

VILLAGE SKETCHES IX

To complete the present review of the musical development of our village some reference is due to the vocal attainments of the community.

Vocal music in village life has been mainly identified with the places of worship, which have been not only centres for the proclamation of Christian truth, but of social fellowship and musical culture, and in this respect they have made a fine contribution to the progress and refinement of the Commonwealth.

In the earliest days of our local church life the musical portion of the services consisted in the rendering of "Psalm Tunes" which were composed for the hymns in use, chiefly those of Watts, Cowper and the Wesleys. Popular airs were sometimes adapted, as for instance the air for the ballad "Drink to me only with thine eyes," was set to "There is a land of pure delight" in "Wesley's Hymns." Manuscript tunes were much in use, and the little chapels had their own compilations, which often included productions by local musicians. The choir was a very elastic organisation, and was chiefly in evidence on special occasions, being generally enlarged by the inclusion of friends from other places. Choirmasters seem to be quite a modern innovation, and the chief person in the choir was formerly known as the "leading singer." Fifty to eighty years ago one of the best known men of this type in the district was

JOHN GREEN.

He was born at Giggleswick in the second decade of the last century, and as a boy he was a chorister in the Giggleswick church. He then acquired an elementary knowledge of music which proved very useful in after years. The family removed to Gargrave, and there John Green became the leading singer at the Methodist Chapel. He also officiated in a similar capacity at Broughton Church.

He married Ann Burrow, a member of a well known Gargrave family, and in the fifties they came to reside at Earby, bringing with them a family to obtain employment at the new cotton mill.

The family became strongly attached to the old Methodist Chapel and Sunday School, and the father for a considerable period filled his usual role as "leading singer." Several members of the family were musical and on one occasion, at a "charity" more than sixty years ago (so the writer was informed by an old lady who as a girl walked to the services from White Moor), a very pleasing sensation was caused by the sweet rendering of the solo "There is a stream whose gentle flow" in the popular anthem "God is the refuge of his Saints," by

ELIZABETH GREEN

In the "Penny Reading" entertainments of that period, she was much in evidence and she was for those days, a young woman of exceptional culture.

A REMARKABLE COUPLE, JOHN AND MARY WILKINSON,

occupied the seats of the mighty in the new Wesleyan Chapel fifty and sixty years ago. John eventually became the organist and his wife the "leading singer," and there was no gainsaying her authority. Oratorio singing became popular at that time, and they both could

sing solo parts with credit. They were very much devoted to the chapel and the choir, and John must have spent hundreds of hours in copying manuscript tunes and anthems.

These good people had no children, and their musical mantle may be said to have fallen upon their nephew,

MR. HUGH CURRER SMITH.

who succeeded Mr. Wilkinson as organist and choirmaster, which position he held for over twenty-five years. Forty years ago. The musical competitions local musical circles than “Hugh Currer,” as he was familiarly called, and his interests extended far beyond the denomination with which he was identified. He promoted concert parties which visited the neighbouring towns and villages, which included an annual visit to the Skipton Temperance Hall. Perhaps the most signal service he rendered in this capacity was the assistance he gave to the annual concert for Leeds Infirmary which was held in the Village Institute, West Marton, for a score of years. At the Victoria Institute, Mr. Smith was mainly instrumental in organising the annual concerts which were a special feature of our village life about forty years ago. The musical competitions which were held at the institute, and which attracted the best singers from East Lancashire, were mainly due to his musical enthusiasm and organising ability. Of the

SINGERS WHO BELONGED TO THAT PERIOD.

and who won deserved popularity in the district, one can recall the names of Miss E.A. Wilkinson, Miss Isabella Sephton, Miss Annie Turner, Miss Tomlinson, Mr. Edmondson Watson, Mr.W. Waddington, Mr Harry Kay, Mr.J.R. Hartley and Mr. Joseph Hartley.

There were several musical families in the village at that time, and four brothers of the Kay family were all bass singers in the Wesleyan choir.

MR.HARRY KAY

went to reside at Skipton, and he is especially remembered as the conductor of the singing of the United Sunday Schools at the Whitsuntide demonstrations in Caroline Square, a service which he rendered for many years.

MR. WILLIAM PAWSON

was a most useful man in training young children, and he rendered invaluable service to the old Temperance Society and Band of Hope, and the Wesleyan Sunday School. His son Horace has derived the musical instinct from him, and for many years now he has been a popular bass singer in the Wesleyan choir and in local musical circles. Reverting again to the Baptist choir, there are some musical families which are well deserving of honourable mention for their vocal talent. In addition to some, Abe Turner and Hartley Wilkinson, previously referred to,

BETTY GREENWOOD

was remarkable. She was known to everybody as “Betty Green,” and for two generations no oratorio choir would be complete without her inclusion.

She had a strong contralto voice, and imparted into her singing an enthusiastic vigour which made it a joy to listen and behold. She revelled in the singing of “The Messiah,” and she seemed to know every note in her part. Music apart, she was an original character, very

shrewd and witty and used to express herself in the “pure” Earby dialect with a rather drawling intonation. When she was well past the allotted span of life she sallied forth every morning for a walk through the village, and engaged in hearty conversation with anyone so inclined. As long as her husband, Charles Greenwood, lived, they walked out together, but one usually a little in advance of the other.

They had two daughters, Alice and Polly, who were much in request thirty years ago or more, for singing, and their duet singing was always a pleasing performance. Another daughter, Maggie, was a noted elocutionist.

THE BAPTIST CHOIR

used to be exceptionally strong in the bass section, and I remember Thomas Smith used to be a fine soloist. In this connection Virgil Crowther is deserving of special mention, and he is undoubtedly the best bass singer Earby has produced. He carried off the premier honours at several musical festivals about a dozen years ago. He was particularly effective in “The Creation” performances and in music requiring a fierce dramatic interpretation. Mr. Crowther removed to Nelson some years ago.

It would be fitting to conclude these musical sketches by a more extended reference to that remarkable musical character who is still with us,

MR. JOSEPH FOULDS,

If any man is the embodiment of the musical spirit it is he, for it pulsates through every fibre of his frame.

He was born in Burnley Lane, and later lived in Nelson as a boy. While at the latter place he was in the choir at a Wesleyan Mission Chapel and occasionally played the harmonium. He remembers with gratitude the kindly interest of the town missionary, Mr. Quinney.

When he was 16 years old the family moved to the Duckpond Farm above Barnoldswick. He attached himself to the Wesleyan School, and before he had been there long he was asked to play the school organ. Mr. William Bracewell was the superintendent of the school and he manifested a real friendly interest towards him.

Having to pass “Newfield Edge” on the way home to the moorland farm, Mr. Bracewell occasionally invited him in to play and sing for the family. Ever since, there has been a musical relationship between Miss Ada (now Mrs. Joseph Slater) and himself, and whenever he wanted any assistance or special effort, Mrs. Slater would always bring a strong contingent from Barnoldswick.

While at Barnoldswick he was strongly attracted to the Wesleyan Temperance Band and the effect of that association with the temperance people has been very special to him.

The “New Ship” people (Independent Methodists) also asked him to help them with their school entertainments, which help he gladly gave.

Before he was 20 years old, the family moved again, this time to Black Lane ----- and Joseph was put in charge of the harmonium.

When the new chapel was opened by Mr. Peter Mackenzie he (Mr. Foulds) played the harmonium, and once he was rather late in starting the tune. ---- “Peter” wouldn’t wait, and

started the tune himself, "right on pitch."

A few years later Mr. Foulds came to ----- at Kelbrook, and was a tackler at Smallpage's Sough Bridge Mill.

He was asked to train the choir at the -----ed Methodist Church, and when he was 23 years old he conducted a performance of "The Messiah" in the old United Methodist Chapel. He got across with ----- of the old singers at the practices because "they worn't baan to be talked ----- a bit o' a lad," but he stuck to his guns and they had a fine time when it came off. There was a lack of accommodation in the choir pews, so the choir occupied the seats of the congregation, and they used a harmonium instead of the organ.

W.H. Green, of Silsden, was the player on the harmonium, and there was also a good orchestra, including several players from Colne. The principals were : W.H. Green, Silsden, Miss Berry, Colne, ----- Sharp and Mr. Jackson, both of Silsden. They went through the work, every ----- and the performance lasted for -----and a half hours, closing at 11 o'clock.

The place was packed out, and it was the only time that such an event had taken place in Kelbrook, before or since.

Then Mr. Foulds came to live in Earby and the Baptist choir got hold of him and he was appointed their conductor.

After Mr. William Hartley jun. resigned from the post of organist, he succeeded in getting Mr. Edwin Berry appointed and they had a long and happy -----er of office together.

The choir later went in for competition ---- and they secured first prize in the mixed voice contest at Burnley, and -----was a gold medal for the conductor which he prized very highly.

At one of the Colne festivals, his elder daughter, Polly, won the first prize, and ---- his other daughter, Jennie, was -- a quartet party at Barrow, and they carried off most of the prizes in their sections. They won the first in the quartet , his daughter got the first prize for contralto, and Virgil Crowther won -----s for both baritone and bass. Some other members of the party, Miss----- Watson and Mr. Ellis (of Nelson) were also prize winners.

It might be mentioned at this point that Clara Watson, the leading member of the Baptist choir, has won an honoured place in local musical circles, and has ----- taken a prominent part in the performance of oratorio music in recent years.

A PRESENTATION,

after an association with the Baptist choir extending over twenty years, Mr Foulds was made a presentation on February 6th, 1907, which took the form of a handsome gold watch, bearing the following inscription :- Presented to Joseph Foulds by the members of the Baptist Church and Congregation, in recognition of his services and devoted labours as choirmaster. With sincere wishes for his ----re welfare." Mrs. Foulds was also presented with two fine ornamental -----es.

AMATEUR OPERA

Mr. Foulds has always been interested in operatic music, and when a younger man, possessed a splendid tenor voice, and took a principal part in "The Bohemian Girl" at the Nelson Theatre, which stands in his memory as his finest ----- achievement. About fifteen years ago he was associated with Mr. Frank ----er in the presentation of his local -----, and this was followed by the formation of the Earby Amateur Operatic Society, which performed several operas including, "The Mikado," "H.M.S.Pinafore," and "The Gondoliers." A new society has recently been formed, and the services of Mr. Foulds have been requisitioned as conductor. Mr. Foulds has always been

A WILLING HELPER,

of other choirs, and on special occasions he has conducted the Earby and Barnoldswick Wesleyan choirs, the Earby United Methodist choir, and Salterforth Baptist choir.

SUNDAY SCHOOL MUSIC

In this sphere Mr. Foulds has devoted his best energies. He has conducted the combined Sunday Schools at their annual demonstrations for more than two decades, and he has also officiated in the same capacity on more than one occasion for the Skipton Sunday School Union.

There is nothing that he enjoys so much , and no sphere of public service for which he is prepared to sacrifice so much, as the training of young children in the best methods of voice production.

To see him on a wagon conducting hundreds of children at a festival, or conducting a childrens choir giving a cantata, is to see him in a realm of which he is a king. Long may he live to wield the baton which is more productive of human felicity than any regal sceptre.

MUSIC.

"There is something very wonderful in music." Words are wonderful enough but there is something more wonderful in music. It speaks not to our thoughts as words do - it speaks straight to our hearts and spirits, to the very core and root of our souls. Music soothes us, stirs us up, it puts noble feelings into us ; it melts us to tears, we know not how ; it is a language by itself, just as perfect in its way as speech, as words, just as Divine, just as blessed. Music has been called the speech of angels ; I will go further and call it the speech of God Himself." - Charles Kingsley.

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