

## SIR JOSEPH BARNBY

BORN AUGUST 12, 1838; DIED JANUARY 28, 1896.

CLOSE upon each other's steps, during what has passed of this ominous year, death and disaster have followed, and now it is our melancholy duty to record the passing away of Sir Joseph Barnby. Mournful under any circumstances, there are some conditions amid which the dissolution of the body loses much of its terror. When a man has finished his life's work, and the enfeebled frame stoops under a weight of years, we can calmly think, with Lord Bacon, that "it is as natural to die as to be born." But the case is wholly different when, in the full vigour of maturity and in the midst of work, one is suddenly struck down, as by a bolt from the blue. Thus did Joseph Barnby die. As far as our knowledge goes, his health had lately given no cause for uneasiness. He went about his daily task as of old, and, only a few hours before the stroke fell, was presiding at a rehearsal of "Judas Maccabæus" by the Royal Choral Society. At ten o'clock the next morning the imperative summons came. It is more especially when Death appears in such a shape that the awful presence gives us pause, as being that which is scarcely natural, that which violates the regular and beneficent order of Providence, and fills us not only with grief, but infinite pity. Of the bereaved widow and orphans in the present sad example of untimely mortality, a humane mind scarcely dares to think. We can only trust that the few sources of comfort equal to their requirements may be abundantly open.

In these necessarily hurried lines it is not possible to give an adequate biographical sketch of the deceased musician, and we must be satisfied to mention the salient features of a very successful life. Sir Joseph Barnby, born at York on the date given above, became a chorister in the Minster of his native city, and spent his boyish years amid surroundings and influences which, no doubt, had a large share in determining his career, as, before everything else, a Church musician. He could have had no better school than that which has given so much distinction to English art, while that he made good use of opportunity then, and, later, at the Royal Academy of Music, was proved in various ways, notably by his honourable position in a hard struggle for the Mendelssohn Scholarship, which, perhaps, only Arthur Sullivan could have carried off against him. His education completed, as far as professors were concerned, Joseph Barnby naturally took service under the banner of the Church which had nurtured him. Acting as organist and choirmaster first at St. James the Less, Westminster, he removed, in 1863, to a similar, but more important, post at St. Andrew's, Wells Street, where he remained till 1871. During that time the music at St. Andrew's became more than metropolitan in repute. It was not only performed with uncommon excellence, but distinguished by considerable enterprise. Always an admirer of Gounod, Mr. Barnby made the sacred works of that master familiar to frequenters of the church, doing the same good turn for others, whose claims he recognised regardless of nationality. In 1871 the increasingly active musician transferred his services to St. Anne's, Soho, and made that church famous in turn, especially in connection with Lenten music;

attracting crowds by his renderings of Bach's "Passion" according both to St. Matthew and St. John. So much activity and success prepared the way for still higher things, and, in 1875, Mr. Barnby was appointed Precentor and Director of Musical Instruction at Eton College. That important position he retained till shortly before election to a still more onerous and responsible post as Principal of the Guildhall School of Music. With resignation from Eton, his direct, personal service to the Church ceased. But he worked for the music of worship in more than one way, being as active with his pen as at the organ or in choir practice. He leaves behind him a long list of Services, Anthems, hymn-tunes, and Chants, many of which have come into general use, are highly prized, and will perpetuate his name. In this connection may also be mentioned the sacred idyll "Rebekah," and a setting of the Psalm "The Lord is King," written for the Leeds Festival of 1883.

It is now time to glance at Sir Joseph Barnby's career outside his work for the Church. Here we meet with evidence of constant activity and progress, beginning with the establishment, in 1867, of Barnby's Choir, for the performance of madrigals and other distinctively choral music. Two years later came the foundation of Novello's Oratorio Concerts, under his musical directorship; and subsequently, following M. Gounod's resignation as conductor of the Albert Hall Choral Society, his appointment to the vacant post, in the discharge of the duties of which Death may almost be said to have found him. It was, no doubt, with special reference to successful work at the Albert Hall that Mr. Barnby received the honour of knighthood in 1892. No reward of the kind was ever more fairly earned by devotion to duty.

The sudden removal of so active and comprehensive a labourer in the field of music leaves, like that of Sir Charles Hallé not long since, a great gap to be filled up. A successor must be found at the Guildhall School, at the Royal Albert Hall, in the conductor's seat of the Cardiff Triennial Festival, and for the South Wales Festival which has yet to hold its first meeting. We can only hope that with the new men will also be obtained the qualities which made Sir Joseph Barnby a successful organiser, a choir trainer without peer, and a toiler who, once having put his hand to the plough, never thought of looking back.

It will not be inappropriate to mention here the close relations which have existed between the proprietors of THE MUSICAL TIMES and the eminent man whom now we mourn. As for a long time musical adviser to Messrs. Novello, Ewer and Co., and as conductor of concerts given by the firm, the connection was necessarily intimate, and now adds a sense of personal loss to that in which the whole musical world shares. There remains for all who, in any sense, are conscious of such loss to bear it resignedly, and to comfort themselves and one another with the thought that—

Beyond the flight of time,  
Beyond this vale of death,  
There surely is some blessed clime  
Where life is not a breath,  
Nor life's affections transient fire,  
Whose sparks fly upward and expire.