

LUTON RED CROSS BAND.

Luton is a town situated in the south of Bedfordshire, and about thirty miles North of London, having a population of nearly 32,000 inhabitants, the greater part of whom are employed in the manufacture of straw hats and bonnets.

The Red Cross Band was established in 1890, by 14 or 15 men who had till just previously been members of the Ashton Street Mission Band, and who, finding that the rules of the society somewhat retarded the progress of the band, severed their connection with the Mission, and shortly afterwards formed what is now the subject of our sketch, under the direction of Mr. Harry Cannon, Bandmaster. The band soon began to make rapid progress, and other members were enrolled until it was made up to full contesting strength, the only drawback being the old instruments the band was equipped with.

When the band had been formed about six months and were holding their first annual social gathering, it was suggested to them by a gentleman present that they should try and get Mr. R. Ryan, of Kettering, to give them a few lessons, and the outcome was that Mr. Ryan was eventually engaged, the first lesson being given on the selection "Linda di Chamouni."

The band made their first appearance on the contest stage at Aylesbury, July 9th, 1891, (test piece, "Bohemian Girl"), conducted by Mr. R. Ryan, but the result was nil, being severely handicapped by their old instruments. They therefore decided to get a new set before attempting any more contesting and to this end they set themselves to work with a will, so much so that by July, 1892, they had a complete set of Messrs. Besson and Co's. first-class instruments. However, as the season was so far advanced they decided not to compete at any contests until the next year.

At the end of 1892, Mr. W. Goodger, of Sheffield, was engaged as conductor for the coming season, and the band attended their first contest at Rothwell, in May, 1893, with their new instruments, test-piece, "Joan of Arc." There were two special prizes offered in addition to others for bands who had never won a prize, and the Red Cross won the first prize, being placed next in order of merit to the prize-winners proper, thereby defeating the Burton Latimer Prize Band and Rothwell Albion. This success had a marked effect, and they decided to engage Mr. J. Gladney for a lesson or two, with the result that they attended three other contests during the season, winning two first prizes and one fourth.

At the commencement of 1894, Mr. J. T. Ogden, of Manchester, the famous soprano of Kingston Mills Band, was engaged for a period of three years as solo cornet and conductor, and under his careful tuition the band continued to make splendid headway, gaining a prize at every contest they attended, although opposed by the best Midland bands.

Their popularity now seems to have been fairly established, for engagements came rolling in and the funds increased so satisfactorily that they were able to clear off the debt on the instruments, and it was decided to have them silver-plated and engraved, the order being entrusted to the makers, F. Besson and Co.

During the present year, 1895, the band had some unfortunate drawbacks, perhaps the worst being the loss of their euphonium player, Mr. S. Butler (a remarkably fine performer on that instrument), who joined the Southampton Police Force, and as he only left just as the season commenced, they had to play at their first contest, without a euphonium, but still they succeeded in winning first prize out of ten competitors.

Their next contest was at the Agricultural Hall, London, and here they were handicapped worse still, Mr. Ogden and Mr. Cannon not being allowed to play, the former because he was conducting and

the latter because he was playing with the St. Albans City band. The solo baritone player was also unable to play owing to illness. But here again is a proof of what pluck and enthusiasm will do; they were determined to compete as this was looked upon as the Southern Championship, and their efforts were rewarded with first prize, the judges, Messrs. Kiefert and Cope, remarking that on the day's playing they were equal to any of the bands playing the week previous, with the exception of the first three.

There are two points in connection with their contesting career, that the members feel proud of. With the exception of their first contest, when their instruments were not at all fit for contesting, they have never competed without being in the prizes, and what is far better, they have never had a bad "remark" for tune and intonation.

The band have to depend entirely upon the public for support, and last year their balance-sheet showed an income of over £300, without engagements, which were considerably over £100 more. It will therefore be seen that the Luton public are not slow in showing their appreciation of good music. The present year, however, so far as engagements are concerned, is by far the best yet, and everywhere they have given the greatest satisfaction.

In conclusion, they are ever ready to lend a helping hand where needed, and this undoubtedly has had much to do with their popularity. They are just settling down to practice, under their talented conductor Mr. Ogden, and with an occasional lesson from the G.O.M. of the Brass Band World intend not only to maintain their position as Champions of the South, but to prove themselves one of the best bands in the country.

MR. J. T. OGDEN,

CONDUCTOR, LUTON RED CROSS BAND.

Mr. Ogden, the late famous soprano player of Kingston Mills Band, is a native of Radcliffe, and was born in 1859. He first joined the Mount Zion Works Band when he was ten years of age, beginning with the tenor horn. We next find him in the Radcliffe Good Templar Band, in which he 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, on which instrument he made for himself a great name and also won a large number of prizes. He was engaged by Kingston Mills Band in 1890, and played for them about four years and during that period was pronounced the best soprano player in England, and even this flattering description of his abilities was not saying too much for he was a complete master of that difficult instrument, his tone, taste, and powers of execution being most remarkable.

Mr. Ogden came to Luton about 2 years ago as conductor and solo cornet of the above band, and in that position he has been very successful, securing several medals, both gold and silver, and has succeeded in winning with his band the Championship of the South of England. Mr. Ogden is held in the highest respect by the members of the band, and any band being desirous of coming to the front and wanting a conductor could not do better than engage Mr. Ogden.

MR. HARRY CANNON,

BANDMASTER, LUTON RED CROSS BAND.

Mr. Harry Cannon was born at Grendon, Bucks., and is now in his thirtieth year. At the age of 15 he removed to Luton, and shortly afterwards joined the Volunteer as bugler. Later he took to the cornet, and joined the Ashton Street Mission Band, and was soon promoted to Solo Cornet, and held that position for 3 years, when he was appointed bandmaster, and under his direction the