beveridge eagerly reads all that he can lay his fingers on. When engagements permit, he visits the Institution which he considers his "Alma Mater," and reads the stories in the Braille Magazines to his erstwhile companions, who have chosen the less exciting arena of the workshops in which to earn their living.

A joyous personality is "Johnnie" despite his "birth's invidious bar," and like Milton in his braver and loftier moods, he "bates not one jot of heart or hope, but still bears up, and steers right onward."
OTHER MUSICAL PUPILS.

In addition to the foregoing sketches, we give the names and some particulars regarding other former pupils of the School, all of whom, as we go to press, are at present engaged in the musical profession.

James T. Forbes.

Began as a Teacher and Piano Tuner. Now established as a Piano and Musicseller in Dundee.

J. Stuart Moncur.

Completed Musical Studies at the Royal Normal College for the Blind, London. Possessed of a voice of great sweetness, which attracted attention when the College Choir visited Berlin in 1885. He has established a good reputation both in Britain and America as a public singer.

Tom Lord.

Entered School in 1891. Completed education in Royal Normal College, London. Organ and Choirmaster and Teacher of Music in Dundee for some years. He is at present employed in Glasgow as general musical entertainer.

David Shand.

Educated in the Institution School. Received musical training in the Royal Normal College. A Teacher of Music for many years, he is now the proprietor of a successful Cinema in Dundee.
David Reid.
Teacher of Music and Piano Tuner with a large practice in Dundee and district.

George Millers.
Organist and Choirmaster to several Churches at different periods. He is at present employed as Organist in a Dundee Picture House.

Ernest Glass.
Entered School in 1903. Started as Music Teacher in 1912. Appointed Organist and Choirmaster of St Peter’s U.F. Church, Dundee, in 1915.

Robert Kilgour.