

KETTERING TOWN BAND.

Kettering is a very important little town of about 20,000 inhabitants situated in Northamptonshire, being about 75 miles north of London, and 14 miles N.E. of Northampton, and is on the Midland main-line from London to Derby. Kettering lies almost in the centre of a very large shoe industry, supplying boots and shoes to all parts of the world. 25 years ago Kettering was quite a village, with only two or three boot factories, but now there are upwards of 60 of them, apparently doing good business. Some manufacturers turn out from 8 to 10 thousand pairs per week. Indeed a more thriving and go-ahead town would be hard to find.

The neighbourhood of Kettering abounds with places of historical renown, the most notable being the triangular lodge, near Rushton Hall, about 3 miles from Kettering, where the notorious Guy Fawkes and his companions hatched their nefarious plot to blow up the King and Parliament. The place where the terrible Battle of Naseby Field was fought on June 14th, 1645, is situated only about 8 miles away. There are also to be seen in a crypt under the church at Rothwell (about 4 miles away) the skulls and remains of (it is supposed) at least 60,000 men. From marks on the skulls, &c., it is conjectured that many of them are the remains of men who fell in the above battle. They were discovered by a grave-digger, who was digging a grave in one of the aisles.

After this brief description of the neighbourhood we now come to our subject proper.

The Kettering Town Band was originally started by some workmen at Stanley's Boot and Shoe Works on October 8th, 1872, and went for some time in the name of the Albert Band, the following gentlemen being amongst the founders:—Mr. W. Smith, H. Fowkes, Mr. Bishop, Mr. W. Taffs, (the last named having retained his membership up to the present day), Mr. W. Hammond being the first Bandmaster. The band made fair progress up to 1885, having a goodly number of engagements, &c., and being looked on as a good band in this district (for that time.) In 1885 the band started contesting, having engaged Mr. Randolph Ryan, of Farnworth, to conduct them and went to Rushden Septet

Contest, securing the second prize. From 1885 to 1890 the band attended 16 contests with the following results:—4 firsts, 3 seconds, 5 thirds, and 1 fourth. In the early part of 1890 Mr. John Gladney was engaged to instruct the band and from that time to the present they have been very successful. In 1890 the band attended 5 contests with the following results:—4 firsts, 1 third, and 1 fifth, total £87. The next year showed still further improvement, the band attending 17 contests and gaining 14 firsts and 3 seconds, (including 24 Silver Medals at Gretton), making a grand total of £187/3/- for the season. Last year, 1892, was an ever memorable year in the band's history, attending 23 contests, which resulted in 11 firsts, 10 seconds, 1 third, and once unplaced, at the Old America Contest at Manchester, the band, however, being only 4 points below the famous Besses-o'-th'-Barn Band at that contest. Total value for that year (1892), £231/6/-, including the Champion Gold Medal for England and Wales, presented by Silvan and Smith, Instrument manufacturers, London, for the band totalling the highest number of points for the whole season's contest. The result was—Kettering Town 1st with 120 points; Kingston Mills 2nd with 111 points; and Besses-o'-th'-Barn 3rd with 110 points.

Besides this, the band at present holds the Champion County Challenge Cup, value 13 guineas, competed for at Stanwick, in August 1892, and the following are the Judge's remarks on the playing of the band at that contest.

STANWICK, AUG. 20TH 1892.—1st PRIZE AND COUNTY CHALLENGE CUP.

(SEVEN BANDS COMPETED.)

KETTERING TOWN.—Conductor, J. Gladney. Selection, "Stiffello."—Attack in opening bars splendid, sustaining powers very good all round, intonation very good; soloists played with plenty of warmth, accompaniments well kept under, and band very precise, soprano excellent, trombone fine tone, and stands out properly, playing very intelligently, marks well looked after, *ff* very smart, trombones fine, also cornets, basses, and the rest; horn solo excellent, and proper meaning displayed, attack very good. Next—soloists good, trombones in cres. very rich, sustained notes very grand, bass solo well delivered, cornets very good, trombone solo stood out well, accompaniments very good, light and shade well looked after, euphonium solo very artistic, accompaniments in proper time and not overdone, soprano stood out well, cadenza rather unartistic first part, good tone, closing bars excellent, trombone again well to the fore, accompaniments well kept under, and plays like one, quick movement very fine. Organ movement—Basses played with a oneness that was charming, everything dove-tailed in to a nicety, and balance could not have been better, trombones come in with lovely tone and brighten up the movement very grand, discords held very well till they righted themselves, very often these are given way to, in this case excellent, euphonium solo very artistic, sustaining well, and very sympathetic, soprano again a treat, playing the obligato with wonderful clearness, trombones in crescendo, splendidly built up, *dim.* very good in every respect, band in excellent tune, sustaining last chords properly. Allegro—Euphonium and cornet in cadenza very good, band excellent, and very smart playing with plenty of command, basses, trombones, and others played very fine, and gave an artistic rendering of the selection all through.—Judges:—Mr. R. Stead (Huddersfield); Mr. J. Jackson (Leeds); Mr. G. Hames (Nottingham).

The band has also won several medals for best soloists.

The following was the composition of the band for that most successful season of 1892 :—

Conductor—Mr. Randolph Ryan.
Solo cornets—R. Ryan, H. Ficken,—Debanke.
Repiano cornets—W. East and H. Arber.
Second cornets—H. Slow and W. Soasby.
Third cornet—C. Winstone.
Tenors—G. Spriggs, solo ; T. Barlow, 2nd ; H. Robinson, 3rd.
Baritones—1st, A.L. Ambler ; 2nd, T. Blumson.
Euphoniums—solo, S. Roughton ; 2nd, W. Taffs.
Trombones—1st, A. Falkner ; 2nd, A. Turner ; bass, F. Panter.
Eb Basses—W. Cherry and C. Bruxby.
BBb Basses—A. Cherry and S. Manning.
Drum—J. Parkinson.

One of those principally entitled to credit is the late bandmaster, Mr. Warren East, whose portrait and sketch appear in this issue. This gentleman deserves special word of mention with regard to the band. He has been identified with it almost since its commencement, working for it heart and soul. He was bandmaster for upwards of 19 years, and the members of the band sincerely regretted his severing his connection with it. It must be a source of great pleasure and gratification to him to know that he has been so instrumental in its success.

On Mr. East's retirement from the band last year, Mr. G. Spriggs was unanimously elected to fill the vacancy. The present officers of the Band are—Professional tutor, J. Gladney, Esq., Manchester ; Conductor, R. Ryan ; President, H. F. Henson, Esq. ; committee, C. Bruxby, C. Winstone, F. Panter, T. Barlow, and H. Ficken, with S. Roughton, 58, Queen-street, Kettering, as hon. sec.

The Band are very greatly indebted to the public of Kettering (principally comprised of working men) for the handsome way in which they have recognised the efforts of the band, and for the interest they take in the playing of its members. It would do some of your readers good to see some of the magnificent receptions the band have had (at all hours of the night) on returning from some of the most victorious contests.

August, 1892, was also a very eventful month, for it was then the honorary members held their first general meeting with the one object—to find ways and means to get more money for the working of the band, and the following gentlemen who were unanimously elected as a committee to work out the object have given very valuable aid in every work the band have undertaken since that time :—President, H. F. Henson, Esq. ; Mr. Geo. Chater, vice do. ; H. Buckby, hon. sec. ; J. P. Toseland, treasurer ; and Messrs. G. H. Winstone, S. Church, W. Cherry, sen., W. Goodman, A. Parrish, J. Carter, and A. Hullett. These gentlemen have divided the town in districts, and collect all the honorary members' subscriptions themselves, which is no small matter, for the honorary members number some hundreds, (I might say they have increased by 3 or 4 times since the committee commenced their efforts), some paying annual subscriptions up to one guinea, some paying monthly, and some weekly down to 1d. per week. The committee also do the major part of the working of any concerts, &c., &c., got up by the band, and keep a separate banking account in their name, having a voice in all band business, and knowing how their money is spent.

The band are also greatly indebted to their President (H. F. Henson, Esq.), for kindly

placing his yard and a good band-stand at the disposal of its members for practice.

The band have also ordered and just received a full set of silver-plated instruments (Compensating) from Messrs. Boosey and Co., 295, Regent-street, London, at a cost of £450, and having booked a goodly number of engagements and contests (including Belle Vue for the first time), hope, with the invaluable assistance of J. Gladney, Esq., and Mr. R. Ryan, to render a good account of their this year's work at the close of the season.

The following is the present organisation of the Band :—

Soprano—H. Hullett.
Solo Cornets—R. Ryan, F. Miller, and H. Ficken. Repiano Cornet—F. Taffs.
2nd Cornet—T. Chambers.
3rd Cornets—C. Winstone and E. Collman.
1st Flugel Horn—H. Arber ; 2nd Flugel Horn—H. Slow.
Tenor Horns—Solo, F. Evans ; 1st Tenor Horn—G. Spriggs ; 2nd Tenor Horn—T. Barlow ; 3rd Tenor Horn—H. Robinson.
1st Baritone—A. Ambler ; 2nd Baritone—W. Taffs.
Solo Euphonium—W. Reynolds ; 2nd Euphonium—S. Roughton.
1st Trombone—A. Falkner ; 2nd Trombone—E. Pollard.
Bass Trombones—F. Panter and G. Richardson.
Eb Basses—W. Cherry and C. Bruxby.
Bb Bass—S. Manning.
BBb—A. Cherry. Drum—J. Parkinson.

MR. RANDOLPH RYAN, CONDUCTOR AND SOLO CORNET, KETTERING TOWN BAND.

Mr. Ryan was born at Farnsworth, near Bolton, and is 29 years of age. He first came to Kettering 10 years ago, with the Irwell Bank Band, to the first band contest held at Kettering. He was engaged by the Kettering Rifle Band to play with them, after hearing him on the soprano at the contest, and they were not long in finding out that Mr. Ryan was a young man of great promise as a musician, and he quickly made his mark in the town and district by his splendid playing. He did not, however, stay long with the Rifle Band, but transferred his services to the Town Band. As a band teacher and conductor, Mr. Ryan has no equal in the Midlands, and but few in the country. The Town Band was in a very poor state when Mr. Ryan commenced with them, but he has by his extraordinary ability and perseverance made it the Champion Band of the Midlands.

During the past 3 years under his tuition the band has won more prizes than any other band in England. As a soloist Mr. Ryan is exceptionally good, and as a conductor he has the men well under control, being firm but not severe, and he has won golden opinions from all who have come in contact with him. But it is on the contest field that he has won his greatest laurels. When other bands have had their professional conductors with them, Mr. Ryan has encouraged his men with Nelson's ever-memorable words, "Kettering expects every man this day will do his duty," and his words have been almost magical in effect.

It was Mr. Ryan's ambition some years ago to qualify as a contest judge, and his ambition has since been gratified. Last year he was engaged to judge the great band contest at Bo'ness, in Scotland, also a contest in Wales, and at present to judge a contest on the 13th of May at Ashby-de-la-Zouch. He has been obliged to refuse several offers on account of other engagements.