

The "Vicar of Bray"

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been formed in Paris for the purpose of raising subscriptions for a monument to be erected over the grave of the late Henry Litolf, at the cemetery of Colombes.

A new three-act opera, entitled "Celeste," the libretto founded upon M. Marengo's novel of the same title, was brought out last month at the National Theatre of Bucharest, where it met with a very good reception. The composer, M. Francesco Septrino, received a decoration on the occasion in question from the King of Roumania, as an encouragement to the national art.

A season of Italian Opera was inaugurated last month at St. Petersburg with "La Favorita," Madame Orsini and MM. Masini and Lombardi in the principal parts. Donizetti's opera was succeeded by Verdi's "Aida," with Mdlle. Libia Drog and the tenor, Ravelli, as the leading executants.

A new operetta, entitled "Susinette," by a lady composer, Signora Teresa Fuidi, has just met with a most complete success at the La Fenice Theatre, of Naples.

As a sign of the increasing interest which has sprung up of late years in Italy as regards the music of the countrymen of Beethoven and Wagner, it may be noticed that our Milan contemporary *La Perseveranza* has opened, with the new year, a permanent column, under the able editorship of Signor Eugenio Pirani, devoted entirely to the musical activity of the Fatherland and headed "La Germania Musicale."

Wagner's "Die Walküre" met with a most favourable reception on its first performance last month at Turin, and the same composer's "Lohengrin" has just been most enthusiastically received at Ferrara.

It is stated in Italian journals that a collection, which promises to be highly interesting, of Rossini's letters is being prepared for publication, and that search is being made for that purpose, under the auspices of the Italian Government, both in the French capital, where the composer of "Guillaume Tell" resided for so many years, and elsewhere.

The house at Pesaro where Gioacchino Rossini first saw the light on February 29, 1792, is to be purchased and kept in good preservation by the municipality of that town.

Some interesting and successful revivals have just taken place at the Teatro Nazionale, of Rome, under the zealous management of Signor Cavori—viz., of Pergolesi's "La Serva Padrona," Cimarosa's "Il Matrimonio Segreto," and Paisiello's "La Scuffiara Raggiratrice." The performances had been most carefully rehearsed, under the conductorship of Signor Sebastiani.

Verdi's once popular opera "I due Foscari" was revived last month with great success at Siena, the performance being, moreover, described as an excellent one. The work was first performed at Rome in 1844.

An excellent first performance of Wagner's "Tannhäuser" took place on December 29 at the La Scala, of Milan, Herr Scheidemantel, of Dresden, singing the part of *Wolfram*. The work met with an enthusiastic reception.

Three Italian composers have consigned finished operas to Signor Sonzogno, the well-known music publisher. Umberto Giordano has written "Mala Vita," in three acts, the libretto taken from the drama of the same name by Signori di Giacomo and Cognetti. Francesco Cilea has written "La Tilda," also in three acts; and Ernesto Coon, who is of English parentage on his father's side, has finished an opera in two acts, with a prologue, entitled "Teresa Raquin," the subject taken from Zola's novel. It is believed that all three operas will be put on the stage directly. Another young Neapolitan composer, Signor Napolitano, a pupil of the Conservatoire, hopes to have his first work, the "Profeta Velato" (The Veiled Prophet), put on the San Carlo stage, should that Opera House be opened.

Verdi's "Aida" is drawing full houses just now (despite the prevailing financial depression) at the San Carlos Theatre, of Lisbon, where the work has been most carefully and elaborately remounted under the conductorship of Senhor José Tolosa.

Under the title of "Per la Walkiria di R. Wagner," a volume has just been published (Turin: Roux and Co.) containing a series of very interesting papers, which originally appeared in the *Gazzetta Letteraria*, of Turin, from the pen of Signor Giuseppe Depanis.

Two new zarzuelas have just been successfully brought out at Barcelona—viz., at the Eldorado, the one act "El Toque de Rancho," the music by SS. Marques and Sellares; and at the Tivoli, "Karravion," in two acts, with a lively libretto by Señor José Zaldwar, and some, it is said, very charming music by Señor Frederico Gassola.

A new Mass by Signor Luigi Mancinelli was recently performed, under his direction, at the Church of San Francisco, Madrid, when it met with the highest appreciation of connoisseurs.

At one of the recent Concerts of chamber music, instituted by the music publisher M. Belaiew, at St. Petersburg, two new string quartets, by representatives of the modern Russian School, MM. Skolow and Glazounow, obtained a first hearing, and were extremely well received.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE "VICAR OF BRAY."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—The following notes respecting the above song now under discussion may be of interest to some of your readers. The air which Dr. Mee discovered in a MS. dated 1752 has evidently been originally copied from a book in six volumes, published by Walsh in 1734, entitled "The British Musical Miscellany; or, the Delightful Grove." A reference to this book, Vol. I., p. 30, will show that it is note for note and in the same key as the air in Dr. Mee's MS. I do not think that it is the original air to which the "Vicar of Bray" was written, but I have no proof to the contrary. The air is undoubtedly "Bessy Bell and Mary Gray," for in the ballad opera of "The Mock Doctor," printed in 1732, by John Watts, the same air is printed under the old title, "Bessy Bell." This copy is not merely *like* it, but is *exactly* the same except in being set a note lower in pitch. The air in question was one to a ballad before Ramsay's time, now lost (my earliest copy of Ramsay's song is in a collection by him, printed for the author, 1721), and this tune was first printed in Henry Playford's "Original Scotch Tunes," 1700 and 1701. The tune printed by Playford is not *identical* with the one given in "The Mock Doctor," but sufficient similarity exists between them. It is found to be more similar in W. Thomson's "Orpheus Caledonius," 1725, folio, and in his octavo edition, 1733. Bremner's "Thirty Scots Songs," published in Edinburgh about 1745 (and reprinted many times afterwards, both in Edinburgh and London), has the tune as reprinted by Dr. Mee in last month's *MUSICAL TIMES*.

I think it is probable that Walsh, not knowing the tune (if it ever had one previously) to the "Vicar of Bray," set it to "Bessy Bell" in his "British Musical Miscellany," 1734; he afterwards republished it in his "Merry Musician; or, a Cure for the Spleen," 1735, Vol. II. The air to the "Vicar of Bray" now so familiar was originally a tune for a song called the "Country Garden," the words of which appear to be lost. The "Country Garden" had two settings, of which the "Vicar of Bray" version was the "new way," as witness the following from a Flute Tutor, by Daniel Wright, circa 1735-6:—

THE "COUNTRY GARDEN" (THE NEW WAY).

From "The Compleat Tutor for ye Flute," by Daniel Wright, 8vo, circa 1735.



As far as my researches have gone, I do not find the "Vicar of Bray" united to its now popular air before late

in the eighteenth century; not, I believe, prior to the song of the "Neglected Tar," by Edward Rushton, of Liverpool, which, set to a version of the same air, made it popular.

Respecting the words of the song, Chappell, quoting Nichols, tells us that the song "Vicar of Bray" was written by a soldier in George I.'s reign; I have now to claim another authorship for it. In a copy of a book published in Queen Anne's reign, called "Miscellaneous writings in verse and prose, both serious and comical . . . by Mr. Edward Ward, Vol. III., the second edition, with large additions and amendments. London, 1712." 8vo, at page 321 is the following poem in eighteen verses, some of which are here reproduced :—

THE RELIGIOUS TURNCOAT; OR, THE TRIMMING PARSON.

I lov'd no king in Forty-one,
When Prelacy went down,
A cloak and band I then put on
And preach'd against the Crown.

Chorus—A Turncoat is a cunning man,
That cants to admiration,
And prays for any side to gain
The people's approbation.

When Charles return'd into the land
The English Crown's supporter,
I shifted off my cloak and band,
And then became a Courtier.

Chorus—A Turncoat, &c.

The King's religion I profess,
And found there was no harm in't;
I cog'd and flatter'd like the rest,
Till I had got preferment.

Chorus—A Turncoat, &c.

When Royal James began his reign,
And mass was us'd in common,
I shifted off my faith again,
And then became a Roman.

Chorus—A Turncoat, &c.

When William had possess'd the throne,
And cur'd the nation's grievance,
New principles I then put on,
And swore to him allegiance.

Chorus—A Turncoat, &c.

But when Queen Anne the throne posses't,
I then to save my bacon,
Turn'd High Church, thinking that was best,
But found myself mistaken.

Chorus—A Turncoat, &c.

Therefore, all you, both high and low,
Let me for once direct ye,
Serve no cause longer than you know
The party can protect you.

Chorus—A Turncoat, &c.

The "Vicar of Bray" is laid a generation later than the foregoing, but whoever was its author he has been indebted to Ward's song. Who Ned Ward was, and how he was pilloried by Pope in the "Dunciad," is out of the present question.

I have not sent copies of the airs I have referred to above, as I do not wish to take up valuable space, but can do so either privately or through your paper should it be desired.—I am, yours truly,

FRANK KIDSON.

128, Burley Road, Leeds.

P.S.—I also find Dr. Mee's version of the "Vicar of Bray" in an early engraved musical broadside, circa 1735-40, in my possession. It is entitled "The Vicar of Bray set for the German Flute." No publisher's or engraver's name is attached.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL TIMES."

SIR,—The following facts regarding the air of "Bessy Bell and Mary Gray" may be of interest to Mr. Mee. In "Songs of Scotland," edited, with notes, by George Farquhar Graham in 1849—undoubtedly our best collection—the air occurs identical with that quoted by Mr. Mee from "Thirty Scots Songs," but in the key of F.

Graham, in his foot-note, says, "Mr. Stenhouse's note upon this song is as follows: 'The first stanza of this song is old, the rest of it was written by Ramsay. Thomson adapted Ramsay's improved song to the old air in his

"Orpheus Caledonius" in 1725, from whence it was copied into the first volume of Watts's "Musical Miscellany," printed in London in 1729. The tune also appears in Craig's Collection, in 1730, and in many others subsequent to that period. . . . Mr. Gay selected the tune of "Bessy Bell and Mary Gray" for one of his songs in the "Beggar's" opera, beginning, "A curse attends that woman's love who always would be pleasing," acted at London in 1728." (The two young ladies thus commemorated died of the plague in the year 1645.)

The above extract proves that the origin of this melody must be sought for as a printed production a good quarter of a century earlier than the date ascribed to the flute melody first quoted by Mr. Mee; so that his surmise gains strength and probability—i.e., that the air of "Bessy Bell and Mary Gray" was the real origin of the "Dragoon's" air, and so of the "Vicar of Bray" melody.

However, I subjoin a third melody, which can be found, set to English words, and entitled "Once a farmer and his wife," in the Royal Edition of "Songs of Wales," which, spite of great differences in tonality, bears a marked resemblance to the two tunes under discussion in its "lilt," accent, and rhythm, and has even a still more unusual final bar.—I am, yours very truly,

F. R. C.

WELSH AIR, "Y SAITH GYSADUR."



TO CORRESPONDENTS.

. Notices of concerts, 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 must specifically denote the date of each concert, for without such date no notice can be taken of the performance.

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.

A.—The Mass was certainly believed to be by Mozart when first published, and as it is so widely known by its present title, a change of this would only cause confusion, especially as the work has not been absolutely proved to be the composition of another.

A. H. V. (Brixton).—Germer's "How to play the pianoforte" is not published complete in English.

CONSTANT READER (Truro).—If we could be sure that the composer had always noted down his exact intention, it is obvious that unless accompanied by a staccato mark or occurring at the end of a group united by a "slur" every note should be sounded during its full time-value. A rest following a note has no power to shorten the duration of that note.

C. W. PARKINSON (Blackpool).—The season lasts from October 1 to June 1. Salary, about £100; qualifications, a thorough knowledge of the subject.

H. E. THORNE.—The muffled roll of drums in the Dead March in "Saul" was not in the original score, but has become a matter of tradition with organists.

VOICE (Auckland, N.Z.).—No English edition of Rokitansky's book "Sänger und Singen" has yet been published.

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.

BIGGLESWADE.—At the Town Hall, on the 7th ult., an encouraging performance was given of Sterndale Bennett's *May Queen* by the recently formed District Choral Society, conducted by Mr. J. G. Cooper. The solos were efficiently rendered by the Misses Ada Loaring and Florence Croft, and Messrs. A. Kenningham and H. E. Lockhart; the pianoforte and harmonium accompaniments were played by Mrs. Welch and Mrs. Kempe.