

# THE Musical Times

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National Musical Education

Author(s): H. H. Statham

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## THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR.

MAY 1, 1878.

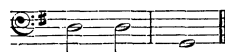
## NATIONAL MUSICAL EDUCATION.

BY H. H. STATHAM.

THE trio of worthies who played such a merciless practical joke on Malvolio—Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Sir Toby Belch, and the nameless “Clown”—were certainly not, even for the times in which they lived, very erudite or refined people. But it appears from the story that they could do what very few English people in the best society can do now, among those at least who are not specially and professedly “musical people”—they could sing a part-song without accompaniment, and that not as a set task, but as an after-dinner relaxation and enjoyment. Indeed it was the want of appreciation of their music on the part of the respectable steward which gave rise to the unhappy breach between him and them. We might be doubtful about the musical powers of the two knights, perhaps, if we did not know from other parts of the play that the Clown, who was no fool except professionally, was possessed of eminent musical gifts, since in another scene he is specially summoned to sing the Duke’s favourite song, as the only person who could do it justice. It is not likely, therefore, that he would have joined with the “gentlemen” in a part-song unless they had been able to do their part with commendable ability; and, indeed, he makes a point of defending the performance to Malvolio as correct musically, if not morally: “We did keep time, sir, in our catches.” We are not of course without other and more direct historical evidence of the prevalence of part-singing as a branch of home music in the Elizabethan period; but this musical revelry in Sir Toby’s quarters is a specially strong instance, because it was a case of after-dinner, or after-supper, singing, and it seems that even under such circumstances artistic conditions were observed.

With all the performances of modern music on a grand scale in England, all the undoubted love of the art and the still greater amount of talk about it, we do not find now that knowledge of music and habitual practice of it which would be indicated by the fact of a general ability to join in harmonised vocal compositions, of even a simple character, as a matter of social recreation. It may be said that pianoforte-playing and solo-singing have taken the place of this kind of music, and that the pianoforte pieces and songs heard at average social gatherings are for the most part music of more artistic form, or at all events of more poetic and imaginative feeling, than the part-songs with “burdens” which our ancestors sung. There may be two sides even to that latter part of the comparison; but what is to the point at present is that the moderate ability in playing and singing found among average English ladies and gentlemen in the present day does not in itself presuppose any real scholarly knowledge of the art of music. Those of us who pay any attention to such matters know very well that the lady who plays a piece fairly generally does not know what key it is in, and that any mistakes which she may make are usually not those of accident or want of manipulative power, but of sheer ignorance of musical form or utter insensibility to style. We know that the gentleman with a good voice who sings a song with considerable effect has probably learned it mainly from getting the melody played along with him on the piano till his ear has caught it, and we possibly find him out by his suddenly making a mistake in an interval or in

the form of a phrase, in such a way as to prove that he has no perception of the tonal relation of the sounds which form the melody: so that the mere amount of playing and singing which goes on is not much test of musical knowledge. If we compare the kind of performance in the present day which comes nearest to that of our “Twelfth-Night” trio, the after-dinner singing on convivial occasions, we find the depths of musical inability among modern Englishmen laid bare before us. On State occasions, indeed, we are wise enough not to attempt what we cannot do. Sir Toby Belch and his two companions could have sung “Non nobis Domine” themselves, if they had been disposed for anything so serious: we engage certain trustworthy professional gentlemen to sing it for us, and to put in the more or less appropriate singing between the toasts. Considerations of conventional dignity and reserve would perhaps, in modern times, stand in the way of singing by the guests, in any case, at a gathering of a ceremonial description. But when, on occasions of less ceremonious conviviality, singing by the guests is introduced, then we become conscious what the engagement of the professional singers at a more formal entertainment delivers us from. When the chairman “calls on Mr. — for a song,” we know that we may expect to hear the words half recited in a kind of irregular sing-song, embodying a vague suggestion of the outlines of a melody. Or if by good luck the gentleman called upon is able to sing the melody truly, we at all events know that when the chairman suggests that the guests will join in the chorus, he merely means that the company will all shout simultaneously something as near the supposed melody as they are able to get, each at the pitch which happens to suit his own voice. One or two will perhaps please themselves with the notion that they are “singing the bass” by following the melody till the last three notes, when they will diverge to a—



that simple formula of dropping from the fifth to the key-note at the close being the average Englishman’s ruling idea about the “bass.” If we go to a church where the congregation endeavours to join in the singing, the result is pretty much the same. Our friend with the bass is always to be met with there, but even he is in a minority; and the probability is that a worshipper behind us, possessed of a deep voice, is singing the melody of the tune two octaves lower than it was written, and of course beneath the real bass as sung by the choir. Hymn-books are now provided giving the music as well as the words; but the ability and even the wish to make use of these in realising harmonised singing seems to be still wanted, and the few who possess it find themselves in too small a minority to diverge from the universal practice. A lady with a contralto voice told the writer one day how she had attempted to put the hymn-book with music to its proper use by singing the part in the harmony suited to her own voice; “but,” she said, “I found my children, who used to join in the hymns, looked up at me in a puzzled manner and stopped singing, and my neighbours in the congregation looked round at me with a disapproving expression, as if they thought I was doing something wrong; so I had to give it up again.” It would have been, perhaps, a better course if the lady in such a case, instead of “giving in,” had endeavoured to teach her children, or get them taught, sufficient about part-singing and reading music to understand the *rationale* of the matter. But it perhaps is hardly surprising that

what is almost ignored in public education in this country should not fare better in private.

It is, in fact, the want of any proper system of musical education in our schools which is probably the most serious obstacle to music taking the place among English people which, though in a far more primitive stage of the art, it obviously did at one time take. There is the fact, of which we can have no doubt from the evidence that remains to us, that 300 years ago music was a part of the usual training and education of English boys and girls, and that it was almost a matter of course that any one of good education, if he had a voice and a power of singing, was able to bear a part with others in harmonised singing, both with the spirit and the understanding. It is not only *not* a matter of course now that any should have the slightest degree of musical education, but it is also a significant fact that many of those who have some musical accomplishments, and who are habitually asked to sing and play by their friends, have acquired these accomplishments in a kind of left-handed manner, and with no real and solid basis of knowledge as a groundwork on which to exhibit their natural ability. But the establishment of a generally satisfactory standard of musical knowledge is really almost a matter of more importance than the training of specially gifted persons for the profession of music. These latter are almost always led by exceptional ability and strong predilection to turn to music as the work of their life, and such persons are pretty sure to get education somewhere; and it is even an open question, upon which doctors of considerable eminence have differed, whether academical training really has any very beneficial or developing influence on musical genius, and whether the connection with this or that educational establishment has not in most cases shed lustre upon the establishment itself, rather than upon the genius who would have been successful equally without it. There is, however, another side to this question, to which we may devote a word or two just now. But of the importance of a general, good, and systematic education in music, as the means of developing the average of musical ability and the power of finding intellectual enjoyment in the art, and of rendering the English once more, in real truth, a musical people, there can be no doubt; and it is here that reform is most urgently needed.

Now it can hardly be said that in the great impulse which has been given of late years to systematic primary education under Government sanction the subject of music has been intentionally overlooked. The Government has so far shown a wish to recognise the importance of musical training in elementary schools as to institute a special little endowment to schools of so much per head per annum for every child who can afford evidence of having been taught music. The grant is a very little one in each case—it might be said absurdly little—being only a shilling per child; but, in the aggregate, the money thus expended amounts to nearly £100,000 per annum. That, when we take it *en masse*, is a good deal of money to spend, though nothing that should for a moment be grudged if the desired result were attained by it. But it is a very great deal of money to throw away, and it is getting absolutely and completely thrown away. We might even go further, and say that it is used so as to produce positive evil. For the capitation grant is obtained in this way: The Government Inspector for the district in which a school is situated hears certain children sing some songs, and, if he is satisfied, the grant is given. The Inspector will in all probability not be in any sense a musical man. It is a curious fact that the upper class of schoolmasters and persons

officially connected with education very seldom are musical, in this country at least. It is ten to one that he does not really know the least whether the children sing in tune or not; and therefore, even if they were taught on a good system, he would be no judge of the results. But the fact is that the children are not taught music at all; they are simply made to repeat certain melodies after the teacher, with or without the help of an instrument, until they can more or less sing them, much as a parrot can imitate musical sounds which are made in its hearing. Now we call this method worse than useless, because it not only does no good itself, but it stops the way against real learning of music. It does not enable the pupil to take a single step alone: the learning of ninety-nine melodies by ear does nothing towards enabling the pupil to read the hundredth, or to know anything about the relation of musical sounds, even in the most elementary manner; but it creates and fosters a mistaken idea that something has been learned, for which a certain credit is given which is utterly undeserved by either teacher or pupil. The so-called teacher may know little more about the matter than the pupils; at any rate it is of no consequence in one sense whether he does or not, since he can earn the shillings for his school without any real musical knowledge.

As a matter of fact, however, it would seem from Mr. Hullah's reports of his examinations of some forty training establishments for teachers in England, Wales, and Scotland, that there is, even at present, a very fair amount of musical knowledge, and probably ability to communicate that knowledge to others, among those who become masters and mistresses in our elementary schools. It was in 1872 that Mr. Hullah was appointed to the important and rather arduous post of musical examiner of the students of the training colleges, and he testifies that since even that recent period the advance has been very great. In his report for 1876 he says: "Of every student who, prior to 1872, left a training college in which he had remained two years, it may be said that he left it possessed of some musical skill and science, in many instances, as I know, of very considerable. A very large number of acting teachers not educated in training colleges were, as I have also reason to know, fair musicians before they entered their profession, and a still larger number have become such since they have done so." He therefore concludes that there is a considerable proportion of masters and mistresses of schools receiving Government grants who would be quite competent to teach children to sing from note. But this amount of musical accomplishment, Mr. Hullah complains, has not really been brought to bear on the elementary schools. We quote again from his report for 1876:—

Every class of the community has directly or indirectly profited by the impulse given to musical instruction by my Lords in 1840—1., except that particular class which it was hoped and believed would profit most largely from it. Indeed, what has been latterly done for music in schools has rather impeded than furthered its improvement. The "songs" for the last few years required of scholars are not merely worthless as means of musical culture, but they take up time that might be given to the real study of the subject, and thus, so I have been repeatedly told by schoolmasters whom I know to be competent to teach, prevent their turning their knowledge to account in teaching their pupils, not half-a-dozen songs, but—*MUSIC*.

Music is the single subject in which our future school-teachers are prepared at a considerable expenditure of time and money, the results of the teaching of which are neither ascertained with any precision nor recorded.

In elementary schools, perhaps in all schools, teaching and examination act and re-act upon each other. As that which is not taught cannot be examined in, so that which it is known will not be examined in is not likely to be taught.

And thus it comes to pass that the children are bored with being taught music in a way that cannot enable them to turn it to any good account subsequently in giving pleasure either to themselves or others. No one, perhaps, is more in a position to

appreciate the result than the unfortunate organist of a country church, who is assured that the boys who form his trebles and altos are taught music in school, and finds that this only means that they can pick up a new chant after it has been drummed over to them a dozen times—the trebles can, that is to say; the altos (if any of the boys are promoted to singing alto) probably never get their part, because they are dependent on hearing it from the instrument. The remedy for this state of things is, as Mr. Hullah suggests, that the children should be examined, not in singing, but in music. For this purpose he would advise, we believe, that persons competent to examine them in music should be placed at the disposal of the School Inspectors. He suggests that there are men to be found in every district who would be able to perform this duty efficiently in regard to an elementary school, without going to the expense in fees which the appointment of a professional musician of a high class to each district would entail. In the neighbourhood of a cathedral town, for example, there is sure to be found some member of the cathedral choir whose services could be secured for such a task; and he assumes that there would be no real difficulty in finding persons similarly qualified in other districts, whose assistance could be secured without any unreasonable or exorbitant demand on public money. That this would be found so we have very little doubt, and that this would be the best immediate way of meeting the case, and ensuring that real musical instruction, instead of mere parrot-teaching, should be a necessary condition of a school receiving the capitation grant for music; and we wish to join to the repeated representations of Mr. Hullah to his official chiefs our own strong recommendation that some such steps should be taken without any delay, as the best means of immediately securing the adequate musical inspection of elementary schools.

We say, however, advisedly, the best way of "immediately" securing this. For does not the very suggestion, and the fact that it should be necessary, lead to the reflection how very much better it would be if the Government Inspector himself were competent to examine the children musically, and what a really extraordinary oversight it is that, music being one of the subjects to be examined in, the possession of some knowledge of it on the part of the Government Inspector should not be a necessary condition of qualification for the office? This consideration naturally brings us to the next step in the subject—the necessity of musical education in schools of a higher grade, and which are frequented by pupils in a different class of life from those who occupy the elementary schools under Government inspection. Why is it to be the case that music is to be looked upon as a kind of exceptional thing, which an "educated man" is not supposed to know anything about necessarily? The common supposition, that only a comparatively few persons have any aptitude for knowing or understanding anything about it, is only the natural consequence of the fact that hardly any systematic attempt is made to teach them. The idea is probably an entire delusion. If some education in the elements of music were made as regular a part of education as English Composition and Latin Grammar, there is no reason to suppose that there would be any greater proportion of dunces in the Musical Class than in the others. Those who learned music might not all grow up with "voices," or with the ability to sing or play, but they would at least have a ground-work of knowledge which would enable them to form a sound judgment on the subject; to listen to music with the understanding as well as with the spirit; and to have some logical basis of opinion which would probably do much to put

an end to those absurd flights of fashion for this or that novelty in music which are usually supported by persons of general, but not of musical education. But even the very fact of the ability to do something practically with music—the possession of what is called "ear"—is very much more a matter of education than is commonly supposed; and many who imagine they have no ear, and that they "cannot tell one tune from another," would have found themselves with quite an average ability in this respect if their attention had been directed in childhood to the scientific basis of music, the relations of tones, and the elements of musical form (if such a thing is now any longer to be permitted to exist!). With the teaching of music as a necessary element of education in our schools would naturally come its introduction as a specific part of university study; leaving, of course, untouched the present university rewards for exceptional attainments in music, but making the possession of a certain degree of general knowledge of the art a recognised portion of a liberal education. *There is no possible reason why this should not be done*, except the fact that it never has been, and the natural result that a knowledge of music is therefore supposed to be the privilege of a few, simply because the many have never had the encouragement or the opportunity to obtain it. We must aim at getting rid of this view of music as an exceptional thing—recognise it as a great language, with its classic literature, as important to our intellectual completeness as Greek or French, and a knowledge of which may be just as well acquired by any one who will take the trouble. Then, and not till then, we shall be really a musical nation; we shall no longer see music regarded with a jealous eye by schoolmasters as an infringement on the claims of languages and mathematics; and we shall not be obliged to contemplate the necessity of engaging supplementary assistants to examine into the music of primary schools because our highly educated gentleman, the Government Inspector, is so utterly unacquainted with the rudiments of the art that his judgment on the matter is worth nothing.

Such a general recognition of music as an integral part of a liberal education seems the most important reform that could be aimed at in musical education in this country, for the lift in the taste and knowledge of the public at large would be sure to have its influence on the standard of professional education, directly or indirectly. In regard to this last and highly important subject of facilities for professional or high-class musical education, it may be said that we are most probably in a fair way to put an end to the reproach that was till lately to be made against us of having no national *Conservatoire*. It is true that the condition of things in this respect is at present rather that of promise than of results: we can hardly judge yet what the National Training-School for Music will really turn out. But we have at least the commencement of an educational institution for music which possesses three most important qualifications: it provides free education, a matter the more important since (for what reason one can hardly understand) exceptional ability for music is much more often found among the poorer than among the richer classes of English society; it makes natural ability in music a condition of entrance; and it provides an obligatory course of study, though perhaps hardly so full or so precisely defined as might be desired; and it may perhaps be considered, in accordance with some of the evidence given before the Society of Arts' Committee in 1866, that thorough efficiency in the working of such an institution is best secured by the appointment of a principal who would be able and desirous

to concentrate his whole attention upon it, rather than of one whose reputation and occupations would hardly allow him to do this. There seems, however, every reason to believe that the instruction of the scholars in the general curriculum and in their various special branches is very well provided for and very systematically carried on, and that we may look with hope to the future results of the establishment at Kensington. The demand for admission is very large, it appears—far beyond what the existing endowments of the school will meet; and this is a point that may well be brought before those who have the means and the wish to do something to promote the improvement of musical education. Among those who take an interest in music, in London alone, there is wealth enough to provide at once for a large addition to the number of endowed scholarships, and such an employment of a certain amount of capital would be an exceedingly efficacious method of giving a practical turn to that enthusiastic interest in music which has become so prevalent of late years in English society.

### “GOD SAVE THE KING.”

BY WILLIAM H. CUMMINGS.

(Continued from page 197.)

THE pretended discovery by Mr. Thomas Hunter of “The King’s Anthem, Dr. Bull” was readily believed in by some, although there were others who doubted its genuineness. The MS. was sent to Richard Clark for his inspection, and on the 13th of February, 1840, he published another long letter re-asserting all his previous statements respecting Bull, Ben Jonson, and the Merchant Taylors’ Company, closing with the following cautious paragraph:—

If the MS. (sent by Mr. Hunter), headed “The King’s Anthem, Dr. Bull,” which has been forwarded to me for my inspection be genuine, it is a further confirmation of what I have already stated of Dr. Bull. By the watermark in the sheet of music-paper containing the tune in question, the paper was made by P. Ballard about 1687, of which make I have much in my possession. If this said MS. be not genuine (which I much suspect) we shall learn something more respecting it anon.

It appears that the MS. was shown to Sir Francis Madden, the Keeper of the Manuscripts in the British Museum, and he expressed his opinion that it was “undoubtedly a forgery, written within these twenty years, and that the paper was anterior to the time.”

I should not have referred to the letters of James Henry Saville and Thomas Hunter had I not feared that some enthusiastic student might hereafter discover and reproduce them as veritable facts. In order to prevent any such use being made of them, I am able to state that they were both the concoction of Mr. Joseph Warren, a well-known and most accomplished musician and antiquary. Originally intended as an amusing hoax they doubtless added to the mystery and confusion which surrounded the subject of the authorship of “God save the King.” Mr. Warren subsequently endeavoured to make amends by informing Mr. Richard Clark of the true state of the case; but, so far as I know, the latter never publicly referred to the matter. I am kindly permitted by Mr. Warren to publish the following letter, the original of which is now lying before me:—

Litlington Tower,  
Cloisters, Westminster, Feb. 12, 1846.

Dear Sir,—When you were at my house looking through my own book with the accounts of persons in the Musical World on the long-disputed subject of “God save the King,” you mentioned various funny circumstances which had been pursued by yourself, Dr. Rimbault, Mr. Chapelle, and Mr. Davidson, only for the purpose of bringing out before the public all that could possibly be written on that subject; you stated also that whilst you were at the Museum one day you concocted the piece of music said to have been found at a cheese-monger’s shop, Islington; this was taken by Mr. Chapelle to (I forgot who)—he pronounced the same a forgery; all this you wished me to

transcribe in my own book, stating that you had authorised me to do so. Now you will oblige me by drawing up the above particulars and put the same in the post, because there were several other amusing facts which I do not recollect. I should like to place yours to me on the subject besides Dr. Rimbault’s, Mr. Nichol’s, and Mr. Chapelle’s. Your early reply will oblige,  
Dear Sir, yours truly,  
To Joseph Warren, Esq.  
RICHD. CLARK.

Mr. Warren tells me he adopted the *nom de plume* of Saville, thinking of Saville House, Leicester Square, and that Hunter is one of his family names.

The controversy respecting the authorship of “God save the King” was in this unsatisfactory state when Dr. Kitchener died (1840), and he left “particular injunctions respecting the non-disposal of a certain MS. music-book”—the volume containing Bull’s compositions,—and consequently this book was not included in the sale of the doctor’s library. But it was subsequently sold privately to Mr. Clark for £20, who shortly afterwards announced it to be a “Collection of Pieces for the Virginals in the veritable autograph of Dr. John Bull,” which he had carefully gone through, and “found that precisely at the bar where Dr. Kitchener’s published extract concludes, the correct melody of the National Anthem begins.” Here again Clark made two foolish blunders, for we shall presently find that the MS. could not by any possibility have been in Bull’s autograph, and a reference to the index previously published (p. 196) fully proves that the “God save the King” which Kitchener had quoted was followed by several pieces bearing neither reference nor resemblance to the air we call the National Anthem. In November, 1841, Clark addressed a printed circular to the “Masters, Wardens,” &c., of the City Companies, in which he says:—

I continued my inquiries until eventually I was enabled to obtain a sight of, and finally to purchase (in the handwriting of the composer (Dr. John Bull), this long-lost manuscript.

That the manuscript was not in the composer’s own hand may be ascertained by reference to the list and indices of the Bull volumes, published in Ward’s “Lives of the Gresham Professors,” where the name of the *Flemish*\* scribe is quoted as part of the “Large quarto, number 16 in the Catalogue.” At the end of this book is written the following note: “Incepit 6 Apr. 1628, finivit 20 Oct. 1628. Scribebat Gulielmus a Messaus, Divat Walburgis Antverpiensis phonascus.” These dates are an additional proof that the writings were not in the autograph of Dr. Bull, for he died on the 12th or 13th of March, 1628, and was buried in the Church of Notre Dame, in Antwerp. I have already mentioned the fact that I have recently examined one of the Bull volumes—that which is described is on p. 206 of Ward’s “Lives,” &c.—and I am therefore able confidently to assert that it is also in the hand of a Flemish scribe, and further that several of the pieces bear dates showing that they were copied after Bull was dead and buried. In 1860 Sir Francis Madden examined the particular volume which had belonged to Kitchener and Clark, the one in which all our interest is now centred, and he wrote respecting the contents: “Of course they cannot be in the handwriting of Dr. John Bull, but of some Dutchman.” We may therefore, I think, very fairly assume that all the Bull MSS. spoken of by Ward were copies made by the same Flemish scribe.

It is singular that after having published so many untenable statements respecting “God save the King” Clark should have really discovered in his recent purchase an “Ayre” bearing a remarkable resemblance to the true melody;—that the resemblance was very apparent may be gathered from the writings

\* All writers have hitherto erroneously described the writer as a Dutch scribe.