

OUR VILLAGE

18TH ARTICLE

EARBY AS A MUSICAL NEIGHBOURHOOD

Forty to fifty years ago there was a part of our village, always called "Top o' t' town," which was a notable musical colony. At this farthest end of the village main street there were little more than a dozen houses, half on one side the rest on the other. Almost every evening a wayfarer passing along this street would have arrested by hearing harmonious strains issuing from these cottages. All kinds of instruments were brought into action - pianos, American organs, violins, violoncellos and numerous brass instruments - and these were supplemented by vocalists of a creditable order.

Going up the street, in the second house of a row of four lived Vandeleur Wilkinson with a family of about ten children, mostly sons. As a businessman he was known over a large radius, as he and his brother Henry ran the bobbin mill at Booth Bridge between Earby and Thornton, and his sons were engaged with them in the business. After the death of the senior partners the family removed to Heysham, where a modern sawmill was erected for their business.

The eldest son, Harry, was a pupil teacher in the Wesleyan Day School, and as a young man became H.M. Inspector, and has had a very honourable career. Vandeleur, the father, was an enthusiastic player on the violin, and the father's passion was inherited by Herbert, one of the younger sons. As a youth he was a brilliant player and often appeared at local concerts to the great delight of his admirers. He later went to Germany to improve his musical culture, and he has since been engaged at Morecambe during the summer seasons. Jack, Alfred and Charlie were band musicians in the palmy days of the Earby Brass Band.

Next door to the Wilkinsons there lived William Turner, always known as "Tinker." He was a foreman tackler at Bracewell's new weaving shed, and three of his sons became tacklers too - Joseph, Tommy and James. A grandson, Walter, the son of Tommy, is also a tackler, and the late chairman of the Urban District Council. Tommy was a prominent member of the Earby Band, and played the biggest bass instrument, which corresponded to his size. Two other sons, Levi and James, were players on the organ and tenor singers. Thirty years ago James was in much request, along with his friend, Virgil Crowther, a famous bass singer of those days. Levi has been the choir master at the Baptist Chapel for about twenty years, and his daughter, Millicent, is a brilliant violinist, a pupil of Arthur Catterall, and has appeared at concerts in Lancashire and Yorkshire with the best musical talent in the country. Another member of the family, a grandson, John Smith, is the talented organist at the Baptist Chapel.

"LITTLE BILL HARTLEY"

But the outstanding musical family at the top of the town was undoubtedly that of William Hartley. He lived in the middle of the row of houses on the opposite side of the road. William was rather diminutive in stature, and to distinguish him from another William Hartley, who was also a musician, he was called "Little Bill Hartley." At an early age he was employed in the village cotton mill as doffer, but at the same time he started to learn music, and to play the piano. His teacher was that highly-gifted man, Henry Pickles, who devoted all the time he could spare from serving in the grocer's shop in Aspen Lane to teaching music in the house

adjoining. The teacher was so pleased with his promising pupil that he used to take him to surrounding churches where he was much in demand.

His first appointment as organist was at Kelbrook Church when he was nineteen years of age. About that time there was a school for gentlemen's sons at Hague House between Kelbrook and Foulridge, conducted by Mr. Tunncliffe. The master of this academy was much interested in music and always brought the boys down to Kelbrook Church and to concerts at Earby. He afforded the young organist all possible encouragement, which was very acceptable.

Having played occasionally at the Baptist Chapel, William Hartley was engaged as choirmaster and organist, and he remained in that capacity over thirty years. A striking evidence of Mr. Hartley's musical enthusiasm is manifest in the names he gave to his children, such as Handel, Haydn, Novello, Lloyd, Halle.

To improve his playing the young organist went to Broughton to take lessons from Mr. Skippings, who was the organist at the Hall Chapel. At that time he was also a member of the Earby Band, and played the second trombone. When the Earby Band appeared at Broughton sports Father Marshall saw the young organist, with whom he was quite friendly, and said : "I am sorry to see you with that instrument ; it will ruin you ; don't let me see you with it again."

Mr. Hartley entered upon a new career as a baker of oatcakes, muffins etc., and this gave him more time for music. When he was on his rounds hawking bread and muffins, he was always thinking of music and how to give the best expression of any work he had in hand.

When the Earby Brass Band was very busy contesting it was not always possible to obtain professional conductors, and he was engaged from time to time to train the band for these events. He had to follow men like Birkenshaw, Gladney and Owen, but he had the glowing satisfaction of never appearing with the band without securing a prize, and at one memorable contest at Skipton the band under his leadership won four prizes. "But banding" he admitted "was hard work ; it was like leading a cow from Skipton market and trying to get it into a fresh shippon."

About forty years ago Mr. Hartley was mainly instrumental in forming the Orpheus Glee Union, which had a successful career for several years and won many prizes.

THE "CREATION"

A grand performance of Haydn's "Creation" is the greatest event in his musical career. This took place in the Earby Baptist Chapel on May 22nd, 1886. A poster which has been preserved, gives the following interesting particulars :- The principals were Miss Tomlinson (soprano), Bradford ; Mr. Paratt, principal tenor, Ripon Cathedral ; and Mr. Varley (bass), choirmaster of St. Peter's Church, Blackburn.

The chorus consisted of the Baptist and Wesleyan choirs, Earby, the Baptist and Wesleyan choirs from Barnoldswick, and members of the Skipton, Colne and Nelson Choral Societies. The orchestra was a very fine one, and included the Earby String Band, members of the Brass Band, assisted by friends from other places, as follows :-

First violins : Mr. Waddington (leader), Burnley ; Mr. Wilson, Birstall ; Messrs. V.

Wilkinson, James Brown and W. Nutter, Earby ; second violins : Mr. Titherington, Colne ; Mr.P. Anforth, Burnley ; Messrs. John Brown, W. Windle and Herbert Wilkinson, Earby ; viola, Mr.H. Hargreaves and Mr.N.H. Smith Burnley ; 'cello, Mr. Hargreaves, Burnley ; Mr. Leach, Colne, and Mr. William Hartley, senr., Earby ; contra bass : Mr.J. Calderbank, Higham, and Mr.F. Windle, Earby ; flute, Mr.H. Thornton, Helles Band, and Mrs. Joseph Sephton, Earby ; clarinet, Mr.D. Seaman, Burnley, Mr. Bannister, Colne, and Mr.F.G. Turner, Earby ; cornet, Mr.W. Rushton, Mr John Cowgill, Earby, and Mr.Jas. Wormwell, Kelbrook ; tenor horn, Mr.W. Holmes, Earby ; baritone : Mr.W. Sephton, Earby ; tenor trombone, Mr.Rd. Bailey, Earby ; euphonium : Mr. Fred Wright, Earby ; harmonium, Mr. Peter Pickup, Burnley, and Mr.W.N. Berry, Kelbrook.

The event was a triumph of skill and perseverance, and was a most successful event. The orchestra practices for the occasion were held in the room over Mr. Hartley's bakehouse, and never was such music heard at the top of the town before or since.

The proceeds of the performance were towards a new organ, which was shortly afterwards installed in the Baptist Chapel by Driver and Haigh, of Bradford.

Mr. Hartley's service received a fitting recognition on December 17th, 1892, when he was the recipient of an illuminated address and a purse of gold. Mr. Hartley continued his association with the Baptist Chapel organ for some years, and when the Rev. Walter Wynn was the minister he asked the organist to choose the hymns as well as the tunes.

A GOOD STORY

William was fond at times of using the heavy Bourdon stop on the pedal organ, which used to make the building vibrate. Mr. Wynn said to him one Sunday morning "William! whatever have you been doing this morning. The noise was like the tipping of a big load of potatoes!" William neatly turned the tables on Mr. Wynn a few weeks later after a sermon in which the pastor had been most dramatic in his manner. Going down to the minister's vestry at the close of the service he exclaimed : "Mr. Wynn, what ever made you carry on as you have done this morning? I never saw such antics." And, suiting the actions to the words, he gesticulated wildly with his hands and careered round the vestry in imitation of Mr. Wynn. It was always a dangerous experiment to try to score off William.

HIS MUSICAL SON

Two of Mr. Hartley's sons, Handel and James, the eldest and the youngest, are professional musicians, and both are players and teachers of the 'cello : but it is the brilliant son, Lloyd Hartley, who has earned for himself and the family undying glory. As a young boy he gave promise of being an exceptionally talented artist, and before he learned music he could play pieces of music on the piano in different keys. That was how he acquired the art of musical composition in early life.

In his youth he was of a religious temperament, and he collaborated with an evangelist (Mr. Henry Powers), who was living in Earby at that time, in the production of an original hymn and tune book. The book contained sixty hymns composed by Mr. Powers, and the tunes were the product of Lloyd Hartley, with the exception of six composed by his father. One of the tunes was named "Kitchener," and a copy was sent to Lord Kitchener, who was so delighted with it he acknowledged it with a gift of a £5 note.

The words of the first verse of the hymn are :-

"Soldiers on the battle field,
With God's armour, sword and shield,
Though the foe be fierce and strong,
Conquer sin, subdue the wrong."

Lloyd went to London to continue his musical training, and after being with a German professor for a few years he studied under Tobias Mattay, under whom he made rapid development. Mattay was far in advance of the Germans in understanding of the technique of the piano, and Lloyd profited immensely from this expert knowledge. While he resided in London he became a member of Dr. Clifford's Church at Westbourne Park, and was baptised by him.

After the completion of his studies in London he settled in Leeds where he has been eminently successful with his recitals, and has established a good practice as a teacher. In association with Mr. John Dunn, the famous English violinist, he has given recitals in the north of England, and his own recitals at Liverpool and Manchester which received the highest praise from the music critic of the "Manchester Guardian."

It may be noted that the father, in his earlier years, received great inspiration from attending the performance of the world famed band and chorus conducted by Sir Charles Halle, in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester.

Mr. Hartley, now in his 84th year, after a few years residence with his son at Leeds, has returned to Earby where he resides with his son Novello Hartley in School Lane. When he takes a stroll through the village he delights to accost his old friends and recounts the happy experiences of the past years, and he is ever ready with a word of encouragement to young musicians.

Such a personal and family record should be a fine stimulus to all lovers of music in our village.

J.H.

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