

Review

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 38, No. 651 (May 1, 1897), p. 317

Published by: Musical Times Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3366972>

Accessed: 27-06-2016 09:40 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*

MUSICAL ASSOCIATION.

AT the monthly meeting of the Musical Association, on the 13th ult., Dr. Annie W. Patterson read a paper on "The Distinctive Characteristics of Irish Music." The lecturer claimed great antiquity for Irish music, as it was "essentially harp music," and there was good reason to believe that the harp was the oldest of all musical instruments. A distinctive feature of Irish music was its rapid change of sentiment, which reflected a peculiarity of the character of the people. Poetry and music went hand in hand with the bards, who until the early part of the eighteenth century were held in great and widespread esteem. Consideration of the music of the bards brought us in touch with the music of Ireland of two hundred years ago. It should not be forgotten, however, that there was a great gulf between just intonation and the modern equal tempered scale, which altered to a certain degree the character of the ancient melodies. The oldest tunes seemed to be in the pentatonic scale. The sharp seventh was rarely met with in hundreds of old tunes. The lecturer did not think that the influence of the Church modes on Irish music was ever very great. Irish song was distinctly secular, and essentially a music of human emotion.

During the subsequent discussion Dr. Pearce, who presided, called attention to a paper read by Mr. Lacy before the Association, in which Irish music was divided into three periods, the earliest being the tunes written in the pentatonic scale, and the subsequent divisions being melodies which contained the leading seventh and sharp fourth respectively. Dr. Pearce also expressed his opinion that the prevalence at one time of the ecclesiastical tones must have affected Irish music. Mr. W. H. Cummings brought forward some good evidence to show that the ancient Irish scale was the same as that now in general use, and that in common with other countries where Church music had prevailed, the scale which formerly existed as we now had it was spoilt by the influence of the ecclesiastical modes. Ancient Irish music had to rest on tradition, and tradition was a sad story-teller.

STRATFORD MUSICAL FESTIVAL.

No local musical event is of more interest to amateurs residing in the Eastern suburbs of the metropolis than this annual competition, extending over several days, at the Stratford Town Hall. At the fifteenth of these gatherings there was not the slightest indication of growing indifference. Over forty contests, beginning on the 1st ult., took place, and there were no fewer than 450 entries for the prizes offered for proficiency in nearly every branch of the art. The various competitions were closely followed, and in most of the classes a marked increase of ability was manifested. In the contest for choirs of equal voices, in which there were nine entries, the first prize was awarded to Bancroft's School, Woodford (conductor, Mr. J. E. Hall), and the second to the Forest Gate Collegiate School for Girls (conductor, Mr. G. B. Gilbert). Each body of singers taking part in the Elementary School Choirs competition (not more than fifty voices, every member under sixteen years) had to sing as test piece Franz Abt's "Softly roam, gentle night," and a piece chosen by the choir. The winner was Monteith Road (North Bow) Board School, the conductor of which is Mr. Edwin A. Price. The prize for choral societies of not more than seventy voices went to Bethnal Green Library (conductor, Mr. J. J. Cole). In hymn-tune composition Mr. E. A. Price (Victoria Park) was winner, and Mr. J. H. Morre (Poplar) gained the part-song prize. Some of the pianoforte and vocal contests were exceedingly keen. In the special competitions for past festival prize-winners, whether amateur or professional vocalists, gold medals were assigned to Miss Eugenie Frank (Leyton) and to Mr. A. M. Borwell (Clapton), and Mr. Stephen Champ (Stratford) received a similar award for pianists. The adjudicators included such well-known musicians as Mr. H. C. Banister, Dr. Creser, Mr. Eaton Fanning, Mr. Tobias A. Matthay, and Mr. Visetti. In all respects the festival was a distinct success, and reflected great credit upon the business capabilities of Mr. John Graham, the indefatigable secretary.

REVIEWS.

The Flag of England. Ballad for Soprano Solo, Chorus, and Orchestra. Words by Rudyard Kipling. Music by J. Frederick Bridge. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS work, which is, by permission, dedicated to the Queen, and is to be performed on the 6th inst. at the Albert Hall, is one of the most important compositions which the forthcoming celebrations have caused to be written. The text possesses the virility common to Mr. Kipling's poems, and its contrasts and picturesque suggestiveness render it peculiarly suitable to musical illustration. The portion of the poem which Professor Bridge has so dramatically set to music opens with the demand, "What is the flag of England? Winds of the world, declare!" To which answer is made in characteristic fashion, from the North, South, East, and West. The question, "What is the flag of England?" is several times repeated in the course of the poem, and is set to a bold diatonic phrase, which is deftly made to impart unity to the music. The soprano soloist first makes the interrogation, preceded by only two bars of instrumental introduction, and this direct opening is well calculated to fix the attention of the listener and to suggest the vigorous and lucid style of musical expression which proves to be the most distinguishing features of the work. The reply of the North Wind is set to music of rhythmic force and sustained energy that admirably reflect the ruthless sentiment of the words. The South speaks next, and its milder utterances provide an opportunity for contrast of which the composer has made effective use. It is opened by a melodious solo for the soprano vocalist, who is subsequently supported by the female voices of the choristers in four parts, the tenors and basses being cleverly introduced with dramatic effect towards the close of the number. Several highly imaginative passages also occur in the answer of the East Wind, which contains some of the most effective part-writing of the work. The song of the West Wind begins more graciously, but it soon loses its suave character, and its sentiment is sympathetically followed by the music, and, by breaking into cleverly arranged eight-part vocal harmony, Professor Bridge brings his work to a thrilling and imposing conclusion. Choral conductors should make an early acquaintance of this patriotic ballad, which is not only peculiarly appropriate to the present period, but, from the nature of its text, will be always seasonable as long as Englishmen are proud of the associations of their National Standard.

The Literature of Music. By James E. Matthew.

[London: Elliot Stock.]

THIS useful book, one of "The Book-Lover's Library" series, is industriously compiled by an expert who is the fortunate possessor of a library containing upwards of 4,200 books on musical literature! The dainty volume is divided into twelve chapters, ranging from "The literature of ancient music" to the "Bibliography of music," through all of which the author conducts the reader in an easy, pleasant manner, chatting as he goes along about the many musical books of which he gives the titles. It is a question whether a strict chapter classification is an unmixed advantage. For example, Adolphe Jullien's valuable monographs on Berlioz and Wagner are placed under "The literature of the opera" and do not appear at all under "Biography," and there are no cross references. The index does not meet this difficulty, as neither of the above books are indexed under the two composers' names. Some omissions in Mr. Matthew's list are naturally to be expected in a first edition. Such an invaluable book of reference as Herr Alfred Dörfel's "Festschrift zur hundertjährigen Jubelfeier der Einweihung des Concertsaales im Gewandhause zu Leipzig, 1781-1881," should have been included, as also a similar historical work by Hanslick on the Vienna concerts. There is no list of musical newspapers; and Miss C. Bell (p. 133) should be Mrs. C. Bell. We give a cordial welcome to this interesting and companionable little volume.