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Do you remember the fuss there was when a certain widely-used adjective was shot at the audience in Shaw's 'Pygmalion'? It was the great moment of the play. Crowds stood in queues and paid good hard money nightly, and then hung upon the word—a word which they could have heard as well delivered free of charge in the street outside. That word follows next on the postcard, and cannot be quoted in a journal that prides itself on being so conducted that it may safely be left about the house and read even by the oldest. So we will borrow from the more harmless side of Old Bill's vocabulary, and put 'blinkin' in its place :

... beyond a peradventure (not, of course, that anyone but a blinkin' fool . . .)

And there the card ends,—on an unresolved suspension, so to speak. Turning up last month's *Musical Times*, I find a contributor speaking of the London Symphony Orchestra as the 'L.S.O.,' little knowing what trouble he was making. Now, the London Society of Organists is a small body about two years old—at all events as at present constituted. We may safely say that beyond the members, their sisters, their cousins, and aunts, nobody knows of their existence. Their fame is bounded on the north by Palmers Green, on the south by Denmark Hill. The London Symphony Orchestra, on the other hand, is known (at least by name) to musicians not only over the greater part of Europe but in North America as well. Its initials have been used as a title for many years.

Was there ever a more ludicrous case of,
'Said the Flea to the Elephant:
"Who 're you shovin'?"'

ENGLISH FOLK-SONG

By RICHARD CAPELL

All national art, says a wise Frenchman, is a source of beauty. Of course Beauty and Art are difficult words, and none but the professed philosopher can say just what he means by them; but still one's feeling may be some help on the way in default of strict philosophy. We may (without straying out of sight of our concern, which is Mr. Sharp and his English folk-songs*) see Beauty as possessed of double aspect, and the one or other allures and is adored in its season—the one is the imagined and fantastic, the other the assured and experienced.

For one whose lot just before the war lay amid London musical doings the days were gorgeously crowded with the exotic succession of tribute-payers who seemed to be bringing to our feet all that the world held of the strange, rich, and monstrous. As Asia of old sent her elephants, apes, and peacocks in offering to imperial Rome, so there showered down on us tetralogies and symphonic poems, the pyramidal scores of Scriabin, Mahler, and Strauss, the fairyland of the Russian Ballet (ah, at its prime!), the opera-casts with all the golden throats of Italy, not to speak of opera-houses simply thrown at our heads by America.

One August day, and all this was like snow upon the desert's dusty face. It left the barest memory of a dream, and it was like awakening from a dream to face the new world, so irrelevant to the intoxication of the eve! The fantastical beauty that miraged so flatteringly the impossible ends of the earth left not enough comfort to be worth a thought. That

autumn there dawned on you perhaps that other beauty, the beauty of the assured things that have made and moulded you and yours for time without mind. It dawned on you, no doubt with a pang, in the look of some bit of road, low hills, and home-county village, by which you were trudging in weather you would perhaps never have chosen to be out in, and with an absurd lot of things on your back.

The beauty had a voice, to be perceived in certain turns of speech of your fellows—the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker. Oh! admirably vivid and vigorous, a speech that was untouched by the pallor of the printed word. When song put in an appearance, here and there were snatches that were clearly an English voice, a voice which could be recognized from its hints in our prose from Shakespeare to Thomas Hardy. No tune was, I think, 'magnificent.' The feeling was more of humour than of declared heroism. It could bear irony, but could not bear with any of the emotion of the heart-worn-on-sleeve. But here is a sample which was much sung in the neighbourhood of Festubert and Cuinchy in grim days—spring, 1915. There may be a known composer—or even a known author of the verses (the refrain of which begins, 'I don't want to be a soldier, I don't want to go to war,' and ends, 'I'd rather stay in England, in merrie, merrie England, than throw my precious life away'). We knew of none, and here is a case of a folk-song in the making :

Such artless songs are not to be disassociated from the artless singers, who are our own people, ourselves; and their beauty is of more than this surface of cheerful irony, such being just the emerging aspect of that hidden bulk of our own soundness, the solidity of our virtue of self-rescue, which 'saved the sum of things' in the day 'when heaven was falling, the hour when earth's foundations fled.'

The causes of our delight in art are doubtless never unmixed, and conceivably these two books of a hundred English folk-songs, chosen from Mr. Sharp's collections of twenty-five years, might leave some persons untouched if beauty in her exotic phase were dominant. But the passions, the disillusionings, and endurance of the war have perhaps contracted a little our hearts, which used to be so very expansive. We perhaps have come to trust more in ourselves and less in any glib and flattering stranger's effusiveness. Anyhow there is a consistent strain in these song-books which is certain to be seized on more eagerly now than it ever would have been in the past. These songs have not the poignant accent of the

* English Folk-songs: collected and arranged by Cecil J. Sharp. 2 vols. Novello & Co., Ltd.

great Irish airs, or the sensuousness and savage rhythmical life of Spanish or of Hungarian folk-music. To generalise (for often the lyre of pathos is most delicately touched), these are the songs of a passably happy, contented people, with a cheerful humour all its own. There are not the gloom or supernatural terrors of the lore of mountain-folk. Beyond the favourite case of a bridegroom being seized by the press-gang there is no oppression.

But short of the grand dramatic flight, these old country songs range over a multitude of human feelings. The ballads give us hints of the really archaic. Some of these, in Mr. Sharp's scrupulously unimproved versions, are occasionally fragmentary and obscure. The lyric songs offer to the listening ear the authentic voice of our countryside. For of course these are countrymen's songs (such as are not sailors'), for urban song is a different thing, picking up and dropping its favourites as often in a year as does the country in a generation. This artless voice so sweet, now tender, now rollicking, has us wholly won, and for the just reason that at the mocking notes of the courted milkmaid, at the plaint of the forlorn swain, or the home-coming sailor's tale everyone must instinctively call from memory's store some corner of the green and pleasant land, a scene from favoured shire, or home.

How propitious May mornings are to Somerset suitors is to be learned from many a song (a good proportion of these first two books comes from Mr. Sharp's Somerset collection). On the other hand even that melting season, it is clear, leaves some maids whole-hearted and scoffing. The sailor is a favourite hero, but some sailors only court to thief, it seems, and hence the rueful modal complaint of more than one once merry milkmaid or shepherdess.

If any doubt that such songs may not have the hold they had over English folk, there was a demonstration the other evening at the Morley Working Men's College (Waterloo Road, London), where the chanty 'Let the Bulgine run'—an irresistible tune from Dr. Terry's collection—caught the audience as does not one music-hall song in a thousand.

This collection of Mr. Sharp's, which seems to have every virtue of taste and fidelity, will be an acknowledged record and store-house. It will be the best beloved of song-books in many English homes. At song recitals a bunch of flowers from Mr. Sharp's garden will always be welcome.

New Music

PIANOFORTE MUSIC

In our January number mention was made of the first set of Caprices and Rhythmic Studies by E. Jaques-Dalcroze. Here is the second set (Augener), and one need give it no higher praise than to say it is as good as its predecessor. It is a pleasure to meet with music of this kind—free and imaginative, and handling complex rhythmic and harmonic problems with ease and assurance. The pieces are for good players. For 'good' we must substitute 'advanced' in speaking of Arthur de Greef's 'Etudes de Concert' (Augener). There are five, published separately. Here again we have an unusually high standard. The technical excellence of these pieces goes without saying. Far more important is the fact that they

have real beauty and power as well—for example, the delicate wistful charm of the Etude in E takes one captive at once. However, there is no space for detailed description. It must suffice to draw the advanced pianist's attention to these excellent additions to his repertoire. Ravel's *Poème Chorégraphique*, 'La Valse,' has been transcribed for pianoforte solo by the composer (Durand). It makes a fine piece, though one feels the need of the orchestra in the opening pages, where the music lies rather too low to be clear, and later where some important decorative passages for woodwind, written in small notes, will mostly have to be taken as read. 'La Valse' is very difficult and very long—twenty-four pages.

'The Hour Glass' is a set of three pieces by Frank Bridge, published in separate numbers by Augener. 'Dusk' is appropriately vague and slightly melancholy. 'The Dew Fairy' gives us some delightful arabesque treatment of an elvish little tune. In 'The Midnight Tide' fearful conglomerations of notes and tempestuous *arpeggi* point to dirty weather. The piece is not long, but it has the right sense of bigness. These three highly picturesque sketches are difficult, but they 'come off,' which is more than can be said for a great deal of difficult music.

The pianoforte duet is such a valuable means of getting a good working idea of complex orchestral and chamber works that one is glad to see some of our modern composers taking advantage of it. Here is Malipiero's 'Panthea,' a symphonic drama for chorus and orchestra, boiled down for four-handed consumption (Chester). A very pungent dish it is, too. Only the varied timbres of the orchestra can make some of the dissonances tolerable, so it is to be hoped that no one will judge it from the pianoforte point of view. An arrangement of this kind must be regarded merely as a kind of glorified analytical programme.

We return to pianoforte music proper with some pleasant sets of pieces by Melartin—'Chips' and 'Intermezzi' (Augener). These are fairly easy essays, picturesque and tuneful, excellent teaching material of the type of Grieg's lyrical pieces, though less highly coloured. From the same publishers comes Liszt's edition of Schubert's 'Wanderer' Fantasia. A batch of material for youthful players calls for no more than mention. Four Miniatures by Reginald S. Thatcher (Augener), an album of Ten Preludes and Miniatures by M. E. Marshall (Bosworth), and a Little Suite, 'Nursery Secrets,' by Felix White (Keith Prowse). The last-named gives us not only some unusually pleasant little pieces, but also something new in titles, perhaps an even more difficult feat. Here they are: 'The Forbidden Fairy Tale (with Ghosts in it),' 'A Dream of the Russian Ballet,' 'Who broke the New Toy?' and 'Why the Flies go round and round.' Having settled this last point, perhaps Mr. White will in his next Suite go one better and answer a popular question as to where they go in the winter. C. W.

ORGAN MUSIC

Parry's interest in the organ showed itself in a series of works written in his later years—works so good that organists regretted he had not turned to their instrument before his numerous public and educational duties made composition a mere extra. Among the MS. works he left a Toccata and Fugue entitled 'The Wanderer,' which has now been