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Review: The 'Star-Spangled Banner': An Exhaustive Official Inquiry

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on the cholera-stricken 'Lincolns.' Miss Lena Ashwell pleaded for less abject materialism, and that the Arts—but music especially—might be given the chance of helping at the fountain-head of all effort—the emotions. We all sing the 'man behind the gun,' but what is it that is behind the man? Other speakers followed, and the wealth of British folk-music—old songs, old dances, old march-tunes—and the crying need of instrumental music for the new Armies was amply demonstrated. Its quality, and its administration, however, were left somewhat in doubt.

Have bands, and plenty of them, by all means,—if you can get them: a good band at the disposal of every depot commanding officer, for occasional military duty, but chiefly to enliven the leisure hours and afford some compensation for the sacrifice of the volunteers' ordinary evening amusements. But the first and most urgent need is for cheering influences on the march during the months and months of actual training, music which is simple and straightforward, that needs no strained effort to grasp and assimilate,—plain 'melody and rhythm,' as Kipling put it. Music in fact, which is best expressed through the time-honoured medium of the drum and fife.

A drum and fife, and a bagpiper, at the disposal of every company captain would work wonders.

As to recruiting, it is to be questioned whether the bunkum of a more or less theatrical 'recruiting march' would attract intelligent men nearly so much as seeing a platoon, like a happy family, swinging along its daily task to the pulsating beat of the drum, the merry chirrup of the fife—spontaneous, like the song of a lark—or the compelling and forceful skirl of the bagpipe. The very soul of true soldiering finds expression therein; and if there is any man who has not yet come under its influence, let him try a march amongst good comrades to the tune of 'Green Sleeves,' 'Joan's Placket,' 'Rory O'More,' 'Rosin the Beau,' 'The Buff Coat,' 'Larry O'Gaff,' 'Johnnie Cope,' or an old English Hornpipe, or Irish Jig or Scots Reel in its own particular idiom, the fife or bagpipe. Love of country, pride of race, historic glory and all things that make for Patriotism speak under these circumstances more clearly than under the influence of the most inspired orator. There can be no doubt about it, for the case has been proved times out of number during similar crises in the past.

Warfare is a primitive thing. Its essentials are the same as ever, and the 'Kitcheners' of to-day are as the warriors who responded to the call in bygone ages: who drilled, and marched to the fife and drum, and finally assembled and encamped under the same old oaks in the same old 'New Forest'; whose tramping footsteps echoed under the same old Bar-gate at Southampton on the way to the wars; who fought and conquered on the self-same battle-fields at Agincourt and Cressy, Blenheim and Waterloo; whose spirit is with us, and whose souls 'still go marching on,' if we believe what is most worth believing.

G. M.

AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL.

What fitter place for such a celebration than the splendid old Norman nave of Gloucester Cathedral? When Dr. Montagu Butler, then Dean of Gloucester, now Master of Trinity, took counsel with his Cathedral organist in October, 1886, as to the possibility of holding recitals of sacred music during the winter months, they could hardly have contemplated or foreseen that the movement would have extended

with amazing popularity to the year 1915. But it is so, and lately the 250th recital has been celebrated, and marked with due appreciation by the citizens of Gloucester, who assembled in many thousands, headed by the Mayor and Corporation, Col. the Hon. A. B. Bathurst, M.P., Col. Sandeman, and many officers and men of the different Battalions now quartered at Gloucester, to listen for one short hour to the strains of Handel, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Bach, and Haydn, rendered by a large voluntary choir of ladies and gentlemen and the Cathedral choristers. Organ solos by more modern composers, played by Dr. Brewer, were also listened to with great attention by the huge gathering. The solo-singing of Mr. John Coates came as a grateful surprise to the congregation, who much appreciated the sacred songs of Handel and Mendelssohn that Mr. Coates had selected. The programmes of sacred music at these recitals carry out Dr. Butler's advice in 1886: 'Pray always include music by the Great Masters, give dates of birth and death of each, and reiterate, reiterate, for the people we want here are those who from various circumstances cannot often hear really high-class music.'

It is pleasant to assure the Master of Trinity, if these lines should meet his eye, that his advice has proved sound and practical, and is being loyally carried out by the present Dean, Dr. Spence-Jones, and his organist, Dr. Brewer. 'Recital-night' has now for nearly thirty years become a well-loved institution in the old city of Gloucester. Certainly the authorities do this thing right well, for some three thousand programmes with the words of each vocal number enabled all present to follow and appreciate every sentiment that was sung by soloist or choir.

On the present occasion the very sad events of the War were brought home to each one present at the solemn moment when all rose to listen to the strains of 'The Last Post,' played by six young buglers placed in the far-away Lady Chapel. The almost painful silence that followed told its own tale, and eyes grew dim and hearts beat quickly as the solemn strains died slowly away, reverberating through clerestory and cloister,—a fine tribute to those lost to us on land and sea.

Gloucester may well be proud of its grand old Cathedral, and of the many splendid services of sacred song that are privileged to take place there.

C. L. W.

THE 'STAR-SPANGLED BANNER': AN EXHAUSTIVE OFFICIAL INQUIRY.*

The writer who essays the apparently innocent task of conscientiously writing the history of a national song or tune, generally finds himself in the position of an unfortunate soldier fast amid a barbed wire entanglement and subjected to a hail of bullets from the enemy's firing line.

This simile may have forced itself into the mind of Mr. O. G. Sonneck after the publication of his original report, issued in 1909. This exhaustive monograph was compiled at the request of the head librarian of the Library of Congress, with intent that all information obtainable regarding America's chief national songs should be given to the world under official auspices. 'The Star-spangled Banner,' 'Yankee Doodle,' 'Hail, Columbia!' and 'America,' were therefore dealt with down to the most

* "The Star-spangled Banner." Revised and enlarged from the Report on the above and other airs, issued in 1909. By Oscar George Theodore Sonneck. Washington, 1914.

insignificant detail, the whole forming a monument of patient research; every wild statement is traced to its source and duly knocked on the head. It is unfortunate for the historian that all popular songs and melodies have been subjected to the writings of irresponsible persons who, without giving any authority, have rushed into print with startling assertions regarding them.

These (generally) romantic stories are repeated over and over again, and it becomes the historian's business to trace them to their fountain head and to disprove them. Again, to give a homely parallel, it is quite easy to assert, on the basis of infantile tradition, that the moon is a huge green cheese, or that it is inhabited by a solitary Sabbath breaker, guilty of gathering sticks on a Sunday; but it is a complicated and laborious task for even the skilled astronomer scientifically to prove the untruth of these myths.

Such, however, has been Mr. Sonneck's task. He has had to collect all the irresponsible fables regarding the two airs, 'Yankee Doodle' and 'The Star-spangled Banner,' and patiently to sift the few grains of corn from a great quantity of chaff; also in the case of the last-named air and song, with which the present Report only is concerned, to combat new theories that have sprung up since the first Report of 1909.

Put in the fewest words, the sum of Mr. Sonneck's contention is that the words of 'The Star-spangled Banner' were written by Francis Scott Key, a Baltimore lawyer, on or about September 13 or 14, 1814, under these circumstances:

A medical friend of Key's had been arrested upon certain charges as an enemy during England's war with America. This gentleman, Dr. Beanes, had been conveyed to a ship then forming part of the British Fleet lying off the mouth of the Potomac. Under a flag of truce, Scott Key sailed out to the English ships and made a successful endeavour to obtain the release of his friend. They were informed, however, that they would not be allowed to return to land for some little while, as the Fleet was about to bombard Fort McHenry.

From the deck of their vessel Scott Key and his friend watched the flag floating over the fort; but the growing darkness prevented them from seeing if the flag still held position, and they waited anxiously for morning.

During the evening Key had strung together part of his song:

'O! say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's
last gleaming?' &c.

The song was finished during their return, and was printed on a broadsheet, and in the *Baltimore Patriot* of September 20; also, next day, in another Baltimore paper.

In broadsheet form and in the newspapers the song is headed—'Tune, "Anacreon in Heaven."' The metre of 'To Anacreon in Heaven' is peculiar to itself and to the many songs which were written to the air. The melody had long been popular in America, and formed the vehicle for several songs of a patriotic character. Therefore, in spite of an assertion that Scott Key did not know one tune from another, it is quite obvious that he knew, at least, the 'Anacreon' song, as the metre of his verse distinctly shows its association.

In regard to the tune, about which English readers will be interested, it belongs to a song of which the first two lines run:

'To Anacreon in Heaven, where he sat in full glee,
A few sons of harmony sent a petition.'

&c.

This song was regularly sung at all meetings of a convivial harmonic club, called 'The Anacreontic Society,' that held its meetings at a tavern on Ludgate Hill kept by one Rowley; later, the Society transferred itself to the 'Crown and Anchor' in the Strand. The first half of Mr. Sonneck's Report is to establish the fact of the authorship of the tune which, according to his belief from the evidence available, was by John Stafford Smith, 1750-1836. The contention is not new, for it had long been settled thus in most impartial minds that had gone into the matter. Nevertheless some attacks had been made upon this conclusion, and it became Mr. Sonneck's task to re-establish the original belief. We think he has successfully done this, and that he has faced all adverse points that have been raised.

To review the evidence as put forth by Mr. Sonneck: in order to refute an American claim for the song, a claim which Mr. Sonneck refers to as 'one of the most grotesquely absurd articles in musical literature,' it was pointed out by 'X' in the *Musical Times* of August, 1896, pp. 516-519, that the song 'To Anacreon in Heaven' first appears in print (without music) in a London song book the *Vocal Magazine*, the edition of 1778, under the heading:

'Anacreontic Society—written by Ralph Tomlinson, Esq.'

In this version one line runs:

'A fig for Parnassus, to Rowley's we'll fly.'

And another line:

'To the hill of old Lud will incontinent flee.'

These lines allude to the fact that the Society held its meetings at a tavern kept by 'one Rowley,' as mentioned above. Afterwards it removed to larger premises at the 'Crown and Anchor' in the Strand. The earliest known copy of the song fitted to its music appears on a music sheet issued by Longman and Broderip, at the assumed date 1780. In this sheet, and in all other copies of the song after the *Vocal Magazine*, the lines relating to 'Rowley' and the 'hill of old Lud' are omitted and classic generalities substituted.

As to the composer of the glorious tune, the *Musical Times* article, with which Mr. Sonneck agrees, points to John Stafford Smith, who published a version of the song in glee form in his 'Fifth Book of Canzonets, Catches, Canons, and Glee's' which, it has since been ascertained, was entered at Stationers' Hall in 1799. In this work it is called 'The Anacreontick Song, Harmonised by the Author.' On the title-page of the volume an important statement is made as follows: 'By John Stafford Smith, Gent of His Majesty's Chapels Royal, author of the Favorite Glee—Blest pair of Syrens, Hark the Hollow Woods, &c., the Anacreontic and other popular songs.' In these words, and in 'harmonised by the author' attached to the glee form, lies the evidence for claiming Stafford Smith as composer of the air.

So far all would seem to be plain sailing. But two gentlemen arise who dispute the British birth of both the words and melody of 'To Anacreon in Heaven.' One is Mr. John Henry Blake, who is referred to as 'a wealthy Irish American,' and the other Dr. Grattan Flood, who, it may be remembered, in his 'History of Irish Music' claimed 'God save the King' as an 'adaptation of an Irish Folk-song.' Dr. Grattan Flood having satisfied himself (even if this opinion is not concurred in by others who have studied the question) that "'Yankee Doodle" is of Irish origin,' mentions in an article in *Church Music*, September, 1909, that "'The Star-spangled Banner" had its provenance in England.'

He goes on to say, in the same article, in allusion to 'Anacreon in Heaven': 'As to the melody, it was composed by John Stafford Smith, a pupil of Dr. Boyce, in 1771,' and 'there is no doubt as to the fact that Ralph Tomlinson wrote the song in the winter of 1770.' Further, that 'the words and music of "To Anacreon" were published by Longman and Broderip in 1779-80, and were reprinted by Anne Lee, of Dublin (? 1780) in 1781.' The above shows Dr. Flood as in full agreement with Mr. Sonneck.

But this certainty as to detail, and much more which we have not space to quote, sounds rather strange when we read Dr. Flood's later communication to another magazine, *Ave Maria*, July 6, 1912, under the title, 'The Irish origin of "The Star-spangled Banner."' In this he demolishes all the conclusions he had arrived at in 1909, and asserts that Tomlinson did *not* write the song of 'To Anacreon in Heaven,' and that Stafford Smith did *not* compose the music, but that the tune 'is Irish, and most probably the work of Turlough O'Carolan.'

Dr. Flood, in his first article, in *Church Music*, dwelt on the fact that 'internal evidence clearly points to the influence of Boyce, under whom he [J. Stafford Smith] was then studying.' Dr. Flood, however, in 1912, completely changes his views, and says: 'Having thus eliminated the English claim to the tune, I have no hesitation in claiming the tune as of Irish origin. Furthermore, it has all the characteristics of a composition by the famous O'Carolan, as can easily be tested by a comparison of "Anacreon" with O'Carolan's "Bumpers Squire Jones."' Dr. Flood's conclusions did not pass unchallenged, for the Rev. Father H. T. Henry contested them in an article contributed to the 'Records of the American Catholic Historical Society,' December, 1913.

Mr. Sonneck in his Report says:

'Father Henry sought to show—and few, if any, of his readers will deny his success—that (to quote his words):

- '1. The article in the *Ave Maria* is misleading both in its assertions and in its omissions;
- '2. "Anacreon" has hardly any characteristic resemblance to "Bumper";
- '3. The words were most probably composed by Tomlinson, the tune by Smith;
- '4. Mr. Sonneck's singularly careful Report to Congress is completely misrepresented in Dr. Flood's article;
- '5. There is no evidence, or even what purports to be such, that the tune is Irish in origin, or that the words "emanated from Ireland about the year 1765." In brief, there is no real basis for Dr. Flood's claim.'

In this summing-up of Father Henry's Mr. Sonneck heartily agrees.

The Report next deals with a pamphlet in folio issued by Mr. John Henry Blake, New York, 1912. Mr. Sonneck says of this:

'It is safe to say that Mr. Grattan Flood would never have written his article of 1912 without the stimulating perusal of one of the most curious pamphlets that ever came to my notice during a somewhat extensive association with books on music. The complete pamphlet bears the title:

American National Anthem 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' made singable for the voices of the people. History of the origin of the words and music, written for the information and use of the American people.

Mr. Sonneck characterizes this pamphlet as a composite affair, sections of the history being written at different times, and points out—'this disjointed method makes it difficult to report the pamphlet briefly, or cope with the discoveries, theories, idiosyncrasies, and contradictions therein contained.'

Mr. Blake's real discovery is that Stafford Smith's 'Fifth Book of Canzonets,' in which the song 'To Anacreon in Heaven' was adapted as a glee, was copyrighted in 1799: a fact of interest, but which has not the slightest bearing on the question at issue. Mr. Blake lays much stress upon the fact that Stafford Smith did not claim its composition before 1799, or copyright it on first publication. He appears to be quite in ignorance of the little real value copyright in song and music had at that period, or that an enormous number of songs and music never were entered for copyright.

The accidental fact that the Lee family, who issued a Dublin copy of the song, also published a number of French songs, sets Mr. Blake off on another tack—that the tune is perhaps French and of enormous antiquity. He says:

'In our humble opinion the music has come down through the ages, probably through the Troubadours, for it has always been a song for men, and no one but an opera singer of the *premier étoile* quality can negotiate it. Even English or Irish voices of to-day cannot do it justice. It may have been composed by Richard Cœur de Lion, who as a Troubadour could compose a good song, and as a Crusader could swing a mighty battle-axe in the cause of Christianity. Perhaps it was the very song that led to his release. . . . It requires voices produced only in that climate where the sunlit valleys of Southern France and the plains of Northern Italy meet to sing it with justice and animation'—and so forth.

This extract will show the precise value of Mr. Blake's qualifications for dealing with points of musical antiquarianism; and as the rest of his pamphlet has much of this sort of thing embodied in it, we can appreciate Mr. Sonneck's task in combating Mr. Blake's rather nebulous views.

We have not space to deal with the many absurd statements that, in the course of his inquiry, Mr. Sonneck had to search out and logically refute. As one closes the book one cannot but feel lively sympathy for the author of the Report, that his path towards the elucidation of the truth was strewn with such thorns.

The reproductions of early music sheets and manuscript copies of words are of special value.

By a notice within the book it appears that the Report is on sale by the 'Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., price 85 cents'; and from this source, we believe, the earlier Report dealing with the air 'Yankee Doodle' may also be obtained, the price of this being marked the same.

FRANK KIDSON.

The Independent Music Club will give a concert at 7.30 p.m. on March 2, at the Kingsway Hall, in aid of the Fund for Erecting Drying Shelters for Soldiers. Artists from the Allied Nations are assisting, and a selection of Indian music will be performed. Sir Owen Seaman will recite, and the Band of the Duke of Cambridge's Hussars will assist.

On January 30, Mr. Tobias Matthay lectured on 'The teaching of the fundamentals of pianoforte technique,' to the Liverpool Branch of the Music Teachers' Association.

The Classical Concert Society announce an interesting series of concerts to take place at 3.30 p.m. on March 10, 17, and 24.