

British Music and Patriotism

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years ago Mr. E. J. Dent showed to me several hitherto unknown Church compositions in MS. by Lully, which had been recently unearthed in Paris. I examined them carefully. They are as unlike his secular compositions, composed for the Court, as any thinking man would expect from a composer of Lully's versatility and discrimination. Humfrey and Blow presumably were influenced by Lully's Church compositions as well as by his secular work. Purcell was a pupil of both, and we acknowledge him to be the most distinguished composer whom we have produced. Yet we easily and thoughtlessly credit him with gross lack of taste, which fails to distinguish between secular and sacred. If Purcell's anthems be secular, then the word has no meaning for me.

One more grumble. Your able writer continues, "The Fairy Queen," "King Arthur," "Dido and Æneas," and "Dioclesian," . . . are hardly likely to be performed save by societies of an antiquarian or other special character.' I cannot agree. In July, 1914, we had here at Cambridge University over a hundred young people—undergraduates, women students, and others—most of them keenly interested in modern developments of art in all forms, rehearsing 'The Fairy Queen' with obvious enthusiasm, and revelling in its tunes and rhythms, its delightful freshness and humour. Further, a similar number of enthusiasts—some of them, I am glad to think, the same people as in 1914—in our rejuvenated University are going to give six performances of the same work in the Cambridge Theatre in February, 1920. I hope and believe that if those who call much of Purcell's music antiquarian will come and hear it, they will find that Purcell is still unsurpassed in invention, humour, and power of setting his native tongue to music.—Yours, &c.,

Cambridge,
August 11, 1919.

CYRIL B. ROOTHAM.

['FESTE' writes:

'I am glad to hear that the *ritornelli* sound more in keeping than their appearance on paper suggests. Opportunities for hearing Purcell's anthems are so rare that few of us are able to apply the only satisfactory test—that of the ear. But even so, I doubt whether the best of performances can remove the other serious objection to some of these passages—their too frequent interruption of the main musical stream. In both matters, however, I do not press my theory against Dr. Rootham's practice. In regard to the dramatic works, until I see some signs to the contrary I must adhere to my opinion that they are hardly likely to be performed save by Societies of an antiquarian or other special character. The Cambridge performances surely come under the second category. I have so much faith in the attractive power of the best of these works that I hope the missionary efforts of Dr. Rootham and others will lead to their being taken up by the average choral Society. Further, I suggest that during the week in which the "Fairy Queen" is given at Cambridge, the College chapels should draw their service music as far as possible from Purcell, using the orchestral accompaniments when practicable. Those of us who come will then have a fine opportunity for hearing and comparing two sides of the composer's work.']

PURCELL'S SONATAS.

SIR,—I entirely agree with 'Feste's' remarks on the Sonatas of Purcell. I am frequently asked to suggest music of the kind for concerts in England and abroad, and the only editions of the Sonatas that can be obtained are a few odd German ones. It is high time that the best of these works appeared in a cheap and handy form.—Yours, &c.,

'PURCELLIAN.'

BRITISH MUSIC AND PATRIOTISM.

SIR,—I have been listening to the controversy over British music which has been raging of late, with great interest and sometimes with no little amusement—to the senseless rant of the self-supposed patriot who denies the great German composers because they are German; to the unthinking enthusiast who persuades himself that British music is 'the goods' because it is British.

Both types of writer fail to understand that the intelligent listener wishes to hear *good* music, but cares not a rap what is the nationality of the composer. It therefore behoves the

British composer to make *good* music rather than aim at *British* music. Most of the controversy has been argued, on the one hand by men with 'names' in the musical world who, from the tone of their arguments, seem to have axes to grind, and, on the other hand, by critics who are suffering from mental indigestion due to a surfeit of musical food. I have been in France four and a half years, returning home in March. During that time I have been quite out of touch with music other than marching songs and the like. I now find very great changes in British music at home. I derive comfort from and feel hopeful for the future when I listen to Stanford, Delius, Bantock, and a very few others; but the vast majority of stuff I hear fills me with despair. The recipe for most of it might well be as follows: Grate some sounds until they form a hard, chaotic mixture; mix with a lot of rests and a scale or two that has been buried for some hundreds of years; stir well; add a good lyric; serve hot, with lots of froth on top.

You have only to mix the same ingredients in different proportions, give the mess a different name, and there you have a new dish to delight British musical appetite!

I find far greater sincerity and true expression of feeling in songs of the 'Tipperary' class which I heard at the Front than the stuff I hear at home, which only masquerades as good British music. Thank God for Stanford and the few others!—Yours, &c.,

ALEXANDER BAILLIE.

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BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY'S NEW CATALOGUE.

SIR,—Will you allow me the courtesy of your columns to call the attention of British composers to the catalogue which is now being compiled and which we hope to publish in October? I anticipate that it will be a bound volume of some 400 pages, and as we are anxious to make this, the general catalogue, as complete as possible, I invite those composers who have not yet been approached for lists of their compositions, to send such lists to me at once, with the names of the publishers.—Yours, &c.,

FRANK SOLMAN

19, Berners Street, W.1. (Secretary to the Information Bureau Committee, British Music Society).
August 7, 1919.

THE GRAMOPHONE AS AN AID TO MUSICAL APPRECIATION.

SIR,—It has struck me that the frequent repetition of certain compositions at concerts is not due merely to the 'cussedness' of the British musical public, but to the fact that at present the only means that the listener has of becoming familiar with the masterpieces of music—of 'making them his own,' as it were—is by hearing them at concerts. I am of opinion that this intimacy is the *summum bonum* of music from the listener's point of view, but in any case the psychological factor cannot be ignored, more particularly by those who have the interests of British composers at heart. The policy of substituting for the present system one in which a great diversity of complex modern works are performed will inevitably tend to drive audiences back to that type of music which they can appreciate at a first hearing, the result being a degradation of musical taste which cannot but react on the standard of British composition.

The solution appears to me to lie in making the general public more familiar with the classics by improving and popularising the means of mechanical reproduction. In proportion as this object is attained, so will there be increasing opportunities at concerts for the introduction of new works, the concert-platform being thereby relieved of some part of its duties as a means of musical education, and becoming more the centre of musical progress.

As to the means of achieving this object, the gramophone seems to offer the greatest possibilities but for the fact of the limitations at present imposed by the size of records. I have recently heard reproductions of chamber music which in point of tonal fidelity were almost all that could be desired, but in which the compositions recorded were so ruthlessly mutilated, owing to lack of space, as to be hopelessly unsatisfying from a musical point of view.