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1

Themes of a Lifetime: the Many Interests of a Great Victorian

Michael Musgrave

Perspective

No one figure in later-nineteenth-century Britain is as worthy of the title Great Victorian of Music as Sir George Grove (1820–1900). He satisfied every criterion normally attributed to the age's outstanding figures: a wide range of interests and zest and energy in pursuing them; a devotion to great projects with a high sense of purpose and optimism; an assumed sense of the progress implicit in what he did, and the belief in a better future through education and self-improvement (as well as another side, where earnestness easily turned to melancholy, and even illness). Grove's wide achievements in music came not in spite of his lack of a professional career in the field, but essentially because of it. His life coincides with the great development of concert life in England, which gathered particular momentum in the 1850s, when he was entering his first mature professional years in London, and which had become totally transformed by the time of his death at the beginning of the new century. By comparison with the other arts with which it would today be naturally compared, for example, painting and sculpture, the status of public instrumental music in Grove's youth was low, and performance standards were often poor: most high-quality performances took place in private homes: the German orchestral repertory, soon to be the backbone of the emerging concert culture, was little known, because the world of musically well-educated individuals and thus audiences was small. Public status in music was attached to fashionable opera attended by the rich, or by oratorio attended by the affluent middle class. The steady emergence of great concert music to its later central position in musical performance is one of the most striking features of the period covered by Grove's life.¹

Grove was a major figure in the communication of the new information that accompanied this change. But it is doubtful that he could have achieved what he did from inside the musical profession only. It was his capacity to influence events on the larger public stage that gave him

his importance, and this arose from his wide experience in other disciplines and activities, his numerous contacts and access: no performing musician exerted comparable influence in this field. When Grove was elected to the Athenaeum – a club of artists and intellectuals – his *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was yet to be produced and his musical notes for the Crystal Palace concerts were of peripheral interest to the men who were his peers: rather he was known as the Secretary of the Society of Arts (from 1908 the Royal Society), the Crystal Palace and, especially, as a biblical scholar and founder of the Palestine Exploration Fund: it was this background that counted. Thus the particular themes of Grove's life and circumstances are of immediate interest in surveying the expansion of musical culture within the larger public setting. They show how new initiatives came about. But Grove had remarkable gifts, which emerge in the following pages. As well as the Victorian professional virtues, he had personal qualities which identified him, and without which he would not have achieved what he did: kindness, genuine modesty, immense social skills partly springing from a real interest in people and their work. Grove had four phases of professional activity; as engineer, as institutional secretary, as editor, and as institutional director. That on which his fame chiefly rests, the *Dictionary*, was undertaken in a part-time capacity alongside other full-time editorial responsibilities. This chapter pursues the themes and connections through the four periods: youth and professional training, 1820–50 (to age 30); the secretarial phase at the Society of Arts and Crystal Palace, 1850–52, and 1852–73 respectively, to age 53; the editorial phase at Macmillan, from 1874–83, to age 62 (which overlaps with part-time advisory work for Macmillan and editorship of *Macmillan's Magazine* from 1868); finally, directorship of the RCM, 1882–94, and retirement, up to his death in the first year of the new century, 1894–1900.

Youth, education and a career in engineering, 1820–50

Considering that he was destined to play such a large role in the world of letters, Grove's choice of a career in engineering might at first seem unusual to the modern reader, not least by comparison with his contemporaries. His closest school – and lifelong – friend, George Granville Bradley, later Dean of Westminster, was educated at Oxford, as was a close fellow-spirit of later years, the critic, poet and educationalist Matthew Arnold, and such close friends as the Christian Socialist F.D. Maurice and Bradley's predecessor Dean A.P. Stanley. One can often sense that Grove would have preferred a university education, and especially one at Oxford. He speaks of himself and his younger brother Edmund as being sent from school 'too soon into the world' (at 15); and, though gratified with his honorary doctorate from Durham University in 1875,

commented 'I wish it had been from Oxford'. He speaks of not being at Oxford during the 'great years of 1840–45... alas' (a reference to the high period of the Oxford Movement) when he might still have been a student from the age of 20.²

There are several indications why Grove did not follow this path. He is not recorded as being first-class academically at school: his younger brother Edmund did better. Equally, however, in light of his subsequent professional successes, it seems unlikely that he was ever really intellectually second-class (though a certain intellectual self-disparagement lingered on); rather, he seems a late developer, or someone preoccupied with his own thoughts and passions. One thing is certain: he was greatly influenced by the character of the teaching he received at school, which presented a career in technology as a very viable alternative to a higher education at the ancient universities since the (as yet) unreformed curriculum did not offer science. And the larger world itself now offered much more to someone with a practical and scientific bent (he was later described as a thoroughly 'modern' man) and may have made entry into the exciting and potentially lucrative world of science applied through engineering and industry more attractive to his parents and headmaster. Self-made men were an emerging breed.³

Grove's education took on a new significance in 1834 when, aged 14, he became a pupil at Clapham Grammar School under Charles Pritchard as headmaster. He had previously attended two other schools: as a weekly boarder from age 8 in 1828 at Elwell's School on Clapham Common, first run by one Mr Greaves; and then from 1832 as a pupil at Stockwell school, where Pritchard had previously taught; Pritchard had moved with the support of many parents to establish the new, progressive proprietorial school at Clapham. As the first head of Clapham Grammar School from 1834–62, he provided an exceptional education for his pupils. It offered a classical foundation but using new methods, plus science, which was not yet taught at public schools, which still focused on the classics. Grove was greatly impressed when he became one of 65 boys in the first intake of the new school. 'I had been at two other schools which were considered good in their class but with Pritchard the atmosphere was very different'. Grove especially enjoyed and excelled in the copying of maps of Palestine, and in the describing of imaginary travels, as well as the study of elementary science. Pritchard claimed that 'the main intention of early education should be the development of the habit of thinking, and the exhibition of the right mode of setting about it'; and in addition he insisted on the necessity of providing 'resources for the leisure hours of maturer life'. . . In translating from Latin and Greek, as Grove remembered, he urged his pupils to 'render the passages as well as construe them, and thus we felt that that they were about real transactions and people and reflected the same emotions as our own literature'. Grove wrote of Pritchard

the master was younger and more sympathetic and full of wider knowledge than I had before dreamed of; also he had a great power of explanation and illustration and took constant interest in his boys. One or two things I had not met with before. They made a great impression on me. First the mathematics and the natural philosophy. These were taught in a practical and interesting way, and as connected with common life – not with the abstract world – which made them, always fresh. Some of his precepts and examples recur to me almost daily.⁴

But Grove's stay at the school was to be short. By the end of 1835, aged 15½, 'already well grounded in the rudiments of science, natural history, and geography, with a fair knowledge of Latin and something more than a smattering of Greek', Grove was removed from Clapham and articled in January 1836 to Alexander Gordon, a civil engineer whose premises were at 22 Fluyder St, off Whitehall. Young observes that the fact that Grove was dispatched into technology shows the distinction between education at a proprietary school of progressive character and a public school. It seems that Pritchard's family connections with engineering may have been decisive and thus the school gave him an advantage. Grove walked the three miles to work. Gordon had worked for Thomas Telford, and was an expert on optical apparatus and transport, responsible in 1838 for the establishment of the Polytechnic Institution in London. So Grove found himself 'where the action was' in the modern world; in the building and design of railways, bridges and ships. Over the next three years many interesting perspectives opened to him, including a visit to Belgium with Gordon as the latter was negotiating a railway contract. Grove became a graduate of the Institute of Civil Engineers on 26 February 1839. Though his graduation certificate gives no details of his technical attainments, other than that he has satisfactorily completed a course of study, Gordon's specialities indicate the technologies with which he would have been involved.⁵

Gordon represented the Glasgow-born engineer Robert Napier. Grove was seconded to him for two years at his Glasgow factory on the Broomielaw. Napier was the best engineer on the Clyde and one of the best in the world, building steamships to sail to the New World. It was a new world also for Grove, who later stressed how he got his hands dirty and had to rinse them before he read his papers and books in the evening. He worked in the pattern and fitting shops 'like a common mechanic', from which experience he later advised young people to be prepared to start at the bottom of any profession. On completion of his articles, his contract with Gordon took him further afield. Gordon was an authority on lighthouse design and construction, a vital technology in the fast-developing world of sea transport. Grove was sent to Jamaica in 1841 for the construction of the Morant Point lighthouse, a cast-iron structure which, built in parts in London, had to be erected on site with Grove as clerk of works and two labouring engineers who had attended

the construction in London. As well as ensuring that the work was done on time and efficiently, Grove's main task was overseeing the itinerant workers. Almost immediately after returning to England towards the end of 1843, he was sent on a similar assignment, to oversee the building of the lighthouse at Gibbs Hill, Hamilton, Bermuda. Gordon had been called upon to advise on a project that had become controversial through bad planning and overspending. This was to last for almost three years until 1846. Grove had to deal not only with a labour force that had been conscripted mainly from able-bodied convicts on the island, but also from interference from the military, who had sent a lieutenant to act with Grove – Gordon having written a report indicating that the work was badly behind schedule, and should have taken only 12 months.⁶

On his return, Grove was drawn into the world of railways through his brother, now working for C.H. Wild, principal assistant to Robert Stephenson, 'especially entrusted with the laying out of stations' on the London and North Western Railway project. Grove now joined Stephenson's staff, working on a major new General Station at Chester.

I was resident Engineer of the great station, and worked (as I have always done) like a tiger. That was in the year 1847-8. What an age ago, it's almost like looking back to the world before the flood. It was a warming time of my life – I was very good and religious. I had already done much in Jamaica and Bermuda – but that was nothing to what was to come after.

In the short term, the Chester work led directly to the construction of the Britannia Bridge over the Menai Straits at Bangor, another Stephenson project, initially completed in June 1849. Grove's position was that of assistant site engineer. As he later pointed out, he had a modest position in a major project. But he was obviously successful, because in September 1848, during the course of the project, Wild paid for his expenses for a trip to France with his brother Edmund.⁷

There was no music in any of these engineering jobs. But music had been an accompaniment to Grove's life since childhood (see Chapter 5). He recalled the musical side of his life in his 1880 address:

I was articled to an engineer in London, even then I was fond of music and used to haunt every place where I could hear it or look at it and one of those places was Novello's music shop in Dean St, Soho, where, in a back room, there was a fine large case full of scores...The choir of [Westminster] Abbey was not in those days what it is now, but many an entrancing hour have I spent there in the winter months at afternoon service, with the dim candles below and the impenetrable gloom above, when I thought my heart must have come out of me with emotion and

longing. I used to copy music in the British Museum with my friend William Pickering Stevens, and we sometimes finished the afternoon together at the Abbey.

Even when abroad, he took music and books with him, for use especially when he had time on his hands. In Chester, he became well known to the cathedral organist (as in Bangor) and introduced some little-known vocal music, including motets by Palestrina, to a singing class started by the organist.⁸

The Secretary 1850–73

Grove was not cut out to be an engineer for life. Though he had achieved much and he retained a wide interest in engineering projects, he had too many other interests to want to pursue engineering as a career. What would get him to where he wanted to go – a field more conducive to his skills and enthusiasms? He had clearly impressed his seniors on the Britannia Bridge project: he had played his part and written good reports. His modesty comes as he describes how it all happened.

Looking back over the scattered course of my life, London, Scotland, West Indies, North Wales, London, again, the Society of Arts, the Crystal Palace, the Palestine Exploration Fund, it is curious now to see how many of the points in it have been determined by my friends. My whole London life and all that came out of it is due to three of them, now gone – Mr Robert Stephenson, Mr Brunel, Sir Charles Barry. I was then in 1848 in a subordinate engineering post, in Mr Edwin Clark's staff, on the Britannia Bridge, with no confidence in myself, and little chance of getting on. They used now and then to come down to watch the operations of the bridge, and these distinguished men used to notice me, and were as good as gold to me. They counselled me to go to London, and (there is no treason in saying so now) they forced me into the secretaryship of the Society of Arts, just then vacated by Mr Scott Russell.⁹

The Society of Arts and Crystal Palace positions were based on recognition of Grove's administrative skills, range of sympathies, grasp of issues, and capacity to deal with people. The new position simply increased the demands made on him in executing the directors' instructions, reporting, advising and interacting with people in a much more complex and many-sided environment. Grove was appointed probationary Secretary to the Society of Arts in February 1850 and succeeded John Scott Russell (who had been Secretary since 1846) as full Secretary in March. The position opened up new worlds of ideas and contacts. The energetic Henry Cole, now chairman of the

Society, had much work for the Secretary, and Grove became involved in leading public issues, such as how to set up enquiries into topics like the manufacture and supply of coal gas, the supply of water to London, the manufacture of sugar in the British colonies and the adulteration of food. Following Cole's commitment to free education, in 1852 the Society proposed to review the working of the Museums and Free Libraries Act as part of a serious attempt to lay the foundations for a broadly based adult and polytechnical educational provision, building on the Mechanics' Institutes and other such institutions; the organizing of lectures was essential to all these fields.¹⁰

Not least, Grove found himself involved in planning what was to be the biggest public event in history up to that time, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, which, following on earlier exhibitions, was planned to showcase modern design, with Britain at its centre and as its sponsor. It was chaired by Prince Albert with Henry Cole as Secretary, who was the driving force. In the Exhibition Grove records that his main role was to deal with ticket sales, which were made from the Society of Arts' house in the Adelphi, where Grove lived, and this is confirmed in the records. Over the period 20 February to 9 May, there is a series of letters concerning methods of entry, sale of tickets, and especially the arrangements regarding season tickets. But there were also issues concerning the problems of the exhibitors, including, for example, a long correspondence concerning the appointment of an arbitrator and legal costs relating to a contract.¹¹

The Great Exhibition and the extraordinary building in which it was housed (Plate 7) did not need to have professional consequence for Grove. There had been great opposition to the location of the building, as well as to its modernistic character, and it was to be dismantled by law after the six months of the exhibition May–September 1851. Grove should have returned to his Society of Arts business. But the designer, Joseph Paxton, had created the Crystal Palace Company – grasping the popular name for the building – and raised money to rebuild on an impressive hill site at Penge Place, Sydenham, South London: the prefabricated structure had merely to be extended. Thus a job suddenly became available. Grove recalls:

the Society of Arts originated the Great Exhibition of 1851 and from that naturally sprang the Crystal Palace. There again, two friends whom I made at the Society, Mr [Francis] Fuller [land agent] Mr Scott Russell, and I am glad to mention them, stepped in and gave me the secretaryship of the Crystal Palace in 1852.

In contrast to the Hyde Park Palace, the Crystal Palace at Sydenham was not a trade or industrial fair, but a permanent exhibition for leisured culture (Plate 8). The building was significantly bigger and less elegant than the Hyde Park structure; one-third of a mile long, of several storeys, with a huge

nave the full length of the building flanked with courts, each illustrating a different period of history from ancient to modern, taken over and extended from the Hyde Park concept and with the addition of a Shakespeare house, a reading room, a chess room, and later a school of art and science, as well as constant visiting exhibits. Additionally, the new Palace had extensive grounds and wonderful gardens and fountains modelled on those of Versailles. The first heads of departments included such experts in their fields as the Middle Eastern scholars James Fergusson and Austin Layard, the illustrator George Scharf, and the architect Francis Penrose.¹²

The Crystal Palace became a focus for the major public issues of the day, a natural location for large meetings and public events. Grove in turn became even more of a focal figure there than in the less exposed position of a Society secretary, though dealing with many of the same issues. Two areas had most impact on him in light of his interests: social issues, especially the wider provision of schooling; and a host of religious issues bearing largely on the impact of science and of religious reforming movements on the Church of England. The promotion of educational issues became particularly associated with the group known as the Christian Socialists, of which the leading figures were Frederick Denison Maurice and Charles Kingsley. Grove's interest had first been aroused by a pamphlet sent to him whilst still in Jamaica. On settling in London he became closely associated with them for a while, first with Septimus Hansard, a curate in Marylebone (later rector of Bethnal Green), then with J.M. Ludlow, F.J. Furnivall and Thomas Hughes (also a Director of the Crystal Palace). Kingsley, vicar of a parish in Hampshire, was not as closely associated with the London circle. Grove was especially attracted to Maurice's wide outlook, personal culture and warmth, and was to name his first son after him. Maurice (1805–72) was a liberal-minded churchman who had been appointed Professor of English Literature at King's College, London, in 1840, and who focused his social commitment on the education of the working class. In 1853 he founded the first women's college in London, Queen's College, Harley St. But in 1853 he was dismissed from King's College for his socialist convictions. He then founded the Working Men's College in Red Lion Square in 1854 and became its principal; later he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge. Maurice's extensive writings influenced events, such as the removal of sanctions against the admission of dissenters to Oxford and Cambridge in 1854/1856. Grove had opposed Maurice's dismissal from King's; and Maurice supported Grove when the vexed issue of Sabbath Observance impinged directly upon Grove as Secretary of the Crystal Palace, since he supported the financial necessity of Sunday opening (the prohibition against which crucially affected the Palace's economics). Grove had been interested in the Mechanics' Institutes: Thomas Carlyle noted his support in replying to him in 1852 that 'surely if you can do anything to resuscitate the decayed vigour of the

Mechanics' Institutes it will be well done'. But Grove did not retain his interest. Ludlow later recalled that, though he gave a lecture on 'mechanical principles in common things', which he thought very good, 'for professional reasons he never became fully involved'. Grove seems never to have been politically involved: he could never get beyond a certain point in radical thought and reform, and as he got older, he retreated from the principles of liberalism. In general he opposed Gladstone, Irish Home Rule, and the Reform Bill of 1867. He was wary of extending the franchise and seems to have opposed female suffrage, all of which were sensed as a threat to the established order he increasingly treasured, though informally his views were more flexible.¹³

Grove's abiding interest in the Bible and the religion of the Church of England naturally came to the fore in this environment: the huge impact of social, economic and philosophical issues on the traditions and reform of the state church; the growth of nonconformity; and later the claims of Darwin and their implications. As a young man Grove had been attracted to the Oxford Movement and the ritualism of the High Church movement. But his new life in London subjected him to a much wider range of influences. On settling in Sydenham and as a committed member of the Church of England, he became an intimate member of the church community, his home the focus for socializing. The young curate of the parish church, St Bartholomew's, Sydenham, recalls the hospitality of Grove's house:

there were distinguished people of all kinds, travellers connected with the Palestine Exploration, a musician or two, and friends who had come to dine after the afternoon's concert at the Crystal Palace. Everyone seemed to be cheerful and happy. There was no pretence about anything; no starch or stiffness. After dinner we all went out into the garden. We talked and smoked and had tea. There were endless stories and endless jokes, Sir George taking the lead, but just as good a listener as he was a talker, till at length came eleven o'clock – what might be described as 'closing time' on Saturday evenings at Lower Sydenham – when the Londoners had to leave to catch the 11–22 train to Victoria.

This was a tradition that would grow throughout his life, often including musical performance. He was constantly attracted to debate, but had to decide on the level of his commitment for time and pressure of interests. In 1869 he became a founder member of the Metaphysical Society for the discussion of matters of belief in a scientific age, with an array of distinguished members. He had known Thomas Huxley from early on, and Charles Darwin was also a member. But Grove withdrew quickly. His ultimate view was that the worlds of science and religion were incompatible, though he looked forward to progressive thought in the Church of England and possessed it himself to a degree surprising in relation to other attitudes: 'I am always looking for a time

when the modern scientific spirit shall invade it. It must come sooner or later. That, and the marriage of priests seem to me two things that must happen.' And in recommending a friend to get the *Bampton Lectures on Science and Religion* he comments that

they are worth reading even if you don't agree with them. I am afraid [the lecturer] has not solved the difficulty, but I find [his views] very interesting and quite fair. The drawback is, no advocate of 'religion' – no 'believer' – knows science accurately enough to argue adequately, just as no scientific man is religious enough (by conviction, I mean) to appreciate the religious difficulty'.¹⁴

If Grove was not destined to follow science professionally, some of the scientific method became crucial to the other greatest preoccupation of his early years aside from music, the study of biblical lands and people. It was this that turned Grove from an educated lover of the scriptures into what Dean Stanley would assess by 1865 as 'the best Old Testament scholar he knew.' These interests found a focus at the Crystal Palace, where James Fergusson, who was the initiator of the so-called Assyrian Court of the Palace, had been General Manager since 1856. The future lexicographer of music needed only an opportunity to focus his biblical interests. It came through a chance word of Fergusson's that he should begin making lists of biblical places and persons. This dictionary-like work suddenly found an outlet through Grove's connection with Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, then Dean of Canterbury: George Bradley had introduced Grove to Stanley in 1853 or 1854. Stanley invited Grove to produce an appendix to his recent book *Sinai and Palestine*, an important travelogue of the Holy Land. Grove revised his Hebrew (learnt at school) and his German (self-taught) and did the work (for which Stanley insisted that he accept remuneration). Stanley indicates that he also did much proof checking, commenting that 'I ought never to write a book without a Grove or an Albert Way to correct references and proofs'. Stanley's personality and character, shared interests in the Holy Land and values had a powerful effect on Grove. He revered his personality, culture and kindness and he became a mentor similarly close as Maurice, especially when Stanley became Dean of Westminster in 1864. If Maurice was Grove's mentor in social matters then Stanley performed the same role in matters religious.¹⁵

Grove's connection with Stanley was to bring about an even more significant link in terms of his scholarly development. Stanley was in contact with Dr William Smith, who was seeking help in connection with his *Dictionary of the Bible*, for which Stanley recommended Grove. Smith (1813–93) was the doyen of lexicographers, having already produced the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* of 1842 and subsequent dictionaries of Greek and Roman biography, a *Dictionary of Christian*

Antiquaries, and a *Classical Atlas* (see Chapter 4); his *Dictionary of the Bible* would be followed by many other works. The *Dictionary of the Bible* was Smith's greatest work.

Grove's contribution was far bigger than indicated. A later critic observed that, despite later advances in biblical scholarship, Smith's book was almost a beginning of such work in England that deserves to be called scientific and comments that

of this work Sir George Grove was the very soul. He began it by compiling a concordance of proper names in Bible and Apocrypha, he wrote most of the articles on obscure names in the first volume, corrected the proofs and revised the whole book. This would have been labour enough for most men. But besides all this, he wrote many articles of first-rate importance. Amid these I mention a long article of the geography of Palestine, till lately the best account which we had and still worth careful study, with two brilliant biographies of Elijah and Elisha.¹⁶

It took him seven years, from 1857 to 1863. Grove soon became deeply immersed in the work and worked late at it. In November 1858 and April 1859 he had to decline to write some articles for lack of time. 'I cannot go on any longer being torn to pieces as I am, even for the *Bible Dictionary*'. The work gave a huge opportunity for all Grove's interests to find a focus. The completion of the three-volume work by the end of 1863 drew warm praise from Smith for his work in his Preface, as well as praise in the press:

there is however one writer to whom he owes a more special acknowledgement. Mr George Grove of Sydenham, besides contributing articles to which his initial is attached [Grove's contributions are signed 'G', as are his concert programme notes] has rendered the editor important assistance in writing the majority of the articles on the more obscure names in the first volume, in the correction of proofs and in the revision of the whole book.

Typically Grove regarded his work as humble and mechanical. But it gave him a huge reputation and the appetite for more work, both fulfilled – as with his involvement with the Palestine Exploration Fund – and not fulfilled, as with his 'Speakers Commentary' to the *Dictionary of the Bible*, planned in 1863.¹⁷

There did not need to be a vital change in Grove's musical life when he went to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. There had not been any real musical life at Hyde Park and the plans for Sydenham were modest: a resident brass band, though quite big at 58 members, to perform inside and out – typical regimental band fare as had been performed at Hyde Park after the Great Exhibition ended. But Sydenham changed everything. It enabled Grove's

developing interests to burst into bloom: it was the crucial link to the increasingly powerful role music was to play in the rest of his life. What changed everything was the arrival of August Manns and Grove's reaction to him: namely, Grove's spotting of ability and handling of a situation. The director of music at the Crystal Palace at its opening in 1854 was Heinrich Schallehn. He had heard Manns in Germany and appointed him assistant conductor, librarian and E flat clarinettist for the opening at Sydenham in June 1854. Schallehn then abused Manns by passing Manns's band arrangements off as his own; Manns complained and Schallehn sacked him. Manns went to the press. Grove was sympathetic because he admired Manns. He kept in communication and Schallehn was duly relieved of his responsibilities within the year, Manns being appointed as director. Manns then transformed his wind band into an orchestra and developed the Saturday Concerts with bold new repertoire and high standards. The Crystal Palace became the focus of developing orchestral music in Britain and was of international standard within the decade. The partnership with Manns, allied to Grove's own influence with the Directors of the Palace, gave him the opportunity to participate actively in developing his enthusiasms for modern music, building on his already considerable experience and study. An immediate focus was provided by the need for programme notes, a central preoccupation pursued later in this book (see Chapter 6).

The editor 1874–83

Apart from the music and its performance, Grove was naturally to tire of the administrative responsibilities of the Crystal Palace position over the years, and he applied for many other positions. 'I hope you will succeed in getting some employment which leaves you a little more leisure than you can get at the Crystal Palace' was the comment of Matthew Arnold in 1867 when Grove applied (unsuccessfully) for the post of librarian to the House of Commons, and others had looked out for him as well. He wanted something closer to his developing interests in the arts. Finally by the end of 1873 he was in a position to give his resignation to the Palace and assumed full responsibility for all Macmillan's literary editing, as well as editing *Macmillan's Magazine*. The relationship with Macmillan had come about by degrees. Grove had been the unofficial assistant to the first editor David Masson from 1859 when the magazine began. Grove had been connected with Alexander Macmillan through his friendships with the Christian Socialists including Maurice and Kingsley who were also close to Macmillan from 1868; Grove took over on a part-time salary, and in January 1874 with a full-time salary acknowledging his varied responsibilities for the firm (see Chapter 7, p.147). The agreement was for seven years. With the new contract, Macmillan assured him of £3,000 as editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*: £2,600 for 'managing the literary side of their business' and a guarantee of

£400 per annum in the event of profits from the sale of books or series of which he was editor or compiler not amounting to that sum in any one year'. The agreement was for seven years. But it was to last for nine.

As an editor, Grove had already gained much experience with John Murray on Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*. The Macmillan connection offered him a huge opportunity to shift his orientation from administration into letters, and his great knowledge and sensitivity were used fruitfully. His great attraction from the publisher's point of view was his reliability: he worked endlessly and got copy in. In his first year he was able to receive contributions from F.D. Maurice, J. Scott Russell, J.R. Seeley (Professor of Modern History at Cambridge), Thomas Huxley (on the education of the working man), Matthew Arnold, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and George Eliot. It was an exciting time: world events included the political consequences of the Franco-Prussian War, which prompted suggestions of a United States of Europe, for example. But the work also challenged him. He needed tact when tough reviews were offered, as for example of the work of the prestigious historian James Anthony Froude; or in reaction to a challenging poem of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.¹⁸

The nature of his work for *Macmillan's Magazine* is discussed in Chapter 7. Here however, one can note the larger perspective in terms of Grove's personal growth. From the beginning, the work with Macmillan had given him the opportunity to go deeper into cultural issues stimulated by figures such as Maurice and Stanley, and the increasing stress in Grove's life on what emerges as his primary skill and drive: education and the qualities and values that ideally inhere within it, values that would characterize his period as Director of the Royal College of Music. Lying behind the practicalities of educational provision and reform, so often tied up with political ideology and expediency, lay a broader, more detached image of a spiritual quality articulated by many writers in different fields; for example, the three great figures who addressed the spiritual issues left by the Oxford Movement: Matthew Arnold in criticism, John Henry Newman in religion, and John Ruskin in art.

Grove was particularly drawn to the writings of Newman and Arnold, though they represented emphases at different parts of his life. Both promoted the ideal of the spiritually refined individual, based on an education resulting from a response to what they took to be the vulgarity and philistinism emerging from industrialization, the creation of rapid new wealth, a grasping new middle class and the philosophy of utility attached to it. They espoused a belief in knowledge as a whole: the parts of science as one unity, and acknowledgment of the distinction between education and instruction. At the personal level, they valued the qualities of gentleness, dispassionate evaluation and courteous bearing, in an era when social change had undermined the traditional assumptions about behaviour and personal character. Newman famously commented of the philosophy of utility that it 'has at least done its work... - it aimed low, but it has fulfilled

its aim.' Grove first admired Newman's writings, especially the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, which Newman wrote in response to an exchange prompted by Kingsley's review of Froude's *History of England*, vols 7 and 8, and which Grove continued to read; and he retained a love for certain of his poems, most notably 'Lead Kindly Light'. But Grove grew increasingly distant from Newman's theological position, first as high church Anglican then as Catholic, and also became critical of his influence: 'to him, and to the stronger men who took the reins out of his hands, we owe the flood of rituals and material worship and magic that now fills our church, and I for one don't feel very grateful. . . . Our church is fast becoming . . . a mere magic mill for the production of Sacraments which are to act as charms.'¹⁹

Grove was much closer to Matthew Arnold, whom he knew well. He was the soulmate of Grove's later years (see Chapter 3). Arnold's larger concept of culture as expressed in his essays, and also his sympathy with music as embodying its qualities, found an immediate resonance with Grove. Some of Arnold's statements defining culture are pure Grove: 'Culture . . . shows its single minded love of perfection, its desire simply to see reason and the will of God prevail [and displays] the flexibility which sweetness and light give, and which is one of the rewards of culture pursued in good faith'; and likewise his definition of criticism: 'to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespective of practical politics, and everything of the kind'. Grove was also attracted by Arnold's churchmanship. Both esteemed a middle, liberal position in the Church of England and believed in the imagery and character of this church as embodying these values best. Arnold was reserved about the dissenting church, basically since he saw its political affinity with the new wealth and commerce and its capacity to pose an implicit challenge to the traditional English church order. '[Though] culture accepts the necessity of wealth-making . . . culture defines itself in opposition to false religious values.' Though he admired the Independents in some senses, he still criticized them in principle. 'Puritanism was perhaps necessary to develop the moral fibre of the English race, Nonconformity to break the yoke of ecclesiastical domination over men's minds and to prepare the way for freedom of thought in the distant future.' He agreed that the Oxford Movement had failed against middle-class liberalism, strongly influenced by Nonconformists, but argued that its ideal was better, that Puritanism was narrow. Grove was of similar mind, at least to judge by his reserved comments on his brother-in-law J.C. Harrison, a Congregationalist minister, and his pointed reserve towards the scholarship of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the leading Nonconformist evangelical preacher of the day (and a fellow resident of the Crystal Palace district).²⁰

Grove's London life had settled comfortably with the full-time position at Macmillan. Sydenham was his domestic and weekend social base; but the metropolis was his cultural scene, and membership of The Athenaeum had given him the flexibility to pursue it by providing a base when he

needed it: the high period of cultural life in Sydenham had finished by the mid-1870s (see Chapter 2). Grove's many interests continued and blossomed as he rose in the social and professional world. One project reflective of this time, though never implemented, was for a Dictionary of Names, effectively a precursor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (founded 1882), which Grove mentioned to John Murray in May 1860. One notable event which took place in 1878 was his visit to the USA with Dean Stanley, and Stanley's young doctor, Gerald Harper, a visit preceded by a visit to the Queen with Stanley. Grove, with Harper, was the lesser attraction and Graves notes how Grove put himself totally at the service of his esteemed senior throughout. They left Liverpool on 5 September and arrived at Boston on 16 September, an 11-day journey. They travelled extensively, from Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, where they met the President, to Newport, Rhode Island, to New Haven, where they met the president of Yale University; to New York, Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Virginia, New York again, Albany, Niagara, Montreal; then back to New York via the Adirondacks, Lake George, the Berkshires, Concord, and Stockbridge. Stanley and Grove were particularly interested in American history and literature. Leading divines and academics played host to them throughout. At Boston they stayed with Phillips Brooks, rector of Trinity Church; at Philadelphia they were guests of G.W. Childs, and attended a black Methodist service, at Baltimore they met the president of Johns Hopkins University, Daniel Gilman, then in the process of raising money for a medical school (now one of the world's leading research and teaching hospitals). Finally in New York, the many events which ended the visit included sermons by Stanley at Trinity Church, Wall St, St Paul's Methodist Church, and Grace Church, Broadway and 10th St.²¹

Throughout this period Grove had continued to write his programme notes for the Crystal Palace and other concerts, and to attend its concerts regularly. The greatest musical counterpoint to his period at Macmillan was the creation of the *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. But for all its focal importance in his creative life, it fell professionally under the umbrella of general editing for the firm. It represented the last of his dictionary activities, of the working out through his life of this particular approach and skill: at last, his own dictionary expressing his own deepest interest: the systematic gathering of a huge amount of information for eager consumers and responding to a clearly emerging need. He was uniquely placed to pull it off: a very wide knowledge, finely honed editorial skills, an awareness of and involvement with many of the issues of the time, together with a unique range of contacts. From the Macmillan period onwards he had very high musical status. One example of this is the extent to which he was invited to write prefaces for important new publications on musical subjects, usually in translation from German, to give them the stamp of authority for a still narrow world of consumers. In the case of Hiller's *Mendelssohn* he had the

work serialized in *Macmillan's Magazine* (January–May, 1874). He wrote a preface to the English translation, and concluded it with a personal comment (written 25 June 1874):

As I write news arrives of the death of Paul Mendelssohn, Felix's younger brother, and the last remaining member of the family circle to which he was so fondly attached. It is a double reminder – first that but for over-work and over-excitement Felix Mendelssohn might himself have still been with us, or but recently departed; and secondly that those who knew him personally, and to whom he was not only a musician but a living, loving friend, rich beyond measure in the gifts and powers of life, are fast passing away with their recollections and traditions out of the reach of the biographer.²²

Director and Retirement 1882–1900

With his appointment to the RCM in December 1882 all the themes of Grove's life came together. He was able to take a major public position as an administrator of the newest and most forward-looking and hoped-for educational institution for music in the UK. And the ultimate public recognition, through his knighthood, came now in connection with his contributions to music on the day the college opened, 7 May 1883. He would receive a CB from the Queen on retirement for his contributions in the post. But it was more than his musical expertise that got him the job. The basic skills, the themes were still at work. As emerges in Chapter 9, Grove had become an intimate part of the public representation of the concept of a new college, though by no means universally welcomed and supported, and its spearhead at fund-raising. All the skills he used in the parallel situation for the establishment of the Palestine Exploration Fund were present here too. He was invited to become a member of the council of the executive committee of the proposed college in July 1881 and in March 1882 he took on fund-raising at the request of the Prince of Wales for six months. Again, his reputation for getting the job done went before him. It was arduous work touring to raise money by giving speeches all over the country: 'hard work for me and still harder work for my listeners', yet a latter example of the early value of 'getting your hands dirty.' On 20 October 1882 the announcement was made that Grove was Director-designate.

But if in retrospect Grove's appointment to the RCM can be seen as representing a natural culmination of his work as secretary, administrator and musical writer, it did not seem quite so obvious then to the music profession which took so much interest in the new project. There were those who thought it entirely inappropriate that the Director should not be a musician: the heads of the other two music conservatoires were leading

composers and performers, both appointed to their posts in 1876, George Macfarren at the Royal Academy, and Arthur Sullivan at the National Training School, which the new college was to succeed. Expertise in musical scholarship was still not valued highly. Indeed, even at this late stage Grove was still regarded with reserve by many, for reasons that emerge from Graves's evaluation:

in a musical performance, what chiefly impressed him was earnestness and simplicity. For the rest he was little concerned with the niceties of technique, and was infinitely more interested in the music than in the 'reading'. No doubt [his technical shortcomings] account for the disinclination of a certain number of highly-equipped professional musicians to regard Grove in the light of a serious authority on their art.²³

Grove was 63 on appointment, an age at which many with his record of achievement might have been ready to retire. Though income was certainly one reason (Grove never had a high income or could afford a lavish lifestyle) the realization of his values was far deeper than raising money or running an efficient organization, even though the job was to be largely administrative and to have offered the biggest challenge of his life; he retained his position until retiring exhausted ten years later at the age of 74. He was very well placed to handle the initial responsibilities of appointing staff. One notes especially the commonality between the RCM staff and the staff of the Crystal Palace School of Arts, Science and Literature: of the seven members of the first Board of Professors, five had taught at the Crystal Palace. But he had to face problems with personalities and all his tact and patience was required. His letters show how much time he gave to college business. Above all he had to embrace the fact that he was a public figure in music education, and had to justify music nationally in what was often a philistine environment. Grove had raised much money for the college, but often felt national response to be niggardly. Music's needs were not always understood; and he found himself in dispute with the University of London concerning the national evaluation of teaching, which threatened the college's autonomy: in fact, he had had to face a similar challenge to the college's autonomy before his first academic year in the summer of 1883 when a co-ordinated protest was made by the universities at the college's right to award its own degrees by its royal charter. It was all very different from cultivating his musical passions in the quiet of his study at Sydenham, or the pleasure of concert attendance at the Crystal Palace.²⁴

But behind it all, Grove did realize his educational ideals, in framing young lives in the environment of the experience of great music. His belief in the moral value of great music lay behind his approach to education and his relationship with the students; they were likely to have any advice laced with

quotations from Beethoven or lines of poetry, and recommended reading and listening; above all, the sense of the privilege of experiencing great things. Through this period, the *Dictionary* also reached its final stage, though proceeding somewhat more slowly than in earlier years, to a four-volume completion in 1889. By now, Grove was far from interested in everything he had researched. He had much less interest in what would soon be termed 'Early Music', and was resistant to the pioneering work of the younger generation such as Arnold Dolmetsch, or Stanford's performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* in 1896 with students from the college. Whether he was against British music is less easy to ascertain: he gave every support to college composers, whether his colleagues or students, and received some dedications, for example of Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* set to the Longfellow text. But the German concert repertoire was the core of his interest and he eagerly attended new works, writing, for example, an important programme note for the first UK performance of Brahms' Fourth Symphony, conducted by Richter, in May 1886.

Finally, his cherished Beethoven research carried him into retirement and its culmination in *Beethoven and His Nine Symphonies* appeared shortly after in 1896. He began to slowly decline in health from 1898 and the winter of 1899–1900 saw him gradually slipping away. He was unaware of his surroundings for several months before he died on 28 May, in the first year of the new century which was to see the realization of so much that he had worked to achieve in the spread of musical knowledge and public familiarity with great works. He died appreciated: his efforts had been worthwhile. The remarks of his RCM colleague, the composer and conductor Charles Villiers (C.V.) Stanford made a fitting epitaph:

Few Englishmen have been more universal in their sympathies, and more active in their developments than he. Engineer by profession..., explorer by circumstances..., musician by nature, he did more for Art while secretary of the Crystal Palace than any man of his time... His engineering developed into the mastery of men; his exploration into the discovery of the forgotten treasures of Schubert; his musicianship into the foundation and control of a great music school... There are few great advances in art for which we have not to thank him. He fought for everything worth fighting for, Beethoven and Schubert in especial. It was at his request that Parry wrote 'Blest Pair of Sirens...' He made many other suggestions to Parry; for he was always working for others, rather than for himself. In his later years he laid a sure foundation for English music in his directorship of the Royal College, and qualified for the post by an inaugural speech (unfortunately heard only by a few), which was worthy of Arnold at his best. A unique man, whom his friends will ever recall as a living force, and whom future generations will do well to emulate.²⁵

Notes

- 1 A comprehensive survey of Victorian characteristics is included in Walter F. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870* (New Haven, 1957; 2nd edn, 1985); the scope of British musical life in the period is the subject of *Music and British Culture 1785–1914. Essays in Honour of Cyril Ehrlich*, ed. Christina Bashford and Leanne Langley (Oxford, 2000).
- 2 George Granville Bradley 1821–1903; for Matthew Arnold, F.D. Maurice and A.P. Stanley, see Percy M. Young, *George Grove 1820–1900. A Biography* (London, 1980), p.26. F.G. Edwards, 'Sir George Grove C.B.', *Musical Times*, October 1897, 38, 654, pp.657–64; C.L.Graves, *The Life & Letters of Sir George Grove* (London, 1903), pp.213, 132.
- 3 Young, *George Grove*, p.23; See further, A. Pritchard, *The Life and Work of Charles Pritchard* (London, 1897), pp.47–8.
- 4 Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.8–12; Young, *George Grove*, p.21; Pritchard, who had had a brilliant career at Cambridge, was destined to become Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford from 1870–93. Young suggests that Grove 'lived out a sketch plan presented to him as a schoolboy'.
- 5 Young, *George Grove*, pp.13–19; works by Gordon [1802–68] include: *Historical and Practical Treatise upon Locomotion...* (London, 1832); *Treatise on Locomotion by Means of Steam Carriage* (London, 1832); *Observations on Railway Monopolies* (London, 1841); *Lighthouses of the British Colonies and Possessions Abroad* (London, 1848).
- 6 Young, *George Grove*, p.37; Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.19–26; Robert Napier wrote *Machinery of the British and North American Royal Steamship 'Arabia'... constructed by Messrs. Robert Napier and Son* (London, 1855).
- 7 Graves, *Life & Letters*, p.26; Letter of Grove to Edith Oldham, 29 July 1893, quoted in Young, *George Grove*, p.44. Grove does not appear in the commemorative painting featuring the ten leading figures including Stephenson, Brunel and Wild. Nonetheless he was entrusted with writing the report of the successful completion of the bridge for the *Spectator* (see Chapter 3).
- 8 'Sir George Grove's Autobiography', *Musical Herald*, 628 (1 July 1900), p.195; Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.26–7; Young, *George Grove*, pp.44–7.
- 9 'Sir George Grove's Autobiography', pp.195–6; Grove's contract with the Society of Arts allowed him to retain consultancies relating to railways for several years after he was appointed.
- 10 See the discussion in Young, *George Grove*, p.56.
- 11 The Society of Arts had held exhibitions of art manufacture in 1847–49. Concerning admission, see 'Commissioners Correspondence of the Great Exhibition, London (c.1849–1856)': letters to and from Grove: 20 February, 1851; 4 March 1851, 29 March 1851; 28 March, 1851; 14 April, 1851; 16 April 1851; 9 May 1851; concerning Messrs. Munday's contract: letters of 30 March 1850, 18 March 1850, 4 April 1850; 13 April 1850; 25 October 1851; 1 June 1852; 17 June 1850; and 1 June 1850. Other topics with which Grove was probably involved were the expenses concerning the removal of one of the large organs, an appointment to the Musical Instruments Committee and the casting of a commemorative medal. Grove was the last Secretary to live in the Society of Arts house: see D.G. Allen, *The Houses of the Royal Society of Arts. A History and Guide* (London, 1966), p.39.
- 12 'Sir George Grove's Autobiography', pp.195–6; The Crystal Palace is discussed and illustrated in Patrick Beaver, *The Crystal Palace* (Chichester, 1986), and Michael Musgrave, *The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.11–23.

- 13 Letter of Thomas Carlyle to George Grove, 7 May 1852; quoted in Graves, *Life & Letters*, p.37. The Christian Socialists are comprehensively surveyed in Brenda Colloms, *Victorian Visionaries* (London, 1982) and Grove mentioned among them. Grove recalls a visit from Cardinal Manning on the subject of temperance, another major theme of the period (Graves, *Life & Letters*, p.218).
- 14 Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.300, 171, 401.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p.49, n.1; Arthur Penrhyn Stanley [1815–81], *Sinai and Palestine in connection with their History* (London, 1856); Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.48–9; '[Grove] rendered valuable service...not only by verifying the references, but still more by arranging the appendix on Hebrew geographical terms', *ibid.*, p.103. Albert Way (1805–74), antiquary.
- 16 Graves, *Life & Letters*, p.103.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.67.
- 18 There are more details of these incidents in Chapter 7 of this volume.
- 19 Newman's 'The Idea of a University' (Discourses V–VII) and *Apologia* are extracted in *Prose of the Victorian Period*, ed. William E. Buckler (Boston, 1958), pp.179–248; quoted passage at p.190; Letter of Dean Bradley, 30 October, 1890, Graves, *Life & Letters*, p.360; Grove never knew Newman closely, though he thought about inviting him to write an autobiography and left an interesting portrait of him prompted by one of his sermons (see Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.218–19).
- 20 Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', *Essays in Criticism, First Series*, ed., with introd. and notes by Sister Thomas Marion Hoctor (Chicago and London, 1964), p.17; 'Sweetness and Light', in *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. with introd. by J. Dover Wilson (London, 1935; 2nd edn, 1960), pp.56–62; Young, *George Grove*, p.36; Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.55–6.
- 21 Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.231–43; see also the summary in Young, *George Grove*, p.146.
- 22 Ferdinand Hiller, *Mendelssohn, Letters and Recollections*, trans. M.E. von Glehn (London, 1874): Editor's Preface, pp.xxxiv.
- 23 Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.453–4.
- 24 Graves, *Life & Letters*, pp.369–70; the (unpublished) correspondence (June–August 1883) is preserved in the University of London Archives, Senate House: File RC4/18 ('Correspondence relating to the protest of the Universities at the right of the RCM to award degrees'). I thank Professor Brian Trowell for drawing this source to my attention.
- 25 C.V. Stanford, *Interludes, Records and Reflections* (London, 1922), p.137.

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