

# MUSIC AN ANCIENT LEGACY OF THE IRISH

By GERTRUDE MARION BARKER

OF all the musical histories of the nations, that of the Irish is the most full of charm. From the earliest times musical expression has been so a part of the people that one cannot think of an Irishman without his harp or his song. Music and poetry were the means by which the ancient inhabitants of Ireland reached out to higher things, and together they form a tradition which links the old harpers who played on the hill of Tara, and the bards and minstrels of that day, with the advent of St. Patrick and the Christian era.

It is said the followers of Comac Mac Art, high-king of Erin, knelt down before St. Patrick and said, "Never, never again shall my harp sing the praises of any God save Patrick's God," and from that time on they joined the saint in his missionary journeys.

But the life of that remote period could not be effaced from the hearts and memories of the people—so behind every tree a fairy, goblin, spirit or banshee lurked—and are quite as vital in Ireland to-day as they were at the dawn of the Christian civilization.

Who does not love the tales of fairy and goblin; the Blarney Stone, the pictures of the "Low-back car?" Who has not been charmed by the tales in song and rhyme of the beautiful Lakes of Killarney; the rustic scenes of Ireland, and

the home scenes of the plain folk of the Emerald Isle?

The folk-songs of Ireland are battle-cries of freedom; of wrongs done by Tudor kings and Cromwell's hosts; they deal with martyrdom of priests; they cheer the patriots to holier service; they soothe the tired mother; they croon over the sleeping children, and they give vent to the pent-up feelings of the love-lorn youths and maidens. Every phase of history, every-day life, sadness, joy, love and heaven is written in the hearts of all true Irishmen by the songs that are woven about them.

In peace or in war the Irishman is in the fore-front. England's battles have been fought and won to Irish music. The United States won her freedom to the strains of "All the Way to Galaway," known all over the world as "Yankee Doodle," and as the English marched out of Yorktown the pipes soualed the tune of "The World Turned Upside Down."

In the world war the British army has marched to "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" and "Dear Old Dublin Bay," for the Irish songs touch the hearts of the singers, and inspire them to valorous deeds.

The Irish people are their own historians. Their songs are free from guile and pretense, and tell of the loves and hates, the longings, aspirations and ideals that are in the singer's heart. In the time of Queen Elizabeth, Shakespeare honored the Irish melodies by weaving them into his immortal dramas, and Spencer, the historian, who hated the Irish, upon his visit to the Emerald Isle in 1581 and 1584, wrote various interesting facts about the native music, especially the customary ornamentation of simple melodies, and declared an Irishman dared not displease his neighbor for fear of being made infamous by the mouths of men in song.

## Folk Tunes Are Gems

If musical composition meant nothing more than tunes sixteen bars long, Ireland could claim some of the very greatest composers that have ever lived. For in their miniature form the best Irish folk tunes are gems of flawless luster.

The bards and minstrels had their day and made their impression on the folk-songs of the period; songs of pagan chivalry clash with Christian heroism; Gael and Gall rival the curse of Cromwell; and the Jacobite illusion vies with the dawn of a more modern day; but, from whatever angle the folk songs are studied, they cannot be separated from the atmosphere that gave them being.

If vocal expression is an Irishman's birthright, he cannot be perfectly drawn without giving due prominence to his harp as well.

The earliest allusions to music in Irish story refer to the harp, or the ancient Celtic name—the *cruit*. The harp figures in most of the ancient legends.

O'Curry, who has given us our first scientific accounts of Celtic music, gives an old story that tells how the first harp came to be made.

It is a tale of a man and his wife. *Cull* is the man and *Canoclach Mhor* the woman. *Canoclach* hated her husband and fled from him. He persistently followed her. Through forest and wilderness she still flew before him, and finally in her wanderings reached the seashore of Camas. As she walked over the sands she came upon the skeleton of the whale, and the wind, passing through the sinews of the dead monster, made a murmuring. Listening to this strange music, the woman fell asleep, and her husband, who was hard on her trail, came up. He greatly marveled how it was his wife had fallen asleep; casting about him for a reason, he decided it must be the sound made by the wind in the tightly strung sinews of the whale. Then the latent artist in *Cull* asserted itself. What nature had effected by chance he did by design. He went into the wood, and taking a limb of a tree, he made it into the framework of a harp. He put strings upon it, made from the sinews of the whale—and that is how the first harp came to be made.

The harp was of two kinds, a small instrument used chiefly for religious purposes, first by the old Druids, in their rites, and later by the Christian bishops and abbots. The other harp was large and used in public assemblies and in battles.

The bag-pipes were introduced into Ireland from Caledonia, it is said. They had the same use in the Irish armies they now have in the Highland regiment. But the Irish made, in the course of time, an improvement; using bellows to fill the chanter, instead of the mouth, and continued to improve the instrument until the delightful union-pipes are the result.

As to their musicians, we know very little of the music of the medieval harpers, but at Elizabeth's court Irish tunes were popular.

O'Carolan, a famous itinerant harper (1670-1738), wrote many of the best-known Irish melodies, including the "Princess Royal" dance tune, and "Bumper Squire Jones."

Of late huge books of melodies have been collected and arranged. Petrie has attracted special attention to this field by his thorough investigation of Irish folk music.

Thomas Moore had a wonderful genius for writing around the essential elements in an older tune. He wrote "She Is Far From the Land," to commemorate the feelings of Sarah Curran, daughter of the celebrated barrister, and her lover, Robert Emmett.

St. Patrick forms the theme for many songs, as do the shamrock and the glorious Isle itself.

One of the dearest of all the Irish songs is "The Last Rose of Summer," a song that belongs to the time of Queen Anne, but made famous by Flotow in his opera, "Martha." Thomas Moore came upon the melody in a roundabout manner, for it was originally written by a man named Milliken, who was a wandering singer, and it was familiar over Ireland in a coarser dress centuries be-

fore Moore gave it its more polished words and setting.

"The Bells of Shannon," once a great favorite, was written by Francis Sylvester Mahony, and immortalized those old bells on the steeple of St. Anne. "The Exile of Erin," by a Scotchman, Thomas Campbell, shows a surprising affection for the Irish, and a sympathy with the sentiment of their songs. Carol O'Daly gave us "Robin Adair," and Arthur O'Neill has preserved to mankind the old Hibernian song, "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Perhaps two of the best-known Irish composers are John Field and M. W. Balfe. Field was a composer and pianist of no little merit. His friends thought him far greater than Chopin, and Chopin, himself, often played Field's Concerto in A Flat Major. Robert Schumann also praised Field's compositions warmly.

Michal William Balfe is best known to us for his opera, the "Bohemian Girl."

What the Irish may accomplish in the musical world is yet to be determined. For the time being the strange wails of the revolution may be heard among the ghosts of Tara's Hall. But after the cleansing by fire there will rise, again, a better Ireland; and the art of music so beautifully expressed by the Irish soul will come again into its own interpretation of the pipes of Pan. Be their triumphs in the future what they may—it is sure the glory of their past cannot be forgotten when the song of the heart is placed above the outward demonstration of individual talent, for in Ireland the thoughts and aspirations of the masses speak through the medium of their folk-songs.

 **Summer School**  
for  
**Music and School**  
Teachers  
who wish  
**Pedagogy, Material**  
**Results**  
Personal Direction of  
**EFFA ELLIS PERFIELD**  
New York City  
June 1 to July 27—Hotel Astor  
Lake Sebago, Maine, August  
Address  
**ST. JAMES HOTEL**  
109 West 45th St., New York  
Phone Bryant 3247

**May Stone**  
151 East 81st Street  
New York City

**RENATO**  
**ZANELLI**  
Leading Baritone  
METROPOLITAN OPERA COMPANY  
New York City

**JEANNE**  
**GORDON**  
CONTRALTO  
METROPOLITAN OPERA CO.  
Mgr. ARTHUR SPIZZI, 1482 Broadway, New York

**ISAAC**  
**VAN GROVE**  
708 Fine Arts Bldg. Chicago  
Phone, Wabash 6283

**THIS TRADE MARK**  
IN THE  
**IRON PLATE**  
OF A PIANO  
Guarantees at least  
that the maker  
uses the highest  
possible grade of  
plates that money  
can buy.  
  
**O. S. KELLY CO.**  
SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

**New England**  
**CONSERVATORY**  
**OF MUSIC**  
Geo. W. Chadwick  
Director  
Year opens  
September 16, 1920  
**BOSTON, MASS.**  
Located in the Music Center of America  
It affords pupils the environment and atmosphere so necessary to a musical education. Its complete organization, and splendid equipment offer exceptional facilities for students. Dormitories for women students.  
Complete Curriculum  
Courses in every branch of Music, applied and theoretical.  
Owing to the Practical Training  
in our Normal Department, graduates are much in demand as teachers.  
Address Ralph L. Flanders, General Manager  
The Free Privileges  
of lectures, concerts and recitals, the opportunities of ensemble practice and appearing before audiences, and the daily associations, are invaluable advantages to the music student.  
A Complete Orchestra  
offers advanced pupils in piano-forte, voice, organ and violin experience in rehearsal and public appearance with orchestral accompaniment.  
Dramatic Department  
Practical training in acting.

**W. Henri ZAY** SUMMER COURSE FOR TEACHERS  
Author of "Practical Psychology of Voice" (Schirmer)  
Pronounced by Teachers as the Best Book on Voice  
50 W. 67th St. Phone, Columbus 1405

**PALESTRINA CHOIR** of Philadelphia  
Nicola A. Montani, Conductor  
**N. LINDSAY** M.A. M.M. M.B.A.C. CONDUCTOR, MENDELSSOHN CLUB  
Philadelphia—45th Season  
"A Model Chorus"  
Instruction in Theory (Aural Meth.) Composition.

**ZERFFI** TEACHER OF SINGING  
VOICE PRODUCTION *without* INTERFERENCE  
The Logically Correct Method of Voice Production  
Studio: 333 West End Avenue, NEW YORK

**Mme. NANA GENOVESE** Managements Annie Friedrichs  
Metropolitan Opera House Bldg  
1425 Broadway, New York  
AMERICAN-ITALIAN MEZZO-SOPRANO, formerly of Manhattan Opera Company

**VINELLO** DRAMATIC SOPRANO  
Voice Placing—Operatic Repertoire  
20 Elm Hill Park,  
Roxbury, Mass.

**OLIVE NEVIN** SOPRANO  
"She sings apparently for the sheer joy of it, and it is a joy to hear her."—Milwaukee Sentinel.  
Address: Sewickley, Pennsylvania

**INSTITUTE OF MUSICAL ART** OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
**FRANK DAMROSCH, DIRECTOR** 120 CLAREMONT AVENUE

**BODINOFF** SOPRANO  
Available Now  
Hotel St. Andrew  
72nd St. & Broadway,  
New York

**EDWIN FRANKO GOLDMAN** Columbia University  
CONDUCTOR, THE GOLDMAN CONCERT BAND  
Season 1918, 1919  
and 1920  
"A Symphony Orchestra in Brass" 500 West 144th Street, New York

**HELEN ALLEN HUNT** CONTRALTO SOLOIST AND TEACHER  
Studio: 509 Pierce Bldg., Boston, Mass.