



"Blind worship of the foreigner is one phase of this snobbishness"

(continued from previous page)

half of the 19th Century. Foley had a repertoire of sixty operas, sang in several continental countries, and was equally successful in oratorio and ballads. He toured New Zealand, and laughed when he saw a half-empty house. "I can draw a crowd anywhere at home," he said. But to the public Allan Foley was Signor Foli, with an "i." He had tried to get on as Foley and failed. And so deeply embedded was the legend that when he was dramatised for the BBC not long ago, he was described as a "celebrated Italian singer," and made to speak in the conventional stage Italian-English. Someone wrote and quoted the inscription over his grave at Southport. Thus snobbishness may falsify history.

### The Case of Sullivan

My test of an encyclopædia of music is its treatment of Arthur Sullivan. If I find that it gives details of his religious music and then says he also composed a number of light operas, I write it down. It is now generally recognised that the Sullivan of *The Mikado* is more important than the other Sullivan, but the struggle that has produced this result has been long, and also instructive and diverting. What delayed recognition more than anything else was prejudice against lighter forms of composition as unworthy of a composer's genius. The Oratorio-ists and the Lost Chordists fought for possession of Sullivan with the Savoyists, and denied their opponents any claim upon his services. For a long while the ideal of a monopoly for solemnity lay heavy upon English music. The late Thomas F. Dunhill, critic and composer, says in his critical appreciation of Sullivan's comic operas that in the 'nineties a student at the Royal College of Music "hardly dared to express an admiration for Sullivan either to his professor or to his fellow students." Dunhill might have quoted the jibe of Jimmy Glover, the theatre conductor, that the musical academies of England had not produced one good tune. The obituary notice of Sullivan in *The Times* regretted that he should have "set him-

self to rival Offenbach and Lecocq, instead of competing on a level of high seriousness with such musicians as Sir Hubert Parry and Professor Stanford." In his revised edition of *History of Music in England*, published in 1924, Professor Ernest Walker, of Oxford, did not abate a jot his contempt for Sullivan. This drew from Dunhill the broadside that his estimate of Sullivan was "so cruelly crooked, unfair and truculent, that one can hardly believe that a cultured man could have dared to put his signature to it."

Early on, the Germans received *The Mikado* as great comic-opera, produced it in all their

leading musical centres, and gave it to their most famous conductors, including Nikisch. While they were doing this, Sullivan's colleagues at home were deploring what they regarded as the shocking levity of his methods, and shaking their heads over the circumstance that one of their number should descend to the debasing occupation of writing music which others less learned than themselves could listen to with pleasure."

It is part of the joke, however, that Sullivan himself—on some measure at any rate—was with the oratorio-ists. He always wanted to do something better than light opera. He was torn between two worlds. When he presented Dame Ethel Smyth with the manuscript of *The Golden Legend* he said it was the best thing he had done. However, that intellectual composer with a sense of proportion and humour (they are much the same thing) replied that he would be remembered by *The Mikado*. Dame Ethel did not think it beneath her dignity to write an appreciation of the operas for the London *Mercury*. Gilbert also had strong ambitions for higher things and wrote serious plays that are now forgotten. Working over many years, public opinion has settled the matter for both men.

There is a lesson for us in all this. As I have said, snobbishness is not confined to social life. The only preventive of it in its various forms is the open mind.

### Music for a Wedding

OCCASIONALLY the NZBS receives an unusual request. As the result of a recent call for assistance, both the members of the National Orchestra of the NZBS, and of the Wellington Watersiders' Silver Band, played music—from a distance—for the recent royal double wedding in Tonga. Early this year the Tongan Government, through its New Zealand agents in Auckland, asked if the Tongan national anthem could be recorded. The request was accompanied by a piano score of the anthem. The NZBS arranged for orchestral and band parts to be written from it, and the recordings were made at 2YA. The master disc was sent to Australia for pressing, and copies sent to Tonga for playing during the marriage celebrations.

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