

Mr. Edward Elgar's Biographical Sketch

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distinguished a musician should be *suffered to fall into such a state of decay?*, an implication practically contradicted by his next sentence, 'I believe that the stone could be thoroughly renovated at a *very small cost*.'

The renovation he appears to contemplate I should object to at any cost. Something that I did consider advisable I have directed to be done. I should think the repair has already been carried out. It is, however, nothing in the nature of renovating the stone.

I am, yours faithfully,

F. G. WESLEY.

Durham, September 24, 1900.

[The above letter, from the Rev. F. G. Wesley, reached us too late for insertion in our October number.—ED., M.T.]

MR. EDWARD ELGAR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—I have read with much interest the account of Mr. Edward Elgar's career given in your October number, but I am somewhat surprised to find no reference made therein to the assistance rendered by the late Dr. Swinnerton Heap to Mr. Elgar in bringing some of his works prominently before the public.

For some years I held the office of Secretary to the Wolverhampton Festival Choral Society, and was in close contact with Dr. Heap, through whose influence the cantata 'The Black Knight' was performed at Wolverhampton, on February 26, 1895, being, I believe, the first occasion of its performance with full orchestral accompaniment.

It was also on Dr. Heap's recommendation that Mr. Elgar received his commission to compose 'King Olaf,' produced at the North Staffordshire Festival in October, 1896, which was also performed the following season by the Birmingham and Wolverhampton Societies, to both of which Dr. Heap was conductor. At that time Mr. Elgar spoke to me of his great obligation to Dr. Heap, and it may further be observed that his oratorio 'The Light of Life,' produced at the Three Choirs Festival at Worcester, in September, 1896, is dedicated 'To C. Swinnerton Heap, Esq., Mus. Doc., with sincere regard.'

I am, yours faithfully,

HENRY VALE.

16, Darlington Street, Wolverhampton,
October 15, 1900.

EXTEMPORE ORGAN PLAYING OF THE PERIOD.

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE MUSICAL TIMES.'

SIR,—Can any notice be taken about the growing evil of 'extempore' organ playing as an accompaniment of the public services of the Church of England? Not only are we troubled with this complaint in our suburban churches wherever there is a big organ, and a 'fine' player, but the evil is spreading to the more important and representative churches and Cathedrals. The *modus operandi* of the extempore player of the period is about the same in most cases: As the choir and clergy file out of the chancel the organ is played very softly. After a short period the sound gradually increases, stops being pulled out in groups, till, as a final effort, the tubas, &c., are drawn, and then, with a dreadful scream and bang, the 'music' suddenly ceases—literally 'sound and fury signifying nothing'!

To anyone who can remember the extempore playing of such men as Thomas Adams, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, Henry Smart, and many others of their generation, such an exhibition as this is very sad. Many of these modern men are deserving of the greatest praise for the wonderful skill they display in getting about their instruments with their hands and feet; but where is their *music*? If they would use their admirable technical skill to interpret for us the beautiful (often difficult) organ music left on record by the gifted men who have gone before, they would receive (and well deserve) the respectful gratitude of all who listen to them.

A LOVER OF ORGAN MUSIC.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF COUNTRY AND COLONIAL 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.

ASHBURTON.—Harvest thanksgiving services were held at the Parish Church on September 30. The music performed included West's *Te Deum* in B flat, Gadsby's Evening Service in C, and West's new anthem 'The woods and every sweet-smelling tree.' The 'Harvest Festival Book' published by Messrs. Novello was used. Organists will find this book exceedingly useful for such festivals, as the music required is conveniently brought under one cover. Mr. Harold O. Jones, the organist of the church, played Guilman's 'Grand Chœur' in D at the end of the service.

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE.—The annual services in aid of the choir funds of Albion Congregational Church were held on September 23. Special music was sung at each service, the anthems in the morning being 'Lift up your heads' (Hopkins), and Handel's 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' sung by Madame Emily Squire; and in the evening Elvey's 'This is the day.' In the afternoon Dr. H. Hiles's sacred cantata 'The Crusaders' was sung. The choruses are very dramatic and were rendered with spirit by the choir, which gave ample evidence of the excellent training by the conductor, Mr. T. Keighley, organist and choir-master of the church. The solos were admirably sung by Madame Emily Squire and Mr. William Green, and the service concluded with the 'Hallelujah' chorus from 'The Messiah.' Mr. Frank Radcliffe presided successfully at the organ.

AUCKLAND (N.Z.).—Mr. C. Lee Williams's cantata 'Gethsemane' was performed here for the first time in the Primitive Methodist Church, Alexander Street, on August 20. The choir of the church, augmented to fifty voices, sang with spirit, the male voices especially doing well. The solos were well rendered by Mrs. Coates, Miss Bradbury, Messrs. W. Trenwith and J. W. Ryan. Mr. A. Trenwith, the conductor, deserved much credit for his care in training the choir. The cantata was to be repeated in the Franklin Road Church, on September 6.

BASINGSTOKE.—The Harmonic Society gave its first concert (of the eighteenth season) on the 8th ult., with an excellent performance of Smart's 'Bride of Dunkerron.' The solos were taken by Miss Winifred Marwood, Mr. G. D. Dawson, and Mr. Graham Smart. Mr. J. S. Liddle led the orchestra and Mr. A. D. Arnott accompanied. The conductor was Mr. W. H. Liddle, who, in the miscellaneous second part, received an encore for the performance of a Tarantella for the pianoforte of his own composition.

BRENTWOOD.—A most successful patriotic concert was given, under the auspices of the Brentwood Choral and Orchestral Society, on the 4th ult., in the Town Hall. The programme included a well rendered pianoforte solo by Madame Upton-Dene, songs by Miss Agnes Nicholls, Miss Ethel Bevans, Mr. Henry Franckiss, Mr. Ivor Foster, Mr. Edgar Shelton, and Mr. George Baker, all of which were heartily appreciated. Mr. Ferdinand Weist-Hill contributed two violin solos, for which he received quite an ovation, and Mr. Walter Churcher was the reciter of the evening.

BROMLEY.—An organ recital and service of sacred music was given at St. Luke's Church, Bromley Common, on September 30, under the direction of Mr. Walter E. Stark, organist and choirmaster. Violin solos were played by Mr. Handley Davies. Mr. Otto Dene sang, in good style, 'My hope is in the everlasting,' from 'The Daughter of Jairus' (Stainer); 'In splendour bright' and 'In native worth,' from Haydn's 'Creation.'

COVENTRY.—The Holy Trinity Festival Choir gave its first performance of the season on the 18th ult. The works selected were J. S. Bach's 'Sleepers, wake!' Sir Hubert Parry's 'Blest Pair of Sirens,' Brahms's 'How lovely is Thy dwelling-place,' and Gounod's 'By Babylon's wave.' Analytical programmes were provided, and capital renderings of the selected works were given, under the direction of the organist of the church, Mr. C. H. Moody. Miss Gertrude Lyons (soprano), Mr. Turner (tenor), and Mr. Bantock Pierpoint (bass) ably sustained the solo parts,