

SKETCHES OF FAMOUS BANDS.

THE KINGSTON MILLS BAND AND ITS HISTORY.

"Where is Kingston?" That, of course, is what you would like to know definitely first of all. There are several Kingstons—at least three in England; one is on the great River Thames, and another on the River Humber. But this one—the Kingston of Kingstons as far as the Cornet is concerned, is situated at an extreme corner of Cheshire, on the River Tame, being some 350 yards from where that river makes the dividing line between the Cheshire and Lancashire. Kingston Mills are within the borough of Hyde, so that the address is "Kingston, Hyde," and to show that Hyde is not an altogether insignificant place, it will only be necessary to give a brief outline of the glories connected with its past history, so here it is:

"The township of Hyde (now a borough of 31,000 inhabitants) is said to have given its name, so far back as the reign of Henry III., to a family from which sprung Edward Hyde, Lord Clarendon, the celebrated lawyer, statesman, and historian, in the reign of the two Charleses. Tradition relates that Clarendon's daughter, Ann, was born at Hyde Hall,—she who became the wife of the Duke of York, afterwards King James II., and the mother of two of the reigning Queens of England, Mary and Ann." To impress on the reader's mind the fact that Hyde and its Kingston are also within the pale of civilisation, it may also be mentioned that Hyde is only seven miles from the great city of Manchester, a centre which is regarded as having as musically-critical audiences as any in the Kingdom. But reverting for a moment to Hyde's past connection with the names of Royal and distinguished personages, let it be recorded that Kingston is within the proverbial stone's-throw of the site on which Hyde Hall (now demolished) once stood; and the past glorious history may be said to have been latterly overshadowed by modern innovations, one of the most noted of which may be truly said to be the achievement of Kingston Mills Band. This need not be chronicled in any boastful spirit; suffice it to say that Kingston Mills Band has at various times turned out or had connected with it some of the most noted players in the brass band world. Perhaps it may not be amiss to mention a few of these: Commencing with the early history of Kingston's palmiest days was Tom Taylor, son of Mr. Reuben Taylor, at one time Kingston's bandmaster, and previously connected with the once famous Compstall Prize Band. Tom Taylor was inimitable as a solo euphonium player, for as a youth in his teens he could play the most intricate passages in a surprising manner, while as for volume of tone he was prodigious even in *tutti* passages; his fame will live long. Next comes the name of Edwin Booth, one of the finest solo horns in the country. Alfred Monks, the solo cornet, was a most remarkable man—a Trojan on the instrument—who could play soprano parts on the B flat cornet. Next came James Ryder, the sweetest toned cornet artiste who ever mounted a contest platform, as well as being a fine triple-tonguer; his "singing" style of playing was worthy of the greatest admiration, his tone being rich and "veivety" (if you will allow the term.) During the same period as Ryder—the Belle Vue gold medal first prize for three year's period—William Taylor, "the trombone king" wedded his fortunes to Kingston, and it was a treat never to be forgotten to hear these two (Ryder and Taylor)

play a cornet and trombone duet which occurred in one of the Belle Vue selections. Taylor's "true trombone tone" was at that time beyond criticism—it was imposing, it was majestic, and voice-like, so much so that at one contest, in Mr. Gladney's ponderous selection arranged from the works of the immortal Beethoven, Taylor played the great tenor song, "Adelaide," in such a charming manner that the judge in his notes said,— "The trombone sung, not played, the difficult song, 'Adelaide.'" No greater compliment could be paid to a brass player, considering also that the range of the solo passed beyond the legitimate limits of the instrument! It was often a feat of Taylor's (together with Will Fox, the uncommonly good bass trombone, together with a second trombone) to play a trio for three trombones at concerts, etc. Now we come to an acknowledgment of the valuable services of Mr. Sam Newton, Kingston's present solo euphonium; his tone is rich and full, his phrasing truthful and artistic, and his general style such as stands out prominently from the ranks of even good average players of the same instrument. James Billam, the present cornet soloist, is also a good "cornerman," being, as a youth, a capital executant. Several players of other instruments stuck to the band for years—the brothers Knowles, James Bruder, Chas. Shaw (bombardonists), the first two of whom are prize-winners on their unwieldy instruments. Almost all those named above have won prizes galore. Taylor having won the Belle Vue trombone prize for two years in succession; while Ryder could have started business with a stock of cornets and medals he had secured. Sam Newton, also, has carried off many premierships for best euphonium.

Coming to the main facts of Kingston's history, one could positively revel in exact data regarding its successes—but that is neither desirable nor necessary in order to give an outline of its general career. First of all, then, we must say that it was mainly due in the first instance to Mr. Henry H. Clayton, manager at Kingston Mills, that Kingston ever became a contesting band of the "first water." A room in the mills, and gas free, having been placed at the disposal of the band for practice, by the proprietors, Messrs. Robert Hall and Son, the band made such progress as induced Mr. Clayton to inquire after a good tutor for the members. Mr. John Gladney was recommended by a gentleman well versed by experience in the matter, with a result that he was engaged. Mr. Reuben Taylor was sub-conductor at that time, and no doubt the fact of a local contest between four local bands in Hyde being about to take place somewhat helped matters onward as regards contesting. Kingston ultimately came off victorious, vanquishing its opponents easily. From this it went on and on, the members being exuberated by one success after another. In the year 1872, Kingston attended two contests (Abbey Hey and one at Hyde) gaining two second prizes with a total value of £21. In '73 they took a first of £35/15/- at Burslem, a second at Abbey Hey of £16/9/-, a third of £4 at New Mills, and a third of £17 at Ashton, money and instruments totalling up to £73/4/-. In 1874/75 was won—2nd at Burslem, 5th at Golcar, 2nd Abbey Hey, and 3rd at Stalybridge. 1875 was for Kingston a brilliant season for a comparatively young contesting band, and showed distinctly the traces of the masterly treatment by that adept hand of Gladney. Whether it may be said that Gladney "is a name to conjure with," certainly it may be affirmed that Mr. Gladney showed that he conjured out of Kingston such music as drew £152/3/- out of contests in 1875—a first of

£27/10/- at Burslem, 5th of £2 at Batley, 2nd of £14 at Church (Accrington), 4th of £3 at Stalybridge, and the crowning one (with "Il Tallsmano"), of first at Belle Vue, which amounted to in cash and instruments to £100/19/-. The following year (76) the band won prizes to the amount of £161/8/- at ten contests, including second of £50/13/- at Belle Vue, firsts at Abbey Hey, Burslem and Longton, two thirds, two fourths, and one fifth. In 1877, eleven contests brought in £175/17/6, including fifth of £31 at Belle Vue, 2nd of £30 at Edinburgh, 1sts at Abbey Hey and Hanley, 2nd at Stockport, 3rds at Ashton, Huddersfield and Clayton-le-Moors, 4ths at Holme Mills and Stalybridge. Here is a total of £657/2/6 in the first six years of its contesting career, after which changes of circumstances and membership had a blighting effect on the band's career. This did not quench the ardour of some of the old ones, and the band was kept going for some time with admirable determination, the onus of bandmaster falling on Mr. Sam Scholes, the oldest member of the band (along with Mr. Ed. Booth.) Financial difficulties, of course, rendered the matter of professional tuition an impossibility, until the late lamented Mr. Harry L. Holding (who succeeded Mr. Tom Taylor as solo euphonium) stepped manfully into the breach. Mr. Holding volunteered to see the band over its difficulties if they would promise to stick together and help him. Mr. Scholes retiring from the bandmastership, the reins of that office were assumed by Mr. Holding, and not without a great measure of success. James Sidebotham took Mr. Holding's place as solo euphonium, and all "piled together", and again raised Kingston to a moderate contesting pitch, winning quite a number of prizes even against bands with professional tutors. Success attended their efforts, and it became again possible to enlist Mr. Gladney's inimitable services. The "father and pioneer of band contesting" saw he had "men of the true metal" under him, and he set to work in his own unapproachable style to induce truth of rendering, attention to detail, and full value being given to every note, in a way that fairly surprised even the men themselves—"he seemed to draw it out at the end of his stick" as one old musician remarked. To enumerate all the varied successes and prize-takings would take more space than *The Cornet* could spare; suffice it to say that in 1835-6-7 Kingston captured a first every year at Belle Vue, and each member gained a gold medal. In 1838 they were debarred from playing. In 1839 they ran Wyke Temperance closely for first place, and gained second. 1890 saw them sixth, 1891 seventh, and 1892 there was not a great deal to choose between Kingston and Besses-o'-th'-Barn for the premier honours, though it was awarded against Kingston. Returning to the time previous to 1835, the regrettable death of Harry Holding caused a vacancy in the bandmastership not easy to fill. It was, however, offered to Mr. Jos. Ford, and on his retirement put upon the trombone king, Taylor, and it was wonderful to see him play his trombone solos and conduct at the same time. However, he felt that he could not satisfy himself (though he eminently satisfied the band), and as he was anxious to do one thing well, he retired to give all his attention to playing.—Mr. Sam Newton next took the bâton (all of the foregoing of course, under Mr. Gladney), and on his retirement from the office (but still and up to the present time being a soloist.) Mr. Tom Valentine, who was assistant solo cornet at the time, was duly installed bandmaster holding the office at the present moment. Nearly £5,000 is the amount which represents the total earnings of the band, and added to this is an enormous

yearly sum earned by way of engagements. 1892 has been the most remarkable year Kingston has ever had, and points in no uncertain way to the excellence of the band as a musical organisation. To win eighteen first prizes, one second, and one third in thirteen contests is a feat which has never been surpassed, if ever equalled, and though it brought to the funds a large sum of money, it must not be imagined that it was all profit. Such could not possibly be the case, as an enormous amount of money was swallowed by railway fares alone.

In order to help on the work of the band, its supporters opened what is known as the "Kingston Mills Band Institute" some time ago. It is open at nights as a reading room and recreation room, where refreshments are also obtainable. The business of the band is transacted here, and it is an institution from which the finances of the band derive some advantage. Its object is "to establish and maintain a brass band for contesting and the playing of high class music." The member of Parliament for the Hyde Division is Mr. Joseph Watson Sidebotham; he is a Mus. Bac., Oxon, and takes a lively interest in the band.

As an *addendum* to this somewhat scanty outline (as regards the more minute detail) of Kingston Mills Band's history, several remarkable things may be chronicled. It may be said that this magnificent toned band won the first prize at the great Glasgow Exhibition, by their marvellous playing of a selection from the works of Wagner. This was done under circumstances anything but rosy. The then secretary (Mr. Wm. Fletcher, who, by the way, was a most admirable and arduous official) intimated to the members of the band that the exchequer was empty, and asked, "Are you going to Glasgow Exhibition contest?" All said they would like to go, and Mr. Fletcher then said, "Well, if you go you will have to pay your own expenses," and by way of a start, went round with the hat among the bandmen themselves, he not forgetting to set a worthy example by first putting in a good donation. All contributed to the best of their ability, and the men set to with a will. The weird chords and rhythmical difficulties of Wagner were completely mastered, all the men declaring, "No win, no wage" (as it was usual for the committee to pay for contests any wages for lost work). The result was such that Herr Franz Groenings, the judge, declared that "no 24 professional musicians could play 'Wagner' any better" under the same conditions, viz.: travelling all night.

At the Edinburgh Exhibition, Kingston came out with second honours.

Playing during the past winter at the Free Trade Hall Concerts, Manchester, the great Santley, England's representative basso (who was singing the same evening), paid the band a high compliment for its surprising tonal qualities.

During the last few months they have been supplied with a full set of Boosey's Patent Compensating Instruments plated and engraved. This in itself shows a desire to be ready to adopt any sound and valuable improvement in brass instruments, and they find the instruments all that has been claimed for them. In concluding this already too lengthy paper, the writer may say that Kingston's artistic success has been absolutely due to strict attention to detail, giving each note its full value—as written, and very often in a superior manner to "as written," owing to the foresight and wide experience of Mr. Gladney, who very often knows more about an opera or other work than the arranger himself; also by giving proper attention to the bâton, and playing with that combined

affinity which only goes to make perfect ensemble.

The band is at present constituted as follows:—

Conductor and Tutor—Mr. John Gladney, Camp-street, Lower Broughton, Manchester.

Bandmaster and Secretary—Mr. Tom Valentine, 40, East-street, Hooley Hill.

Soprano—J. T. Ogden.

Cornets—James Billam and Charles Kay (soloists), Ed. Whaunby, Jos. Clayton, Robt. Jones, Wm. Cowcill, and W. Walsh.

Flugel Horns—Jno. Scholes, George Sidebotham, and A. Bates.

Tenor Horns—J. O. Heap and E. Booth (soloists), and J. Broadbent.

Baritones—James Sidebottom (solo), and Jno. Walker.

Euphoniums—Sam Newton (solo), and Thos. Howard.

Trombones—Sam Holt (solo), W. Hunt, and Will Fox.

Bombardons—J. H. Knowles, Jas. Bruder, W. Edwards, and Stanley Greaves.

Drum—Harry Higham.

Librarian—Jno. Hibbert.

In addition to this list, there are a number of new and "reserve" men, with whose services it is intended to start a "second team"—in football phraseology.

MR. T. VALENTINE, BANDMASTER, KINGSTON MILLS.

Mr. Thomas Valentine, who is more familiarly known in musical circles as plain Tom Valentine, has attained a position which every aspiring musician may envy. Born at Glossop in 1867, a town which has become noted for the production of its musical talent, he had very good opportunities thrown in his way, and being of a musical turn of mind from his early youth, he frequently mixed in the society of musicians and had a growing tendency to become a member of the Glossop Old Band. His enterprise, gentlemanly manner, and pleasant demeanour soon won for him the respect and esteem of all with whom he came in contact, and his success in life can be accounted for by the intelligence he displayed in everything he undertook and the persevering disposition with which he is endowed. In Glossop and district he has held many positions of honour and public trust which have brought him in contact with persons of great wealth, and rank as well as those occupying a lower status, and the confidence entrusted in him has never been misplaced. To turn to his musical career, for it is particularly with that we wish to deal, he commenced as a practical musician at the age of ten years (1877) when he played the third cornet in the Glossop Old (Prize) Band. Mr. Thomas Mellor then being in command of the band. The subject of this article received his first tuition as a cornet player from Mr. Thomas Mason, at present a member of the above mentioned band, and subsequently he placed himself in the capable hands of Mr. Reuben Taylor, formerly of the once famous Compstall Prize Band, and subsequently of Kingston Mills Band, when that band was in its infant-contesting career. At this time Mr. Reuben Taylor was the tutor of the Glossop Band, and was succeeded by Mr. Tom German, of Man-

chester, who took Mr. Valentine in hand. Upon the inducement of this gentleman Mr. Valentine became a member of the Glossop Dale Philharmonic Society, and was a great adjunct to that body. Ever striving to attain a high position in the musical world as a cornet player, he met with signal success, and his familiar face was seldom absent from any musical gathering whether public or private; and at one time he was a worthy and valuable member of no less than four string bands—Mr. Charles Hall's, St. James, Whitfield, Mr. Arthur Bunting's (now Mr. Albert Sidebottom's) and the Dinting Vale. As may be imagined Mr. Valentine gained a varied experience while being connected with these and acquired nice tuneful playing, good phrasing and a knowledge of works not met with in the ordinary run of brass bands. While attending to playing Mr. Valentine studied music-writing, and found a good friend and splendid exponent of this in Mr. Charles Hall. Being a good penman and ever keeping in his mind the words "whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," he became a splendid music copyist and has been the recipient of the congratulations of many first class writers. From 1886 the Glossop Old (Prize) Band has had a successful career, and in that year won several first prizes, including first at Bella Vue July Contest, and in 1887 was engaged by Mr. Charles Reynolds (soloist at Sir Charles Hall's) to play at Derby Castle. Mr. John Gladney was elected bandmaster, and the abilities of "Tom" were speedily brought under that gentleman's notice. In 1888 Mr. Valentine began to reap the reward of his labours, being in that year appointed assistant solo-cornet in the Kingston Mills Band, and elected to the high and proud position of bandmaster to Glossop Old (Prize) Band—the band where practically he had received his "schooling." This was a great undertaking for so young a man, and to conduct men who were much older members than himself, and who had watched his growth as a musician, was not an easy task. Yet, with that ardour and stability characteristic throughout his life, he retained the position for two years, withdrawing in the autumn of 1890. In October of that year the Glossop Band engaged him, along with a very true friend of his (Mr. Joseph Barber, who is now leader of the band) to act as judge at a local trombone contest, which proved a great success. About this time Mr. Sam Newton, the well-known euphonium soloist, of Kingston, relinquished the bandmastership of the Kingston Mills Band, and the post was offered to and accepted by our old friend Mr. Valentine. So great was the success of the band, coupled with the confidence which the members place in their bandmaster, they have deemed it prudent and wise on their part to re-elect him at the two succeeding annual meetings. He is also managing secretary for the band and institute. The crowning point, up to the present, was reached when he was appointed judge of a band contest held at Neath on Boxing Day last, in connection with the South Wales Eisteddfod, and it reflects credit upon his abilities to know that his decisions were accepted with general approval. He holds another important engagement as judge at a band contest to be held on June 17th at Musselburgh, a distance of some half-dozen miles from Edinburgh. In addition to the particulars given above Mr. Valentine has undertaken the conductorship of the St. John's Church School Band, Henton Mersey, and other important duties, and in the future we can with confidence look to him fulfilling important and delicate offices in the musical world, not only as conductor but as contest judge.

MR. J. T. OGDEN,

SOPRANO, KINGSTON MILLS.

Mr. J. T. Ogden is a native of Radcliffe and was born in 1859.

At the early age of ten, his father being a prominent member of the Mount Zion Band, he secured a Tenor Horn for him which he struggled hard with for two years. Then a sad occurrence came in the death of his father, after which he withdrew from the musical world for five years.

He then joined the Radcliffe Good Templar Band and soon became famous as a solo horn player.

It was quite evident from his rapid success that he was qualified for a more important position in the band, and he was therefore induced to take the soprano. The band was then under the conductorship of Mr. Wm. Wood. Shortly after, the band changed its name to Radcliffe Old, and commenced contesting under Mr. Owen. During his (Mr. Ogden's) stay with the band he was the recipient of many prizes for soprano playing. In consequence of his excellence as a player he was engaged by Middleton Borough; also by Eagley Mills. He afterwards returned to Radcliffe Old Band as Conductor, during which time they attended six contests, winning one first, three seconds, and two thirds. After this the band lost several of its best players, which of course deteriorated them. Kingston Mills Band engaged him in 1890, and he has since joined in their many victories. In the November (1892) issue of a contemporary, Mr. Ogden was pronounced the best soprano player in England,

and even this flattering description of his abilities was not saying too much, for he is complete master of his difficult instrument, his tone, taste, and powers of execution being most remarkable. He is a "model" sopranoist and a true musician. He has assisted at times some of the best bands in Lancashire and Yorkshire, including "Besses-o'-th'-Barn", "Oldham Rifles," "Heptonstall," "Middleton Borough," and several others.

Mr. Ogden is a thorough bandsman and one who is never more happy than when on the contest field.

Those in want of a good soprano player cannot do better than try the famous Mr. Ogden, when circumstances will permit him accepting same.

MR. JAMES BILLAM,

SOLO CORNET, KINGSTON MILLS

Mr. James Billam is just rising 21 years of age, and is a resident of Sheffield. He began playing at the age of 6 years, his debut of any note being made with the Leeds Forge Band. I remember seeing him play with this band at a contest at Totley some years ago when he had to stand on a box. Although so young he rendered great service to the band, for he was a very fine player, even at that early age. After leaving Leeds Forge Band he was tried or examined by the famous Saint Jacombe (the writer of the Saint Jacombe Cornet Tutor), one of the finest cornet players in London in his time, and who was very pleased with Mr. Billam's playing, so much so that he presented him with a testimonial, which led to Mr. Billam being asked to go to America and join Gilmore's Band. He, however, remained at home and shortly afterwards joined the Kingston Mills Band, of which he is still a member. As a cornetist, Mr. Billam, as few equals, his tone being of a very superior quality.

PRIZES WON BY KINGSTON IN 1892.

Contest held at—	Date, 1892.	Selection.	Judges.	Prize	Amount.
Clough Hall	Apr. 18	Mozart	Herr Franz Groenings	1st.	£ s. d. £ s. d. 30 0 0
Haydon Bridge	June 4	Mozart	J. O. Shepherd	do.	30 0 0
West Stanley	June 6	Joan of Arc	R. Stead	do.	30 0 0
do.	June 6	3 D.G.'s March	do.	do.	3 0 0
do.	June 6	Special prize for best Euphonium player in piece			
Silkston	June 18	Mozart	J. O. Shepherd	do.	1 1 0 34 1 0
do.	June 18	And Trom	bone Value	do.	20 0 0
Workington	June 18	3 D.G.'s March	J. O. Shepherd	do.	6 6 0
Longton	June 20	Mozart	J. O. Shepherd	do.	2 0 0 28 6 0
do.	Aug. 10	Faust	{ Jos. Englefield	do.	75 0 0
Lincoln	do.	Ravenswood March	{ Henry Coward	do.	3 0 0 78 0 0
Shildon	Aug. 13	Faust	{ Chas. T. Hurst	do.	35 0 0
Blyth	Aug. 20	Mozart	Geo. Asch	do.	35 0 0
do.	Aug. 27	Cinq Mars	J. O. Shepherd	do.	32 2 6
do.	do.	3 D.G.'s March	Sidney Jones	do.	3 0 0
do.	do.	Three Medals for best Cornet, Trombone, and Euphonium			4 10 0 39 12 6
Belle Vue	Sept. 5	Zaar and Zimmermann	{ Carl Kiefert	2nd	25 0 0
do.	do.	One Medal (Gold)	{ Hamtn. Clark		3 3 0
do.	do.	One Cornet (Value)	{ Manuel Bilton		21 0 0
do.	do.	Music (Value)			1 15 0 50 19 0
Stamford	Sept. 10	Faust	Jno. Ainsworth	1st	15 0 0
do.	do.	3 D.G.'s March		1st	17 0 0
do.	do.	One Cornet (Value)			12 12 0
do.	do.	One Medal (Value)			1 0 0 29 12 0
Oakham	Sept. 12	Faust	Jno. Ainsworth	1st	20 0 0
do.	do.	3 D.G.'s March		1st	1 10 0
do.	do.	Two Medals for best Cornet and Euphonium (Value)			3 0 0 24 10 0
Botanical Garden	Oct. 1	Nabucco		3rd	20 0 6

Total amount in money and value won in 1892

£455 0 6