

Review

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thee'—humility indeed, but what about the lady? The music is simple but musicianly. Mr. Hermann Löhr's duet is unpretentious but melodious, and is worthy of alliance with Charles Kingsley's pretty little poem. The words of 'A Cradle Song' are by Mr. Mat Mervyn, who starts by announcing two facts, 'Dews of night are filling, the sun is in the West,' which may be accepted. Subsequently the usual blessings are called down upon the sleeping child, and if its dreams are as pleasing as the music, the little one should have a very comfortable night.

*Tally Ho!* By C. Lee Williams.

*Sweet and low.* By J. Barnby.

*How beautiful is night.* By J. Lodge Ellerton.

*Love for such a cherry lip.* By John E. West.

(*The Orpheus.*)

[Novello and Company, Limited.]

The above are notable additions to the repertory of glees and part-songs for male voices. 'Tally Ho!' is not a hunting ditty as might be expected from the title, but a settling by Mr. Lee Williams of lines from 'The Sportsman's Vocal Cabinet,' dating from 1830, wherein the practice common to all classes of the community of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds is humorously treated. The music reflects this salutary element, and it is most spirited and clever. We note that it is dedicated to the Royal Bristol Orpheus Society, which will doubtless do full justice to the composition. 'Sweet and low' requires no comment save that Sir Joseph Barnby's captivating music is admirably arranged for T.T.B.B. Dr. Ellerton has happily caught the tranquil spirit of Southey's poetical lines, and the music flows on in graceful and melodious phrases. It is laid out for first and second tenors and basses, supplemented by an alto solo part. Mr. John E. West has taken some lines written by Francis J. Waddington and allied them to music which admirably reflects their old-world spirit and grace.

*I loved a lass, a fair one.* Words by George Wither.

Music by John Pointer.

*Sweet little Katusha.* Words by Michael Morton. Music arranged by Adolf Schmid.

*What shall I give thee?* Words by Walter E. Grogan.

Music by Harold L. Brooke.

[Novello and Company, Limited.]

There is an element of humour in 'I loved a lass,' which is deftly reflected in the music. The deductions drawn by the jilted lover are ungallant to the fair sex, but considering how he has been treated it must be admitted that he is justified in singing at the close, and in tones *fortissimo*, 'Fa-le-ro, loo.' Herr Schmid's ditty is an arrangement of an old Russian folk-song which was sung by Miss Lena Ashwell in the dramatic version of Tolstoy's 'Resurrection,' recently mounted at His Majesty's Theatre. This is a dainty little song meriting the adjective 'sweet.' When a tenor begins to ask 'What shall I give thee?' a declaration of love may confidently be expected. In Mr. Brooke's song, which is remarkable for the independence and musical interest of the accompaniment, the avowal does not come until the last page, when it is uttered in accents 'sweet and low,' a much more rational proceeding than the usual *fortissimo* protestations.

*Six Songs, from the 'Jungle Book.'* By Rudyard Kipling.

Music by Dora Bright.

[Elkin and Company.]

Admirers of Rudyard Kipling should make early acquaintance of Madame Dora Bright's clever settings of these excerpts from his 'Jungle Book.' The first is 'The Night Song in the Jungle,' which, allied to music of broad character, forms an admirable introduction. It is followed by 'The Seal Lullaby' and 'The Mother Seal's Song,' the music of both of which is very pleasing. The dramatic character of 'Tiger! Tiger!' has been happily caught. The music of the 'Bandar-Log' is pretty, but the most characteristic number of the series is 'The Song Toomai's Mother sang to the Baby,' in which the idiom of Indian music is cleverly employed.

## THE HANDEL FESTIVAL.

If we include the preliminary spread of 1857, the seventeenth Gargantuan feast of Handelian strains associated with the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, took place in that historic building on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday the 23rd, 25th and 27th days of the past month. Following the usual custom, the 'Messiah' was performed on the first day, a Selection on the second, and 'Israel in Egypt' worthily concluded this triennial music-making. The public rehearsal occupied some six hours on the preceding Saturday, the 20th ult., and as two of the Festival performances would occur after these pages had gone to press, we must base our remarks mainly on the said full rehearsal.

The band and chorus maintained their customary proportions—players, 485, singers (about), 3,300, making a total of 3,785 executants, gathered together from various parts of the country. No fewer than 110 ladies, including three contrabassists, played on stringed instruments. The non-London contingent of the choir was thus made up, according to figures officially supplied:—

Birmingham	...	...	...	...	90	voices
Bradford	...	...	...	...	90	"
Bristol	...	...	...	...	50	"
Leeds	...	...	...	...	70	"
Sheffield	...	...	...	...	220	"
Other Places	...	...	...	...	56	"
Total of the full-voiced Provincials						576

As to the chorus, the tenors carried off the palm for excellence of tone, though the basses were hardly less fine. The alto part, sweet in quality, might have been strengthened by a larger number of male voices, there being only twenty-three 'bearded altos,' as Mendelssohn called them, on the Handel orchestra. What shall be said of the sopranos? The truth must be told: They gave the conductor the most trouble through their lack of alertness, especially in the all-important matter of attack and verve. The soprano section of the choir needs to be weeded out, at least so far as the London contingent is concerned.

The chronic faults of the old go-as-you-please style, of choral interpretation were unfortunately in evidence in spite of the leavening of the great Metropolitan mass by the Provincial singers—but what are they among so many? Insufficient rhythmic fervour—so important a factor in the rendering of Handel's music—and feebleness of attack—especially at the half bar or after a quaver rest—were unfortunately noticeable. In regard to the enunciation of the words an improvement was noticeable upon previous Festivals, thanks to Dr. Cowen's firm insistence on this important point at the few rehearsals that were possible. But there is still a great deal of leeway to make up in this respect. Final and other consonants did not receive their proper value—*e.g.*, 'led,' 'oppress't,' 'tribes.' A tendency to run one word into another manifested itself, sometimes with curious results, *e.g.*, 'while nightingales slull them,' and so on. And then the important matter of *feeling*—entering fully into the dramatic significance of the words. To give two instances, one longed for 'He spake the word,' and 'Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy,' such a rendering, for example, as one might hear with thrilling effect in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

We have felt it our duty again to call attention to these essential points,—they need so much *rubbing in*—not in the spirit of fault-finding, but as a means of helping to remove the inherent shortcomings that are all too prevalent in choral achievement. Moreover, we make no reflection on Dr. F. H. Cowen, who has succeeded Dr. Manns in the conductorship of the Festival. On the contrary, he has obtained remarkable results considering all the circumstances of his appointment, the limited number of his rehearsals, &c.; but the causes are too deep-rooted to be eradicated in a few meetings devoted to rehearsing a vast mass of voices, even by an experienced conductor. It is only by a general levelling-up of choral technique that the needed—the very much needed—change can be brought about. It is the bounden duty of conductors and singers to be unrelaxing in their efforts to upraise our rich inheritance of English choral song.