

Yorkshire Carols: "George Ridler's Oven"

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REGIERUNGSRATH LEOPOLD ALEXANDER ZELLNER, at Vienna, on November 24, aged seventy-one. Besides being the composer of numerous choral works, such as oratorios, masses, &c., he was Professor of Harmony at the Vienna Conservatoire of Music from 1868, when he took the place of Sechter, who had just died. In former years he edited the *Blätter für Musik*, and he also occupied the post of Chief Secretary to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde until 1892, when he retired on a pension.

GEORG MERTEL, Royal Musikdirektor, and for many years conductor of several musical societies in Erfurt, where he died, on November 16, aged sixty-six.

CANON WILLIAM COOKE, M.A., F.S.A., one of the editors of the "Hymnary," on November 23, at 6, Clifton Place, Sussex Square, aged seventy-three.

CHARLES SIEBERT, a bass singer of promise, and the Hon. Secretary of the Tonic Sol-fa Association, on November 23.

GEORGES BACHMANN, composer of a great many piano-forte pieces. He died, after a long illness, in the Beaujon Hospital, aged forty-six.

IPPOLITO RAGGHIANI, a violinist of great talent, a pupil of M. César Thomson at the Liège Conservatoire, and a composer of more than average promise. Amongst his works are a *Symphonie Thématique*, a Violin Concerto, *Nine Morceaux de Salon* (published as No. 7 of Novello's Albums for violin and piano-forte), and a short opera, which has been accepted for performance at Nice, but of which the poor composer was unable to finish the orchestration. He died in his native place, Viareggio, near Pisa, after a long and painful illness, aged twenty-seven.

JAMES AITKEN, who was for many years on the staff of the *North British Daily Mail*, *Glasgow News*, and the *Glasgow Evening Citizen*, in the capacity of musical critic. Mr. Aitken, who died at Glasgow, on the 3rd ult., was a well-informed musician and wielded the pen of a graceful and ready writer.

FREDERICA HANKINSON, a lady who was universally esteemed in the profession of her adoption, met with an awfully sudden death on the 19th ult. She had previously been suffering from heart trouble, and a sudden attack ended a useful career while she was in the act of conducting some concerted music at a school Concert near her residence in Rock Ferry.

WILLIAM HENRY HUNT, the first Doctor of Music created by the London University, died, on the 6th ult., at Birkenhead, where he had resided for nearly twenty years. Although hardly at any time to be reckoned as of robust constitution, his work had pursued a regular course until the spring of 1894, when, while giving one of the lectures commissioned by the City Corporation at the Liverpool Music School, he was smitten with paralysis. As a composer, Dr. Hunt was best known by his "Stabat Mater"—a fine work, composed as the exercise for his Doctor's degree, and published by Novello and Co. He had also written a number of vocal solos and part-songs, as well as two comic operas, one of which was styled "Utopia," three years or so before the title was adopted by the Savoy organisation. Dr. Hunt, whose age was only forty-three, leaves a widow and family of five children.

PROFESSOR PAUL WIEPRECHT, Royal Kammervirtuoso, oboe player of great excellence, and teacher of his instrument at the Königliche Hochschule für Musik, Berlin. He died on the 7th ult., at Schöneberg, near Berlin, aged fifty-five.

PROFESSOR DR. GUSTAV GUNZ, a tenor vocalist, for twenty-seven years one of the most prominent artists of the Court Opera, Hanover, and also well known in Germany as a concert singer. From 1888 he was Professor of singing in Frankfurt-on-Main, in which town he died on the 11th ult., aged sixty-two.

MR. BASIL TREE has opened a branch office for the sale of Concert tickets at 304, Regent Street, in proximity to Queen's Hall.

HUMPERDINCK's opera "Hänsel und Gretel," which has created so great an impression on the Continent, was produced at Daly's Theatre on Boxing Night, for the first time in England, too late for notice in our present issue.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### YORKSHIRE CAROLS:

#### "GEORGE RIDLER'S OVEN."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—At this present time of the year I venture to send you the air of a traditional Yorkshire Christmas Carol, which, so far as my own library of carol books extends, does not appear to have yet been printed. Possibly a more far-reaching search might reveal it.

The tune is certainly old, and has been popular with generation after generation of children carol singers in Leeds and district. It is sung to the ever-favourite wassailing song, "Here we come a-wassailing among the leaves so green."

#### "HERE WE COME A-WASSAILING."

O here we come a - was - sail - ing a - mong the leaves so

green, Here we come a - wan - der - ing so fair to be

seen; God send you Hap - py, God send you Hap - py,

Pray God send you all a Hap - py New Year.

Sir John Stainer, in his "Christmas Carols," gives a traditional tune to the same words, and one appears in Miss Broadwood and Mr. Fuller Maitland's "English County Songs." Versions varying more or less from these are also, along with the one I send, sung in Leeds.

Another carol which was formerly sung in Yorkshire country places to the words "A virgin unspotted" varies from the air given by Sandy, Husk, and Stainer, but I believe it is equally old with theirs.

#### "A VIRGIN UNSPOTTED."

A Vir - gin un - spot - ted, the Pro - phet fore - told, Should

bring forth a Sa - viour, which you now do be - hold.

In last month's "From my Study," in THE MUSICAL TIMES, mention was made of the quaint song "George Ridler's Oven," and a regret was expressed that the song and air were not included in "English County Songs" (mentioned above).

The aim of that work appears to have been, in general, merely to give traditional airs hitherto unpublished; and possibly the editors omitted the song from the fact that the tune for it is already printed in the first edition of Wm. Chappell's work—viz., "National English Airs," 1838, p. 102. It is the same air as the Gloucestershire Wassail Song, the words of which have been so frequently reprinted; Husk also gives the air. Before I became acquainted with these printed copies I myself noted it down from a Gloucestershire singer to the Wassail Song.

"George Ridler's Oven" is a remarkable production, containing much homely truth and humour. One cannot but admire the delicate way in which George's bald head is hinted at:

And George he was a jolly old man,  
And his head it grewed above his hair.

A characteristic touch shows the prerogative of the eldest son, for while Dick will sing treble and John the "mean," or second, voice—

George he wor the eldest brother,  
And therefore he would sing the bass.

Dixon, in his "Songs of the Peasantry," gives the words, accompanied by a political "key," reprinted from a report of the Gloucestershire Society, 1835. Whatever political meaning the song may have had afterwards applied to it, I feel sure that none was intended by the simple-minded bard who produced the lyric; and though the ditty is old, I rather question whether it is *quite* so early as Charles the Second's time. The whole song, starting with cursory mention of George Ridler's oven and of George himself, tells us how George "made his brag before he died, with any three brothers his sons should sing." After the verse descriptive of the pitch of the sons' voices, it bursts out into a verse of the old song (see the "Roxburgh Ballads"), "My dog and I," and a fragment of "Todlen Hame"—evidently the two ditties intended to silence all-comers. I have met people in Berkshire, North of the district where Thomas Hughes places the song, who could sing "George Ridler's Oven," but, owing to their shyness, I could never get them started. Perhaps some more fortunate reader could tell us if the air is still sung as Chappell and Husk give it, as under:—

"GLOUCESTERSHIRE WASSAIL SONG."  
(From Chappell.)



128, Burley Road, Leeds.

FRANK KIDSON.

#### REFORM ON THE ORCHESTRA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—(a.) In your December issue appears a criticism of an important Orchestral Concert (given in London) wherein the playing of the trombones is severely commented upon—indeed, the "amusing" and "irritating" loudness of these instruments seems to have spoilt what would otherwise have been an excellent performance. Now, this over-loudness of the trombones—and their near relatives, the trumpets—is an infliction of which lovers of good orchestral music are constantly complaining. Yet why is a remedy never thought of? It is often said that the fault is the conductor's—that he ought to "keep the trombones down." And this is true to a certain extent. But is there no other way of subduing the trumpet's and trombone's *naturally large volume of tone* than to say, "please play more softly"? How would the "strings" like to have to play through a whole programme *mezza voce*, with the mute on? This is virtually what the offending instrumentalists in question have to do, in order to be in balance with the rest of the band—and have to do it, too, at the expense of considerable physical pain and fatigue. The fact is that neither conductors nor players are really blameable in the matter: the grievance arises from the silly custom of placing the trumpets and trombones in lofty positions on the orchestra, whence they have to blast and blare *carrément* into the very faces of the audience. The bassoon has to breathe his dulcet aspirations heavenward; the oboe and clarinet—well, *dans un tout autre sens*; even the performer on the soft-toned *waldhorn* "lifts not his horn on high." No; to the trumpet and trombone *solely* (of all instruments!) is accorded the privilege of (metaphorically) hitting straight from the shoulder. This seems to me foolish.

One way of mending matters would be to make the players stand with their backs to the audience; but this would be found inconvenient, even if mirrors were employed. I would suggest that they stand on the *floor* of the platform, and play behind a screen of thick cloth, which

should be just low enough to allow of the conductor being visible to the players, and which ought to be inclined slightly inwards at the ends, for the benefit of the occupants of the side seats. I think it would be found, if this simple little arrangement was properly carried out, that the players in question would be able to play *mf*, *p*, and even *pp*, in a natural manner, and with comfort to themselves and the audience.

(b.) I should like to take this opportunity of asking why, in the name of all that is artistic, the kettledrums and other instruments of percussion are perched in conspicuous places on the orchestra, where everyone can see them? No doubt the athletic display involved in an attempt to tune three drums at the same time, with only six bars' rest to do it in, may serve to while away the time for the programme boys; but it is terribly distracting to those who attend a concert for musical enjoyment. So are the more or less classic postures and gestures of the gentlemen in charge of the tambourine and cymbals. I do not see why the drums and the entire *batterie de cuisine* of the modern orchestra should not be brought down to the floor with the trombones, and hidden as much as possible. My screen of cloth would be a help to this end.

(c.) Just one word more. These two little reforms would be steps in the right direction—that is to say, in the direction of the hidden orchestra, a hint or two concerning which may interest some of your readers. The concert orchestra of the twentieth century will be completely hidden from the view of the audience; the chorus also, when there is one. The conductor shall not be seen, neither shall the tenor and bass soloists. Yea, even the soprano and contralto *ditto* shall be invisible to mortal eye! All will be hidden by a large curtain, which will reach from ceiling to floor and from wall to wall. And, lo! the musician will no longer be distracted by the spectacle of scraping fiddlers and thumping drummers; and in time the people will learn how to *listen* to music; some will have revealed to them something of the magic which Bayreuth pilgrims tell of—a strange spell which seizes them when the lights go quietly low, and beautiful sounds creep into life out of space.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully.

ARTHUR E. GRIMSHAW.

Leeds, December 10, 1894.

A CORRESPONDENT asks:—"Can any old student of the Guildhall School of Music give me information of a glee which was sung there in either 1881 or 1882, called 'Evening,' and beginning—

The Sun descending in the West,  
The Evening Star doth shine,  
The birds are silent in their nests,  
And I must seek for mine.

Reply, A. L. P., 16, Tything, Worcester."

#### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

\*.\* Notices of concerts, of which programmes must invariably be sent, and other information supplied by our friends in the country, must be forwarded as early as possible after the occurrence; otherwise they cannot be inserted.

Our correspondents will oblige by writing all names as clearly as possible, as we cannot be responsible for any mistakes that may occur.

Correspondents are informed that their names and addresses must accompany all communications.

We cannot undertake to return offered contributions; the authors, therefore, will do well to retain copies.

Notice is sent to all subscribers whose payment (in advance) is exhausted. The paper will be discontinued where the Subscription is not renewed. We again remind those who are disappointed in obtaining back numbers that, although the music is always kept in stock, only a sufficient quantity of the rest of the paper is printed to supply the current sale.

MONTROSE.—Almost any good book on Harmony will give you this information. Stainer's "Harmony Primer" (Novello and Co.) will probably suit your purpose. You may also consult the Harmony books of Macfarren, Prout, or Richter, which any music-seller will supply.

#### BRIEF SUMMARY OF COUNTRY NEWS.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for any opinions expressed in this summary, as all the notices are either collated from the local papers or supplied to us by correspondents.

ABERGAVENNY.—The Choral Society gave its first Concert on the 10th ult., in the Town Hall. The programme consisted of Cowen's cantata "St. John's Eve" and a