

Worcester Festival Novelties

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'THE BAY OF BISCAI.'

This year of grace 1905 not only commemorates the centenary of Nelson and Trafalgar, but the famous nautical song 'The Bay of Biscay.' In our July issue, in some notes on Braham's 'The death of Nelson,' we drew attention to the fact that it originally formed part of a comic opera entitled 'The Americans.' Curiously enough 'The Bay of Biscay' was also first introduced in a musical piece having a foreign title—'The Spanish dollars, or the Priest of the Parish.' This was written by Andrew Cherry for the benefit of Incedon, the tenor singer, at Covent Garden, May 9, 1805. The plot—such as it is—of the piece mainly consists of a ship's crew having been cast upon the Irish coast. Scene 2 is headed 'an open country,' and the song is prefaced by the following dialogue, Joe MacMizen, impersonated by Incedon, being the captain of the foundered vessel :

Joe MacMizen.—We have escaped a bit of a squall, to be sure.

Sailor.—Squall !—Hurricane, you mean.

Joe.—Pooh!—a cap-full—nothing—a street-puddle in a shower to what I have weathered :—Why there was in our last voyage from St. Helen's, I remember in the Bay of Biscay, at the dead of a pitch-dark night, the wind blew great guns, the thunder roll'd, flash went the lightning, when the mainmast gave way with a most tremendous crash ; we clapt stops upon the cables and secured 'em by ring-bolts upon the deck ; the cable parted—the ship hung by the stream and kedje, and drove broadside on ; a wave carried away our stern-boat, unshipt our rudder, and washed overboard our quarter-boards, binnacle, and round-house ; there we lay—our men drenched with wet, and fainting with fatigue—'till Providence hush'd the winds, becalmed the seas, hove another sail in sight, that took us up, and gave us strength and fortitude to proceed on our voyage.—When then should sailors despair, since the Breath that agitates, can lull the boisterous ocean.

SONG.

Loud roar'd the dreadful thunder, &c.

It is obvious from the foregoing extract that the song was sung on shore and not afloat—certainly not in the Bay of Biscay. But when Braham sang it he changed the environment of the song—from the peaceful shore to the stormy sea—by interpolating some notes in verse 4 :



In order to pile up the agony the little tenor used to kneel on one knee at the words 'A sail.' At one of the Hereford Festivals he followed his usual custom, but entirely wrecked the effect he intended. It so happened that 'the platform was constructed with a rather high barrier on the side towards the audience, so that the little tenor was completely lost to sight. The audience, in alarm, thinking he had slipped down a trap door, rose like one man, and when Braham got up again, he was received with shouts of laughter.' May we not say that 'he was drowned in hilarity'?

'The Bay of Biscay' was composed by John Davy, a native of Upton Helions, near Exeter. A pupil of William Jackson, of Te Deum in F fame, he subsequently came to London, where he found employment in the orchestra of Covent Garden, and as a teacher of music. Upon his creative gifts becoming known, Davy was engaged to supply music

to many dramatic pieces. 'The Spanish Dollars' (1805) is one of them, and contains the famous song 'The Bay of Biscay,' the only strain which has kept alive the name of its composer. In his latter days Davy seems to have fallen on bad times. He died, without a relative to tend him in his last illness, at May's Buildings, St. Martin's Lane, on February 22, 1824, 'in extreme indigence,' so the *Harmonicon* records, 'without leaving even sufficient to defray the expenses of his funeral.' We are indebted to the kindness of Mr. R. Bennett, clerk of St. Martin-in-the-Fields Parish Church, for supplying us with the following information concerning Davy's death and burial :

John Davy died Feb. 22 and was buried Feb. 28, 1824, in the churchyard here. He lived in May's Buildings, and died of consumption at the age of sixty-three. Interment fees £1. 15. 2, David Morgan, curate, officiating. In Oct. 1830 his remains were removed to Catacomb F at the east end of the churchyard, which was then bricked up.

It will be observed that the name in the burial registers of St. Martin's is spelt 'Davy.' The age (sixty-three) there given at the time of death does not agree with the year (1763) of his birth as stated in various biographical dictionaries.

WORCESTER FESTIVAL NOVELTIES.

The two 'first performances' at the meeting of the Three Choirs are works composed by the respective organists of Worcester (where the Festival is to be held) and Gloucester Cathedrals. Both composers—Mr. Ivor Atkins and Dr. A. Herbert Brewer—are to be warmly congratulated upon having chosen subjects that are free from that morbidness and depressing gloom which seem to fascinate young creative artists of the present day.

MR. IVOR ATKINS'S 'HYMN OF FAITH.'

In his cantata entitled 'Hymn of Faith,' Mr. Atkins has been fortunate in securing the co-operation of Sir Edward Elgar, who has 'arranged the words from the Holy Scriptures,' not the only instance, though by no means usual, of one musician collaborating with another. As the title of the work implies, the key-note of the cantata is Faith—'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,' and the working out of this idea has been skilfully accomplished in the 'arrangement' of the words.

Following a custom that was more or less established by Mendelssohn in his 'Elijah,' Mr. Atkins has employed the *leitmotiven* in the selection of two ancient themes as shown in the following example, which opens the work :

No. 1. (a)
Moderato e solenne. $\text{♩} = 72$.

&c.

The first of these (*a*) is an ancient plain-song intonation of four notes; the second (*b*) is derived from the old ecclesiastical melody 'Vexilla regis prodeunt,' which is associated with J. M. Neale's translation of the hymn 'The Royal banners forward go' ('Hymns Ancient and Modern,' No. 96, old edition). Another theme, no less strong in its 'Faith' assurance, is strenuously announced by the orchestra thus :

No. 2. $\text{♩} = 66.$

whereupon enters the full chorus in unison tones of triumphant assertiveness :

No. 3. *Voices in Unison.* *cres. e accel.*

The succeeding words are treated in responsive phrases, leading off with the altos in a melodious strain :

No. 4. ALTO lead :—
mf espress.

This opening chorus—which includes a beautiful and tender setting (voices unaccompanied) of the words 'Faith, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'—is well contrasted and full of interest, the music showing unsuspected strength in the composer, which deserves full acknowledgment.

A mezzo-soprano solo and chorus forms the next section. It opens (after a short recitative) with the words 'Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence,' which are sung to a pastoral accompaniment of appropriate tranquillity—key E flat, rhythm 12-8. In due course the soloist utters the words, 'For he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed,' a statement that rouses the chorus to exclaim in tones of no uncertain sound, 'But *we* are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' Thereupon, inspired by this confident assertion of the chorus, the soloist calls upon '*the people*'—as Mendelssohn in his 'Elijah' insisted upon calling the chorus—to

No. 5. *Allegro moderato.*
SOPRANO SOLO.

The remainder of the work—which occupies twenty-five minutes in performance—reaches the same high level of contrastive effect, skilful musicianship, sustained interest, and artistic sincerity. Laid out for mezzo-soprano solo, chorus, and orchestra, Mr. Atkins's 'Hymn of Faith' is one that does him credit : it is a work that, by reason of conciseness, subject-matter, and opportunities for the chorus, should often be heard in church and concert-room after its production within the walls of Worcester Cathedral.

DR. HERBERT BREWER'S 'A SONG OF EDEN.'

In going to Milton for the words of his 'A Song of Eden' Dr. Brewer is on safe ground. Other composers have found in 'Paradise Lost' themes for the exercise of their creative gifts. We can recall that John Christopher Smith, Handel's amanuensis, composed an oratorio 'Paradise Lost'; for his oratorio 'The Intercession,' Matthew Prior King selected the words from Milton's immortal epic, a song from which, 'Eve's lamentation,' obtained extraordinary popularity; John Lodge Ellerton also composed an oratorio, 'Paradise Lost'; and, coming to later times, there is a setting by Rubinstein, the 'Paradis perdu' of M. Dubois produced at Paris in 1878, and 'Das verlorene Paradies' by Enrico Bossi.

Dr. Brewer, in setting lines from Books v. and vii. of Milton's great poem, has cast his composition—which occupies about fourteen minutes in performance—in the form of a choral and orchestral work; the accompaniment being scored for strings, the usual wood-wind, two horns, two trumpets, three trombones, drums, and organ (*ad lib.*) The following trio of themes from the work may be quoted :

No. 1. *Largo.*

No. 2. *Allegro.*

No. 3. *Allegro.* *8va*

8va

The opening lines—from Book vii. of 'Paradise Lost'—strike the right note for the opening service of a Musical Festival, for which 'A Song of Eden' has been composed :

Now Heaven in all her glory shone, and rolled
Her motions, as the great First Mover's hand
First wheeled their course; Earth, in her rich attire
Consummate, lovely smiled.

These words, after having been declaimed in a stately phrase, are followed by lines selected from Book v. set in solemn chords for voices unaccompanied :

These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty ! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; Thyself how wondrous then !
Unspeakable ! &c.

Then follows an orchestral interlude of 52 bars, in which most of the themes are employed—in fact, thematic material is much in evidence, but as the themes are acceptable no objection can be raised to their ingenious and apposite use. For instance, on p. 11, at the words 'Fairest of stars, last in the train of Night,' Dr. Brewer introduces the 'Star' theme from his oratorio 'The Holy Innocents.' Ex. 3 is an instance of constructive workmanship, by reason of its frequent and varied appearance—a fragment here, and a rhythmic variant (3-4) there, and at the end, the second part of No. 1 (of which the first four bars only are quoted) is worked with it.

Technical workmanship, however skilful it may be, will not vivify an art-creation. So experienced a musician as Dr. Brewer is well aware of this. He has endeavoured, and we think with success, to obtain variety, and to make his music acceptable both to players and singers. In the choral portions of his work he has aimed at making the voice parts interesting as well as singable, and the important matter of declamation—too often neglected by composers because they are prone to orchestralize their voice parts—has received careful attention. 'A Song of Eden' is not only a work that will afford full scope to choral interpretative excellence, but it is the product of an earnest-minded musician.

Reviews.

TWO OLD-TIME ANTHEMS.

Haste Thee, O Lord. Composed by John Shepherd.

Withdraw not Thou Thy Mercy. Composed by Thomas Attwood. Edited by John E. West.

[Novello & Company, Limited.]

There is some doubt concerning the identification of the composer of the anthem 'Haste Thee, O Lord.' John Shepherd was organist of Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1542; but there was another John Shepherd, a gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1606, and Tudway says the anthem is by Thomas Shepherd of the time of James I. Whoever the composer may be, his work deserves rescue from oblivion, for it is a stately and dignified composition in four parts, and an admirable example of its period.

Thomas Attwood's setting of 'Withdraw not Thou Thy mercy' was composed in January, 1827, and its revised form should give it renewed life. It opens with a solidly written chorus in four parts, to which succeeds a soprano solo of some length, after which comes the closing section of the anthem, laid out for first and second sopranos and chorus, and written in the composer's best style.

Musical Studies. By Ernest Newman.

[John Lane.]

The reputation which Mr. Ernest Newman has gained of being an erudite and cultured writer on music is fully endorsed in this volume of collected essays. It is true that they have already appeared in various magazines and journals; but—as the preface states—they have all been greatly altered and practically re-written. Therefore these Studies may be regarded as recording the ripest judgment of the author on the musical subjects of which he treats, no less than furnishing additional evidence of his literary skill.

The six essays forming the book are more or less on subjects which give rise to controversy; but no one can read Mr. Newman's pages without being impressed by his earnestness and the lucidity with which he expresses the truth that is in him. As a specimen of Mr. Newman's style we may quote from his first essay, an excellent study on 'Berlioz, romantic and classic': 'We are face to face, then, with a personality which, whether we like it or not, is of extraordinary strength and originality. If we are to realise what kind of force he was, and how he came to do the work he did, we must study him both from the standpoint of

history and from that of physiological and psychological science. Musical criticism is apt to become too much a mere matter of wine-tasting, a bare statement of a preference of this vintage or a decided dislike for that. We need to study musicians as a whole, as complete organisms hanging together by virtue of certain peculiarities of structure. If a man does not like Liszt's music he compares it disparagingly with Wagner's—as if this placing of people on the higher or lower rungs of a ladder were the be-all and the end-all of criticism.' The last sentence in the book, which concludes an essay on 'Strauss and the music of the future,' must be quoted for its epigrammatic nature: 'The "Symphonia domestica" I take to be the work of an enormously clever man who was once a genius.' Mr. Newman will certainly not lack readers.

PART-MUSIC BY BRAHMS.

The Angel's Greeting. Mary and the Boatman. Mary's Wandering. The Hunter. A Prayer to Mary. In praise of Mary. Mary Magdalene. (Op. 22.) Text translated from the German by Paul England. Music by Johannes Brahms. [Novello & Company, Limited.]

With the exception of the last in the above list, each of the songs refers to the Virgin Mary. The character of the first is explained by its title. In the second Mary safely swims a river rather than entertain the admiration of the boatman. Mary's searching for her Son forms the subject of the third. 'The Hunter' relates the Annunciation, and 'A prayer to Mary' and 'In praise of Mary' are devotional. The incident referred to in the life of Mary Magdalene is her journeying to the sepulchre and her being greeted there by the risen Saviour. The naïveté of the original text has been preserved to a judicious extent by Mr. Paul England, and the music is typically Brahms in its earnestness and solidity.

PART-MUSIC FOR MALE VOICES.

Love in my bosom like a bee. Words by Thomas Lodge (1590). Music by F. Cunningham Woods.

The old soldier's dream. English words by W. G. Rothery. Composed by Peter Cornelius.

Sweet bird of hope. Words by T. W. Wheeler. Music by H. M. Higgs.

[Novello & Company, Limited.]

Male-voice choirs should make early acquaintance with the above additions to Messrs. Novello's 'Orpheus' series. The title 'Love in my bosom like a bee' suggests an uncomfortable sensation, but this will be dispelled on listening to Mr. Cunningham Woods's music, which is melodious and interesting and reflects the quaint spirit of the words. The work is written for alto, tenor, and first and second bass.

'The old soldier's dream' is more ambitious in character, and the part-writing is more complex. It is laid out in six tenor and three bass parts, the first, third and fourth tenors forming a first choir, and the remaining voices a second choir. Variety and contrast are thus obtained, and in certain passages there occur some remarkably rich harmonic effects.

'Sweet bird of hope' is a less exacting composition. It is designed for alto, tenor, and first and second bass, and independence is shown in the form, in employment of rhythm, and in the part-writing. The music offers several opportunities for expressive singing, and would form excellent practice for the cultivation of elasticity of style.

Cherubini: memorials illustrative of his life. By Edward Bellasis. Second and enlarged edition.

[Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, Limited.]

Cherubini seems to have lost ground since the year 1874, when the first edition of this biography of the Florentine master was published. With such exceptions as the 'Anacréon' and 'Les deux journées' overtures, his name has all but disappeared from concert programmes, yet as a composer he was held in the highest esteem by such masters of music as Haydn, Beethoven and Berlioz. He lived during an eventful period—1760 to 1842—in the development of modern music, and as he passed the last fifty-four years