Review

Source: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 49, No. 781 (Mar. 1, 1908), p. 171

Published by: Musical Times Publications Ltd.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/904820>

Accessed: 22-06-2016 10:57 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*

Reviews.

FOLK-SONG.

Folk-songs from Somerset. Gathered and edited, with pianoforte accompaniments, by Cecil J. Sharp. Fourth series. [Simpkin & Co., Ltd.]

Folk-songs from Dorset. Collected by H. E. D. Hammond, with pianoforte accompaniment by Cecil J. Sharp. [Novello & Co., Ltd.]

These two collections are a welcome addition to our store of folk-songs. While Mr. Sharp has made Somerset his own, Dorset appears to have been practically untouched by the worker in traditional music. Both counties must, of necessity, be rich in folk-song. They are uninfluenced by any large manufacturing town, and experience has shown that where vast tracts of agricultural land exist, there folk-song lingers in quantity even more than in the lonely dales and among the fells of the north.

Folk-song collectors, like ardent fishermen, eagerly scan the baskets of fellow anglers and mentally compare catches. We are not quite sure whether Mr. Sharp's latest creelful contains such prizes as do his former hauls. It must be remembered that this collection is his fourth series. Yet folk-songs are delightfully non-obvious, and do not reveal their hidden beauties on first acquaintance; therefore we may readily assume that many, if they do not particularly appeal to-day, may come with greater force to-morrow.

In looking over the twenty-five songs which form the contents of this volume, we come across many old favourites in different forms; all interesting enough in their variation from those previously published. It is not a far cry from the hills of Cornwall, and from the centre of Dartmoor, to Somerset; therefore we may certainly expect variants from those published by Mr. Baring Gould sixteen or seventeen years ago, and they are present in 'The Rambling Sailor,' 'Green Broom,' and some others. A fine, sturdy sea-song, 'The Coasts of High Barbary,' calls for special notice in Mr. Sharp's collection; it is a pure forecastle ditty, with its old tune and picturesque words. 'Come all you worthy Christians' is surely more of a version of the widely spread 'Gilderoy' tune than, as Mr. Sharp states, of 'The Miller of the Dee.' The traditional version of the early ballad 'Death and the Lady' is also a notable inclusion. 'Searching for lambs,' 'Arise! arise!' 'Bridgewater Fair,' 'The bonny lighter boy,' are average folk-songs of merit, while 'Rugleton's daughter,' with its explanatory note tracing its various forms of publication, and 'The cruel mother,' are of considerable interest. 'James Macdonald' is an example of the execution ballad with its quaint old 'hanging tune.' Mr. Sharp has told us that he has gathered some fifteen hundred folk-tunes, and as his four series of 'Folk-songs from Somerset' only bring to light something over a hundred, we trust that an appreciative public will enable him to continue the publication he commenced three years ago.

'Folk-songs from Dorset' is a collection made by Mr. H. E. D. Hammond, and is the first of a series of county folk-song albums to be issued by Messrs. Novello. The book contains sixteen numbers of much merit, regarded both from a musical and antiquarian point of view.

Such songs as 'Robin Hood and the Bishop of Hereford,' 'Fair Margaret and Sweet William,' and 'Lady Maisry,' are fragments of long narrative ballads, versions of which have been before published, except perhaps 'Lady Maisry.' We very much doubt whether the last named is a correct title, as the burning of the unfortunate lady is not even hinted at in Mr. Hammond's version.

It should be noticed that although the contents of the volume are made up from traditional songs gathered in the extreme south of England, yet there is a distinct Scottish flavour about them. One of them—'As I walked out one May morning'—is certainly, both in tune and words, the Scottish song 'As I went out ae May morning,' which appears in the fourth volume of Johnson's '*Scots Museum*' (1792). The two versions have apparently existed independently of each other in traditional form. 'The Jolly Ploughboy,' 'The Rambling Comber,' and others are more frequently heard in the southern than in the northern counties. The 'Sprig of Thyme' is, however, universal. We think that the book

would have gained had there been an appendix of brief explanatory notes as to the different versions, and other particulars regarding the songs.

While the editor disclaims any interference with the melodies, he confesses that some slight liberties have been taken with the words. All who have intimate knowledge of folk-song will agree with him that, for most reasons, it would be impossible to issue in a popular publication the songs as literally taken down. There may be danger, as in church restoration, in these emendations, but where an editor is fully imbued with the folk-song spirit and conscious of his responsibilities, lovers of folk-song need have no fear. In this case the slight verbal alterations appear to have been most carefully and judiciously made.

The Opera. By R. A. Streatfeild. With an introduction by J. A. Fuller Maitland.

[George Routledge & Sons, Ltd.]

This is the third edition, revised and enlarged, of (to quote the sub-title) 'A sketch of the development of Opera, with full descriptions of all works in the modern repertory.' At the appearance of the second edition we heartily welcomed and commended the book; in repeating these sentiments it may suffice, as showing the value of the work, to quote from Mr. Fuller Maitland's Introduction. He says: 'Mr. Streatfeild has hit upon the happy idea of combining the mere story-telling part of his task with a survey of the history of opera from its beginning early in the 17th century to the present day. In the course of this historical narrative, the plots of all operas that made a great mark in the past, or that have any chance of being revived in the present, are related clearly and succinctly, and with a rare and delightful absence of prejudice.' This we can fully endorse, at the same time adding that Mr. Streatfeild's 'The Opera' is a useful book of reference.

Old English Organ Music. Nos. 27-30. By various composers. Edited by John E. West.

[Novello & Company, Ltd.]

Dr. Benjamin Rogers leads the way in a group of five pieces forming No. 27 of this interesting series of music for the king of instruments. It is a placid little prelude of twelve bars in the key of D minor. To this succeeds a fugal *Allegro moderato* by Thomas Roseingrave, containing some fine scale-passages for the pedals. A *Largo* in E flat, by Samuel Wesley, speaks for itself in its dignified ecclesiasticism. A charming *Andante pastorale* by Thomas Adams is sure to find acceptance, while a sprightly *Finale* in F, by William Hine, the chant composer, concludes a capital quintet of old English organ music.

A 'Verse for a double organ,' by Dr. Christopher Gibbons, as arranged from a manuscript in the British Museum, forms another number. Dr. Dupuis is represented by a group of three pieces—*Larghetto*, *Allegretto* and *Fugue*, a most interesting trio of pieces, of which the pleasing *Allegretto* or the *Fugue* could be played separately. The last of this quartet—instalment is a Voluntary in D minor by William Russell, a composer who has rightly met with the favour of Sir Walter Parratt. It consists of a *Larghetto* (in D minor) which leads into a *Fugue (Allegro)* in the tonic major key. The whole forms an interesting piece, the *Coda* being particularly impressive. In the discharge of his editorial duties Mr. John E. West has combined artistic restraint with practical utility.

What does Richard Wagner relate concerning the origin of his musical composition of 'The Ring of the Nibelungs'? By S. Röckl. Translated by C. de C. Parrish.

[Breitkopf & Haertel.]

This brochure of twenty-seven pages is 'compiled from epistolary utterances of the master' concerning his famous cycle of operas. The extracts cover a period of seventeen years—1853 to 1870—and the letters from which they are taken were written to various friends of the composer's, chiefly to Liszt. In one letter, dated 'London, April 5, 1855,' Wagner says: 'The day before yesterday I got the first act ["Die Walküre"] finished with great difficulty, and already I am contenting myself with the hope of completing at least the second act here as well. . . . Believe me, I ought not to have gone [come] to London!' Poor Wagner!