

## A Few Famous Songs

OPTIONAL TOPIC FOR THE MONTH'S LITERARY EVENING.

MISS IDELL ROGERS, COBURG.

POETS," Emerson finely said, "should be lawgivers." He meant that the boldest lyric inspiration, "should not chide or insult, but should direct the civil code and the day's work." In 1793 Fletcher, of Saltoun, uttered his famous dictum to the Marquis of Montrose as follows: "The poorer sort of both sexes are daily tempted to all manner of wickedness by infamous ballads sung in every corner of the streets. I knew," he continued, "a very wise man that believed that if a man were permitted to make all the ballads he need not care who should make the laws of a nation. And we find that most of the ancient legislators thought they could not well reform the manners of any city without the help of a lyric and sometimes of a dramatic poet." It is certain that we, as an English-speaking people, are the possessors of songs that have not only made history of themselves, but for those who have sung or listened to them. Are we not losers to-day in that we are letting the old songs fall into disuse and allowing in their place meaningless or coarse rag-time ditties and other ballads? It has been truly said that "if words were given us to conceal our thoughts, music must have been given us to express them; to turn our tears to laughter and our laughter to tears; to make our brief joys long and our worst sorrows brief. For what more thrilling voice than the voice of music—the voice of all our passions blended into witching melody or soul-inspiring harmony?" For very few know the origin of the old songs—the songs that please them—the songs that are always favorite songs. If our Epworth Leaguers would take up this work and have during the coming winter a number of evenings with the old songs, secure the services of local soloists, who will sing the old favorites, have others tell the history of two or three of these, and another give a short paper upon "the influence of a nation's songs upon its people," they would arrange evenings that would indeed be profitably spent. And if in so doing there was awakened in the young people a desire for these better things, and a wholesome contempt for all that is low, or in the very least suggestive and ribald, they would accomplish a good and profitable work.

Let us look at just a few of our famous songs. It is said that Handel once said that he would rather have been the composer of the exquisite air of "Robin Adair," or "Eileen Aroon," than of all of the beautiful music that he has written.

The song was written by Lady Caroline Keppell, the second daughter of the Earl of Albemarle, and sister of the late famous Admiral Keppell. She was wooed by Robin Adair, a handsome but penniless Irish doctor, and ardently returned his affections. Her family was scandalized at the thought of it, and she was sent her way to separate her from the young doctor. At Bath she wrote the song that has become so popular and fitted the words to the plaintive Irish air of "Eileen Aroon," which Robin Adair had no doubt often sang to her. Her steadfastness was rewarded by her family in time withdrawing their objection, and she was married to the hero of the ballad, who later gained high eminence in his profession.

The true story of "Eileen Aroon" is even more romantic. Carol O'Daly, a man of much consequence in Connaught, and an accomplished musician, excelling especially in music and poetry, paid his addresses to Eileen, daughter of a chieftain

named Kavanagh. For political reasons he was obliged to leave the country temporarily, and her family impressed upon her that he was faithless and arranged for her marriage with a rival of O'Daly's. Disguised as a harper, O'Daly returned the night before the day fixed for the nuptials. Under the first influence of his disappointment, upon hearing what was about to take place, and seeking a quiet, sequestered spot, he composed the song "Eileen Aroon."

"Then wilt thou come away?

Eileen Aroon!

O! Wilt thou come or stay?

Eileen Aroon!"

In his disguise he joined the guests at the wedding and was summoned by Eileen herself to sing and play. Touching the harp, with all the pathetic sensibility which the dramatic occasion aroused, he indicated in the first stanza, according to Irish idiom, that he would walk with her, that is, be her partner and constant lover for life. In the second, that he would tenderly care for her and afford her every possible delight. She, having recognized him by his eloquent pleading, manages to clope with him. The well-known motto of Irish hospitality, "Cead Mille Failte,"—a hundred thousand welcomes—was taken from this song, which is one of the historic ones of the Emerald Isle.

In old Scottish songs one of the most beautiful and pathetic is "The Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond." The refrain is supposed to have been the adieu of one

of Prince Charlie's followers to a dear friend, before the poor fellow's execution at Carlisle. The lady was at the side of the scaffold and was thus addressed:

"Ye'll tak' the high road, and I'll tak' the low road,  
And I'll be in Scotland afore ye."

The low road meant for the prisoner the grave, and his words were meant to convey the thought that death would bring his spirit to Scotland, before she could travel back to the banks of bonnie Loch Lomond.

This conception has its simile in the Christian's belief, that loved one's who have passed before are with Christ and He is not far from any one of us. May they not, too, therefore, be ministering spirits?

Adelaide Ann Procter, a daughter of "Barry Cornwall," wrote "The Lost Chord," which has been so beautifully set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan. This is one of the most successful songs of modern times and reference to the circumstances under which the music was composed is of interest. Only a few months after Sir Arthur Sullivan had accepted the post of Principal of the National Training School for Music, he received a severe blow in the death of his brother Frederick, whose talents as an actor were widely recognized. For nearly three weeks Sir Arthur watched by the sick man's bedside, night and day. One night when it was well known that the end was not far off, the sick one lay for some hours in quiet slumber. Sir Arthur picked up this poem of Adelaide Procter's and at once the music began to shape itself in his mind. Slowly the melody grew until it shaped itself into a triumphant psalm, signifying defeat and sorrow crowned with triumphant, immortal victory.



OUR COMPETITION THIS MONTH.

Here is a picture that surely tells a story. When you have heard what that bright, laughing girl has said to the other, and after you have entered into the feelings of the open-mouthed boy who is evidently appreciating the dialogue, if dialogue it be,—in short, when you have made up your mind about the picture write it all down as neatly as you can and mail to the Editor on or before November 1st. Two good book prizes will be awarded to the best two storytellers. This much you may know about the picture: It was taken one morning by the Editor on his way to the office. The trio are "children of the Ward" in Toronto. An early morning rainfall had

left the street clean and the air pure, and whether the girls had enjoyed their breakfast or not, it was no wonder they laughed and apparently enjoyed life. The morning sunbeams were dancing among the branches and fast drying up the pools, and all Nature seemed glad. But, I must stop or I shall be telling the story myself, and that would never do. You do the rest, please. Call your story what you like, give the "kiddies" any names you will, I do not know them, they do not know me, and you will not be telling any secrets if you write all you know or imagine about them. Remember, November 1st.

—THE EDITOR.