

A Huddersfield Music-Making

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Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 43, No. 710 (Apr. 1, 1902), pp. 239-241

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3369698>

Accessed: 18-12-2015 14:22 UTC

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A HUDDERSFIELD MUSIC-MAKING.

Huddersfield is not a very fertile field from an antiquarian point of view. It is true that the surrounding country contains some Druidical remains, that the adjoining township of Longwood was once a Roman station known as *Cambodunum*, and that the Castle Hill, Almondbury, is the site of a Saxon fortress. But Huddersfield itself—called in the Domesday Book *Odersfelt*, after the first Saxon colonist in the place—is an important business centre of a century's growth. Ninety years ago an entry was made in the Parish Church books to this effect:—

Resolved: That a standing constable to act as police-officer is highly necessary, and shall be elected for this township.

Five years later the church books record, as one of the duties of the aforesaid standing police-constable, that he had 'to visit the public-houses frequently.' Within living memory it was customary for the churchwardens to pay official visits, after the reading of the second lesson at Morning Prayer, to clear the churchyard of loiterers and dogs, and then to visit the public houses—of course, in an official capacity! A curious financial entry in the church books reads thus:—

1817. May 2, Paid Hedghogs, Weasles, & Co. 4s. 8d.

The musical history of Huddersfield may be said to have commenced with the year 1812, when a youth, Thomas Parratt, by name, just passing out of his teens, became the first organist of the Parish Church. The congregation, to avoid any difficulties that might arise in regard to charges on the church rate (then levied on the whole parish), raised an endowment, which was settled in trust to provide a salary for the organist in perpetuity. Mr. Parratt began his duties on December 25, 1812, and played at fifty Christmas services. He was succeeded by his son, Henry, who has played on forty similar occasions—thus father and son between them have officiated for ninety Christmas Days without a break—probably an unique record. A younger son of Thomas Parratt is Sir Walter Parratt, Master of the Musick to the King and organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

It may not be without interest to give the specification of the first organ in Huddersfield Parish Church, erected by William Gray, in the year 1812:—

GREAT (8 stops).	
1. Double Diapason (to CC).	5. Twelfth.
2. Open Diapason.	6. Fifteenth.
3. Stopped Diapason.	7. Sesquialtera, III ranks.
4. Principal.	8. Trumpet.
CHOIR (5 stops).	
9. Stopped Diapason.	12. Fifteenth.
10. Principal.	13. Violoncello.
11. Flute.	
SWELL (6 stops).	
14. Open Diapason.	17. Cornet, III ranks.
15. Stopped Diapason.	18. Trumpet.
16. Principal.	19. Hautboy.

COMPASS: Great and Choir, GG (no GG sharp) to $\text{f}\sharp$ in alt., 58 notes.
Swell, Tenor C to $\text{f}\sharp$ in alt., 42 notes.

Mr. Thomas Parratt (of whom we give a portrait) is to this day referred to in terms of high esteem. He was an excellent organist, and it is from him that his two sons have inherited their accompaniment gifts. In the old days of the West Gallery organ and singing pew, the quartet of soloists at Huddersfield Parish Church included the celebrated Mrs. Sunderland, known as 'the Yorkshire Queen of Song'—now an octogenarian—and Mrs. Lister Peace, the mother of Dr. A. L. Peace, himself a native of the town, and now organist of St. George's Hall, Liverpool. Thomas Parratt was not only the first professional musician

who started in practice in Huddersfield, but he worthily held the chief place there for half-a-century. A tablet placed in the South Gallery of the Parish Church records his worth in these words:—

In Memory of
THOMAS PARRATT
of this town,
Who died 27 March, 1862,
In the 70th year of his age.
He was the first organist of this Church,
and filled that office
with zeal and ability during 50 years.
This monument
is erected by members of the congregation
and other friends.

In addition to Mr. Henry L. Parratt, already referred to, the names of Mr. Joshua Marshall and Mr. John North must be mentioned as having done good work for the cause of music in the town for many years.



MR. THOMAS PARRATT (1793-1862),
ORGANIST OF HUDDERSFIELD PARISH CHURCH FROM 1812 TO 1862.
(From an oil painting by G. D. Tomlinson.)

The reputation of Huddersfield stands high as a music-loving centre. Its townsmen have gone forth to various parts of the world as organists and singers, and their attainments—as, for instance, Sir Walter Parratt and Dr. Peace—have given distinction to their birthplace. And then what shall be said of those glorious West Riding voices? The books of reference state that Huddersfield 'is the chief seat of the fancy woollen trade,' but the voices of the inhabitants thereof are anything but 'woolly.' Choral music has long characterised the town and surrounding country, and its deep-rooted traditions of magnificent tone and genuine enthusiasm are splendidly maintained in present-day attainments. The strongest proof of these precious qualities was furnished at

a concert of the Huddersfield Choral Society on the evening of the 7th ult.; but let us first take a peep at the early days of this vigorous Society.

The Huddersfield Choral Society was founded at the Plough Inn, Westgate, June 7, 1836. Here are a few extracts from its eight-and-twenty Rules and Regulations, as revised on December 16, 1842:—

I. That this Society shall be designated "The Huddersfield Choral Society," and shall have for its object the improvement of the talent and taste of this town and neighbourhood, in the performance of Sacred and Choral Music, Overtures, etc.; for which purpose meetings shall be held on the Friday on or before the full of the moon in every month.

There were no street lamps in those days, hence the full-moon reference. After very strictly laying down the law in regard to management, membership, subscriptions, &c., there is a reference to creature comforts in these words:—

IX. That on the Monthly nights each member shall have allowed three gills of ale, bread, cheese, etc.; and on the Quarterly, such other refreshments as shall be agreed upon by the Committee.

'Fines,' ranging from sixpence to five times that amount, figure largely in the Society's original constitution—a fine Society, one might call it. Here is a salutary rule:—

XIII. Should any member or members leave the Orchestra before the conclusion of any performance, without giving a satisfactory reason to the Leader, he or she shall be fined sixpence.

The next to be quoted might be liable to abuse, though it has the merit of novelty—

XXI. That at the Monthly meetings any member shall be allowed to give his or her opinion on any piece of music, providing it be done in a respectful, friendly and becoming manner; but not to stop, interrupt, or make any disturbance during the performance, on pain of forfeiting the sum of two shillings and sixpence for each offence, or be excluded.

Rules XXII. and XXVI. are of disciplinary excellence:—

XXII. Any member being intoxicated, or using obscene or abusive language, at any of the meetings, shall forfeit sixpence for each offence.

XXVI. That any member taking a copy away without first acquainting the Librarian, shall be fined two shillings and sixpence.

No one who is acquainted with Yorkshire folk and their warm-hearted *camaraderie* could doubt that one of the fundamentals of the Society was a fostering of a social spirit, but socialism was tabooed. Rule XXVIII. reads:—

That no person shall be a member of this Society, who frequents the "Hall of Science" or any of the "Socialist Meetings," nor shall the Librarian be allowed to lend any copies of music (knowingly) belonging to this Society to any Socialist, upon pain of expulsion.

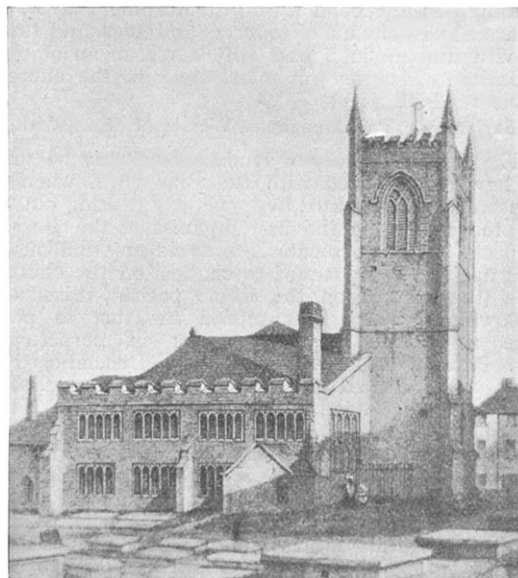
At the present time the Society—which is eighty years old—consists of 345 singing members, distributed thus:—

SOPRANOS	116
ALTOS (19 males)	86
TENORS	72
BASSES	71
Total	<u>345</u>

Thirty years ago there were only two contraltos in the choir, and the men who sang the alto part thought nothing of changing their registers, with ludicrous effect, in such a phrase as 'And the glory of the Lord.' At the present time, members are

admitted into the Society 'if approved by the Committee,' the gentlemen paying an entrance fee of two shillings and sixpence, the ladies being admitted free. The Society possesses a fine library of choral works, ranging from 'The Messiah' to 'King Olaf.' A new departure was taken at the beginning of the season 1901-2 by the appointment of Dr. Henry Coward, of Sheffield, to the office of conductor. This happy arrangement has had a marked effect upon the Society in more respects than one. Many of the members had got into the way of attending the rehearsals only as a duty; others, being less dutiful, became very lax in this respect; but now, under Dr. Coward's inspiring leadership, the weekly practisings have become a real pleasure to all concerned, and this vigorous Society has entered upon a new lease of life. Enthusiastic devotion to a cause is half the battle of success.

The 239th concert of the Society took place in the Town Hall, Huddersfield, on the 7th ult., when the programme comprised Mendelssohn's 'Hymn of



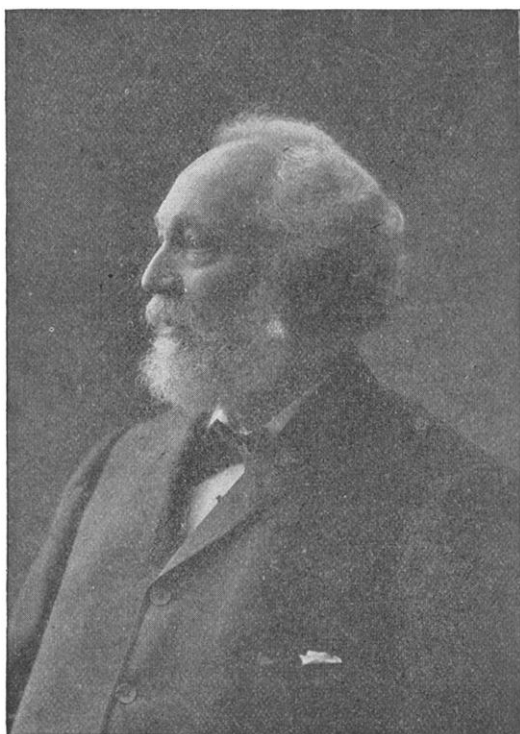
THE OLD PARISH CHURCH, HUDDERSFIELD.

(From an old print kindly lent by Sir Walter Parratt.)

Praise,' and 'Athalie,' both works being performed in the presence of a large and enthusiastic audience. The band of sixty-six performers, for the most part local, we are glad to say—gave a good account of themselves in Mendelssohn's more familiar work. Miss Agnes Nicholls—in excellent voice, and full of artistic energy—Madame Annie Phillips, Miss Emily Berry, Madame H. England, Miss Ethel B. Ramsden, and Mr. Joseph O'Mara, were the soloists, while Mr. J. Edgar Ibeson—an excellent pianoforte accompanist, by-the-way—rendered good service at the organ.

The honours of the evening were, however, carried off by the choir. How magnificently they sang those Praise choruses of Mendelssohn's! Tone, attack, and pure intonation were not the only commendable features of the choral performance; intelligence and enthusiasm—and, indeed, refinement, as in 'I waited for the Lord'—were present to a very marked degree. The ease with which the sopranos took their high B flats, and the electrifying F's and G's of the tenors were, indeed, thrilling to a degree. The altos and basses were

no less fit, and the choir was one about which any conductor and any town might boast. It would be invidious to single out any special point of excellence when all reached the high-water mark; but the unaccompanied strains of *Nun danket* ('Let all men praise the Lord') greeted the ear with a peculiar beauty that will not soon be forgotten. 'Athalie'—of which, it may be observed, the overture was composed by Mendelssohn in London, during his visit of 1844—had not, we were informed, been sung by the Society for some twenty-five years, therefore the music was much less familiar to both band and chorus than the earlier work which formed the first part of the programme, but the March of the Priests made its usual effect. It only remains to be said that Dr. Coward conducted with that exuberance of spirit which characterises everything he takes in hand, including



MR. BEN STOCKS,
PRESIDENT OF THE HUDDERSFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY.
(Photograph by Mr. John E. Shaw, Huddersfield.)

his baton. He is evidently the right man in the right place as conductor of the Huddersfield Choral Society. Long may it flourish under his invigorating sway!

Huddersfield, like other cities and towns, is to be congratulated on its Choral Society officers:—Mr. Ben Stocks, the President, and Mr. J. Eagleton, Secretary, as chiefs, though yeoman service has been rendered by Mr. William Harrop, Mr. J. A. Wrigley, J.P., and Mr. J. J. Grist, members of the committee. In the course of a pleasant chat (after the concert) at the Borough Club—located in the very house in which the Parratt family resided—Mr. Ben Stocks relates the story of his early music-makings in Huddersfield forty or fifty years ago. It was then the custom to meet for a feast of song, on the Friday nearest the full moon, in various neighbouring towns and villages. The

method of conveyance from place to place was 'Shanks's mare,' and a walk of eight miles over the hills to get to the rendezvous was a mere nothing to those enthusiastic music lovers. Places like Honley, Brighouse, New Mill, were visited in rotation; and it was a common experience, for instance, to walk to New Mill on a Saturday afternoon, have 'a good sing,' then supper, leave the place of rehearsal at about eleven o'clock, walk home in the moonlight, and yet be at church at 9.30 on the following (Sunday) morning, ready for rehearsal, and as fresh as cucumbers!

No less enthusiastic is the honorary secretary of the Society, Mr. John Eagleton, who, like Mr. Ben Stocks, is a fine specimen of an amateur musician and a sturdy Yorkshireman, yet genial withal. A native of Huddersfield, Mr. Eagleton joined the Society forty years ago. Six years later he was placed on the Committee, and, since 1872, he has been the ever-alert Secretary. History says that Mr. Eagleton has not been altogether unacquainted with burnt cork; but in 1870 he took up the more serious study of the bassoon. He and Mr. Cyril Spottiswoode are the only amateur double-bassoon players in this country and Mr. Eagleton has played his monster instrument at the Handel Festivals, and at several London concerts. With such a trio of able officers as Ben Stocks, John Eagleton, and Henry Coward, and with such splendid singers as those who form the chorus, the Huddersfield Choral Society bids fair to sustain the reputation of the West Riding of Yorkshire as the Home of the Oratorio.

DOTTED CROCHET.

NOTES ON SOME FORGOTTEN SYMPHONY COMPOSERS:

C. PH. E. BACH, DITTERSDORF, AND IGNAZ PLEYEL.

By PROFESSOR NIECKS.

The Programme of Professor Niecks's Fourth Historical Concert, 'Some Forgotten Symphony Composers,' given at Edinburgh on February 19th, contained the following interesting introductory remarks.

To recall the forgotten, or, rather, to disinter the buried, is profitable in more than one respect. It enables us to realise tastes, styles, and personalities of the past better than the most graphic of descriptions can do, enables us to learn the lesson that older forms may be different phases without being lower stages of development, and enables us to prove the fact that many things shelved are worthy to be brought forth again.

C. PH. E. BACH (1714-88), the son of J. S. Bach, he whom Haydn and Mozart called their father, was a cultivator of the 'gallant' style (so-called in contradistinction to the contrapuntal and fugal style), and one of the chief developers of the modern sonata. As a composer of sonatas he is better known than as a composer of symphonies. From 1741 to 1776 the master composed, however, as many as eighteen symphonies, five of which were printed in his life-time, and four of these reprinted in 1860. Characteristic of C. Ph. E. Bach's works are liveliness of imagination and variety of form. The masterly Symphony in D, among others, illustrates this strikingly. It consists of three movements—the first a well-developed, spirited *Allegro di molto*, the second a short, singing *Largo* of only twenty-seven bars, and the third a nimble, by no means long, *Presto*. The unconventionality of the composer comes out in the continuity of the work (the first movement leads into the second, the second into the third); it comes out