

THE EVENING NEWS.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 12, 1872.

A WELSH CHOIR CARRY OFF THE MUSIC PRIZE AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

The London correspondent of the New York Tribune, writing July 1st, says:

"Most Americans who know anything about the Crystal Palace, know that its director has made great efforts in various ways for the development of musical art. Last summer they organized a National Music Meeting with competition and prizes in large numbers, and the result of the experiment was so great as to lead to the repetition of it this year, with a success even more brilliant. The competition was conducted with some remarkable results. One of the exciting results of last year was the appearance of a Welsh choir, the singing of which was so extraordinarily good that the grand prize of £1000, or £1,000, was awarded to it, although no rival choir appeared and no contest took place. The celebrity they thus gained, coupled with the amount of the prize, was supposed to have led them to immediately contest this year. England abounds in musical organizations and the choral associations of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, and elsewhere, have not been slow to speak of London. But the only body which appeared against the Welsh was the Royal Choral Society, which is one of the best known in England. The struggle has just been concluded by the signal triumph of the South Wales choir over their English rivals."

"Both choirs had to sing J. S. Bach's motet, 'I wrestle and play,' the final chorus: 'Hallelujah, from Beethoven's Mount of Olives; 'see what joys,' from Mendelssohn's 'Paulus'; and 'Crown with torches' from the Walpurgis Night, by the same author. The judges were Sir J. Benedict, Sir J. Goss and Mr. Baillie, who named and I am sure almost as well known in America as in England. The scene of the competition is admirably suited for choral effects, and the large number of the better class of people in the hall were unmoved for their display. In numbers the Welsh had an advantage, mustering 500 strong to the 300 of the Tonies. The Welsh, however, had a slight advantage in the national enthusiasm, both of the singers and of the audience, for it is estimated that at least half of the 12,000 who came to hear the contest were Welshmen. The interest excited they take in an event of this kind they beat the English all hollow, and so strong is the sympathetic bond between the two peoples that the latter may very likely have contributed to their countrymen's victory. Be that as it may, the victory was the most decided and decided, the whole affair as becoming a Welsh festival, while the Welsh themselves have already christened it the Crystal Palace Festival. The same critic, writing to the London Times, says of the singing:

"The fine and sustained energy with which the Welsh choristers, under the vigorous guidance of 'Ganadur,' their chief for women, and their director, the retired master, sang 'Come with Torches,' from Mendelssohn's 'Walpurgis Night,' was simply marvellous. Every single piece their intention should be here and there at fault was inevitable; but their 'attack' was as sure as the stroke from a hammer delivered by a well skilled hand, and their finish was never once off. This alone (and, I will say, the way the orchestra took part) being persistently enforced, the familiar 'March the Men of Harlech' (in the Welsh language—unaccompanied) was substituted.

"There were other competitions during the meeting, including four for solo vocalists, one for solo trumpets, one for brass bands, and bands of all kinds, together with choral contests on a smaller scale than that in which the Welsh carried off the first. But the strength—or at least comparative strength—of English musical training is supposed to be so much in choral singing that by far the greatest public interest was directed to the particular contests. The very name of 'Music' is so important. And since its award, the glory of winning it has been almost eclipsed by the glow of an invitation to be invited to sing throughout the land, the love and regard of the Prince of Wales. The loyalty of the Welsh to the Prince, who looks upon them with such tenderness, is so profound, of course, that they are the most devoted kind. They call him 'our Prince,' albeit they see but little of him. Nor is the Prince slow to seize a good chance of doing a popular thing, and when he understood the situation, gave a gracious command that the whole choir of five hundred should sing before him in his private room of a private house, big enough for a concert of that kind, it had to be held on the lawn. Then the Welshmen gathered yesterday afternoon, while in front of them sat the royal party, composed of the Princess, the Duke of Connaught, and their Duchesses, the Countess, the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the Prime Minister's son, Mr. W. H. Gladstone, M. P., and a number of other distinguished persons. Most of the Welsh members of Parliament were present with their countrymen, having marshaled them over from Willis's room, the famous 'Butcher Room.' Mr. Fetherstonhaugh, Mr. Holland, Sir J. Lloyd, Mr. Davies, and others accompanying him. For the moment distinction of rank was forgotten. The music of the Welsh choir impressed so wholly members of what are called the lower classes—miners, iron-workers, tradesmen on a small scale, and the like—with their voices, that they are said to be the most popular in Wales, and an accomplished musician generally. That he is an admirable conductor we can hardly doubt.

"Forming in a circle, the choir sang the national anthem; then the Welsh melody of 'Llewys Owain,' or the Ash Grove, 'the conductor,' says another critic, 'yielded his hands of gold and ebony, which had been taken from his Welsh setting in Australia, and with it guiding his huge choir, without any music, with a precision that Costa might have envied.' Then came the chorus of 'Llewys Owain,' which, by Brinley Richards, which is to say, with such precision and effect that the Prince and Princess, good musicians both, asked—or I suppose I should say commanded—that it should be repeated. The Prince afterward caused the composer to be notified that she would accept a definition of it to herself. It was fully explained, and then Mr. Richards, who had been asked if he had not been swayed by the Welsh, but I hope it is all right, 'or the March of the Men of Harlech,' said the whole world of Wales." At the close of the concert, when presented to the Prince, who shook hands with him and the Queen of royal condescension was pronounced unfeigned. The choir would have liked to cheer, but it had not been arranged for demonstrations of that kind were not expected. How the enthusiasm of the people was excited, but it must have been a stupendous one. But those they did at last, in response to a few words from the Prince,

expressing his thanks for their company and his hope that their visit had been as agreeable to them as their singing had been excellent, with a wish for their safe journey home. "Amen," said the Welshmen, who have not all grown too democratic to be gratified by this gracious speech.

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