

With this Number are presented gratis Extra Supplements, consisting of a new Anthem for Easter, by Bruce Steane, entitled, "The first day of the week"; a new Part-Song, by C. Hubert H. Parry, entitled, "There rolls the deep"; and the fac-simile of a letter written by Mdle. Tietjens.

THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR.

MARCH 1, 1896.

JOSEPH BARNBY.

WE cannot be satisfied with the hurried words which appeared in this journal last month having reference to the sudden removal of Sir Joseph Barnby. Something more than the usual biographical details is required in the case of any man who has occupied a prominent position and done something which his contemporaries have recognised as a claim to honour and gratitude. Such a man certainly was our departed friend, and in the columns of *THE MUSICAL TIMES* that fact should be made prominent. All the world of music knows that between Joseph Barnby and the conductors of this journal existed, for many years, a close personal and business relationship. It is among their happiest reflections that the house of Novello was the means, after he had left his native city and settled in London, of extending to him material encouragement. They recall, too, with peculiar pleasure the fact that through the same agency opportunity was given for demonstrating and maturing in most practical fashion their friend's exceptional qualities as a choir-trainer and conductor, and for placing his merits as a composer in public sight. Association so close and prolonged cannot lightly be treated when, in the order of nature, the ties are broken, when voice no longer answers to voice, or hand meets hand. At such a time, besides dwelling gratefully upon the past, the lessons of a closed life may best be gathered up, and a character, for ever withdrawn into the serene region which lies beyond human passion and failing, obtain the recognition which is its due.

To say that man is determined by the circumstances of his environment is, perhaps, to underrate the forces of human nature. The philosopher, indeed, tells us that we should bend circumstances to our will, but, unhappily, philosophers are apt to take upon themselves the privileges of the poet and create in fancy that which does not exist in reality. Every day experience teaches us that some men are born to good luck and others to luck that is bad; this being only another way of saying that some have been fortunate, and others unfortunate in the conditions and surroundings of their lives. In the matter of Joseph Barnby,

it seems to us beyond question that Providence was wholly kind. Born into a musical family, with inherited musical tastes, he was like the seed that fell upon good ground. All things were suitable to his development: the place readily found for his boyish gifts in the choir of a great and solemn Minster, where, day by day, "service high and anthem clear" brought him under the direct influence of art in its most exalted application; and, besides this, long, steady, quiet training, at a susceptible age, in the finest and most fruitful school which England can boast. Such an atmosphere every sensible man would most readily choose for the development of youthful talent, and in it Barnby received a first healthy, orderly impulse towards the career in which he was to gain distinction. The impulse was, of course, general, in the direction of music as a whole, but it was markedly particular from the very nature of the case, and Barnby, as a Church musician, kept to the path wherein his early steps were guided. Study at the Royal Academy did not divert him from what may have seemed a natural and pre-destined road. Had it done so there would have been no occasion for surprise, since we all know that the attractions of secular art are great; and its ways obviously decked with lights and flowers—with all the charms congenial to youth. But, whether from force of early training or from the shrewd common-sense which was his through life, Barnby remained faithful to religious music, and, making a humble beginning as organist and choirmaster, passed by decisive stages to one of the highest peaks of his profession. We must respect and honour the qualities he evinced as a conductor and head of a great school, but before and above everything else the ex-chorister of York Minster was a servant of those great and solemn rites in which, faithfully carried out, there is more than enough to satisfy the most craving soul. As may be supposed, we include here the work Barnby did as a Church composer. That will remain, a permanent memorial when time shall have effaced all recollection of triumphs at St. Andrew's, Wells Street, and elsewhere. To it, therefore, one looks with particular interest, and to it we must direct peculiar attention.

The complete list of Barnby's writings, though it would not be specially remarkable as that of a musician who restricted himself to composition, is a very striking monument of industry in the case of a man constantly engaged with other branches of the profession. Under the head of "Services," twenty-one works or arrangements are mentioned. These include only one complete Service, but there are two settings of the *Te Deum*, six of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*, four arrangements of the *Preces* and *Responses*, besides chant forms of the *Canticles*, *Offertory Sentences*, &c. It is, however, when we come

to Anthems that Barnby's greatest strength and fecundity appear. This part of the list contains forty-six numbers, and includes provision almost for the entire round of the Christian year. There are Anthems for Advent, Christmas, and Easter; for harvest celebrations and wedding rites; for St. Michael's Day and Ascension; for Trinity and the Feasts of Apostles and Martyrs, besides, of course, a large number for general occasions. From forty-six Anthems to two Cantatas—"Rebekah" and "The Lord is King"—is a great drop, suggesting that the composer recognised some real or fancied limitations in that direction, though they do not appear in the structure and character of either piece. A number of Hymn-tunes—not less than 250—thirteen Carols, nineteen Songs, thirty-two Four-part Songs, composed or arranged; five Trios for female voices, two Organ Pieces, and two Piano-forte Pieces complete the roll; looking into the details of which, one is struck with the vast preponderance of religious music and the steadiness with which Barnby kept mainly to the path of his early training and his personal sympathies.

Concerning the merits of Barnby's music, a precise opinion can only be formed after careful examination and classification. But an important general remark is this—that the composer showed himself in sympathy with the musical feeling of his day rather than with the austere scholasticism of an earlier time. The fact might easily have been different, since Barnby's most impressionable years belonged to a time in which the older school of Church composers flourished and the era of free effects and what was then looked upon as operatic sentiment had only just begun to dawn. Barnby, however, had few tastes in common with the contrapuntists. He was essentially, if not assertively, a man of his own era. While shunning frivolity and the undignified, he did not at all see why the Church should be closed against musical developments in the direction of ornate or even pretty effects. To this he gave practical expression in his works, but always with the prudence and self-restraint which were conspicuous in his musical career. Hence the popularity of his compositions as things having in them the modern spirit yet not offensive to older tastes. We cannot forestall the judgments of the future, and it remains to be seen whether Barnby's anthems, &c., will win for him a lasting place among the finest masters of Church song; but one would fain believe, and can scarcely resist prophesying, that not a few of them will go down to far distant posterity, and to that extent assure the fame of their author.

Next in importance to the departed musician's various Church labours must be placed his work as a conductor. This should be considered with reference to two distinct branches—direction of choral compositions and of those

exclusively orchestral. We employ the word "distinct," because many of the qualities necessary in the case of a choral conductor are independent of those essential to a *chef d'orchestre*, and a man who fails in the one department may attain even to eminence in the other. On the whole, and with regard merely to executive success, the function first-named strikes us as more onerous than the second and as demanding qualities wider in range, if not more profound. An orchestral conductor has to do with comparatively few performers, all more or less cultured and skilful, whom experience has made quick to understand and execute, and who, moreover, cannot afford to trifle with their task or taskmaster. A choral conductor, on the other hand, has to work upon a mass of amateurs, unequal in attainment, varying in devotion, needing to be humoured, and generally quick to resent what they regard as improper treatment. No doubt the difficulties are less in some cases than in others, but we have indicated those which, to some extent, are generally present. A choral conductor, therefore, needs the rare power of keeping men and women in good humour, while exacting from them all the work that may be necessary and enforcing all the discipline required.

As the conductor of an orchestra running alone, and not merely in accompaniment, Barnby's opportunities were few, save for a period during which he did work that has largely escaped the notice of his biographers. We refer to his direction of the daily orchestral concerts in the Albert Hall, through the season of 1873. The repertory in this case is now before us, and contains eighteen symphonies, forty-seven overtures, seven concertos, seven marches, and five works described as "miscellaneous." The daily concerts given during the winter of 1874-5 were more mixed and "popular," but the catalogue contains, nevertheless, a long array of instrumental compositions. The support given to these enterprises was scanty, and both Barnby and his orchestra strove against depressing conditions; but the general merit of the performances was surprisingly high. With characteristic shrewdness and self-knowledge, however, the then rising musician saw where his chief strength lay. As a choral conductor he felt in himself the power of supremacy and proceeded to develop it accordingly. His great success all men know. It mattered not whether the music was that of the oratorio, the secular cantata, or the madrigal. Wherever voices were chiefly concerned, there he was master of the situation. Some excellent choir-trainers were his contemporaries, but not his equals, much less his superiors. In this respect his death involves an unqualified loss. Barnby's compositions remain, but the qualities which made him a great choral conductor have vanished with his life, and by so much is music in England the poorer.

Our friend had not sufficient time given him to show his full resources as principal of a great School, nor do we know the precise conditions under which he laboured during the few years vouchsafed to him. But an indeterminate condition in this case does not impair the value of his life and work. We could ill spare him, but there remains to us the force of his example—the power of single-mindedness which lies at the root of all distinguished achievement. For that let us preserve his memory.

J. B.

HANS VON BÜLOW IN HIS LETTERS.*

UNDER the editorship of Bülow's widow, who has evidently regarded her task as one of love and pious devotion, the world has recently been enriched by the publication of two volumes, comprising two hundred and forty letters, which were penned during the period 1841-55, and together cover over nine hundred pages. By far the greater number of them were addressed by Bülow to his father, mother, and sister, and only a few to such well-known musicians as Fr. Wieck, J. Raff, Th. Uhlig, Liszt, Fr. Kroll, P. Cornelius, R. Pohl, Alexander Ritter, R. Radecke, and L. Köhler. By way of throwing light upon the context, letters from other individuals are occasionally interpolated—*e.g.*, from Franziska von Bülow (Bülow's mother) to her daughter, from Liszt and Wagner to Bülow's parents, and from Berlioz to Bülow.

Though the letters of young men to their parents and sisters are generally of a perfunctory kind, and therefore devoid of general interest, this cannot be said of Bülow's. Couched in a thoroughly filial and reverential manner, those addressed to his parents read like the utterances of a friend to a friend on equal terms. He seems to have withheld nothing from them, and to have told them all that most interested himself, and which, as he thought, would most interest them. Thus, during his school and his college days, we find him discoursing upon his scholastic studies, the lecturers and preachers to whom he had listened, quite as much as upon music, the study of which, under competent teachers, his parents encouraged in his earliest days as a humanizing element, and without any thought of his making music his profession; but which, as the event proved, was fated to exercise so strong an influence upon his future life, to the great disappointment of his parents (especially his mother), who had set their hearts upon his studying jurisprudence, with the view to his becoming a Government servant or diplomatist. The announcement of his determination to devote himself to music and to music alone

came upon them as a most heavy blow, though it was one which must have long been foreseen. Most heartrending are the letters addressed to his parents excusing and justifying himself for this irresistible determination, and begging their forgiveness for the step he had taken, and which for a long time caused a most unhappy estrangement between them.

The task of collating and editing this first instalment of Letters has been carried out in a thoroughly admirable and practical manner. The Letters are grouped in chronological order in sections, determined by the places of residence from which they were addressed, each section being prefaced and sometimes supplemented by explanatory notes of the circumstances and situations under which they were written. Such a plan adds greatly to the value of the collection of Letters, as it supplies biographical particulars which have hitherto been wanting, and at the same time furnishes a tolerably complete and connected narrative of Bülow's early life. Occasional foot-notes relating to the identity of personages alluded to in the Letters are also given, but in a future edition these might advantageously be extended.

Bülow has never been spoken of as an infant musical prodigy. As a child he suffered from delicate health, and it was not till he was nine years old, by which time he had survived five serious attacks of brain fever, that he suddenly evinced an extraordinary love and talent for music. These qualities developed themselves with such rapid strides that in two years' time he might fairly have been invested with the title of "prodigy."

Hans Guido von Bülow, a worthy scion of a noble family, and the "wonderful son of a wonderful mother," was born at Dresden on January 8, 1830. Here, together with his sister Isidore, three years his junior, he spent his childhood, as well as his early school-days (1840-45), in his parents' house. Always a delicate child, he was tenderly nurtured, and his education, though adequate, does not seem to have been unduly pressed forward. A practical knowledge of French was insisted upon, and at a later date instruction in piano-forte playing, under Fr. Wieck, was provided.

It has been said, perhaps with good reason, that it is impossible to overwork an unwilling boy. The greatest sufferers are those who voluntarily impose upon themselves an inordinate amount of work. This was the malady from which Bülow suffered throughout his life. Even in his early days the books which formed his daily reading were by his own choice of an æsthetical, philosophical, and historical character, rather than simply amusing.

During his school years at Dresden (1840-45) Bülow was often sent on visits to Leipzig, where he was the guest of Frau Livia Frege, a relation of his mother's. This lady was an accomplished

* Hans von Bülow, Briefe und Schriften. Band I. und II. Briefe von Hans von Bülow herausgegeben von Marie von Bülow. Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel. 1895.