

# The Arion,

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## EDITORIAL.

THE following criticism upon the song lately published by Mr. Torrington appeared in *Grip* (25 June) and was replied to in the next number of that Journal, as appears in consequence.

"Abide with me," sacred song by F. H. Torrington, published by Suckling & Sons. There are several faults in this song. A few of the most striking we will point out. In the Bass setting, page 1st, bar 3rd there is an unbearable set of consecutive 5ths, and the same again bar 16th between the extreme parts; page 2nd, bar 3d, C sharp should be written D flat. The frequent doubling of the 3rd and 7th that exists is also not good. The setting of the unaccented word at the beginning of the 2nd line to the accented note of the bar is also incorrect, and equally so from a singing point. There is also a great monotony in its modulation. The modulation from the key to its relative minor, then to the seventh on C, then to the seventh on F, and then to the key, occurring no less than seven or eight times. The harmonizing of the song throughout is certainly not orthodox. Irrespective of these faults we do not find anything striking or original in the melody, or the element of a sacred song contained in it. SHARPER SIXTH.

TORONTO, June 28th, 1881.

To the Editor of *Grip*:—

Sir,—The primitive critic, who under the pseudonym of "Sharp Sixth," attempts to dissect a recently published sacred song composed by Mr. Torrington, in your last issue, evidently belongs to an old and effete school, and confounds the freedom of an accompaniment to a melody with the strictest form of a four-part vocal harmony. He presumes to point out technical errors, and gloating over them with a sardonic smile, seems to say, "look at me, I know so much more than other people." He forgets that his antiquated ideas have long since been exploded, and modern musical science outstepped his narrow-minded hypercriticisms. I commend to him the lines of Pope on criticism:—

"The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,  
With loads of learned lumber in his head."

I find consecutive fifths in the 6th bar, (not in the 3rd) but evidently intentional, and required for an enharmonic effect; the substitution of C sharp for the D flat is a matter of taste, perhaps. Throughout the piece there is to my mind a spontaneous charm of melody, both for the voice, and in the somewhat obligato accompaniment. The composer will doubtless strengthen some trifling weak points in another edition. But the real excellencies and intensely *spiritual* character of the music, embodying, as it does, the very soul-essence of the words, cannot be impaired by spiteful would-be criticism. Yours flatly,

A SHARPER SIXTH.

THE criticism, to those who have been accustomed to read the universally fulsome puffs and notices which our amateur composers have received from time to time, may appear somewhat severe, but it must be borne in mind that the song

in question is not put forward by a favored amateur, but by one of the professional masters of Toronto, and, moreover, one who advertises that he teaches "theory of music." What the object of the second writer can be in rushing into print and denying in so reckless a manner the generally correct statements of "Sharp Sixth," we are at a loss to know, except it be to aid the sale of the song, or (after the manner of the cuttle fish, by discoloring the water with some of his own secretions) to blind the public to the facts. Now as to which sixth is the sharper we care not a jot, but in the interest of the true in art, we feel constrained to give expression to a few thoughts in connection therewith. First, modern musical science while admitting of more freedom than the old school, does *not* permit a violation of the *principals* of the science of harmony. It will be understood that the term "principals" includes both the rules and their exceptions, for it is as much a part of the principal to know when to discard a rule, as when to use it. Now the principals of modern harmony forbid the occurrence of consecutive octaves and fifths, false relations, doubling of the third and seventh, upward resolution of the minor seventh on the dominant dissonant chords left unresolved in any harmonic progression, whether accompaniment or otherwise, unless some special object is to be gained; nor will a matter of *taste* excuse false notation, such as C sharp for D flat, although the writer has (in bad diction) added the word "perhaps." Yet all these errors, to say nothing of errors of form, do occur in this short and simple song. But from the remark which "Sharper Sixth" makes towards the close of his communication with reference to correcting some "trifling weak points," we should judge that he was perfectly aware of the errors to which we have referred, and that his whole effusion has been directed towards shielding Mr. Torrington from the effects of the criticism. As to whether there is anything "spiritual" or not in the melody is a matter of taste in which "Sharp Sixth," who fails to find it, has as much right to his opinion as the "Sharper Sixth," who expresses an opinion to the contrary. And far beyond either of them, the public will settle that matter for itself. The real point at issue is whether the song is correctly written or not. If it is not, it merited a strong criticism, and "Sharper Sixth" should enharmonically change his signature into a major seventh, and resolve (by making a full close) up.

In every community there are always persons willing to make themselves conspicuous by their endeavors to impose upon others their own narrow and sometimes absurd notions. The last Philharmonic Concert, which regarded as a whole, was a decided success, financially and musically, gave an opportunity for one of these to write a letter to the *Telegram* in which, among other